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# THRILLING ADVENTURES



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True Adventure

By HENRY  
MORGAN  
KRECH

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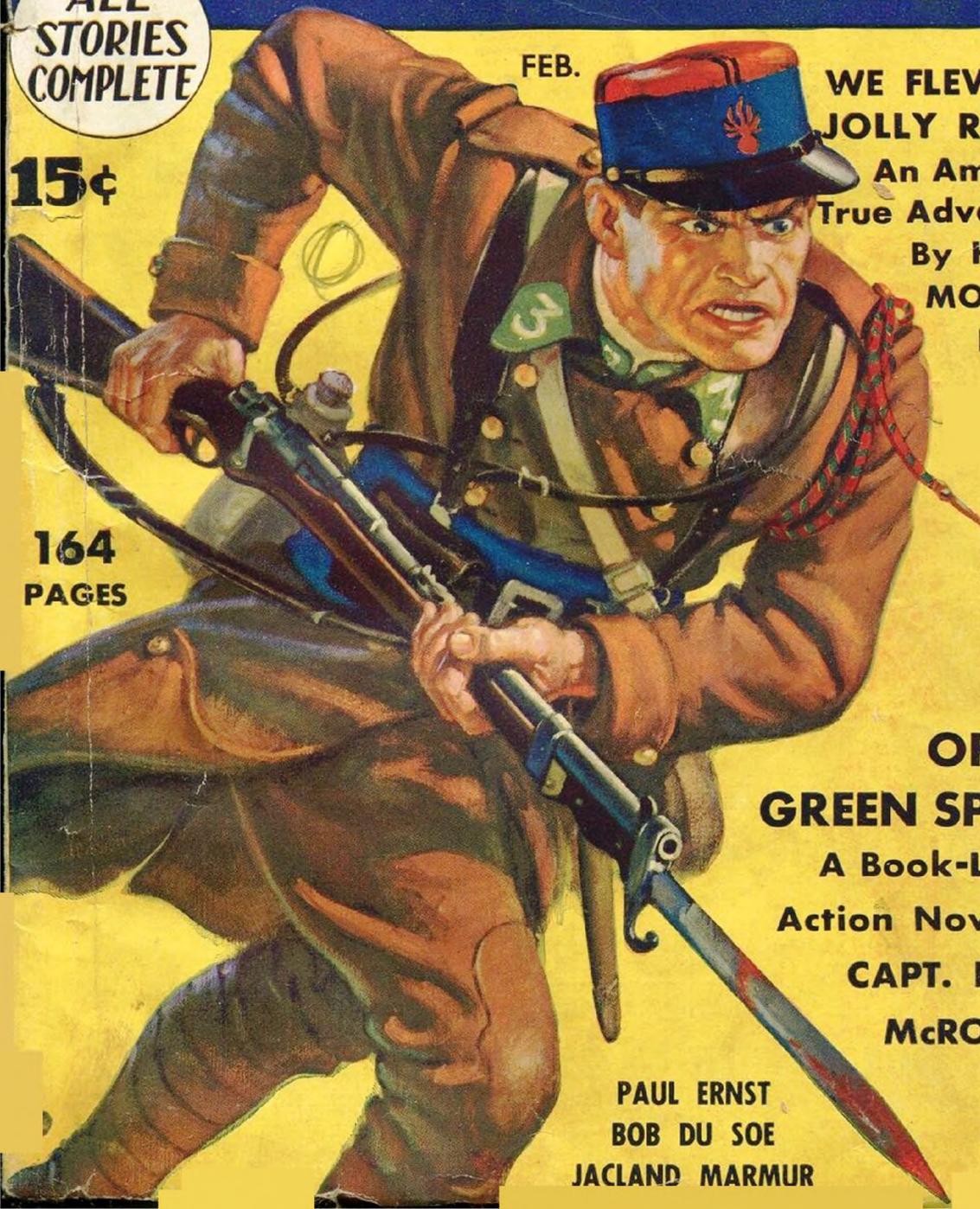
164  
PAGES

WEB  
OF THE  
GREEN SPIDER

A Book-Length  
Action Novel By

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PAUL ERNST  
BOB DU SOE  
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# THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. XII, No. 3

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

February, 1935

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GEORGE BAILEY

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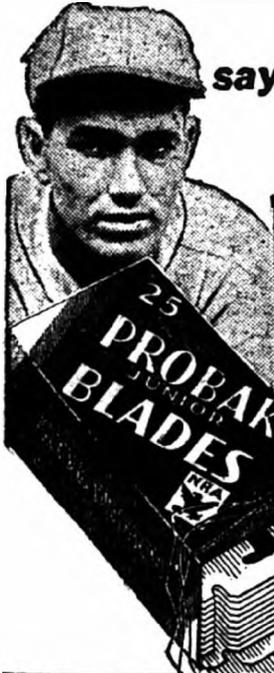
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Dr. W. R. George

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"Only 6½ months ago I started with your company without a penny in my name, and today (I just finished my balance) I am worth a little more than \$1200.00 I can hardly believe it possible—such success in so short a time. Hans Coordes, Nebr."

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"Lambert Wilson, Mich."

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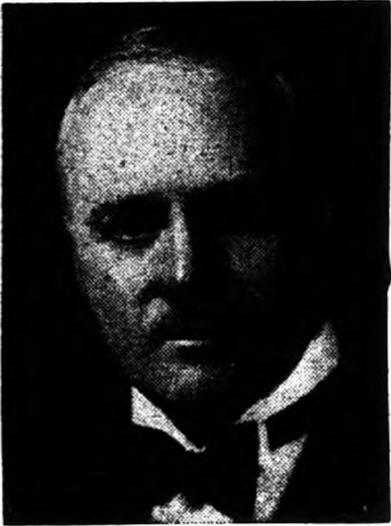
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- Shop Foreman
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- Traffic Manager
- Purchasing Agent
- Aerial Mail Clerk
- Motor Expert
- Radio Operator
- Airplane Mechanic
- Field Work

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- Air Express Agent
- Air Mail Pilot
- Aerial Photography
- Airport Manager
- Test Pilot
- Aerial Passenger Agent
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- Weather Observer
- Flight Instructor
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- Field Manager
- Transport Pilot

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# Thrilling News

ALL-STAR STORIES

"Literary News of the Month"

FEBRUARY, 1935

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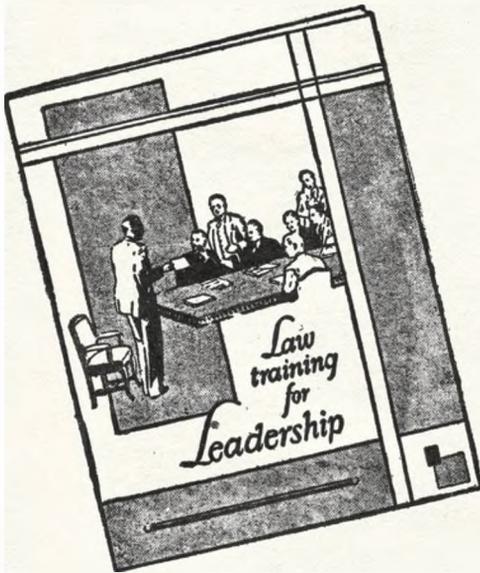
"Death stalks menacingly in that house of a thousand ghastly horrors! Bony talons of the Grim Reaper reach out for innocent victims! For the first time, the pulse-stirring, swift-moving story of my struggle with the forces of evil, holding the Thorpes in their grasp, is told in **THE HOUSE OF MURDERS**, a full book-length novel in **THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE**!" Other gripping stories, too—and it's only 10c.

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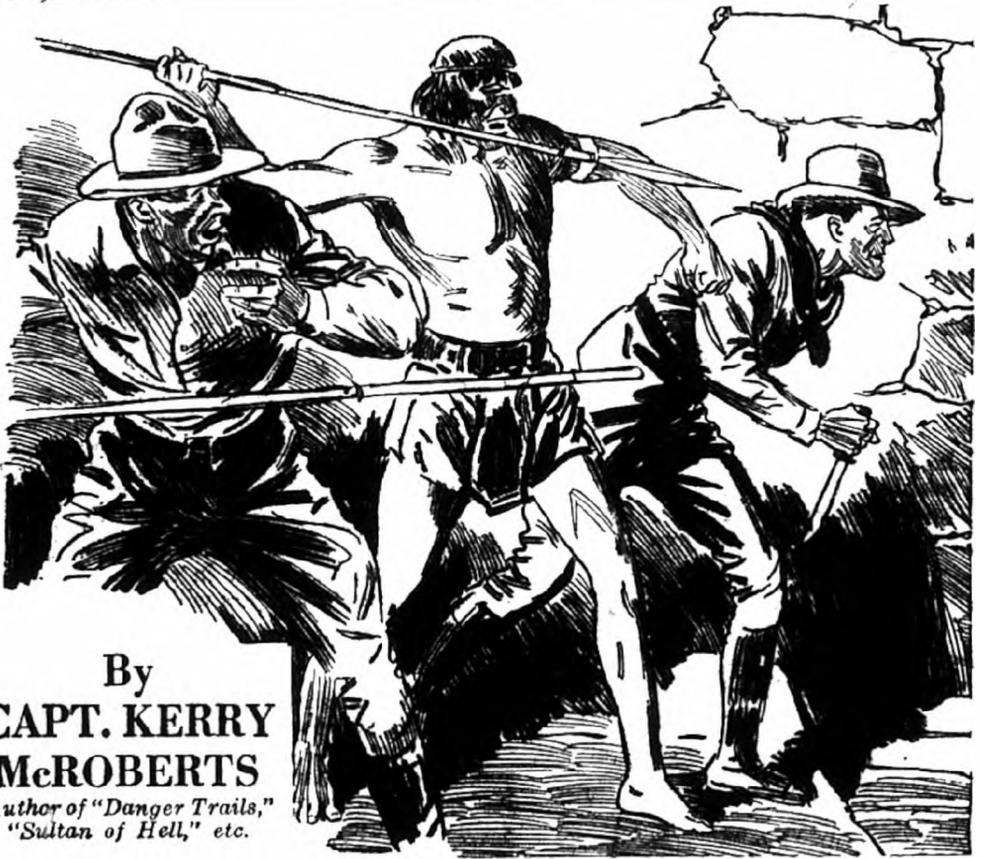
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## *Torture and Terror Stalk Menacingly Through the Wild*

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By  
**CAPT. KERRY  
McROBERTS**  
*Author of "Danger Trails,"  
"Sultan of Hell," etc.*

*Kermac, knife in his hand, again*

# *The Web of the*

## CHAPTER I

### *Death Jungle*

**T**HE three Indians came out of the blackness of the jungle swiftly, crawling on all fours like animals. Their bodies looked, in the shafts of pale moonlight of the camp clearing, like grotesque creatures from hell.

Fred Kermac, lying in his ham-

mock, heard a twig break. With a leap he was on the ground, his automatic coming out of the holster strapped around his leg. Behind him came a piercing, wailing scream of anguish. He swerved. At the hammock next to his, he saw the Indians. A knife gleamed in the air. The body of a white man rose slowly and then sank to the ground.

Kermac had no time to reach the

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*Men Face Savage Perils As They Stake Their*

---

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*Sierra Tuscomnia—the Jungle of Impenetrable Depths!*

---



*A Complete  
Book-Length  
Novel*

*backed to the stone wall with his two companions at his sides*

# Green Spider

man. His gun roared twice at the Indians over the body; then he turned, fired two shots into the crouching savages closing in on himself. One of them went to the ground, groveling crazily in the dirt.

The two others were on Kermac with vicious snarls, sending him staggering back, stumbling to the earth. A long arm reached for his neck. A gruesome face, with beady

eyes and the jaws and mouth of a gorilla, appeared in front of him. He brought his automatic up, fired point blank into that face.

He saw the mouth gash open with blood. The savage fell heavily over him. Kermac kicked the lifeless body off and squirmed around, trying to rise to his feet. The third Indian was on him with terrific force.

Kermac pulled the trigger of his

---

*Lives in Quest of Dazzling Diamonds of Mystery!*

---



Agrillo

automatic. It clicked on an empty chamber. The Indian had him pinned to the earth, arms around his neck, pulling it back for the quick snap that would break a vertebrae.

Kermac's knees went up, catching the savage with full force in the stomach.

The man groaned. The arms relaxed in their death grip. Kermac came up with his body and his fist, sending a right to the savage's jaw. There was a resounding crack. The round, bullet head of the Indian snapped back. Kermac's left caught the chin as the head came back in place.

The savage's knees buckled, then straightened again. Kermac was on his feet. The Indian bellowed strangely, looked at him, and then melted away into the darkness as if the jungle night had swallowed him up completely.

Kermac was over his hammock with a leap, at the side of the white man lying on the ground. The man's shirt was torn down the front, disclosing a chest covered with blood. Overhead the moon, sending its thin, weak shafts of light through the dense foliage, lighted the face. It

was thin, bloodless and weak. The eyes were closed; the mouth gaped open.

Every muscle in Kermac's body tensed. His mouth contracted into a thin line. His steel grey eyes narrowed and his lean face seemed suddenly to freeze.

On the forehead of the white man was printed the outline of a green spider!

The Green Spider! The strange mark of death for all white men who went into the mysterious Sierra Tuscomnia country that lay to the south of Venezuela, between the Sierra Tuscomnia Mountains and the Orinoco River. A vast desolation of impenetrable jungle, with countless streams and lakes.

Fourteen white men, Americans all, had died with the mark of the green spider stamped on their foreheads within the last year. All that was known of their death was what could be gleaned from the disjointed stories told by the Indians of the boat crews who had escaped. And they told weird tales of strange savages and death that came out of the bushes with the uncanny speed of a striking snake.

**K**ERMAC, of the United States Secret Service, had been sent to Ciudad, Bolivia, to investigate the deaths of the American citizens. For fifteen years he had worked in the South American countries for the Service. He knew the language of the different natives and the *lingua ceral*, the common language of all the savages of the Amazon country.

He had listened to the weird, incoherent tales told by the natives who had escaped the strange death. They spoke in fear of the destruction that came mysteriously from the bushes and of a white man called the Green Spider.

The last white man killed had been Bill Sprague. He had gone into the

country of death with a partner, in search of diamonds. Only the partner had returned alive. Philip Unger was his name—a thin, weak-faced individual, with shifty shell-blue eyes and a tall, slim body.

Kermac had distrusted the man on sight. Unger repeated the story of the Indians. He admitted that he and Sprague had found diamonds, a fortune; but he had fled leaving them hidden in the river.

The one part of the story Kermac believed was about the diamonds. There had been an attempt to kidnap Unger in Ciudad Bolivia by mysterious persons. Kermac got him out of the city, loaded him on a *mounterais*, a large canoe, and started for the clearing where Unger and Sprague had found diamonds.

Kermac knew that his line of action was reckless and foolhardy, but there was certain cold reason and logic to it. Unger's knowledge of where the diamonds were hidden made him a valuable pawn against this unseen hand of death.

But now—

Kermac was on his knees, hands ripping Unger's shirt away. He listened for some evidence of the man's breathing. At first there was none. Kermac wet his lips nervously. Then he caught the faint, indistinct sound of a feeble respiration; short, barely audible gasps that seemed to die in the throat before they reached the mouth.

THE moonlight enabled him to see the wound in the chest. A knife had entered Unger's left side, several inches below the heart. Kermac tore the shirt in strips, bandaged the wound as best he could. The breathing was coming heavier now, with more strength. Then he walked down to the river.

His big *mounterais* was gone, with his crew of bush Indians. That did not surprise him. The natives had



Kermac

long been ready to desert him, and the attack was sufficient excuse.

Suddenly there was a splash of water near the bank, at the feet of Kermac. Out of the blackness rose the head and shoulders of a huge Indian. He came out of the water, up over the slippery bank, with the speed of a water animal, standing upright in front of Kermac, the muscles in his naked shoulders and back rippling in the moonlight.

His face was heavy, with the high cheekbones of an up-country Indian and the heavy mouth and jaws of a Columbian negro. His body was naked to the waist. Below that were soiled white trousers. His feet were bare.

"Padrao," he said hoarsely, "me swim after boat, but bush Indians get 'way with supplies and food. Green Spider men scare them away."

Kermac smiled wearily and nodded.

"I know, Agrillo," he answered. "But the white man is dying."

A puzzled look came over Agrillo's face. His eyes looked at Kermac in the manner of a dog looking at his master. Agrillo had been more than a faithful dog to Kermac for five years. He had worked for him, gone



Unger

with him every place he went, ready and willing to risk his life at Kermac's slightest wish.

"Green Spider strikes very fast," Agrillo said now. "If white man dead, we no find Green Spider."

Kermac turned and walked back to the hammocks. Unger was still lying on the ground, his breath now coming in jerky heaves. Agrillo went to his knees over Unger's body, examining his wound.

Finally the Indian turned.

"Knife cut edge of lungs," he said. "Maybe white man die and maybe he no die."

A muffled groan came from one of the savages lying on the ground. His body twisted and then stiffened. There were no more groans. The other savage lay on his face, rigor mortis already setting in.

Agrillo's eyes darted through the darkness, his head moving slowly about.

Then he turned to Kermac.

"We got little time to work," he said. "Me make bed for white man. We carry him through jungle."

Kermac wasted no time talking now. He started an inventory of the camps and while he did this, Agrillo,

using his machete, cut the limbs of the *luiza* trees, and with *pissaba* vines as ropes, made a stretcher for Unger.

By the time the Indian had completed this job, Kermac had finished his round of the camp. In a hidden cache, a precaution he had taken against such an emergency, he found two canteens of water, some rice, and canned meat. The bush Indians had taken most of the other food in their flight.

Unger was placed on the improvised litter. He was moaning now and his eyelids jerked. From a flask of whiskey he carried in his pocket, Kermac gave the man a small drink. Agrillo had gone into the jungle, returning with some peculiar-looking leaves. These he formed into a wet plaster and placed over Unger's wound.

"Jungle medicine cure wound," he said. "We keep going into death jungle?"

Kermac nodded determinedly. His voice was firm.

"We cut across the jungle," he said to Agrillo. "We'll have to take a chance of striking another tributary and finding an Indian village. If we do, it will be your job to steal a canoe. Our food will only last a few days, and we must save most of it for Unger."

**A**GRILLO grinned back at him, his white teeth shining in the night. "Padrao," he said, "me steal canoe easily."

The grin remained on his face. Without further words he reached down, slipped the *pissaba* rope at the end of the litter over his shoulders. Kermac did the same to the rope at the other end. They lifted the litter up.

Agrillo started out of the camp clearing, his machete in his right hand, cutting and slashing vines and underbrush away.

## CHAPTER II

*Hostile Country*

A MONTH later, in a native canoe hewn out of the trunk of a tree, Kermac and Agrillo paddled up a narrow, shallow river of the Sierra Tuscomnia country, far inland from the Orinoco River. Under the thatched roof of the small house constructed in the center of the canoe, Philip Unger lay on a bed of *plantillo* leaves. His wound had healed and strength had returned to his body. The knife thrust had cut along the edge of the lungs, not penetrating deep enough to cause a serious hemorrhage.

Agrillo's treatment, using the jungle herbs, had helped it to heal rapidly. The rice and the canned food Kermac had taken from the camp gave the wounded man back his strength, but he lay on his bed of leaves, staring up at the roof, his eyes glassy and filled with a haunted look of terror.

Kermac and Agrillo had been forced to live off the jungle. Kermac's clothes were torn and his body bruised and swollen from the ravages of insects, and the constant wading through jungle grass and crawling through underbrush.

For over two weeks, after leaving the camp, they had beaten and hewn their way through the jungle. Agrillo acted as the jungle cook, and Kermac was fed dishes that often caused his face to twist and his stomach to rebel.

There had been baked ants and boiled caterpillars. From the *yucca* roots Agrillo had baked something that looked like bread. From other roots he had boiled a jungle tea, bitter to taste but refreshing. Kermac had managed to kill a *peccaire* when it seemed that he could stand the gnawing hunger no longer. They had feasted on this meat for more than two days.



Von Durkin

Then they had come to a river. By this time Unger had recovered, but he refused to walk, forcing Kermac and Agrillo to carry him on the stretcher.

Kermac, unwilling to risk Unger to the dangers of the jungle, had done this without protest.

When they came to the river, Agrillo disappeared for two days, coming back one evening with the dugout canoe and some Indian food. Then they started up the stream in the boat, following it until they came to a larger tributary. They continued on this for five days, cutting off finally, at Unger's advice, on the narrow shallow stream they now were on.

THE attitude of Unger worried Kermac. The man lay under the little house, speaking only when addressed directly. Then his voice was hoarse and frightened.

His shell-blue eyes, weak and shifty, watched every move Kermac made with the cunning of an animal watching its captor.

It had been the same way in Ciudad, Bolivia, when Kermac had first questioned him. Unger had not pro-

tested against going back to the clearing, yet Kermac sensed that behind his silence was part of the story yet untold about the death of Sprague.

These things passed through Kermac's mind as the shallow canoe skimmed over the reddish water of the river. Kermac sat in the front and Agrillo in the stern, guiding the boat through the treacherous rocks that filled the stream. Behind them could still be heard the subdued roar of a rapids they had come over; ahead of them the water was still and glistened a bluish red in the late afternoon sun.

They were out of the low country. The air was clear though the sun beat down with a scorching heat. Overhead spread the branches of the giant *cedralls* that towered like grim, silent sentries over the green forest. The matted foliage that clung to their trunks, forming an impenetrable wall of green along the river banks, crept up the trees for several feet; above this, continuing the climb, were the heavy *liana* vines that went to the top of the trees.

On these vines were flowers; yellow orchids that gave the air a scent of bananas, and other jungle flowers, a multitude of colors, that lost themselves in the great spreading branches. Among them gorgeously plumed birds flew, sending down cries of anger at the human beings that had intruded on their solitude.

THE canoe came to a turn in the river. The banks seemed to draw together and the water became redder. A great rock protruded from the center of the stream and a little distance ahead a sand bar jutted out from the bank.

From the thatched house came a wild cry from Unger. He was crawling toward Kermac, his face twisted with fear.

"This—this—is the river," he said

in a strangled voice. "I remember that rock and that sand bar."

Kermac turned, yelled an order back at Agrillo. The canoe made for the bank, gliding up alongside the sand bar. Kermac jumped out, grabbing the prow of the canoe and pulling it up on the sand bar. Agrillo waded to shore, helping to shove the boat up.

Unger got out slowly, walking with shoulders slumped and face pale. He had recovered his strength, but he found walking, at first, a little uncertain. He made his way slowly to the bank and sat down.

Kermac covered the canoe with brush while Agrillo carried what few supplies remained to the shore and into the dense foliage. The Indian cleared a small space for a camp.

UNGER walked into the small clearing as Kermac came up from the sand bar.

"Agrillo," Kermac said, "you stay here with the canoe. Unger and I are going to take a look at the clearing where Sprague was killed."

Unger turned on Kermac savagely, his eyes flashing hatred and fear.

"The clearing?" he cried. "My God, man, you're crazy. That place isn't human. Confound it, we won't live five seconds—"

"There isn't any place along this river that will be human for us," Kermac replied quietly. "We can hide the canoe and this camp for one or two days, possibly, but after that our lives won't be worth a nickel."

A smile twisted Unger's thin lips. His face drew up with a look that was both malicious and greedy. His eyes narrowed slightly.

"Now that we are here, Kermac," he said coldly, "we might as well start calling a spade a spade. All this hokum about your being a Secret Service man doesn't convince me that you came up here for anything but those diamonds. I came with you



*There, bones bleached white, lay a grim skeleton!*

because the Green Spider would have killed me in Ciudad Bolivia—he would have followed me to the end of the earth. Why he would isn't important now—"

"I came here, Unger," Kermac admitted, "to get those diamonds. I want them for two reasons. The first is the more important. The Green Spider wants them and the minute we start after them, we are going to come face to face with his natives.

It is quite probable that the Indians will kill us since they are hundreds and we are only two. But we have a chance—remote, I admit—and I am taking that chance!

"The second reason why I want those diamonds is that one half of them belong to Sprague, and his family is destitute. The other half will be yours."

Unger laughed coldly.

"And you think," he sneered, "that

I believe all that and that I will lead you to the diamonds? After you get them you will kill me just as the Green Spider would. I'm no fool."

Kermac's face remained expressionless, as if he had not heard Unger's words. His eyes looked at the quivering man without either hatred or friendship in them.

"You are going to the clearing with me, Unger," he said calmly. "I don't give a hoot what you think. You are taking me to those diamonds—and you are going to prove to me that your story about the death of Sprague is true."

A look of animal cunning came to Unger's eyes. A cold, sneering smile came to his lips.

"You think I murdered Sprague," he said hoarsely. "You are a fool. I will go to the clearing with you. You will see the death that comes from the bushes. It will strike you—but not me. I will go with you."

Agrillo sidled up to Kermac, his face worried.

"Padrao," he said to Kermac, "you no come back from clearing alive."

"This boat and what supplies we have, Agrillo," Kermac said, "are too important to leave alone. You watch them. We will be back."

Agrillo shook his head, started to say something, but shrugged and walked away.

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Enemy Strikes!*



KERMAC moved, on hands and knees, through the matted green foliage of the jungle, his right hand reaching out to push the vines and brush away.

His face was bleeding and his flesh torn by the vines and grass and brush.

Ahead of him, a few feet, Unger

crawled, his face and body bruised and bloody from the same jungle foliage. Unger moved forward slowly, desperately, never so much as stopping or looking around. He brushed the jungle growth from in front of him savagely, with only a muttered oath now and then to break the eerie silence.

OVERHEAD, hidden from the earth by the branches of the trees that intertwined themselves into a roof of green, the sun was slowly falling below the western rim of the jungle. It left only a shadowy light of purple grey, which did not penetrate through the trees overhead to where Kermac and Unger were moving like animals over the ground.

Suddenly Unger stopped, drew himself up to a standing position. Kermac crawled up to him, jumping to his feet.

"There it is," Unger said quietly. "Sprague was killed in that shack and I guess his body is still there."

Kermac stared out at the small clearing, already half reclaimed by the jungle grass and brush that had grown up around a shack that stood in its center. Some forty feet from the shack was the river, a narrow, shallow stream, with its banks dug up and the dredging platforms still standing, just as Sprague and Unger's crew of workers had left it.

Kermac walked out of the jungle and onto the clearing, heading directly for the shack. Unger followed after him, keeping close to his heels. At the door of the shack, Kermac pushed the vines and the brush that had grown over it away. Then his body stiffened and his jaws clicked shut at what he saw.

He was looking at a bunk against the far wall. On it, covered by moldy blankets, lay a skeleton, the bones bleached white by the humid heat of the jungle. It lay crossways on the bed, the bones of the legs drawn

up, showing that the man had died in a struggle.

Kermac took a step inside the shack. There was a movement behind him, a slight shuffling of feet. He swerved and saw, for one brief second, the leering, sneering face of Unger. Then something crashed against his head—a sickening, paralyzing blow that sent him staggering over into the shack, his body falling over the bleached bones of the skeleton on the bunk.

He was on his feet in a flash, his head swimming crazily and a nauseating feeling at the pit of his stomach. He leaped for the door.

Across the clearing, near the river, he saw the darting, running Unger disappear into the jungle. Kermac dashed out of the shack, racing after him—but before he got ten yards, he made a headlong dive for a bush, landing under it on his head and shoulders.

From out of the forest, to the left of him, two Indians came running on the clearing!

**K**ERMAC lay under the cover of the bush, his body hugging the ground. In his right hand his automatic was ready for use. The Indians, running in crouching positions, crossed the clearing and entered the jungle like darting animals.

For a full minute Kermac remained under the bush; then he crawled to his hands and knees. The clearing was deserted. The twilight was fast fading into darkness. Kermac was on his feet, darting for the spot where Unger had disappeared.

He stopped suddenly, every muscle in his body stiffening. From somewhere out of the jungle came a piercing, wailing scream that rose to an insane pitch, dying away in a muffled groan.

Hardly had it faded away before two Indians rose from the tangled grass of the clearing, rushing on Ker-

mac with leaping bounds. The American's gun roared, the spitting, jagged flashes of flame cutting through the gathering darkness. One of the Indians reared backward, remained in that position for a second and then crumpled to the ground.

Kermac was across the clearing, plunging into the jungle. A spear came through the air at him, zipping past his head with a whining moan, losing itself in the green foliage. With a crash he broke through the jungle netting, landing in a mass of *liana* vines that hung down from the trees.

**H**E tore himself away from this net, crawling to the ground. Striking viciously with his right and left, he knocked the dense undergrowth away as he crawled in the direction the scream had come. Only silence, grim and sinister, greeted him; then somewhere in the vast desolation of the jungle a twig snapped to break this stillness. It was only a vague, indistinct sound; yet to Kermac it grated horribly, an ominous warning that death still lurked at his side.

Crawling and creeping, fighting frantically against the undergrowth in a darkness that was fast becoming stygian, he worked his way to a narrow trail that led into the mysterious region beyond the clearing. The shifting light of the coming night broke through the tree tops and covered the path with a blue haze. Through it he could see the soggy earth where bare feet had slopped through the mud.

With the coming of the night the *piume* flies swarmed over his blood-soaked body, biting into his wounds with a viciousness that, for a while, threatened to drive him insane. Mosquitoes came in thousands to aid in the work of the *piume* flies.

The coat and shirt had been torn from Kermac's back; even his white trousers were mere strips of blood-

soaked cloth. Every part of his body was covered with scratches and bruises from the vines and the impenetrable underbrush through which he had fought his way.

He rose to his feet, arms swinging wildly to chase the insects away. He started down the path, away from the clearing. He walked rapidly, head and shoulders leaning forward. His head still ached from the blow; at times he felt dizzy.

**A**ROUND him was a dreary, ominous silence, more terrifying than the yells of a hundred Indians. Kermac knew that eyes were watching him—small black beady eyes of the strange Indians. With chilling clarity he realized that the stories told by the natives who had escaped the Green Spider death were all too true. Death had leaped indeed from the bushes.

A grim, bitter smile came to his face when he thought of Unger's warning back at the canoe. Unger had come with him, knowing what to expect. He had said that death would strike Kermac but not him. Kermac had half expected the attack from Unger, but had not believed it would come with such speed and viciousness.

Unger's natural greed had dictated that move. He wanted the diamonds for himself and was willing to chance death to get them. That partly explained the attack; yet Kermac felt certain that, behind all this, there was some strange relation between Unger and the Green Spider.

The path widened while darkness fell rapidly. Kermac was now walking through a haze of gathering black, able to see only dimly the trees at his right and left. He had no idea where this trail led, except that from somewhere in this direction had come the scream of death when the Indians had come out of the bush at him.

Then he stopped suddenly. The

automatic came up in his right hand. Ahead, along the path, the darkness moved. A crouching figure had darted into the jungle. Kermac remained standing in the center of the path, every muscle tense and every nerve taut.

The darkness ahead of him did not move again. He started for the spot where the form had disappeared, his gun ready to spit fire. He walked slowly now, his eyes trying to pierce the deep mist ahead of him.

Above him a limb of a tree moved queerly, with a sharp, snapping sound. There was a *whish* of air. Then another snapping sounded, ending in a hiss.

These three sounds came to Kermac in the space of a second. He had no time to stop; not even a chance to turn his head in the direction of the noises.

For out of the darkness came an inhuman power to grip him around the body, pinning his arms to his body. He was jerked up into the air as if he were a mere feather.

Five, ten feet up he was pulled, dangling like a sack of flour. Higher he went; suddenly the upward movement stopped, and he hung suspended in the stifling, suffocating air, barely able to catch his breath because of the crushing power gripping his body.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Web of the Spider*



**K**ERMAC realized quickly what had happened. Walking over the jungle path, his head and shoulders hunched over, he had stepped into a native death trap, which, had it not been for the position of his head and shoulders, would have torn his head off.

A tall tree, the toughest wood of the jungle, had been bent over to the ground, with a *pissaba* rope curled into a noose. Through this noose he had shoved his head and shoulders before his foot had set off the trap that caused the tree to snap with the speed of lightning, taking his body up with it.

The matter of several inches had caused the noose to catch him around the shoulders and arms instead of around the neck where the sharp rope would have severed his head. Even now the rope was cutting through the flesh of his arms as he hung helplessly in the air, fifteen feet from the ground, unable to move either of his arms. Desperately he kicked his legs. This did nothing more than cause his body to swing around as the rope cut into his flesh, tightening every second in its death grip.

Sweat broke out on his forehead and face from the pain of the cutting rope. His right hand worked itself around until it slipped the knife from his belt. Slowly he bent his hand and wrist upward, but halfway to the rope the hand stopped, unable to go another inch higher. And after trying several times to raise the knife to the rope, Kermac let his hand drop helplessly.

HE started kicking again. In the darkness he could see the trunk of a tree near him. The kicking started him swaying back and forth. He kicked harder. His body was now swinging. His foot kicked against some brush, sending him away from it in a long, swinging arc.

He came back through the air, crashing against the trunk of the tree. His legs went around the tree, pulling his body tight against it; then slowly he worked himself up, the rope loosening above him. He twisted his shoulders, every movement sending stabbing pains through

his head and neck and down his arms.

His hand, holding the knife, went up again. This time it got to the rope and he sawed it frantically. The tough fibre resisted the knife, but at last the blade ripped through it and his arms were free. He threw them around the trunk of the tree and started sliding down to the earth.

THE grim, eerie stillness still pervaded the forest. It was unreal, unnatural; yet Kermac knew, as he had known when he and Unger first stepped into the clearing and sensed the unbroken silence that hung over it, that it was caused by the fact that human beings lurked in the bushes. Their presence chased the jungle life away, stilling all the usual noises.

In the darkness below him, Kermac knew that human eyes had watched him; had seen him step into the death trap that had jerked his body up. But as he slid down the tree, no form of life moved in the desolation of the jungle. No sound came to break the dreariness of the unearthly silence.

His feet hit the ground. His arms were still numbed from the cutting pains that shot through them, though he could move them freely. He stepped back from the path, his right hand gripping the automatic.

And then the jungle moved and came to life, noiselessly, viciously, swiftly. At first the darkness seemed to roll up and move toward him in a wave of black. The wave broke into short, crouching men and then swept up to Kermac with the fury of a tidal wave.

He stepped back, lurched out with his right hand. His knife sank into human flesh. There was a muffled groan. Then the wave of human bodies hit him, sending him to the ground under a mass of sweating, snarling bodies.

He struggled feebly, but his arms and legs were firmly pinned to the

earth. There were excited jabberings going on over him. For some time he lay there, his arms and legs held to the ground, preventing him from moving any part of his body. The conversation continued; then at length this stopped and he was picked up.

His wrists and ankles were tied. Four natives carried him along the jungle path. There was no talking now.

**H**OW long Kermac was carried through the jungle he had no way of knowing. To him it seemed ages. The numbness had left his body and every part of it ached; with the aches were the sharp, shooting pains from the torn muscles of his arms where the death trap rope had cut into them. And to add to these pains came the swarm of insects to feed on his body.

The procession left the jungle, marched up on higher ground, across an open stretch of waist-high jungle grass. There was no path here and the grass cut his face and lashed against the open wounds in his body. From the tall grass they entered a forest. The moon was up by this time, flooding the night with a silvery glow.

The forest seemed cool. There were giant trees and under them no underbrush grew. For over an hour he was carried through the forest and then suddenly the procession came to the shore of a large lake. In the soft moonlight the waters looked blue and clear, like glistening glass, without a ripple or any movement.

The procession stopped only a moment at the shore of the great lake. Tied to the bank were a number of shallow, native canoes, hewn out of the logs of *luria* trees—long, narrow boats built for speed.

Kermac was thrown in the bottom of one of them. From where he lay he could see the strange-looking In-

dians crawling into the other canoes. There were more than twenty of them, all powerful of body, with huge shoulders and strong, broad backs.

They moved swiftly, without any conversation or wasted movement. The fleet of shallow canoes swung out into the blue water of the lake, cutting across the surface like long sharp knives, sending a spray of water up around each of them.

Kermac twisted and squirmed at the bottom of the canoe, but the rope around his wrists and ankles held tightly. After a time he ceased his futile efforts and lay still, his mind trying to grasp the events of the night which had happened with such startling rapidity.

**S**UDDENLY the canoes slowed down. The paddlers straightened up, letting the boats coast over the water. They hit a bank with a quivering thud. The Indians leaped out, pulling the craft up on a bank.

Four of them lifted Kermac from his boat and carried him up on the bank. Here the *pissaba* rope around his ankles was cut, a cloth was tied around his eyes; and, blindfolded, he was marched ahead of the Indians, with the points of sharp spears in his back.

He was conscious of walking over sharp rocks and then down stone steps. An Indian went ahead, guiding him. He was taken through a door. A bright light struck the cloth over his eyes, seeping through a little. He was shoved forward for a few feet; then brought to an abrupt stop.

The cloth was torn from his eyes. A brilliant light blinded him for a moment. He blinked helplessly, trying to adjust his eyes to the new light. Finally forms began to take shape and then he was staring at the face of a white man seated behind a large table.

The face was hideous in the yellow-grey of the skin; it looked like the face of a dead man. The features were heavy, the face long, coming to a sharp point at the chin. The man's eyes were colorless, the eyes of a staring corpse. His face was expressionless as he looked at Kermac. The lips were a blood red, as if they had been painted.

His huge body was slumped over, elbows resting on a blackwood table. It was a gorgeous, hand-carved piece of furniture, such as one would expect had come out of medieval Italy.

"I must admit, Kermac," the man said in a hollow, lifeless voice, "that you are exceedingly adroit at walking in and out of death traps and remaining alive."

"I've been darn successful so far," Kermac retorted with a grim smile.

The man shrugged, without any form of expression coming to his grey face or his colorless eyes.

"You got out of the trap set for you on the Orinoco River," he continued. "Frankly, I didn't expect that. A very deadly trap, the *pis-saba* rope and the *laira* tree. You are the first human being that ever escaped its almost certain death—"

HE smiled, a peculiar twisting of the facial muscles forming such a grimace as one would expect to see on the face of a corpse.

"As for Unger, he acted a little too hastily," he said. "But—to get back to yourself. You are a man to be admired. I have heard of you and when I learned that you were in Cuidad Bolivia to investigate the death of Sprague—and to try to capture the Green Spider—I was interested. I always prefer a clever, courageous adversary. For over a year I have killed only the stupid diamond hunters who have come into my territory. Like killing sheep, it was uninteresting—boring."

Kermac's eyes flashed and his lips

went tightly together as if struggling to hold back a sudden emotion of fury that had come over him.

"If you didn't give the others any more chance than you gave Sprague," he retorted, "I would say that such slaughter could hardly be interesting."

The man shrugged. He rose slowly to his feet, his huge, bony body towering high over the table. He waved his arm around the room.

"**B**UT very profitable," he said. "I have amassed a great fortune. Let me show you something of the treasures hidden in this room."

Kermac followed the arm with his eyes, and for the first time got a look at the room he had been led into. It was large, with chalk-white stone walls, indicating that it was either underground or carved out of a cliff of limestone. On the walls were beautiful paintings and gorgeous silk hangings.

The floor was covered with a deep red Oriental rug, one that must have cost a small fortune. The furniture was massive, luxurious, chosen with excellent taste. Along one side of the room was a large cabinet with many drawers in it. The man walked over to this cabinet, motioning Kermac to follow.

Behind Kermac stood eight or ten of the Indians who had brought him in the room. Kermac stared at them in amazement. It was the first time he had seen them in the light. Their bodies were tall, arms abnormally long, and shoulders broad and powerful. Their faces were ghastly in their hideousness—long, distorted faces, with beady eyes and the features of gorillas.

The white man opened several doors of the cabinet. Reaching in them, he extracted handfuls of gold, some in nuggets and the rest in dust.

"For twenty years," he explained in his hollow, lifeless voice, "I was

a white trader, suffering the hardships of the jungle and profiting but little. Then it struck me that I had been a fool. Wealth is not achieved with the hands, toiling for it. It is gotten by brains.

"Look at the men behind you. Strange-looking Indians, abnormal creatures according to our white standards; yet those men had what I needed for success. In those bodies is a strength that can strike death with a speed quicker than the eye. One twist of those long arms and a man's neck is easily broken.

"I became their chief through tricks that are elementary and simple to the white man. With them I have plundered and robbed the Sierra Tusconnia country. I have allowed the white traders to come up and find gold, and the diamond hunters to come and get diamonds. Then I have struck. Already there is a great fortune in these drawers. In five years it will be fabulous and then I am through."

Kermac looked at the strange man, at the ashen grey face and the distorted features. Then he looked at the Indians that stood near him.

"And now, Kermac," the white man said, "you are going to discover the little joke of the Green Spider. All those whom I have brought here to rob have discovered the secret."

## CHAPTER V

### *The Pit of Bones*



POWERFUL arms, arms that moved with inhuman speed and strength, took Kermac's wrists and pulled them behind him. He was fairly carried out of the room by the

Indians, through a long stone corridor and into a large room, barren of any furniture.

Here other Indians were waiting. Three of them were prying up a great rock in the floor. One of these Indians, slightly smaller in body than the others, was lifting the huge rock by his own strength.

A rope was tied under Kermac's arms and he was pushed over to the hole where the heavy rock had been removed. He brushed against the Indian. Something cold touched his hand. His fingers closed around a knife. He looked up quickly.

Standing at his side, his face distorted into a likeness of the other faces around him was Agrillo!

KERMAC got one fleeting look at the face of his friend; then his body hurled into the hole. At first he plunged headfirst into a sickly, yellow light. He went down in this manner several feet when the rope tightened around his body and he was lowered more slowly into the yellow pit below him.

He hit the stone floor in a sprawling heap, on his hands and knees. The rope was thrown down with his body. He got to his feet. The yellow light was coming from two tapers stuck in the sides of the stone wall. Kermac looked up. The hole was thirty feet above him, with no remote chance of his ever crawling up to the opening.

He looked around the pit, a shudder going through his body. It was filled with human bones, skulls, arms and legs. Several of the skeletons were intact, lying in huddled positions. The air was heavy and putrid from the carnage that had taken place in the yellow pit.

The bones told Kermac the grim, silent story of where the many white men captured by the Green Spider had met their death.

He looked up again at the gaping hole far above him. A shadow moved over it and then the ashen-grey face of the strange white man peered

down at him, the features distorted with an insane hatred.

"So you came to destroy the Green Spider," the man sneered. You are a fool, Kermac—a stupid fool. I knew you were coming when you landed at Ciudad Bolivia. I set a trap for you, a trap that brought you here where no man has ever escaped alive. Fool—fool—"

The man's words died away in a weird laugh. Something dark came dangling down the hole. Kermac caught his breath. It was a spider, and as it came nearer, he saw that it was green.

The Green Turkiti! The most virulent of all jungle insects, found in the Sierra Tuscomnia district. A cross between a spider and a scorpion more deadly than the latter, its bite bringing instant death. It was an eight-legged insect, differing from the more common jungle spiders in that it had an elongated tail, at the end of which was a poison-laden sac. With deadly speed, this tail came under the body, striking out in front of the animal's head when it dealt death to its victims.

Kermac knew this creature of death well. He had made a study of the insect life of the jungle. He knew where the poison sac was and how death would strike him—but knowing that was little help to him now.

LOWER and lower came the creature of death. Kermac's fingers closed around the knife Agrillo had slipped into his hands. A smile came momentarily to his lips when he thought of the faithful Indian. He had sneaked away from the camp when Kermac and Unger left, knowing that Kermac would face death.

How he had got into the mysterious stronghold of the Green Spider was a mystery to Kermac, but it made little difference. He had done his best. But the knife he had

slipped to his *padrao* was little help against the sting of the Turkiti.

Kermac looked down at the bones of the men that had gone before him in the yellow pit of hell. Each of them had stood as he was, looking up at the leering face of the strange white man, with the green messenger of death being lowered at him. The only consolation in it all was the fact that death would be instantaneous when the Turkiti struck.

IT was only two feet from Kermac's body. He knew the futility of running. The Turkiti would be on him in a flash, no matter where he was in the pit; so he remained standing under the hole, with the Turkiti descending on his head, being let down into the pit by a silken cord.

The Yank's lean face was hard and tense; yet in his steel grey eyes came no fear. He had come to the stronghold of the Green Spider with his eyes wide open and he was ready to take the consequences.

A cold, bitter smile came to his face. He was thinking of Unger. The Turkiti was within inches of his head now.

"You fool," the man at the hole screamed, "that is a Turkiti. It is death when it strikes. Why do you stand there, gazing up like an idiot? Why don't you cringe and run like the others did? Fool! You will be dead in a minute."

Kermac laughed harshly, bitterly.

"That's one pleasure you'll never have," he taunted. "Seeing me run."

The man stood up, letting the silk cord down slowly.

It was within an inch of Kermac's head, bearing a grotesque, hideous creature of death.

Kermac's eyes turned up to the Turkiti, stared at it in amazement for a moment. Then his body stiffened and his fingers closed around the handle of the knife in his hand. From above came a mocking laugh,

but Kermac continued to stare at the green Turkiti, every muscle in his face set, his eyes cold and hard.

The hand that held the silk cord let it drop. The green creature came falling through the air at Kermac. It landed on the side of his face and in the next second Kermac's body went to the floor of the pit, a groveling, struggling mass of human flesh. From overhead came another mocking, shrill laugh before the great rock was thrown back in place with a heavy thud.

Kermac remained on the floor, but his body stopped groveling. A minute passed and yet he did not move. From the wall, directly in front of him, came a dull, thumping sound, vague and indistinct, as if it came from far off.

The thumping caused Kermac to move slightly. The Turkiti had fallen from the side of his head and lay on the floor on its back. The thumping on the rock continued. With a leap Kermac came to life, springing to his feet, the knife Agrillo had given him gripped tightly in his right hand.

He looked at the rock covering the hole, making sure that the aperture was covered. Then he looked down at the green Turkiti, smiled grimly, and kicked it to one side.

The green creature of death was dead!

**I**T had been dead when the man overhead had let it down into the pit. Kermac had seen that much as he had stared up at the insect, but he knew that the weird white man, letting it down into the pit, did not know that. So he had fallen to the floor, to prevent the human killer from knowing that the bite of the Turkiti had not been fatal.

The pounding on the rock continued. With a leap Kermac was over at the wall, not wasting any time trying to figure out how it hap-

pened the Turkiti was dead. It was obvious that the thumping was a signal. He examined the wall.

The outlines of loose rock could be seen in the yellow, flickering light, a light that made the bleached human bones lying on the floor glisten weirdly.

**T**HE knife in Kermac's hand went around the edges of the rock, cutting the dirt out. He tried to pry the rock loose, but his knife made little impression. The air in the pit was fast becoming suffocating, lacking any inflow of oxygen. The air was stifling him and his head was swimming crazily.

The wounds in his arms, made by the ropes of the death trap, were burning and stinging; yet he worked on frantically, pulling and tugging at the loose rock, working his knife as deep in the crack as it would go.

The rock moved, came out an inch from the prying of the knife. Kermac's fingers clutched at the inch of exposed sides. The rock came out further. Kermac got a firmer grip; and then with a scraping, sliding roar the big rock fell out of the wall on the floor.

A yawning hole of black was exposed, a hole just big enough for Kermac's body to go through. His head and shoulders went into the gap, his body squirming like that of a great snake.

A gust of fresh air hit his face. On through the dark hole he crawled, through blackness so intense that he could see nothing. He came abruptly to the end of the passageway through the wall, his head and shoulders plunging down, carrying his body with them.

On through the void he fell, legs and arms dangling wildly. He hit something hard, the force of the jar sending his senses haywire again. But they came back to him in a flash and he rolled over on his back, star-

ing into an impenetrable wall of darkness.

Something moved at his side. He was on his feet with a spring, the knife going back, ready for instant use.

"Padrao," came from that darkness softly, in a whispered voice.

"Agrillo!" Kermac laughed with relief. "What in blazes are you doing in this hole? I thought you were upstairs—or, anyway, guarding the canoe!"

From the darkness came a good natured chuckle from the Indian.

"Padrao," he answered, "you no safe without Agrillo. I hide canoe far in the jungle when you and white man leave. I follow you to clearing. See strange Indians. Know they try to capture you. Follow them to this island ahead of you. I twist face like jaguars. My big shoulders and body help."

"And you killed the Turkiti the Green Spider let down on me," Kermac cut in. "And how did you get down here?"

"Green Turkiti dies when it bites," Agrillo explained. "It bites anything when frightened. I in room with Green Spider and see Turkiti. I let it bite at piece of stick. It no die at once. The Green Spider no know this when he let Turkiti down hole. Turkiti die when coming down.

"White man named von Durkin," Agrillo continued excitedly. "I know him long ago. Bad trader that kill Indians. He Green Spider now and kill white men. We on island center of Lake of Blue. Von Durkin have island guarded by many savages and death traps. We have no chance to escape—"

"ALL RIGHT, all right," Kermac snapped back. "Von Durkin thinks I am dead and that will give us a small break—"

His words were cut short by a piercing scream of pain and death;

the same scream he had heard in the jungle! It ended with a wailing, "God, don't!"

With a muttered oath, Kermac swerved and dashed through the darkness toward the tortured scream, with Agrillo close on his heels.

## CHAPTER VI

### *The Secret Never Told*



KERMAC ran as fast as he could through the wall of black, hands in front to protect himself from colliding against a wall. His feet tripped over a rock

and he went to the floor. Far above came the piercing scream again, this time weaker, ending in a muffled groan.

Agrillo yelled something about steps. Kermac was up, feeling his way carefully, his feet touching ancient stone steps. From far overhead came the shrill, piercing yell of Indians.

The yells echoed and re-echoed weirdly through the underground room of stone.

Kermac went up the stone stairs three at a time. He finally landed in a wide corridor dimly lighted by burning tapers stuck in the walls. Agrillo was at his side.

The two men raced through the smoky, yellow darkness. Kermac's eyes took in the walls. They were of stone, black and mouldy with age. The floor was stone, worn down by the tread of countless feet throughout the ages.

On the walls were strange carved figures, animals and serpents and, in one place a row of women's heads. Kermac knew that he was underground, in some form of cave on the island; yet the carvings on the stone and the beaten floor told him this

cave had been used for untold centuries. It puzzled him completely.

The rooms were far enough underground to be hidden from the sight of anyone coming to the lake. It explained the secret of the Green Spider's hiding place, but the walls and everything about the place were utterly foreign to any tribe of South American Indians Kermac had ever known.

He came to the end of the long passageway. His body went sideways, flattening itself against the wall. Agrillo did likewise, keeping close beside Kermac.

Around a sharp turn in the corridor, two Indians came, walking in crouching positions, faces twisted weirdly. They were inhuman looking men, with bodies and arms more like those of gorillas than human beings. They went through a low opening in the wall.

The piercing scream had come from that opening!

With a leap Kermac was dashing for the gap. The knife gleamed in his hand. He ducked under the overhanging wall, going through the opening like a bullet.

He heard Agrillo at his side; and behind them, out in the passageway, men were jabbering and running back and forth. The opening was about ten feet long. Kermac covered that distance in a second, plunging out into a large, low ceilinged room, lighted with the same ghastly yellow lights as the passageway.

For one brief moment Kermac's body stiffened and the muscles around his mouth contracted in thin lines.

**I**N the center of the room suspended by ropes from the ceiling, was the bent and contorted body of Philip Unger. Cords pulled his head and legs back. And above his head, within a few inches, hung a long,

silk cord, at the end of which was a green Turkiti!

Two Indians with spears were swinging Unger back and forth, using their long weapons to propel him. And as Unger went through the air, he came closer and closer, at each swing, to the green creature of death which hung there with its manifold legs moving and its head forward, as if it were struggling to bite into the human flesh that came so near it.

A pitiful scream burst from Unger.

"God, I'll talk," he moaned. "Tell von Durkin I'll talk. But—but—get that thing away from me. God, get—it—oh, God—" His words ended in a wailing, blood-curdling scream.

**T**HE two Indians that had entered the room started to walk up to Unger. Kermac stood with body tense, nerves taut. His eyes went over the Indians. Then with knife in right hand, Kermac plunged for them.

They heard his feet, swerved. Kermac collided with one. There was a ripping of flesh as his knife went into the man's body. The Indian sank to the floor with a groan.

Kermac swung on the other one, but before he could bring his knife up, the two powerful arms closed around his neck, bending it back with the power of a great steel vise.

Kermac let his body relax completely. It slumped down, and the powerful arm, forced to hold it up, stopped for the moment the backward twist of his neck, which would have ended in a broken vertebrae. Then Kermac whirled to the right, brought his knee up into the groin of the Indian!

The savage groaned like a wolf snarling, and closed his powerful arm around Kermac's neck again. But with the speed of a tiger, Kermac twisted around, bringing the knife up, the blade ripping under the heart of the savage. The man stif-

fened, quivered and then plunged face forward.

Something crashed against the Yank's side, sending him staggering against the wall, the knife falling from his hand. He hit the stone, bounded away from it with a spring. He saw Agrillo struggling on the floor with one of the savages. And advancing toward Kermac was a fourth Indian, his face twitching with hate and his long arms reaching forward for his victim's neck.

Kermac sidestepped, brought his right up in uppercut that raised the savage inches from the floor. But the man came down, a fighting, infuriated beast of murder. His arms closed around Kermac's waist, powerfully and swiftly.

Kermac brought his knee up against the man's jaw, knocking the head back and loosening the grip of the arms. An overhand right, catching the savage flush on the mouth, caused blood to spurt over the face; but with a bellow of rage, the Indian came in, head down, long arms swinging.

Kermac had no chance to reach for the knife that lay on the floor. He was rushed against the stone wall and pinned there with all the force of that powerful body. He landed right and left on the black head, causing the knees of the savage to buckle under him. But the Indian came on for more, struggling to get the death grip on Kermac's neck.

Out in the passageway could be heard voices. Kermac fought desperately, hopelessly, knowing that the first sound of the fight to reach beyond the opening into the hall would bring hundreds of savages into the room.

**H**E dropped to his knees, evading the long, swinging arms that had gone for his neck. He brought his fists up against the groin of the savage, putting every ounce of his

weight and strength behind the blow.

The man doubled up, grabbed his stomach and danced around like a crazy man. Kermac was on his feet, lunging forward, right shooting over in a blow that had started from his toes. It landed on the savage's jaw with a loud smack. The man stopped dead, looked up at Kermac with stupid, glassy eyes and then rolled to the floor without even a groan.

**K**ERMAC stood over him, swaying weakly back and forth. The savage quivered and then lay still. Kermac reached for his knife, grabbed it and threw himself in the direction of Agrillo. But Agrillo was standing up, looking down at the savage he had been fighting. This one's face was turning a sickly purple. He had stopped breathing and around his throat were the imprints of Agrillo's powerful fingers.

Overhead, Unger had stopped swinging and hung suspended from the ceiling, a foot away from the green Turkiti.

In an instant Kermac was on a large stone in the center of the room. While he cut the ropes that held the moaning man, Agrillo eased the body down to the floor.

Quick swipes of the knife severed the cords that pulled Unger's head and legs back. The limbs straightened out slowly in a stiffening movement, the body twisting in a reflexive effort to get the blood circulating again. Unger's eyes fluttered open, staring at Kermac in amazement. The parched lips moved, but no words came from them. The pale, bloodless face was drawn and haggard.

"Talk fast, Unger," Kermac snapped. "You know this place, and by this time you should know that von Durkin will kill you if you remain here."

A weak little smile came over the face of Unger.

"We might as well be in the mid-

dle of hell," he said in a hoarse whisper. "We'd have as good a chance to get out alive. We are on an island in the middle of the Lake of Death. If we could get to the lake—which we can't—we couldn't swim ten feet in it. Treacherous undercurrents would pull our bodies down.

"But we won't get to the lake. They will be on us in a minute and then it will be over. I was a fool. I thought I could play a game with von Durkin, but it's like playing with the devil. Only von Durkin is a little more powerful and a little more brutal than any devil."

"And the secret?" Kermac asked.

"I was ready to tell when you came in," Unger replied. "But telling him won't save my life now."

Kermac looked at the thin, weak face, smiled contemptuously, and shook his head. Unger's face became ghastly at the look.

"You are playing a game you can't beat," Kermac said. "You played it in the clearing when you tried to kill me. You should know it by this time; von Durkin is only using you—"

"I know it—now," Unger said hoarsely, "but it is too late."

"Where is von Durkin?" Kermac asked.

Unger laughed, a dry, lifeless sound that seemed to come from his stomach.

"We'll see him soon enough," he replied, "and when we do—"

**T**HERE was a piercing yell from the low opening into the room. A shadow passed in front of it. The yell was taken up by someone in the corridor, and suddenly the underground dungeons became alive with screaming, running savages. They came through the doorway, swiftly, wildly, for the two white men and Agrillo.

Agrillo had picked up a spear

from one of the dead Indians on the floor. Unger screamed pitifully. Kermac, with knife again in his hand, back to the stone wall of the room, with his two companions at his sides.

Slowly and relentlessly, forming an encircling line, the savages advanced on the three men with their backs to the wall. In the sickly yellow light the faces of the gorilla-like Indians were ghastly in color—twisted, distorted faces of hate and lust.

**S**UDDENLY the savages halted. From out in the corridor came the shrill, high-pitched voice of von Durkin, speaking rapidly in a language Kermac could not understand. The savages, hearing the voice, dropped their spears to the floor and stood there, some twenty feet from the three men, as if waiting for some mysterious thing to happen.

Kermac leaned forward. He considered the advisability of starting the fight, knowing that waiting for death was a sure way to receive it.

Unger's voice broke in on the eerie stillness, a gasping whisper.

"God," he said, "they are not going to kill us yet. They are—good God, the fiend—don't let him—don't—"

His words died in an anguished scream. Kermac swerved toward him, but as he did, there was a rumbling sound under him, a thundering roar. His body started to move upward. From the corner of his eyes he saw Unger going down into the earth.

Kermac gave a wild leap. The stone in the floor he had been standing on was opening up. His leap carried him to the edge of the moving stone.

He saw the distorted faces of the savages in front of him.

Then he went downward through darkness, with arms and legs dangling through what seemed to him endless space.

## CHAPTER VII

*Underground Hell*

FROM the pit of black below him, a growling, savage roar rose to meet Kermac as he fell headlong. Then there was a cold splash over his body and he was sinking

under water. The long, powerful tentacles of some grim monster seemed to grab out and suck him under, whirling him around crazily. He came to the surface, still going around and around. Another body hit him. His right arm went out, encircling this person and drawing him close to him.

Then Kermac dived, forcing his body down through the insane, churning water. As he did this, he realized what had happened. Von Durkin had let the three men down into a raging *cenote*, an underground river of Central and South America—deadly, raging torrents that roared under the earth with the fury of a thousand beasts.

Down and down he sank, his body twisted and spinning around as if it were a mere straw. The man he was clutching at his side went around with him. Kermac's lungs were bursting for air. His head was dizzy. He could stand it only a moment longer.

Then suddenly he was out of the water. The force of the current threw him high above the surface; then its deadly tentacles of fury reached up to grasp him and draw him back into the roaring pit of underground hell that would carry him to death far below the earth.

But in that split second, with his eardrums almost bursting from the terrific din of surging water, Kermac drew on his last ounce of strength and threw himself to the right, car-

rying the limp body in his arms with him. The current grabbed him, took him through the stygian darkness at a speed of better than a mile a minute.

For one brief second his body traveled at this rate. His ears rang crazily; his senses seemed to be going around as fast as the whirlpool of water. His lunge had carried him far to the right. He hit a stone wall with a sickening crash, and then he was floating in still water, the deafening roar of the river still at his left.

He swam weakly away from the din until he came to a rock ledge. His legs touched bottom and he rested there, gasping for breath, with the person he had grabbed in the underground river lying at his side. It was too dark to see who it was, but Kermac knew by the feel of the thin body that it was Unger.

For a long time the Yank lay on the rock bottom, getting his strength back. His dive to the bottom, letting the whirlpool shoot him back above the surface, giving him a chance to throw himself out of the deadly current, had saved him from certain death in the fury of the river. His knowledge of the South American underground rivers had told him the only hope to escape their death was to let them carry the body down and with the current, the very force of which might throw a person out in the pools of still water along the river's side.

THAT was what had happened, but Kermac realized grimly that this offered little hope of life. He knew he was far underground, with no possible hope of getting out.

From the pitch black darkness came a faint cry.

"*Padrao,*" Agrillo was calling, his voice almost completely drowned out by the roar of the river.

Kermac turned and swam in the

direction of the sound, carrying Unger with him. He found Agrillo in the same pool, hanging on to a rock ledge.

"Quick," Agrillo whispered hoarsely. "opening over us."

Kermac looked up. Far overhead he could see the misty light of a moonlight night through a hole in the ground. His heart gave a leap. That hole was beyond the underground stronghold of von Durkin. It might still lead out to the island, but, free from the great cave, there was hope of escape.

Unger came to life with a stiffening of his muscles in Kermac's arms. He, too, saw the opening in the earth above them. The hope it offered revived his ebbing strength and courage and he stood up, staring at the avenue of escape.

Agrillo started up the steep, damp wall of rock. It went almost straight up, with only a few ledges and protruding rocks for footholds. Kermac followed, holding on to Unger's hand.

Slowly and silently, with the grimness of death hovering over them, the three men worked their way up the slippery wall. Kermac held on to Agrillo's hand and Unger on to Kermac's. One slip by any of the three and all would be hurled back into the river of death; the further up they went, the more certain it was that a fall would land them out into the current of the river.

**A**GRILLO climbed with the agility of an animal, but Unger slipped several times. After they had gone thirty feet, the moonlight flooding through the opening lighted up the wall.

Kermac saw that the last twenty feet offered little possible footing. Agrillo continued to work up, however, his free hand gripping the stones and his bare feet digging into the thin ledges offered for footing.

They got to within fifteen feet of

the top. Unger's foot slipped and his body swung out into the darkness, pulling Kermac down with him. For one deadly second the three men hovered over the pit of raging hell. Kermac's body started to slip, but he held onto the swinging Unger.

Agrillo clung to the narrow rock ledge he had reached with the tenacity of a steel cable. Unger swung out over the river once and then his feet came back to the wall, finding a footing.

**T**HEN Agrillo started upward, silently and pulling the two men with him. Kermac clung to the slippery wall, working his way up even with Agrillo helping him. There was a fairly wide ledge six feet from the top. Kermac reached it, pulling Unger up alongside him.

"You'll get out first, Unger," he said. "You're the lightest and we can heave you up."

Unger made no protest. Agrillo and Kermac pushed his body up the remaining six feet. Unger caught hold of a scrub that grew near the hole, pulling himself through the opening. Agrillo went next, being helped by Unger from above and Kermac from below; and then, with Agrillo leaning out of the opening, Unger holding his body, Kermac was raised through the last few feet.

He fell on the ground weakly. At a glance he saw that they were still on the island, at the extreme western end. The land, from where he lay, looked like a great boulder, dome shaped. And under it was the headquarters of von Durkin.

Kermac raised himself to look across the island. On the south shore, the shallow dugout canoes were moored to the bank. He started to crawl toward them, with Agrillo and Unger close behind him. And then they saw, standing near the canoes, three savages, armed with machetes and spears.

The three fugitives got across the dome shaped boulder and onto the stretch of earth between the rock and the shore. Kermac rose to his knees; muscles and nerves taut. It was thirty feet to the boats and the guards.

Crawling across the open space without being seen was, obviously, out of the question.

He motioned to Agrillo and Unger and then, with a spring, he was on his feet. He started for the three guards and the canoes, but as he did, savages rose to his right and left. Piercing screams cut the night. Indians came out of the boulder like rats from a flooded hole, swinging their spears and closing in on the three racing men with the fury of beasts.

Kermac was sent to the ground from the force of the charge. He tried to raise up, to fight desperately. He saw Unger go down from a blow to the head with the flat side of a spear. Agrillo was fighting like a cornered jaguar. He sent three of the savages to the ground, but five others were on him.

All this Kermac saw from his prone position on the ground, through the squirming bodies over him. With a quick twist, he turned over, rising on his arms and knees, sending the savages on him to the ground.

He got to his feet. From the corners of his eyes, he saw the body of Agrillo on the ground, limp and still.

A blow caught Kermac on the side of the head, from behind. It sent him staggering forward with his senses in a whirl.

**H**E fought back at the savages around him. Another blow caught him on the head. His knees buckled under him. He sank to the ground helplessly, consciousness leaving him in the sickening mist of total oblivion.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Torture Chamber*



KERMAC regained consciousness with a feeling that he was soaked with perspiration. He opened his eyes, saw a blur of shifting light; then closed them, con-

scious that every part of him ached and that he couldn't move an arm or a leg.

From the midst of the blurry yellow light came a mournful, inhuman chant. There was a shuffling of feet. Kermac's brain cleared. He opened his eyes again. At first all he could see was the smoking, yellow light, but in its brightness forms took shape: The grotesque outlines of savages, their faces and naked bodies streaked with white and blue paint and on their heads strange feathered hats.

They were moving around Kermac in a circle, chanting in low, monotonous voices as they moved. Kermac's eyes penetrated the light further and he saw the ancient, black walls of stone. He looked down at his arms. He was tied to a great stone chair that sat in the center of the room. At his right he saw the limp, unconscious Unger, supported by the ropes around him.

To his left was Agrillo, his head up and his thin, brown face twisted with pain. It came to Kermac in a flash that the savages had preferred to capture them alive for torture rather than kill them.

"Padrao," Agrillo said hoarsely, "we no get out this trap alive. We far underground and Indians painted for torture death."

A cold, dry laugh came out of the haze of yellow in front of Kermac. The dancing Indians stopped, falling to the floor on their faces. And then

out of the flickering light von Durkin walked up to the three men tied to the chairs, his ashen-grey face expressionless and his colorless eyes mirroring a cruel hatred.

"So you get out of all death traps, Kermac," he sneered. "'Well, try and get out of this one. I didn't intend that you would die this way. It is not advisable to let these savages work their crazy torture ceremony too often. It's a bad habit to get them into, because it works up their insane fury against all white men."

The savages rose to their feet. There was a wild beating of drums somewhere in the room. The chant rose to a mad, weird din. Von Durkin, his face worried, stepped back to a stone chair that stood in front of the three victims.

The gyrating dance of the savages continued, reaching a deafening climax, their faces staring up at the three bound men as they continued their unearthly dance around the chairs.

Then, as suddenly as it began, the dance of death stopped. The savages threw themselves on the floor, groveling and twisting like dying creatures.

From the stone chair von Durkin spoke slowly and clearly.

"AN interesting form of torture these beasts have," he explained. "A year ago I found their mysterious stronghold on this island, quite by accident. I was brought here to be tortured as you are to be, but instead they made me their chief. That is a separate story. The hatred of these strange savages against the white man is diabolical and they have reason.

"In the year I have been here, I have studied their lives and their history. Once these hideous-looking men were a great race. That was centuries ago, according to their legends. They were a tribe of the

Mayan Indians, living in a great city. The Spaniards came, looted and robbed them, killing many of the women and children.

"The men were tortured. The Spaniards were looking for treasure. One of the means of making the men talk was to place them on a great stone slab, stretching the arms and legs until those members were torn from their sockets. A ghastly torture. Hundreds of the Mayans died in this manner.

"THE few that escaped came through Central America to this part of the country, building their stronghold on this island. You will find here evidences of the Mayan work. These underground rooms and the stone structures are the work of Indians who had once known civilization.

"But interbreeding and the hatred handed down from generation to generation have produced this tribe of vicious savages, men little better than animals. All that is left of their one-time culture is their insane hatred against white men. When they can capture one, they make him suffer as their ancestors did on the stone of death. You will be placed on the stone table, with great rocks tied to your arms and legs until they are pulled away from your body.

"It is done with ceremony and considerable brutality. I have been forced, on several occasions, to give them white traders for this sacrifice and I have watched it. Ghastly and brutal."

Von Durkin laughed—a cold, inhuman, cackling laugh. The drums started to beat again. The Indians rose to their feet and started again the dance of death. Their faces were twisted, inhuman and gruesome.

Despite the pain that shot through him and despite the horror of the death that hung over him, Kermac could not help feeling a wave of pity

for the poor, soul-warped creatures below him, the victims of the white man's brutality and greed centuries before.

Once they might have been a proud race of Mayan Indians, possessing a culture that had risen to great heights. But now!

Kermac stared at the tall creatures, with their hideous faces. In their eyes were pain and suffering, the pain and suffering of hundreds of years.

Kermac's gaze lifted until it fell on the thin, grey face of von Durkin. Centuries before, white men had placed the curse of hate upon these Indians; now another white man was using them, nursing their insane hatred for the race that had done this, making of them murderers and plunderers.

Von Durkin met Kermac's gaze with the cold indifference of a man who is pleased that an enemy is about to die. He sat in a large stone chair, undoubtedly the chair set aside for the head of the tribe. Three savages, bodies covered with feathered robes, stood behind him.

Two others stood at each side of the chair.

The dance of the savages had again reached an insane frenzy, but a sharp call from von Durkin sent the Indians groveling to the ground. Von Durkin got to his feet, looked at Kermac with a mocking, leering smile.

"YOU escaped the death I intended for you in the pit of bones," he sneered. "Unfortunate, indeed, that you did that. These savages do not know that the Turkiti failed to kill you. If they did, you would be a god to them as I am. When the bite of a green Turkiti fails to kill a man, that man is a god.

"When I drop the green Turkiti down on white men, I do so with caution, knowing what would happen

if these savages ever learned that a white man came out of that pit alive. When I let the Turkiti down on you, Kermac, none of these natives knew it. You are really a god among them; yet you don't know it and they don't know it. You have been bitten by the Turkiti and have lived—but now you are going to die."

Von Durkin jumped back. Two of the feathered savages behind him grabbed his white coat, tore it from him.

A look of bestial brutality came into his eyes, the same look that shone in the eyes of the maddened savage dancers.

UNGER suddenly regained consciousness, screamed weakly. Kermac looked at him and then at Agrillo. Agrillo was motioning to Kermac with his head and his eyes were trying to convey some message. Kermac followed his eyes to the Indian's side but saw nothing.

"Padrao," Agrillo said in a low whisper, "my belt. Knife."

Kermac looked at Agrillo's waist. There, as a part of his wide belt, was a knife. Kermac shook his head, knowing that now a knife would be of little use.

He looked back at von Durkin. Over his body was a gorgeous feathered cloak, the cloak of the chief. On his head was a feathered hat, a grotesque, misshapen affair. Two of the savages were tying a green Turkiti around his neck, and the Turkiti was alive, its numerous legs crawling over the bare chest of von Durkin.

A grim, bitter smile came to Kermac's lips. The Turkiti was the basis of von Durkin's power with the Indians. If a man could wear the green Turkiti and not die, he was a god. Kermac realized that von Durkin was wearing a green Turkiti with the poison sac from its tail removed. This could be done by the mere cut-

ting off of the deadly stinger under the body.

Von Durkin clapped his hands. He was no longer looking at Kermac. His face was drawn and distorted. He was the chief of the tribe. Now he seemed to be a part of them; the hatred that possessed them was written in his eyes and face and in every iota of his actions.

The drums started to beat with a fury that made Kermac's head whirl. The Indians groveling on the ground leaped to their feet.

From somewhere out of the yellow light six men came carrying a huge rock table.

The table was carried in front of Kermac, set down between him and von Durkin. Six savages, wearing black cloth gowns, leaped up on the chair to which Kermac was tied. From the dancing savages came a loud, drawn-out chant—a piercing wail, the lament of a cursed race.

Burning tapers were brought in the room, handed to the dancers. Swinging these flaming sticks high over their heads, the savages increased the momentum of their orgy of twisting, jumping, screaming gyrations.

It was weird, unreal, unearthly—yet it held Kermac with a strange fascination. But this fascination was short lived. Bitter reality came in its place.

The ropes that tied him to the chair were severed. He was picked up and carried to the great stone table and thrown on it.

FROM somewhere out of the milling, screaming savages came two Indians rolling the great weights that would stretch Kermac's arms and legs from their sockets. Hands grabbed him.

A great strap was tightened around his body.

Clear above the din came the shrill, taunting laugh of von Durkin.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Mark of a God*



THE shrill laugh from von Durkin brought Kermac to his senses with a leap. The strap around him was tightening. With a frantic twisting of his body, Kermac was out from under it. He saw a lurid face leering down at him. In the hands of the leering man was a great club. Kermac leaped.

But the leap he made was a split second too late. The great club was descending on him with a speed and force that would break his back in one blow. Kermac doubled up. The club crashed down, but it hit him a rolling blow, sending darting pains in every part of his chest. In the next second he was off the stone.

All this happened with such rapidity that few in the room realized what had taken place. The savages in the wild dance saw nothing; their eyes were glassy and they leaped and screamed and twisted like animals gone mad.

Kermac's body crashed against the waist of the man with the club, sending him staggering backward over von Durkin and the three savages with him. Kermac was on his feet, fingers gripping the great club.

He knew the utter futility of the move, knew that in a moment a cloud of black bodies would descend on him. Yet if he could die fighting, it would be far better than dying from torture, victim to the savages' ancient hatred against white men.

He swung the club around in a vicious half arc. The Indians not in the dance had seen his move and were on him. The great club sent them to the floor with muffled groans. Kermac gave one long jump toward Agrillo, grabbed the knife from his

belt and in a swing cut the cords around his wrists. He had no time to do anything further with the knife. Agrillo took it as Kermac swerved to meet the onrush of yelling savages.

The dance had ceased. The shrill, infuriated voice of von Durkin was shouting orders. The savages, moving like crouching gorillas, crept up toward the three chairs.

Kermac was on one of them, his great club swinging in a complete circle, knocking the savages down as if they were pins in a bowling alley. Agrillo was free. He cut the cords around Unger's body, but Unger simply sank to the floor at the foot of the chair, a helpless, beaten human being.

With his giant strength Agrillo tore a slab of rock from one of the chairs and heaved it into the onrushing horde of yelling Indians. The rock sent them back in a snarling, squirming heap. He ripped another slab and hurled it at the attackers coming from the other direction, throwing them into momentary retreat.

Kermac kept his club working, sending savages sprawling as they neared the chair. The complete fury of his and Agrillo's attack caused the Indians to back away. Von Durkin's voice was yelling shrill orders, but for a brief moment his shouts fell on deaf ears.

**I**N that second of a lull, Kermac straightened up, called out in a loud voice that could be heard in every part of the vast room. He spoke the language of the *lingua ceral*, the common language of the different Indians of South America, not knowing whether the savages could understand it.

"God of Turkiti," he shouted, "has bitten me, and yet I live. If you crush me, you are crushing a god and his wrath will bring destruction to all that is yours. If you doubt me,

look closely and see that the bite of the green Turkiti brings not death to me."

There was a hushed murmur throughout the crowd. The savages stared at him in amazement. Kermac swerved with the speed of a tiger, fairly leaping across the space between him and von Durkin. And before the leader realized what move he was making, Kermac was in front of him.

With one swipe of the hand, he tore the green Turkiti from the neck of von Durkin, put it around his own. With a leap he was back on the chair, his neck bare and the Turkiti against his skin, with its small legs kicking in jerky, nervous movements.

**F**OR one tense, dynamic moment, the savages gazed up at him, at the green Turkiti on his bare neck, their faces bewildered and their eyes filled with a strange fear. In that deadly moment Kermac's eyes went to the face of von Durkin, who stood near his chair, every part of him trembling with the fury and fear that was surging within him.

Yet the leader made no move toward Kermac, knowing full well what would happen to any who might lay hands on a person accepted by the savages as a god. He was forced to stare at Kermac, confining his rage to the look in his eyes, realizing that Kermac had guessed his trick of the Turkiti with the poison robbed from its deadly bite.

"I have the Turkiti against my bare skin," Kermac cried out triumphantly. "He has bitten me but I live. A year ago a white man came in your midst as I have done. You ordained that this white man die; yet when you put the green Turkiti on him, he did not die. So it is with all gods that come to you."

A murmur started through the crowd. It rose to a piercing chant

and then the Indians threw themselves on the floor, faces hidden in their arms, and the chant continued, rising to a screaming din.

The face of von Durkin contorted bestially. He looked at the prone Indians around him; then with a curse, he darted out of the room.

Kermac was after him in a flash, racing down a long, dark corridor, following the sounds of von Durkin's running feet. He came to a flight of stairs, rushed up them to the floor above. Yellow tapers lighted this part of the underground stronghold.

He saw von Durkin leap for a door. Kermac went through it a few feet behind him and once again entered the room where he had first been taken when brought to the island.

With a snarl of insane fury von Durkin turned on him, an automatic coming out of his pocket. Kermac jumped to one side as the gun roared, the bullet clipping the stone wall of the room. Then with a headlong dive, he went for von Durkin's legs.

The gun roared again. The bullet clipped the side of Kermac's shoulder as he hit von Durkin and sent the man to the floor, the gun dropping from his hand.

VON DURKIN bellowed like an enraged bull, threw his powerful shoulders over, sending Kermac back on the floor. Both men were on their feet at the same time. Von Durkin's right shot out, caught Kermac flush on the jaw. Kermac's knees buckled, but he bore in, shaking his head.

Back and forth across the room the two men fought grimly, desperately, each knowing it was a death struggle. Von Durkin's surprisingly great strength was backed by a cunning and a speed that made every movement of his dangerous. Kermac, smaller of body, was forced to depend on speed to evade the long arms of his opponent.

Both men were bleeding and their

mouths gaped as their breath came heavy and labored from the struggle. Von Durkin was working his way to the great table. Kermac sent his right over to the man's jaw and then jumped between von Durkin and the table.

VON DURKIN'S huge fist crashed flush on the mouth of Kermac, causing blood to spurt from his lips. Kermac's head swam crazily. Another blow from von Durkin sent him back on the table, helpless.

Kermac gasped, slid off the table to the floor, rising on his hands and knees, blood dripping from his mouth. Von Durkin stood over him, swaying back and forth weakly, his face a mass of clotted blood and his right eye closed. Then suddenly he took two steps backward, reached in a drawer of the table, pulling out a knife. As his fingers touched the hilt, his eyes lost their glassy stare and his lips curled in a sneer.

Kermac was on his feet. Von Durkin came around the end of the table, knife in his right hand, shoulders crouching over.

"So you're a god," he sneered. "You wear my Turkiti and don't die. You came to capture the Green Spider. Well, here he is. Come and get him."

Von Durkin's right hand went back as he lunged forward. There was a whish of air, the gleam of a knife.

The two men went to the floor, rolling, twisting, fighting, snarling. Kermac's hand had the wrist that held the knife. The two men rolled over, von Durkin landing on top. The knife went up and then came down slowly, Kermac still gripping the wrist. Closer and closer to his body the blade came.

It touched his flesh but as it did, his knee came up, catching von Durkin in the stomach, sending him to the floor.

What happened next, took place in the space of a few seconds. As von

Durkin's knife went back, Kermac went with him, his hand still grasping the wrist that held the knife. Kermac went up in the air, coming down on that wrist with every ounce in his body behind it.

The knife went down toward von Durkin's chest. Von Durkin screamed wildly. There was a ripping of flesh as the knife went into his heart.

He twisted once, quivered a little, groaned weakly, and then lay still. Kermac fell over him.

For a brief moment he lay there, gasping for breath, his senses a jumble of crazy ideas. Then he got up. The blood was still spurting from von Durkin's wound, but the man's eyes were open.

A guttural laugh came from von Durkin's throat. He struggled to his feet, a ghastly sight, body covered with blood and his long twisted face in the throes of coming death.

Kermac watched him helplessly. It seemed that he himself could make no physical move.

Von Durkin fell against the table. An insane laugh came from him.

"So you think you've killed the Green Spider!" he said in the hollow voice of death. "You have killed him, but I have planned for this moment a long time. You'll never get my diamonds or my gold. You—blast you, you'll never live to tell what you have done. You and the crazy savages—everyone will die as I am going to die."

**K**ERMAC leaped forward feebly. He saw von Durkin's hand go for a lever under the table. The fingers went around it, pulling it back.

Every part of that room of stone started to shake. There was a deafening explosion. Rocks fell from the ceiling. The walls bulged out crazily. The room was suddenly plunged into infernal darkness.

Kermac tried to leap back. He fell heavily to the floor.

## CHAPTER X

*Journey's End*

HE lay on his stomach, gasping for breath. The rumbling roar had spread to all parts of the underground headquarters. The air was filled with a dust that cut his throat. Something fell on his leg, almost crushing it. Overhead and around him, he could hear the great rocks falling.

Screams came from every part of the underground rooms, pitiful screams of fear. Kermac tried to twist his body. He released his right leg from the force that was crushing it. The rumbling roar had ceased, but the dust still filled the air.

He crawled forward in the darkness, a darkness so intense that he could see nothing. His shoulder hit a huge rock. He turned and went in the other direction. Rocks had him hemmed in. His hands went out, feeling for some opening.

It was obvious now what had happened. Von Durkin had had dynamite planted under the great stones against a day when he might be captured. The pulling of the lever had set the charges off. The great rock ceiling had fallen in, but Kermac had lain at a point where the rocks had not touched the floor; where they had fallen in a great pile, supporting themselves and holding their weight off him.

His hands went against the wall of fallen rock. From beyond them he could hear the wild shrieks of the terrified Indians. The rocks had not fallen on him, but they had pinned him under them with no hope of escape. His fingers gripped at them wildly. The dust in his throat cut like sharp knives.

The yells from the Indians had

ceased. It came to Kermac that over him were tons of rock and that he, with the others, was buried alive.

His shoulder went to a rock. He heaved against it frantically. The rock moved. Other rocks over it rumbled. Kermac pushed again, sending his body forward as the rock moved. His shoulder slipped off it and he went flying through the darkness.

His face scraped against another rock, but he kept crawling and fighting. It seemed to him that he had been moving through the blackness for hours. The skin was off his fingers; his cheeks were bleeding. Then suddenly he fell out into an open space.

A light was burning over him. He struggled to his feet. Agrillo was standing over him. Under his right arm the Indian held the limp body of Unger. It took Kermac a moment to adjust his eyes to the yellow light. When he did, he saw that he was in the corridor outside von Durkin's room.

The walls were still standing, though beyond them, in doorways, he could see piles of stone that had fallen with the explosions.

**A**GRILLO'S face was gashed and bloody. His right shoulder was bruised and the skin had been scraped from it.

"Von Durkin," Kermac said weakly to Agrillo, "tried to blow us all to hell."

"Explosion kill Indians in torture room, but many escape," Agrillo replied. "I crawl with Unger out of rocks. Only rooms fall in and not hallways."

"Can we get out of this hole?" Kermac asked.

"Indians running out opening over torture room," Agrillo said. "Explosion make big hole and moonlight coming through it."

"Okay," Kermac said grimly, "but

I came here to get the Green Spider and I want to make sure that I got him."

Agrillo let the body he held down to the floor. Kermac saw that there were no serious wounds on Unger and that unconsciousness was due to fright and fear. He grabbed one of the burning tapers that remained in the walls. Agrillo followed him back in the room where Kermac had struggled with von Durkin.

**I**T took them some time, even with the aid of light, to get to where the table had stood and where von Durkin had pulled the lever. One look told them that the Green Spider was gone forever. A great rock had pinned his body to the floor and all that remained to be seen was an arm.

Kermac and Agrillo took one last look at the room. They saw that everything had been crushed with the falling ceiling, except a narrow lane through the center of the room where the rocks had piled on each other, leaving an open space.

It was through this that Kermac and Agrillo had entered and it was through this lane that they left the room of death. Out in the corridor, a grim, eerie silence had settled over the underground ruins. No voice came from the depths to break the stillness.

"Indians all run," Agrillo said. "They think the God of Turkiti destroyed their caves because they tried to torture white man that would not die when Turkiti bit him."

Unger had opened his eyes. He got to his feet, staring about him in amazement. It took Kermac only a few moments to explain what had happened and to tell that von Durkin was dead. A wave of relief came in Unger's eyes and the fear left.

"I was a fool, Kermac," he said. "I couldn't trust you because I have never given many people reason to

trust me. I guess you are about the first white man in this cursed country that didn't try to doublecross me. And because you didn't, I'm willing to come clean with you. I'll take you back to the clearing and we'll get the diamonds."

"Half of them are yours, Unger," Kermac said. "The other half goes to Sprague's folks. We'll report the location of this underground place and the authorities can come here and get the diamonds and gold under that mass of rock—the diamonds and gold von Durkin stole from traders and diamond hunters."

"**T**HERE was one thing, Kermac," Unger said, "that I couldn't tell you in Cuidad Bolivia. I didn't think I would ever tell you. I was a partner of von Durkin in the murder of Sprague."

Kermac's face remained cold and expressionless.

"Yes," he said, "I figured that."

"The story dates back several years ago, to when von Durkin and I were traders in the jungles," Unger explained. "He was an evil man then. There was a murder. I had nothing to do with it, but he implicated me and I was in his power."

"A year passed and I saw nothing of him. Then he appeared in Cuidad Bolivia, got in touch with me. I didn't know then that he was the Green Spider. That was several months ago. I know now that his murders had frightened white diamond hunters from this country. It was necessary for his success that white men come here."

"He told me of the great amount of diamonds to be found here. I was suspicious. He ordered me to interest white men in coming, and threatened me if I did not. In the end I came here with Sprague. It happens that Sprague suggested the expe-

dition, but I should have warned him because by the time we had left, I had heard about the Green Spider and realized it must be von Durkin.

"Sprague and I hit it rich. I saw that the diamonds were hidden where no one could find them. I did warn Sprague, but it was too late. Von Durkin struck that night. I escaped with my life, but von Durkin followed me to Cuidad Bolivia. I had the secret of the diamonds and he wanted them."

"When you talked to me in Cuidad Bolivia, I didn't believe you were a Secret Service man. I came with you because I wanted the diamonds, and needed help getting here. I thought you were after them also. But after my attack on you in the clearing, von Durkin's Indians captured me. I wouldn't talk, and they tortured me. And you know the rest."

Kermac nodded grimly.

"Without you, Unger," he said "I could never have gotten the Green Spider. So we'll call things even. You can go back to civilization and start anew. You will have money and you can play it straight."

"With my money," Unger said wearily, "I'm going back to real civilization, where I can know honest men. You won't have to worry how I live. I've had enough of stealing."

**K**ERMAC turned to Agrillo and motioned him to lead the way out of the underground dungeons. The Indian walked ahead, through the corridor and down to the torture room, where a great yawning hole opened up into the moonlight.

Outside, at the shore of the lake, they found canoes left there by the fleeing Indians. The three men got into one, took a last look at the island of death, and then paddled rapidly for the far shore—and civilization.

# Famous SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE



## COLONEL JOHN MOSBY

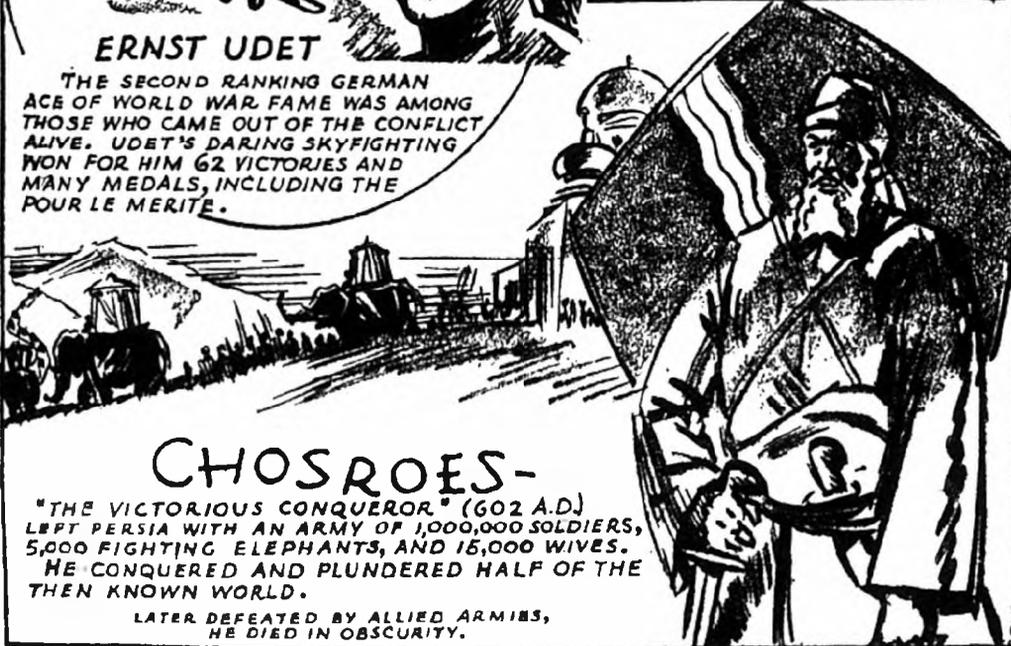
FAMED FOR HIS DRAMATIC AND DARING RAIDS AS A CONFEDERATE CAVALRY OFFICER, INTO UNION ARMY STRONGHOLDS, HE BECAME THE "SOUTHERN HERO OF THE DAY". AT THE AGE OF 28, ALTHOUGH SUCCESSFUL IN LAW, HIS ADVENTUROUS NATURE LED HIM TO ENLIST. EARNING EARLY DISTINCTION AS A RAIDER, MOSBY ORGANIZED HIS "PARTISAN RANGERS."

WITH THIS BEGAN HIS SERIES OF BRILLIANT SURPRISE ATTACKS AGAINST FEDERAL FORCES. HIS MOST DARING FEAT WAS THE CAPTURE OF GENERAL STOUGHTON AT FAIRFAX.



## ERNST UDET

THE SECOND RANKING GERMAN ACE OF WORLD WAR FAME WAS AMONG THOSE WHO CAME OUT OF THE CONFLICT ALIVE. UDET'S DARING SKYFIGHTING WON FOR HIM 62 VICTORIES AND MANY MEDALS, INCLUDING THE POUR LE MERITE.



## CHOSROES-

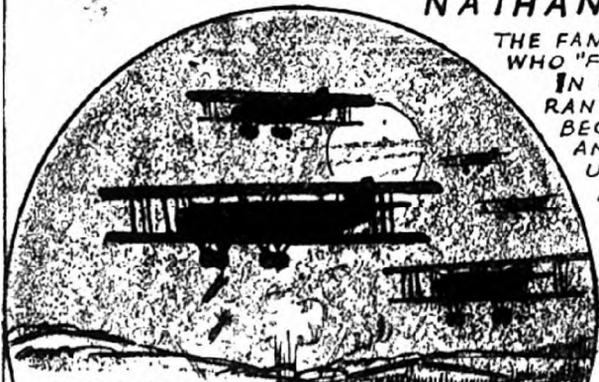
"THE VICTORIOUS CONQUEROR" (602 A.D.) LEFT PERSIA WITH AN ARMY OF 1,000,000 SOLDIERS, 5,000 FIGHTING ELEPHANTS, AND 15,000 WIVES. HE CONQUERED AND PLUNDERED HALF OF THE THEN KNOWN WORLD. LATER DEFEATED BY ALLIED ARMS, HE DIED IN OBSCURITY.



## NATHANIEL NORTH

THE FAMOUS ENGLISH PIRATE WHO "FOUNDED A MONARCHY". IN QUEST OF ADVENTURE, NORTH RAN AWAY FROM HOME AND BECAME A SAILOR. HIS DARING AND COURAGE WHILE SERVING UNDER FRENCH, SPANISH, AND ENGLISH FLAGS, GAINED FOR HIM A FOLLOWING. WITH A SMALL BAND, HE WENT INTO PRIVATEERING.

RICH WITH GOLD AND JEWELS, NORTH MADE FRIENDS WITH NATIVES OF MADAGASCAR, AND FORMED THE "NORTH COLONY MONARCHY" WHICH HIS DESCENDANTS STILL RULE.



## COLONEL RICHARD MULOCK, R.F.C.

WAS THE COMMANDER OF A PROPOSED AIR-RAID THAT NEVER HAPPENED—THE GREAT RAID UPON BERLIN. THIS WAS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>, BUT ON NOVEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>, THE ARMISTICE WAS SIGNED.



**E**LECTRIC EELS OF THE AMAZON RIVER SOMETIMES ATTAIN LENGTHS RANGING FROM SEVEN TO EIGHT FEET AND FROM BATTERY-LIKE CELLS CAN GIVE A DISCHARGE WHICH CAN STUN A HORSE.

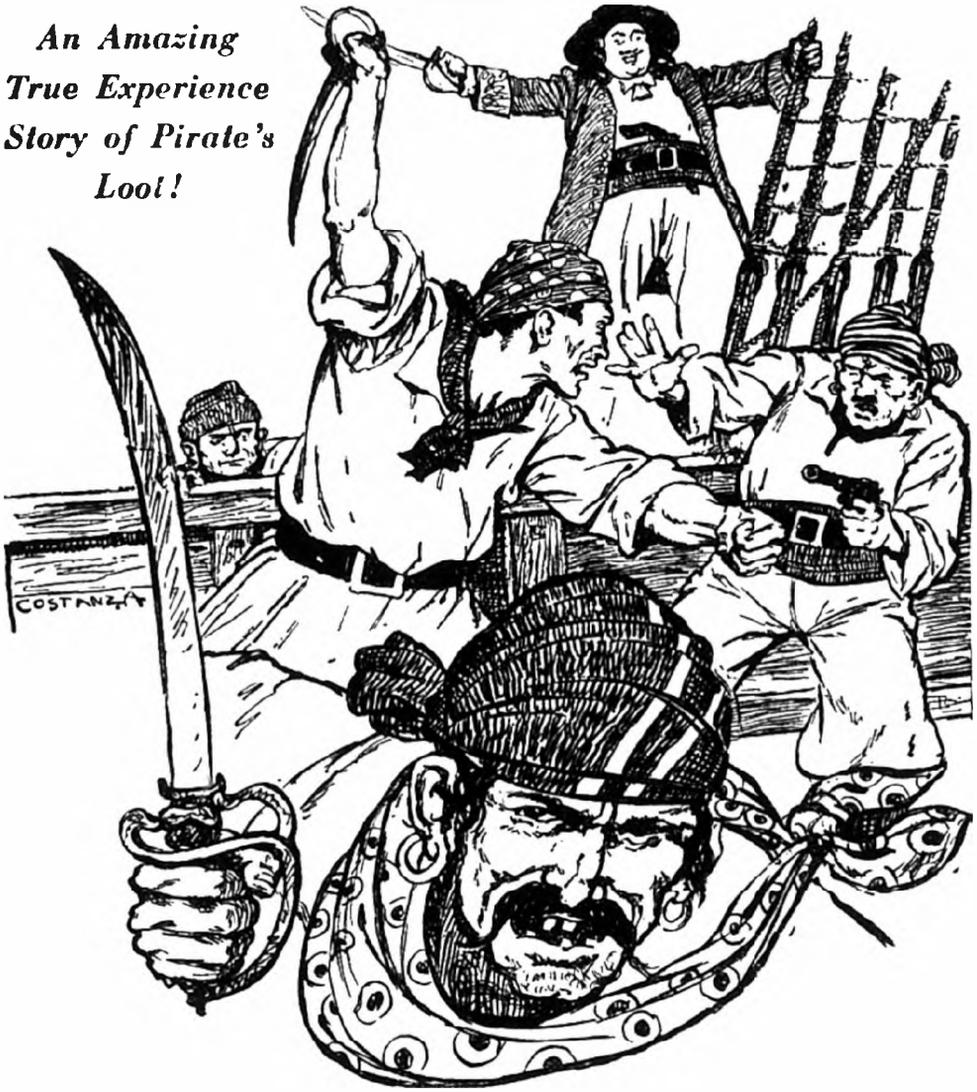


## DODGING CANNON BALLS!

BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR, SOLID SHOT CANNON BALLS TRAVELLED ONLY 800 FEET A SECOND, ALLOWING THE SOLDIERS QUITE FREQUENTLY TO BE ABLE TO DODGE THEM.

# WE FLEW *the*

*An Amazing  
True Experience  
Story of Pirate's  
Loot!*



**I** ALWAYS knew that my father was proud of the old Georgetown house, and I never could see why, just because it was old. It had been built by some ancestor of ours almost two and a half centuries ago. My father used to tell me stories about it, and about my grand-

father and also my great-grandfather.

But he never would go back beyond my great-greats. There was some mystery about them, I knew. I often wondered about it, but when I asked my father to explain it, he always said:

"Some day you'll know."

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*Stranger than Fiction, this Astounding Record*

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# JOLLY ROGER

*Breathless Adventure  
Aboard Henry  
Morgan's Plundering  
Craft!*

By  
**HENRY  
MORGAN  
KRECH**



*I hurled myself forward—  
and drove my dagger into  
his breast!*

I hadn't a hint until Father knew that he was dying. He called me to his bedside and whispered:

"Six generations of us have lived and died in this house. They have been proud folk. They came of sturdy Welsh stock. I think, in two centuries, they should have lived

down any hint of stigma. I don't know, however. I leave it to your judgment.

"You are a man grown. Here is a key to the attic, which I have always forbidden you to enter since you were a little boy. It's haunted, son, by something of which only the first-

---

*of Gory Deeds Will Thrill You Mightily!*

---

born son in each generation has been told.

"I'm going soon, and it is time you knew. If you feel that there is no shame in what you find there, you may tell it to the world. If there is shame, destroy, by fire, what you find."

He told me that, and then he died.

**T**HREE hours ago I returned from the funeral. I was wild with grief. I loved my father as I know I can never love another living soul. With his loss the house has become a sort of mausoleum, a place of silence; even, almost, of terror. And I am a man grown. I know I am, yet somehow, today, I feel like a small boy again, trying to discover forbidden secrets.

I came back to the silence and the smell of funeral flowers—and, desperately seeking something to take my mind off my sorrows, I remembered the key to the attic, and some "haunted" secret there. Now, I decided, was as good a time as any.

I wondered, as I climbed the ladder, why my father had seen fit to have the attic wired. Not to my knowledge had he or any other member of the family entered the place in fifteen years. But that wasn't especially strange, I suppose, for my mother had been dead that long, and my two sisters were married and moved to the West somewhere.

The key screamed in the lock. I pushed up the heavy old trapdoor. A musty odor came out. I found the switch and snapped it on. The electric bulb which must have been screwed into the socket for years—it was the oldest-fashioned bulb I had ever seen—was festooned with cobwebs. The whole attic was laced in all directions with them.

It made me shiver, somehow. I wondered anew why Father had made such a mystery of the place. There was nothing in it—except a vague,

bulky shadow in one end. I walked to it, while the cobwebs dropped their filmy whispers about my head, draped themselves on my clothing, entwined themselves in my hair, tickled my cheeks.

The shadowy thing was a huge box, or chest, blackened by time. The iron hasps which held it were mighty things, covered with rust. There was a bar at one end of the box, which must have been left there for the purpose for which I now used it.

I smashed the lock, swung back the huge lid of the chest, peered in. And then I started rummaging. In fifteen minutes I had made a startling discovery.

A direct lineal ancestor of mine had been a pirate! Not only that, but he had been a right-hand man of Sir Henry Morgan, who had looted, plundered, murdered and laid waste throughout the Spanish Main, from Hispaniola to Puerto Cortez and Panama. That ancestor had built this house in which I now sat cross-legged in a cobwebby attic—reading the letters, diaries, and account books he had left behind him.

**A** STORY of shame? Perhaps, but to me it did not seem so. A story of excitement, of wild adventure. What if there had been bloodshed? The generations had wiped it out, or so I thought.

And so, here and now, I give you the story as my great-great—I don't know just how many "greats"—grandfather set it down when he was still a young man, and this place was his refuge in the wilderness from the law which said that a pirate must hang.

Hereafter the "I" of the story is not myself, but the bold right-hand man of Morgan, but for whose having lived I myself would not be here, and giving you his story—I have only corrected his spelling, and

Sept. 9. 1686

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Pg-I

A story of shame? Perhaps, but to me it did not seem so!

changed his archaic English to the language of today.

Sept. 9, 1685



I WAS near to starving. I had stowed away these many weeks ago in England, a lad of eighteen who merely wanted to see the New World, which I hoped

would be full of adventure and romance of the sort I had read about.

At least twenty times, when I sneaked out at night to raid the cook's galley, they almost caught me. But I managed to elude them. It was well for them that I did, too, for I carried a dagger in my tunic. I had heard that young fellows who stowed away were fed to the sharks; and I would fight to the death before I would be thrown over the side.

I was accustomed to the smelly darkness of the hold, to the squeaking rats, to the odor of bilge-water, to the rolling and plunging of the *Moravia*. Nobody ever came down into the bilge, and I jeopardized the safety of the ship and passengers, I suppose, with my flickering candle by whose light I wrote of all that happened to me. That's all past now, and the *Moravia* is gone, and this is how it happened:

I heard the swift scampering of feet on the deck above me. I heard the shouts of frightened men, the screaming of women. I almost fell over on my back when the ship suddenly changed direction, as though it had been struck in the port quarter by a mountainous wave.

The ship heeled far over. Then I could hear the clattering of weapons on the deck above me, could hear men rushing to their stations. I was bewildered, wondering what in God's name was happening.

Then I heard something else. It was a dull, distant boom, from broad on the port beam. We were being fired upon—and in all this waste of waters we had no enemies as far as I knew. And then the truth burst upon me. We had reached the vicinity of the Antilles, and a pirate had sent a warning shot across our bow!

Now I need not worry about sharks! Every person on the *Moravia*, from the captain on down, would be thinking of just one thing: his own skin. For this was the sea of murder and loot and rapine, and the most ruthless of pirates sailed here, seeking the loot of galleon and caravel.

A name came instantly to mind, out of my reading: Sir Henry Morgan! If we were to be boarded by pirates I hoped for just one thing: that it be the greatest of them all. For to me the masters of the ships which flew the Jolly Roger were greater monarchs than ever sat a throne in Europe.

NOBODY even noticed me when I hurried on deck, blinking my eyes in the glaring sun. I looked away to our port quarter, just as a white rose of smoke spurted from below the billowing folds of the many-sailed vessel which was rapidly overhauling us. At her peak flew the dread flag of murder and piracy, the skull and crossbones.

"It's old Morgan himself!" I heard a pegleg sailor cry. "We'd best sell ourselves dearly, for he has no mercy. And there should be cutlasses sharpened for the throats of our women before the pirates board us."

The captain shouted:

"Heave to! Stand by to repel boarders!"

I could read the despair in his voice. There was no use running away. There was no use surrendering. To surrender was to die under torture, or to witness the betrayal

of our women before dying. There was just one thing to do: die like men!

The *Moravia* swung broadside to the wind. Her sails came slatting down. She rolled in the trough of the sea. The pirate's second shot had crashed into her mainmast.

Now the pirate was coming alongside. I didn't realize, until I could see their swart, bearded faces, several of which were marred by eyeless sockets, that I gripped my dagger until my fingernails pierced the palm of my right hand, and blood ran down to dye my wrist.

The pirates wore, some of them, gaudy kerchiefs. Their hats were broad of brim, black, with the front part turned up against the crown. Some of them had their arms bare to the shoulder, some to the elbow. All grasped weapons of one kind or another. Up in the rigging, lashed fast with his back to the mast, was a huge man who seemed to be in command of things. I knew, with a thrill of pleasure in spite of the terror which rode the *Moravia*, that I was seeing Henry Morgan for the first time.

"Stand by to board!"

His voice came hoarsely across the narrowing space between the vessels. Several men squatted on his rail like so many monkeys, with knives in their white, gleaming teeth. Their eyes gloated over us and our helplessness. Our men manned the rail. Their faces were dead white. I stood back a little, watching, holding my breath until it came forth in spite of me at the last, in an explosion of sound that was like a pistol exploding.

**T**HEN the grappling hooks had us, and the pirates were leaping to our rail. Our men gave back, to leave a clear space through which to charge. A score of men struck our rail together. Our captain issued no com-



"Walk!" Norcross commanded, and the man began his fatal journey

mands. What we had to do was plain.

On the rail, the pirates grabbed the knives from their teeth. Behind them came men with cutlasses, broad, savage, cruel-looking blades. Their teeth were bared as though they thirsted for our blood. In our cabins women screamed in unholy terror. Our men surged forward.

I was among them. The pirates struck our decks with a rush. They offered no quarter whatever. It was useless to ask for any. Cutlass met cutlass as our English crew surged to meet the attack. The clanging of sword against sword, the laughter of

the pirates who knew we were no match for them, started the sound of battle which was to rise to a mad crescendo of terror.

A man went down right before me, his head cut off by a single cutlass stroke. His blood splashed in my face, almost blinding me. And the pirate who had slain him, a mighty man with a patch where his left eye should have been, grinned at me fiercely as his right hand swung his cutlass back to bring it down across my neck.

I didn't wait. I hurled myself forward, my hand uplifted. I drove my dagger into his left breast with all the power of sturdy eighteen. A paean of strange unearthly satisfaction sang itself inside me as the blade sank home—and my charge carried me against the man I had slain, so that we hurtled backward among his fellows.

### *The Same Day. Night*



I AM a pirate! I have taken an oath to follow Sir Henry Morgan! He just passed me and asked me what I was writing. I said:

"I write of what befell today."

"All right, lad, but it seems a silly business. For who will ever read what you are writing?"

I couldn't answer that, for I already knew that the only future of a pirate was a mad, wild life of battle in which he covered himself with wounds for the sake of treasure—and died in shame on the gibbets of Europe or the New World if he were captured.

I would, I promised myself, fight too well to die in battle, and I would never be captured. Something inside me whispered that I would be reserved for something better. Youth,

perhaps, was merely drawing back from the horror of death.

I write now of what happened when, having driven my dagger into the heart of the giant, one-eyed pirate, his falling weight dragged me into the center of the fight. Our sailors were battling with the courage of despair. The pirates had no thought of honor. I saw one of them stab a man in the back of the neck, when that sailor was engaged in bloody, hand-to-hand conflict with one of the pirate's comrades. And the outlaw laughed a boisterous laugh as the sailor went down as though struck on the top of the head with an axe.

Fury such as I had never believed myself capable of possessed me. I flung myself at the murderer. But I had more honor than he, for I shouted at him:

"Turn and face a man! I do not stab in the back!"

He whirled and saw me, and laughed.

"Ho, cockerel! Wouldst measure swords with a man?"

But already I knew that a cutlass did not travel its appointed arc of slaughter as fast as a young man could dart in and strike with a dagger. My blade was lifted even as the pirate whirled his cutlass back. I was bent forward for the charge. I showed my teeth, I fancy, and it made the pirate laugh.

**T**HERE was blood on his right forearm. There was blood on my dagger, too; blood of the first man I had slain, for whom my conscience did not hurt me in the least, because he would have slain me had I failed in strength or speed. My own right hand was slick with blood.

All about me I could hear the slipping and sliding of heavy feet. Gasps of pain, oaths, prayers as the sailors of the *Moravia*, knowing they had naught but death to face, bat-

tled with all their fury to live yet a few moments longer.

The deck swarmed with pirates. Some of the sailors, hoping when they knew there could really be no hope, flung down their weapons and cried for quarter. These the pirates bound against the *Moravia's* masts. Others, white-faced, fought to the end—and their blood smeared the decks of the *Moravia*—blood in which the shod feet of the pirates slipped and scudded.

The *Moravia* rolled. I rolled with her because I could not help myself. I dropped to my knees to keep from measuring my length on the deck, and the cutlass of my opponent swung just above my head, singing a song of terror as it missed me.

My pirate enemy swung his weapon back, to brain me with a back-hand stroke. But he didn't get the chance to strike his blow. For my left hand, almost without command of my brain, darted to his throat.

I gloried in the feel of his brown, sun-tanned skin under my fingers. The nails bit deep. I lifted my right hand. I caught the glint of sun on my reddened blade the second before I drove it home. I felt it slide through flesh and muscle, slip past bones, into the man's heart.

"Ho, cockerel!" the man gasped. "Thou art more a man than I thought!"

**HIS** eyes were glazing, even as he fell. His cutlass slipped from his relaxing fingers, to clatter metallicly on the deck. His knees struck the deck first. As my fingers slipped from his throat, his head fell forward. His hat slid to the back of his neck, held against his shoulder blades by the string under his chin.

Then he rolled to his side. There was a grim smile on his face, and blood came forth on his scarlet shirt; a growing patch of it which doubled and redoubled in size as I stared

down at him, more conscious of this, the second man I had killed, than of the first, whom I had slain in a sort of nightmare.

Now I whirled.

The fight surged back and forth across the deck. Three men charged at me. I took time to drop to one knee, never taking my eyes off the three who charged, to grasp at the cutlass my last antagonist had dropped, to get it before it slid into the crimsoning scuppers. My hand curled around it. I had shifted my dagger to my left hand.

I backed against the rail.

**NOW** I saw the women make their bid for a kind of safety. A dozen of them came bursting forth from the cabins. Two of them reached the rail and, with despairing cries, hurled themselves over. I heard them go screaming down, heard them strike the shark-infested waters, heard their gurgling cries as the seas closed over them. But others did not make the rail; for, with shouts of hilarious joy, pirates caught them about the waist and dragged them back.

At that sight some of the men who had surrendered and been bound, fought like wolves to free themselves of their bonds. Their eyes were on their women. One man went mad in that moment—and cursed the captors with bitter curses, curses which, if they ever worked themselves out, would have caused every last pirate there to hang in chains from the nearest gibbet.

It was Morgan himself, stalking the deck in the midst of the slaughter he had ordered, who glanced at the cursing man. Frowning a little, he took a small, almost womanish dagger from his sash. He plunged it into the frantic man's throat, and the curses died in red gurgles of horror.

The sight drove me mad. Even now I did not think of this as mark-

ing the end of life for me. I didn't even stop to think of the future, but only of the present, and how I should acquit myself. The three who had charged me were within reach—when I stepped onto the rail, poised an instant, and then hurled myself, with all my strength, straight at the central one of the advancing trio.

Even as I dropped among them, my cutlass was swinging down, aimed at the crown of the one. The blade struck his hat, bit through it, to the skull below. I felt it strike bone and eat its way through, and even as I knew that I had killed again, I was wrenching at my blade, to use it again—and yet again—on the other two.

The third man I had killed fell forward, toward me. I looked through the slash in his hat, and saw—

But there was no time to see more, for now a man was attacking me from either side. I whirled and struck at the one. The other struck at me from behind, but I sensed his blow, dropped to one knee, pivoted on it, and struck out with my dagger. No time to reach his stomach or his throat with this blow. I drove the dagger point into his leg, at the ankle, and ripped through muscle and flesh.

**H**E screamed like an animal in pain, and crashed down to the deck. The other man fell over me when his blow missed—and I struck upward at him with my dagger because I had lost my cutlass in the struggle. I felt the dagger strike home. Then I was on my feet, and for a few moments there was no opponent at whom to launch myself.

Ahead of me three sailors, standing back to back, trying to protect all sides at once, were ringed about by pirates. Pirates who laughed as they clanged steel against steel to bring the sailors down. To them it was sport of the finest. I hurled myself

forward—but before I could reach the sailors, all three were down.

And now the pirates turned their attention on me—and I realized that of all the ship's crew, I alone still stood upright. They laughed, in high good humor, and lifting their cutlasses, swung toward me.

I backed toward the rail, ready to sell my life dearly. I could do little against them now, for the deck swarmed with pirates, and all that were left alive aboard the *Moravia* were bound against the masts, or trussed up like cattle on the deck.

**"S**PARE the cockerel!" snapped a harsh voice. "He has fought well. Perhaps we have a place for him."

They drew back, I stood there for a moment, panting, my eyes rolling over them, appraising them. I hated for the fight to cease. To me the battle did not seem real. The dead did not seem dead, but merely sleeping. The blood—I scarcely understood the blood.

How could it be possible that men who, a few minutes before had been living, breathing creatures, could now be the crimson horrors which were scattered bundles on the deck? It wasn't even as real as a nightmare. It was just something I didn't understand, something I could not understand despite the fact that it had really happened.

The pirate master pushed aside his men. His eyes roved over me. He toyed with the dagger at his waist, the dagger which had so easily and simply cut the throat of the man who had cursed the pirates.

"Well, cockerel," he roared, "what say you? Will you take service with Henry Morgan? There will be shares of loot. There will be adventure. There will be food for that good dagger of yours. There will be laughter and life—"

"And if I do not?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I have plenty of men. What does it matter if a few more die, since their death will leave greater shares for those who live on? I shall send my men against you, or I might even slay you myself. Make your choice quickly. We have matters of grave importance to which to attend."

I scarcely believed it when I heard my own voice saying:

"I will take service with you."

It couldn't have been my own decision. It didn't sound like my voice. I swear that I had intended to say that I would see him and all his crew in hell before I would take service under the Jolly Roger. Yet these were other words that came out of my mouth, and I was bound, for a short time or a long time, to travel the way Sir Henry Morgan traveled.

"It is good," he said. "Take the prisoners aboard." This to his murderous minions. "Break out the *Moravia's* treasures. Ransack the hold. Make speed, hearties, so that the *Moravia* may be given to the flames."

He didn't bid me join in the looting of my own ship. I stood aside. One or two of those against whom I had fought clapped hands upon my back—heavy hands which almost felled me to the deck. None seemed to hold it against me that I had slain several of their number. They seemed to have no regard for one another at all.

AND then the last prisoner was aboard the pirate ship, the last chest of gold, specie, and precious stones had been transferred. Men went darting through the rigging and down into the hold of the *Moravia*, bearing torches which blazed hotly, turning the vessel into a raging furnace. The pirates left their own dead aboard the *Moravia*, to burn with the sailors who had died rather than surrender. And they didn't even look back.

I turned my head from the fury

I knew I would see in the eyes of my fellows when I stepped aboard the pirate, unfettered.

Sept. 10, 1686



I HAVE spent a night in hell. I mean exactly that. We lay to within sight of the *Moravia* the rest of that day, yesterday. Her flames roared to the sky. In their midst

I fancied I could hear the crackling flesh of the dead who had been left to the fire. I could smell their roasting bodies. Black and grey smoke curled over her masts, until the fire ate through them and they came crashing down.

When night descended she still burned, and became a torch to light up the hell on the decks of our own ship—yes, it was my ship now, for by all the laws of all countries I was as much a pirate as the deepest-dyed ruffian on her decks. The flames painted our masts a strange red of their own, and our decks were red, too, as though they had been painted with fresh blood.

Morgan vanished into his cabin, leaving the deck to his men. I don't know what happened to the women, but two of them have elected to become pirates with us. God knows why, unless it is that the spirit of adventure beats as high in the breasts of women as in men. I shall have no dealings with them. This is work for men, men without hope.

There was indeed no need of lights aboard us. Perhaps Sir Henry had hove to so that the flames of his capture should brighten our deck for the misdeeds of hell. Casks of rum were broached on the deck—and the pirates gathered the loot of the *Moravia* for the division. I had always thought that division took place on

some island somewhere. Perhaps this was an exception.

The pirates began to dispute at once. Two men, within the first few minutes, flew at each other with knives. They battled back and forth across a deck which soon became even more crimson with blood from their many wounds. They cursed. They stabbed and slashed. They slew each other and with shouts of ribald laughter, with shouts of joy that there were two less with whom to divide, their fellows tossed them over the side.

All this was watched by the white-faced prisoners of the *Moravia*, who knew that their own turn was coming. I stood in the shadows, behind a towering mast, to watch, to find how these pirates did, to decide how I should conduct myself among them. I soon made a vow with myself; that, pirate though I now was, I would never waste human life. I would spare women and set them ashore with their children, unless they elected—if they were fools enough—to marry among us.

One day, I promised myself, I would become the right hand of Morgan, if for no other reason than it would give me a voice in what he did. Perhaps I might be able to dissuade him from turning his deck into a living torment after each capture.

**B**UT to become one of his lieutenants, I knew, I must first usurp the place held by two other men—one named Leach, the other named Norcross, both English. They were both murderers without souls. They would cut my throat as easily as they would gut a fish, and with less trouble.

I watched them, managing the division with a high hand, setting aside their shares and Morgan's—and I saw how the men, most of whom were low, ignorant fellows, were cheated of their rightful shares. I had a head

for reckoning, and I knew how greatly they were being despoiled. But there was little enough I could do about it.

The division was made, finally; and then the pirates turned their attention to the prisoners. They were dragged in among their captors, where Leach and Norcross asked each one a question. This was the query:

"Will you take service with Morgan?"

**O**F the twelve men taken prisoner, four said that they would take such service. But two said it in fear, plainly evident, in order to save their lives. Leach laughed at both of them, and knocked them to the deck with his fist. The others laughed, too, and kicked the two who had fallen.

Eight men faced the pirates with their heads held high.

Norcross grinned at Leach.

"The plank?" he asked.

"Aye, the plank," said Norcross.

A heavy plank was slipped through the rail, its end far out over the waters. The faces of the eight went white when they saw it being lashed so that it would not tilt. Their lips moved as though they prayed. Leach shoved the first man to the inner end of the plank.

"How say you now? Will you take service with Morgan?"

"I would sell myself to the devil first!" the answer came in a low voice, and there was savage intensity in it. Leach laughed and pushed the man onto the plank.

"Walk!" he commanded. "You are privileged to change your mind 'ere plank's end is reached."

Helpless to aid him, I saw the man start his mad journey outward from the ship's side. He walked steadily, with his head up. His eyes were not blindfolded. They looked up to the heavens, into skies red from the burning ship. He didn't look back

once. He did not pause at the end of the swaying, teetering plank.

The pirates laughed at him, shouted to him what to do when, with his hands bound, he should strike the water and the sharks should come for him. Triangular fins were all about the ship, as though they knew what was coming.

The man reached the end, stepped over, and dropped like a stone. A geyser of water shot upward, fell back again. I saw the fins streak toward the spot where he had gone under. I watched for him to rise. His head came up, but only his head—and it was snatched under again too quickly for it to mean merely that he had sunk at once. There was blood on the water, then, and I knew that the sharks had got him.

The second man, at the very end of the plank, turned back. Leach laughed at him, knowing he turned back because of fear—and sent a ball into his stomach. The man screamed in agony, and fell sidewise off the plank. He went as the first one had gone.

The other eight, knowing that now it was too late to take service with Morgan, walked, one after the other, to the end of the plank and took their horrible plunge into eternity. I did nothing to prevent it. What could I have done? But in the future, I promised myself wildly, something would be done. What need was there for all this ghastly waste of life?

**A**FTER the last had gone, and the four recruits had mingled with the pirates, the word came from Morgan to get under way. I watched the burning *Moravia* become a dim red blotch astern, and wondered again why Morgan had not towed her in as a prize. The pirates were fairly good sailors.

There were several of them by this time whom I had marked as being

more cruel than the others, men with whom I knew I would have trouble.

I came out of the shadows when the vessel was rising and falling with the waves—and the pirates, now most of them hilarious with rum as they sat in the midst of their loot, noted me—and laughed. Their laughter was the bitterest of all. I resolved then that I would hold myself aloof, that I would not mingle with them. I strode to the rail and looked back at our white wake.

**A**HAND spun me around. I expected, from its weight, that it belonged to either Leach or Norcross. But it was neither. I was scarcely ready to tackle either of them. But this man was different.

Pirates fought each other, as I had seen. For the winner there was no punishment, while for the loser there was only—the sharks of the Antilles.

"Art too good to travel with us, cockerel?" asked a squat, black-bearded buccaneer.

I studied him. I wasn't afraid of him, though his sash bristled with weapons and his breath reeked with rum. He was in a savage, murderous mood, spoiling for a fight. The others fell silent to watch us. I saw one or two start up as though they would dissuade the man from whatever he intended.

"Let be, Marchant," said one, but the bearded one paid no heed. The speaker was a little afraid of Marchant. But I had no such fear.

"And if I am?" I said.

"I shall quickly teach you respect for your betters!" snapped Marchant.

Now it just happens that I am big for eighteen. I have learned much of fisticuffs, of battle with swords and with knives. I am lithe and strong and know how to use my strength. I felt the need of showing these men, who would, perforce, be my comrades from tonight on,

that I was not one with whom to take liberties. My father had traveled in Cathay, and he had taught me eastern tricks with my hands. I thought of one now, as I studied the bully who was testing me—or showing off before his comrades.

I stepped in close to him, as though the better to hear.

"And when," I asked softly, "does the lesson begin?"

"At once," he said.

"So be it!"

I dropped quickly to one knee. My left hand fastened in the neck of his shirt. My right hand curled under the lower edge of his sash, twisted into it. All this happened so quickly he could scarcely have realized what was happening. I am sure he had never before experienced what I was doing to him—obviously not with the result I quickly attained.

For I pulled with my left hand, bringing him down over my bowed back. I thrust upward with my right hand, until he was suspended over my head, carried forward by his own momentum and the pull I had given him. He screamed as he saw what awaited him. His eyes looked over the rail, which already was passing under him. My muscles strained against his weight.

I released my left hand. I thrust upward a last time with my right and, head downward, he went over the rail and dropped.

I HAD used no knife, nothing except my bare hands, and he had not even had time to clutch the handle of a dagger. I rose, turned my back on the others, looked over the side. He struck the water. There were swirls of phosphorous where he struck, and the shape of the fire in the water was the shape of a speeding shark.

Still I did not turn. I stared over the rail, even though my back crawled in expectation of a knife

under the shoulder blades, until the swirling phosphorous had vanished astern. Then, slowly, I turned to stare at the others and moved forward.

A knife sped past my head, drove three parts of its length into a mast. I did not glance aside though I fully expected to feel its mate in my back. It did not come; yet I knew that from this moment onward I walked in the shadow of death, even among these with whom I had cast my lot.

And Sir Henry Morgan himself, no doubt, had already forgotten the cockerel whose life he had saved.

*March 5, 1687*



I, CALEB KRECH, have now been six months with Morgan. Most of the men who were with him when I took service have died by violence, and new ones, even bloodier

and more murderous than the first, have taken their places. Only Leach and Norcross seem never to die or be in danger of death.

And I have long since learned why; they never take chances. When there is battle they always seem to be in the thick of it, making more noise than any others, but I note that there are always fighting men of their own between them and all danger.

I have grown to hate them with a bitter hatred. The time is coming soon when there shall be a settlement among us—for I am fast becoming a favorite of Morgan. He looks at me speculatively whenever work of an important nature is to be done.

For several months I have not kept my journal. What was there to write about? One day is almost like another. One week we cruise in the waters of the Atlantic and the Mare

des Antilles, seeking the gold ships of those who go to the New World for trade. Then we spend three days ashore on Tortue, drinking, fighting, dividing our spoils.

I scarcely recognize in myself the lad who first took service with Morgan. I have broadened. I have become a man indeed. I never smile—not that I ever was much of one for smiling. My muscles are as hard as those of any man among us. And I have learned to take human life cheaply. I shall never forget the time I got up my courage and faced Morgan in his cabin, about a week after the pillage of the *Moravia*.

"Isn't it possible," I asked him, blurting out what was in my mind, "to prevent such a waste of human life? Why must men walk the plank? Why must they be slaughtered to provide sport for your men?"

There may have been a touch of sadness in his face at first, but it instantly became hard, harsh.

"Young sir," he told me, "it is time you learned the greatest lesson you may learn among us: that human life is the cheapest thing we deal in. A man refuses to take service with me. Shall I keep him a prisoner on Tortue? If I do, he is a constant bother. He is always planning treachery. He may escape and bring the guns of Britain or Spain or France against me. So, I kill him. And since he must die, why not provide sport for my men if it pleases them?"

I COULD never subscribe to his philosophy, but I did learn to gaze without emotion on the dead bodies of men whose heads hung to their shoulders by mere threads of flesh. I grew accustomed to seeing men take the last walk along the plank. I had even grown accustomed to lining the rail with the others, and watching our victims, below the clear surface, torn to bits and devoured by the sharks.

It didn't matter how they died. The world had not been enriched with their birth; it lost nothing when they died. And that applied to me as well as to them.

But I resolved that some day I should be something which gave me happiness. I would, some day, be a married man, with children to follow after me. Often I turned my face to the west or the north, and wished for quiet pursuits ashore in the New World.

AND whenever I had my share of loot, I slipped away from the others and hid it in a place I had found on Tortue—a cave whose mouth was under water, so that it could be reached only by diving. Not one of my comrades even guessed what I did with my jewels, gold and silver.

Leach and Norcross, jealous of my growing favor with Morgan—which they all noted and discussed freely—watched me carefully. I think they would have murdered me if I had given them a chance. I never gambled away my shares as did the others, and I am sure Norcross and Leach must have guessed that it now amounted to a vast sum, if it were possible to convert it into money.

I took no chances with them. I never slept two nights in succession in the same place. I seemed to drink with the others, but when none was watching I spilled my rum on the sands, or over the side if we were on the high seas. I had discovered that rum bleared the eyes and made the sword or pistol hand unsteady—and the pirate whose hand was unsteady was the pirate who did not live to be hanged.

Why do I resume my jottings in the journal? That's a fair question, and I am answering it here. I had grown tired of Norcross and Leach. I had grown tired of piracy, at least as an underling. Underlings who tried to desert were invariably caught

and summarily executed. But if one were a lieutenant of Morgan, one might have a chance to bargain.

In the past six months we had looted no less than fourteen ships—three of them in one day. We had had dozens of brushes with privateers which were little better than pirates themselves. We had fought against the warships of the Kings of France and England. We had lost many men. We had found enough prisoners to volunteer with Morgan to replace them.

I had lost count of the numbers I had slain with my cutlass and dagger. These were my favorite weapons. I went into battle with a cutlass in my right hand, the dagger in my left. I had taken no wounds in this time. I could take care of myself.

But today, which marks the renewal of my journal, a thing happened which will, I am sure, change the whole course of my life. We raised the sail of a British merchantman just after sunrise this morning. We fired the usual shot. She hove to.

We stood by to board. I was in the forefront of the boarding party. Morgan was in the van, for this was a richer prize than usual. There were women aboard.

**G**RAPPLING hooks pulled the two vessels together when he had forced the merchantman to heave to. We spilled upon the other ship's decks.

The men fought back at us with the calm savagery of the British, who fight for their own. To me they were not my countrymen, any more than the French, the Spanish or the Dutch—for they would hang me to the highest gibbet as quickly, perhaps even more quickly, than the others. So I did not hesitate to slash with my cutlass, to stab with my dagger.

The pirates, shouting, screaming, laughing as though all were mad with drink—which they were not,

since Sir Henry insisted on reasonable sobriety prior to the faring-forth—plunged in among the defenders of the *Clyde* with all their usual ferocity. The British fought back coolly. When one of their number fell, coughing out his life through a slit throat, another stepped into the breach, to be downed in his turn. One by one we cut them down.

**T**HE British did not surrender, not this time. They sold their lives dearly. But we were so many. We were thrice their number, and every one of us a better fighter, man for man, because we fought oftener, I suppose.

So, while a third of us cut down the defenders, the other third ransacked the ship for loot, while still others herded passengers on deck and prepared to scuttle or fire the ship. Sir Henry seldom towed in a prize now, for he had more vessels than he could use. They rotted at their moorings off Tortue.

Women screamed as they were dragged forth. I seldom paid any attention to the women. I hated men who did. To me it was a sign of weakness in a man to be soft with women, or to be hard with them, to pay them any heed whatever. But it just happened that the women were herded out directly in front of me, as I was plunging into the thick of the knot of British who had opposed our boarding.

It was then that I saw Anne Cronyn. But at that time I did not know her name.

I almost lost my life under the cutlasses of the British, because sight of Anne Cronyn turned me to a statue. Her hair was the color of new gold in the sun. Her eyes were wells of youth. Her beauty was the greatest I had ever seen in any woman. She wasn't a woman, really, but a girl. I think she couldn't have been over seventeen, eighteen at the most. Her feet and lower limbs were bare

to the knee, as though she had been caught partially dressed. Her beauty stopped my throat.

But for the fact that two men, and those men Leach and Norcross, were closing in on her with their arms outstretched, I might have remained numb with her beauty, standing there like a great oaf, until the British had cut me down. But my hatred of those two was already great. So it did not really need her beauty to speed my action.

My cutlass became a flash of flame. My dagger became a bullet for speed. I cut through three men to reach the girl, and I reached her ahead of Leach and Norcross because she had darted back away from them.

They welcomed the chance to battle me, for they were two against one.

"Quickly," I said, "back against the mainmast."

Her head lifted proudly, and I could see then that she resented my note of authority. I couldn't have said anything else to her if my life had depended on it. I knew that my face had reddened, like that of any stripling, because I could feel it burn, down my neck to my chest.

I STOOD before the girl, staring into the fierce eyes of Leach and Norcross.

"Keep back," I said hoarsely, "or I'll cut the hearts out of you both!"

Behind me the girl gasped. I wondered then why she didn't jump on me from behind but the reason, after all, was simple enough. Over my shoulders she looked into the eyes of Leach and Norcross, and she must have read what those eyes said so plainly. She was not only, to them, a woman, but a very young, lovely one.

I would have slain them then, I think, had not Morgan himself come into view. He saw what was transpiring. He said quickly:

"This is no time to fight over women! Trans-ship!"

At my urging Morgan now saved the lives of women, setting them ashore, whenever he had opportunity, where they had some chance of saving their lives. There were a hundred on Tortue, even now—and I didn't recall the face of any one of them. But their lot was not happy. Pirates were not men of consideration.

LEACH and Norcross spoke softly to Morgan, and their eyes never left the girl whom I had put behind me. Morgan shrugged, studied me for a moment. Then he came to me and said:

"A man is less than a man when he allows himself to think twice about any woman!"

I knew then that one of the reasons he liked me was because I had never been interested in any woman.

"This," I said stubbornly, "is different. If Leach or Norcross so much as speak to this lady, I shall kill them both! I can handle the others."

There was no bragging in the last statement. The other pirates left me severely alone. They knew my reputation—that no man lived who could say that he had even pinked me with cutlass, dirk, dagger or poniard. They would keep hands off anything which I claimed, or they would die—and every one of them knew it.

"It is an affair you must handle yourself, Krech," said Morgan. "If Leach and Norcross want the wench, the result lies entirely with you."

But I knew as he spoke that he was weary of both Leach and Norcross, and that if I destroyed them he would be happy. He liked and respected me, but had no real attachment for any living soul.

My heart leaped fiercely with anticipation. Morgan himself had approved my quarrel with those two. But the girl, when I turned and

looked at her and bowed low, touching my hat to the deck, literally shriveled me with scorn, without saying a single word. I had never seen such contempt in the face of a living soul. She drew aside as she passed me, enroute to the rail—and Leach and Norcross assisted her onto the deck of the pirate!

*March 10, 1687*



I HAVE just killed Norcross and Leach. I did it in fair fight. I knew it would come some time. Ashore in Tortue, after the seizure of the British merchantman, I gave

my own hut to Anne Cronyn. She did not thank me. She seemed to take it as her due. She wouldn't talk to me.

Enroute to Tortue from the spot where we had taken the merchantman, however, I had heard her talking with Leach—and her voice had been like calm water over clean white stones. I knew even before we reached Tortue, while I listened, sick with jealousy, to her talk with Leach and Norcross, how it was with me.

The two lieutenants of Morgan jeered at me when I said that she would have my hut.

I told them, when she had entered and closed the door, with two women as companions, that if they ever dared to cross the threshold I would kill them both. I think the girl hated me, then, for my talk of killing; for aboard the pirate she had heard me, several times, speak of killing the two lieutenants.

Two days passed. We took another vessel, this one a trim caravel loaded with silver for Panama, and were to make division of the loot that night. This grand prize Morgan had brought

into port with a crew aboard. I would have given my soul to have possessed the caravel, but knew I would never have men to sail her, unless I flew the flag of Morgan—and now I was eager to be finished with him!

There was liquor on the beach in rum casks that night. The pirates were more hilarious than ever—and Leach and Norcross cheated them as they had seldom done before. Only me they did not cheat, for they had learned that I had a head for figures. I took my share in doubloons and pieces of eight, because they were smaller than bullion.

I had all I could carry. I slipped out of the firelight on the beach, enroute to the place, the cave, where I had hidden so much loot during the past six months that I myself did not know the whole value of it. I had placed it in a sort of bin of stone, up beyond reach of the waves even in a hurricane. Some day I would take it all away, I promised myself.

But tonight something in the demeanor of Leach and Norcross warned me that they wouldn't do what they usually did—follow me in the hope of finding where I hid my share of the prize. I knew from their faces, from their leers, that they would make a visit to Anne Cronyn.

SHE hadn't yet spoken to me, but she had looked at me thoughtfully a few times, and I knew that she wasn't unmindful of me, though she looked away quickly when I caught her at it.

Out of sight of the roisterers on the beach, I hid my loot under a tree and cut back to the hut I had occupied prior to the coming of Anne Cronyn, and in which she now stayed. I stood within the circle of palm trees which hemmed in the hut and waited.

I had sworn to slay Leach and Norcross if they ever crossed her threshold!

My hand tightened on my cutlass. My dagger slipped into my right hand. I heard them coming. They came swiftly, and I smiled grimly to myself. They were hurrying, no doubt with the intention of being gone again before I could return from my cave, a trip which usually required over two hours.

It was Leach who knocked on the door—and stepped across the threshold, followed by Norcross, when Anne Cronyn opened the door.

I glided out of the shadows.

Inside, the girl screamed. Still I did not hurry. They would take her out of the place. I waited for them to do that. She was struggling in the arms of Norcross. Leach was saying:

"You are built for dancing, pretty one. Come to the beach and dance for us!"

I had seen women who danced on the beach for the pirates. I knew what it meant—jeers, vile remarks, the odor of rum, the harsh talk of men who had drunk too much liquor. I stepped forth.

"I told you never to cross her threshold," I said softly.

**N**ORCROSS swore a savage oath. He hurled Anne from him. She flew from his arms and crashed against the wall of the hut as Norcross cleared space, his hand going for his cutlass. Leach stepped back. The faces of both were white in the moonlight.

"What does it concern you?" said Leach hoarsely. "She is only a woman, after all."

I didn't answer that. There was no need.

I hurled myself at Leach. He stepped back beside Norcross, and stood fast. Both of them swung up their cutlasses, which shone dully in

the moonlight. They were weapons which had taken many lives in their time, and always they had struck cowards' blows, when the backs of their victims had been turned. Now they must fight as the weapons of strong men fight, or their owners would die.

Anne struck the wall and fell, a huddled heap, against it. She whirled and looked at the three of us there, and her face, too, was white. She flirted her golden hair back from her face, the better to see us. And then her face became very still, intent.

**L**EACH was the first to make a move. He hurled himself at me. I was afraid to swing at him with my cutlass, lest my blade bind in the bone and muscles where his neck and shoulders met. So I merely stepped aside, thrust out my right foot, and he stumbled over it, crashing to his face on the sandy soil.

It would take him several seconds to rise. I had forgotten the girl. I was merely a pirate, a killer, preparing to slay again. While Leach, yelling as though he had already felt my blade, struggled to stand erect again, I threw myself full speed at Norcross. He backed away. I knew he was sparring for time, to give Leach the opportunity to get to his feet and attack me from the rear.

But I didn't give him time. He backed swiftly, and the fear of death was in his face. I hurled myself at him. I struck downward with my cutlass. He flung up his own to meet it. I stepped in as he parried my slash—and drove my dagger into his stomach. He gasped. His cutlass arm seemed to weaken. I lifted my own, drawing it back. My teeth must have shown as though I snarled, for his eyes were on them as though they fascinated him.

Then I struck with the cutlass. His head seemed to jump sidewise,

onto his right shoulder, as my blade bit deep. I felt the comfortable weight of the weapon as it ate its way through muscle and bone, deep into his chest.

Then I whirled. Leach was charging. I jumped aside as I heard his cutlass whistle through the air, to strike at my neck from behind. I leaped without looking, and spun in the air as I turned.

Leach's mouth was open in a soundless shout.

Fear rode him, and was plain in his face. He had expected to get me before I turned; and now that he had failed, his courage had drained out of him as water drains from a dried-out rum cask. He whirled, screaming, and started to run. But there wasn't a man who served under Morgan who was as fast on his feet as I.

Leach's screaming brought the pirates from the beach. He was calling on them to help him. I overtook him in a few strides, and struck him down with a single blow. But rum had made the other pirates bolder than usual, and Anne Cronyn was beautiful in the moonlight—so they came on.

I whirled back to her.

"Come with me!" I snapped.

"I would not go with you to save my life!" she said.

**I** DIDN'T answer her. I jumped at her and caught her in my arms. I had thrust my weapons back into their scabbards. The girl did not cry out. She wasn't the sort to cry out. But her face was very white.

I ran with her into the woods. I heard the pirates hammer on the door of the hut, seeking to know what had started the fracas. Several tried to follow me, but were too far gone with rum to know what they did.

I heard them stumble along for a time, and then turn back.

I made good speed through the jungles. I had forgotten, for the moment at least, the silver I had intended taking to my cave.

I never went back for it. It is probably there yet. Some day I shall hunt for it—

**W**E reached the spot on the coast where the cave mouth was. I did not ask the girl if she could swim. She wouldn't talk to me anyhow.

But I was already mapping out a plan of what I should do.

I stepped to the edge of the water. "The cave mouth is ten feet down," I said. "Will you swim with me, or must I drag you?"

She didn't answer. Her eyes were luminous in the moonlight. I caught her in my arms. The water was deep here. I had discovered the cave quite by accident, one day when I had been swimming alone. Holding her, I plunged in.

The water closed over us. She did not struggle against me. Going down, swimming strongly, I held the dagger in my right hand as I swam with it—watching for sharks, whose trails of phosphorus would show me where they were.

I could make out the cave mouth. I carried her in, swam strongly for twenty feet or so, rose to the surface in utter blackness. Then I set foot to the soil, carried her up.

She spat water—and it was like the spitting of an angry cat. There was temper in the wench! I set her down. I had no fear that she would try to escape. I could have caught her in two strides.

I made a fire in the cave, which was supplied with air by some vent which I hadn't found, in the roof. The cave led back for a hundred feet or so. It was dry and warm, but she needed a fire in which to dry her clothing.

"Are you afraid to stay here?" I

asked her, after I had shown her my loot. At sight of it her eyes had properly widened, then narrowed as she surveyed both myself and my booty with displeasure.

Then she spoke to me for the first time.

"As long as you are not here I shall not be afraid," she said contemptuously. "How long am I to be a prisoner?"

"Until I have found a way for both of us to reach Hispaniola. We'll fight our way through the Caribs to the south coast, where we may hope to catch an honest ship bound for Panama."

"I shall accept nothing from you!"

"You will go where I bid you! You will not try to escape. The whole coast is patrolled by sharks."

And then I left her. She wasn't afraid. There was nothing here to be afraid of. Nothing could reach her, save from the sea—and sharks did not come onto the land. And there were no sea-serpents in these waters, as far as I knew.

Outside, on level ground again, I went deep into the woods, where I circled back to the beach at last. There I faced the pirates and told them that I would kill any man who dared dispute my authority after this. Then I went to Sir Henry Morgan, and told him that I had killed Leach and Norcross.

Was there a twinkle of amusement in his eyes as he asked:

"Do you stand ready to serve me in their two places?"

I NODDED stiffly, not sure he didn't make sport of me because I was, after all, but a stripling with not even the sign of a beard. Next day, he told me, we fared forth again. A lookout had sighted mighty sails to the east—and the prize looked inviting.

I resolved it should be the last I should ever assist in taking.

May 15, 1687



WE came away from Tortue empty-handed, save only that I brought out my journal and the map I had made of my treasure-house—and this is the manner of our

coming. I write these last words in Hispaniola, while Anne Cronyn watches the small boat from a Dutch merchantman, putting in to take us off. It has been two months since I quitted the service of Morgan—

After leaving Anne in the cave and making my peace, for the time, with the pirates, I prepared to take part in my last looting of any vessel. I did not sleep that night, and next morning my voice cracked with authority as I routed out my men, manned the vessel from which Sir Henry had sent shots over the bows of so many of his victims.

I was driven by a fever of impatience. I knew there would be one thing aboard that vessel I would have. As a lieutenant of Morgan, I could manage it without question. I wanted a longboat. I knew I would take human life again. I also knew, with a certainty I had never known before, that I would not die in this fight. I felt as a man feels who knows that he bears a charmed life.

I was saying good-by to it all, and soon.

I led Morgan's men—who were *my* men, too, this first and last time—onto the Dutchman. I knew it was a mighty prize. It was a monster ship and I knew that, the instant Morgan saw it, hereafter it would be his flagship; that it would become famous throughout the Antilles.

The Dutch fought stubbornly, but nothing could stop us. I shouted to the pirates. They fought at my back with the best of courage. Their

cutlasses had never been keener, had never struck with greater surety. The Dutchmen fell before us. They did not cry for quarter. None would have been given them. Human life was, after all, exceedingly cheap. It did not matter.

We had our prize.

Sir Henry Morgan, when we were assigning a prize crew to her, looked at me with a sad kind of pride.

"You would have been a great Naval officer," he told me, giving me a first glimpse into his heart. "You handled the boarders like a master. Put some years on your shoulders and you would be a soldier."

I KNEW then that he carried the weight of countless regrets on his shoulders, felt the horror of oceans of blood upon his soul. I knew that never this side of the grave would he make his peace with his God—and that for very anger because this was so, he would continue on and on, slaying as he went; becoming, week by week, year by year, more savage and ruthless—and that in the end the gibbet would have him, unless he had again a King's pardon to save him. There seemed little chance of this.

But I knew right then that he hungered for the coast of Wales whence he had come, and for the humble competence—any size—of a gentleman who did not have to fear the law of any land, or feel hovering over him the shadow of the gallows.

I bowed to him. I was pleased. Even a pirate might enjoy the knowledge that he knows his tasks and performs them with credit. My share of this prize would make me richer than Sir Henry himself, for he squandered his wealth at cards with his men, who squandered it, in turn, in the many ports we dared, on rare occasions, visit.

I asked him to let me command

the prize crew. He agreed readily, smiling a little.

"If, just once more, you acquit yourself so creditably," he told me, "you shall command a vessel, under my command, and this shall be my flagship."

His eyes flamed with the ambition his sudden thought had given him. He had been a great sea-rover. Why not, I could see his thought growing, have a fleet of pirates? Others had done it before him; others would do it again.

But I knew then that I would never command one of his vessels. I had boarded my last prize. Even now I was bidding good-by to piracy.

When Sir Henry had gone back aboard his own vessel, which got under way to show us her heels on the voyage back to Tortue, I ordered my prize crew to lower a longboat over the side, and moor her under the stern. Then I broke out casks of rum and bade them drink and be merry, so that they would forget to be curious about the longboat. I would anchor off Tortue in such a way that the longboat would not be noticeable.

I would risk sharks in swimming out to her, but I had risked them before. My dagger had accounted for sharks before now.

THE night seemed interminable. I went to the cave, stowed my share of the loot. Anne Cronyn scarcely spoke to me. I still saw the contempt in her face. Her eyes widened as she stared at my clothing—for through even the water, which covered my clothing and dripped to the floor of the cave, she could see the bloodstains I had taken aboard the Dutchman.

"I shall be back within two hours," I told her hoarsely. "Be ready to depart for the mainland when I come."

Then I went back to the beach. The pirates were shouting and cursing, fighting among themselves as usual. I saw two men lunging with cutlasses as I stepped into the water. One man fell with his skull caved in. I shrugged and waded deeper.

In deep water I turned and looked back. Standing on the beach I had just quitted was a familiar figure. It was looking out across the waters at me. It was Sir Henry Morgan. He lifted his hand and seemed to wave—but of course I misunderstood the gesture, for he could not, possibly, have seen me in the darkness. But I had a warm glow about my heart, for it was as though he bade me Godspeed on my hazardous undertaking.

I escaped the sharks, though one slid alongside the longboat as I rolled over the side.

I cut loose the rope with my dagger. I sat down, paddled out from shore, keeping the Dutchman between myself and the shadowed land. Then I swung along the coast and rowed swiftly. My heart hammered with excitement. The longboat—which ordinarily would have required several men to handle—had to be handled by me alone. Once free of the land, with Anne Cronyn aboard, I might rig a sail of some sort, for it wasn't a long voyage to Hispaniola.

**I** MOORED the longboat above the cave, dived over, swam down, entered the place.

Anne Cronyn was ready.

I nodded to her.

I stepped to the storehouse where I kept my loot, and for the first time she touched me with her hand. Her eyes were stormy in the fire-light. Her touch thrilled me to the depths of my immortal soul.

"Caleb Krech," she said, in a low, tense voice, "I swear to you by my dead mother, and by the God you

yourself profess to believe in, that I will never leave this cave alive if you take with you from that loot so much as one dubloon or piece of eight! You go with me empty-handed, or you travel alone."

I couldn't understand her. What could we do without wealth—we who had so much, merely for the taking away—in the new land we hoped to reach? Nothing. But if she said we must go empty-handed, and did not explain her meaning—well, it was enough for me that she went with me at all, whatever her woman's reasons for this unheard of decision.

**W**E reached the boat, empty-handed, as she had said.

We shivered through the night as I fought with the sea to reach the shores of Hispaniola. We gained it at last, cast the longboat adrift. We plunged into the reeking jungles. Our clothing dried on us in the sun when it rose. I marked the way we traveled, in case I should have need to return this way some day to retrieve my treasure, which I was sure no one else would ever find.

I had not expected to take human life again, but take it I did—for as we hurried into the south, the arrows of marauding Caribs hastened our steps. It was only by the grace of a beneficent God that we escaped with our lives, traveling by night in the midst of unknown dangers, sleeping in thickets, in tangled masses of forest by day.

And in the steaming heart of Hispaniola, where she had none on whom to lean but myself, I tried with all my heart and soul to prove to Anne Cronyn that I was a man and not a monster.

And long before we reached the south coast, she was smiling and laughing when—for fear of the Caribs—we dared make any noise at all.

But when I asked her, time after time, why she would not allow me

to bring away our riches, she merely shook her head, so that her golden hair swirled about her beautiful face like the blinding rays of the sun. So then I was never to have an answer—save the meaningless, inexplicable answers which women give to men.

And now, this part of my story is ended, for the prow of our rescuers' boats grates on the beach, and soon Hispaniola will vanish behind us as we head toward the unknown New World which neither of us, up to now, has seen.

**I** HENRY MORGAN KRECH, must I, then have been named after Henry Morgan himself! Anne Cronyn of this tale was as much my relative as the pirate from whose journal I selected the most salient points I have set down above.

There is nothing in the journal to say by what strange stages Caleb Krech and Anne Cronyn reached

New England; nor yet when they were married; nor when they built this house in which I now sit—and see their shadowy figures in the dark corners, through the lacy filaments of the cobwebs.

For they are here with me as I read—and they will go with me always. For the blood of them both is my blood; and I never shall understand why my father found any cause for shame in this knowledge which he kept locked so tightly in his breast.

I may hunt for the treasure—but of course the hurricanes of two and a half centuries must long since have erased it. Or maybe, by chance, others have found the cave—as my ancestors found it.

And yet—there are far less exciting tasks than hunting for treasure in the islands of lost romance, of stirring adventure when the New World was really new.



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# SEALED ORDERS

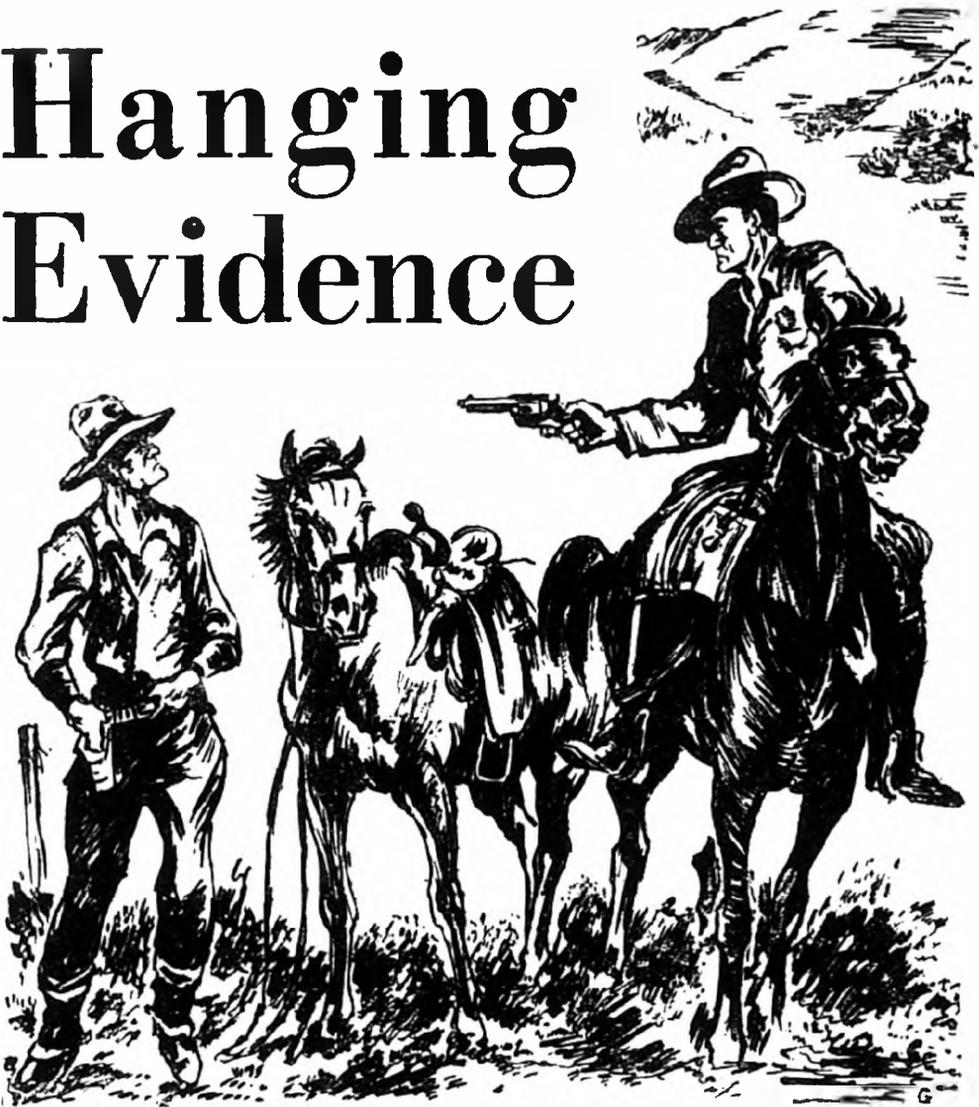
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AND OTHERS



# Hangin' Evidence



*Shane jumped at Walsh's command and looked into the sheriff's .45*

*The Sight of Diamond Tom Tully's Stickpin Was Far  
Too Much for Grasping Faro Shane!*

By SAM BRANT

*Author of "Sage of the Sagebrush," "Smoky Guns," etc.*

**D**IAMOND TOM TULLY stared across the table with eyes that glittered until they outshone the huge diamond stickpin from which came his nickname. Faro Shane wilted and cringed beneath that gaze. He hunched up his chair before the faro table where he

dealt for Diamond Tom on the percentage basis.

"So," Tully's voice was ominous, "there wasn't enough in a straight game for yuh, and yuh had to go crooked on me, eh?" His voice had an icy quality.

Tom Tully ran a straight joint. His

word and his bets were held in high esteem by the cowpokes in the neighborhood of Slattery's Gulch.

Faro tried to meet the other's look but his eyes flinched. He fixed his gaze instead on the gigantic diamond horseshoe which Tully wore in the center of his shirtfront.

"Yuh're through," Tully said in a voice that carried over the rushed room. "Git yore kit an' git out before I lose control o' myself an' shoot yore sneakin' cheatin' brains out."

Not daring to reply, Faro rose from the table and stumbled from the main room to the rear of the saloon where Tully housed his hired help.

"A nice wide chest fer a white shirt tuh hang a diamond ontuh, but no brains," the ex-dealer muttered to himself. "He could clean up, ef only he used his head—" His mutterings trailed off as he noticed that Diamond Tom had followed him into the room.

"Yuh're takin' a hundred dollars an' no more," Tom spoke relentlessly. "The rest o' the money yuh hev salted away goes in back o' the bar tuh stake people thet yuh've robbed afore I caught yuh."

SHANE turned to protest, but the look in the other's eyes made him change his mind. He shrugged as if resigned to his fate, threw a huge wad of bills on the bed and began to pack his clothes. Tully counted one hundred dollars from the roll, threw them at the rat-faced gambler, then stalked from the room, exposing a broad expanse of back.

For a second Shane fingered his derringer lovingly. He started to draw the small deadly weapon from its holster under his armpit when he suddenly spotted the keen eyes of Sheriff Big Bill Walsh peering through the door. Hastily he let his hand drop and, drawing the straps of his saddle bags tight, he made his

way out into the main saloon and gambling hall.

Infuriated by Tully's conduct, Faro ached to deliver some sharp words, but he was yellow at heart. He moved on hastily and silently when he saw that the sheriff and several of the place's steady customers were watching him intently. He picked up his bags and slunk from the room.

Morosely he rode out of town, hurt pride rankling in his chest.

"Jes' a big frame tuh drape a white shirt over," he repeated to himself—then suddenly checked his horse. "The diamond!" he exclaimed.

Diamond Tom thought more of that stickpin than he did of anything else. "Cost ten thousand dollars," he used to boast to open-mouthed rannies. Abruptly, Faro wheeled his horse off the trail out of town and headed for Tully's cabin.

BACK in the saloon Tully was telling the men how he had caught Faro cheating.

"He substituted a deck o' his own cards," he explained. "The designs on the backs was the same as mine, almost—there's jes' the least bit o' diff'rence in the designs. It'd take a well trained eye tuh see it an' I used tuh think Faro was nearsighted the way thet he peered at them cards. Then, I seen a poster bill in his room thet made him out a card magician in the theatres, an' I got tuh think in'."

The men pushed close about him. Big Bill took one of the straight and one of the crooked cards and held them next to each other, comparing them.

"Yuh sure needed yore eye peeled tuh catch them slick fingers," the sheriff congratulated Tully. "An' you better keep it jest as sharp peeled watching fur an ambush on yore way home. My idee is thet *hombre* is bad medicine."

Diamond Tom laughed. "Don't reckon that he'd make trouble fer a steer gnat. He's yella or he wouldn't a left here without an argyment."

"I know he's yella," Walsh returned. "Thet's the reason I told yuh tuh look out fer an ambush."

It was three o'clock in the morning before Tully closed his place. Sheriff Walsh waited around while he placed the night's money in the safe. Then, as Diamond Jim straightened after giving the combination a last twirl, the sheriff asked: "Don't yuh reckon an escort might come in kinda handy tonight?"

Tully laughed. "Seems yuh're more worried about thet *hombre* than I am."

"Well, I reckon it might be a good idea fer somebody tuh sorta canter along with yuh over tuh yore cabin," Big Bill persisted stubbornly. "I scen them kind o' rattlers before an' I don't trust 'em none too far when hit comes tuh a dark night an' ambush."

**T**ULLY saw that the sheriff was in dead earnest.

"I'll hev my gun handy," he promised soberly. "I don't reckon he'd hev any too steady a hand, anyway."

Diamond Tom placed little weight on Walsh's idea, so that when he rode up to the door of his cabin, he failed to see anything unusual. Then a voice barked from the shadows beside him:

"Stick 'em up!"

Tully spun around and found himself at close quarters with the talking end of a derringer backed by Faro. For a moment he was so bewildered that his hands automatically went into the air.

Shane, with the decided upper hand, was first to crow.

"Thought I'd git outa town, didn't yuh?" he sneered. "Well, I ain't goin' until yuh contribute thet nice pin yuh're so proud of. Then, ef yuh're

good, I might let yuh get away with yore life."

Tully recovered quickly from his first surprise. Instead of cringing as the triumphant Shane expected, he made a quick reach for his pistol.

"**W**HY, yuh—!" he started to exclaim. The rest of his words were blanked out in the roar of Shane's gun. For a bald second Tully stared at the smoking derringer in Shane's hand and then, with a look of amazement, he crumpled to the ground.

Shane eyed the body with stupefaction that was almost resentment. He had never before killed a man. The only thing his gun had ever been fired at was a jack rabbit; and now he had a body to contend with, a body that would be awkward to explain to the law enforcement officers if they caught up with him.

He stooped over and plucked the pin, symbol of his ascendancy over Tully, from the lifeless man's tie. Somehow the possession of it seemed hollow, now that the man was dead. To be caught with the diamond pin would mean hanging. The court of Slattery's Gulch was a rough one, without the legal technicalities that hamper justice in the more civilized parts of the country.

Shane pawed at his throat as if he already felt the rope taut about his neck. He made a move to replace the diamond, but its sparkle reminded him of the things, the ease, it could bring him once he got out of this country.

His cupidity overcame his sense of danger. Hastily he shoved the pin into his pocket and mounted the horse that he had hidden behind the house. His first interest was to put enough distance between himself and Slattery's Gulch to constitute an alibi when the murder was discovered.

Sheriff Big Bill Walsh went from Diamond Tom's gambling hall to his

office. Instead of turning in, he sat there thinking. The more he thought the less he liked the idea that Tully had gone off home alone. Perhaps his brain was registering a false alarm but he recalled, when Faro was fired, the gesture the crooked gambler had made while Tully's back was turned.

Finally he arose restlessly from his chair, went out and saddled his horse.

"I may be a danged fool," he muttered as he mounted, "but I can't sleep 'till I find out ef something is wrong."

It didn't take Walsh any time at all to assemble a posse after he found Tully's body.

"We'll git that rat an' string 'im higher'n a kite!" one of the men voiced his sentiments harshly. The sheriff shrugged. He would have a pretty time getting his prisoner to jail if a few hotheads decided to take things into their own hands.

For several hours the posse kept to the main trail, always alert to see a rider ahead. Walsh began to think they were on the wrong track when, as the first light of dawn broke, they spotted a lone figure riding away from them about three quarters of a mile in the distance.

The sheriff and his men spurred their horses to greater efforts, expecting the gambler to run for it. They were nonplussed when he continued at the same even gait.

"Yuh're under arrest," the sheriff of Slattry's Gulch shouted before the posse was up to Shane.

"Why?" queried Faro mildly, reining his horse to a stop. He tried his best to tinge his voice with the proper amount of astonishment.

"Fer the murder o' Diamond Tom Tully," Walsh said in an assured tone. "We found the horse tracks where yuh rode up an' shot 'im outside his cabin."

"Diamond Tom murdered!" Shane sought a fitting degree of amazement without injecting any note of sorrow

into his voice. He knew better than to try to express any regret.

"Well, I don't blame yuh fer yore suspicions," he went on, "but I don't see how it has anythin' tuh do with me. I've been ridin' all night tuh put distance between myself an' yore charmin' town."

The sheriff eyed him in the same manner he would a loathsome insect.

"Yuh're a-comin' back tuh our charmin' town with me right now," he said in a deadly voice. "I reckon the citizens'd like tuh ask yuh a few questions about yore actions after yuh left last night."

Shane stuck his hands in his jeans and pulled his pockets out, palming the pin as he did. "Mebbe yuh'd like tuh search me," he suggested.

Big Bill gave him a piercing look.

"That kin wait," he said shortly. "Right now, yuh're headin' back tuh town with us."

SHANE bent over his horse's neck and picked up the reins.

"All right," he whined in a persecuted tone. "But yuh're responsible fer my safety. Let's start an' git it over with. I hev places tuh go."

"Yuh'll hev places tuh go, all right," the sheriff promised grimly; then. "C'mon!"

Silently the men closed in around Faro. A quick frisk brought forth the gun he kept under his arm. The sheriff appropriated that and gave the command for the posse to head back for town.

In Walsh's office Shane still clung to his exterior pose of bravado. But as he looked around the determined circle of faces, his insides shriveled with fright. There was no doubt in his mind that the men were morally certain he had committed the murder.

The sheriff looked uneasy. He had a prisoner, but no way to pin the crime on him. They had searched Shane futilely half a dozen times.

"Wal, I reckon we can't find nothin' on yuh," Bill was forced at last to admit. "So yuh better take yore saddle bags and git outa town pronto." He indicated the bags that lay on the desk where they had been thoroughly pawed through by members of the posse in hopes of finding the missing diamond pin.

Faro smirked to himself. He had put it over after all. He picked up the bags and headed out of the office.

"No hard feelin's, sheriff," he called back over his shoulder. "Hope yuh git yore man."

"We will," the sheriff promised ominously. But Shane already out the door missed the retort.

As soon as Big Bill was sure that Faro was well on his way to his horse, he bounded to the door and peered after him.

"He didn't leave a valuable stone like that one out on the range," he told his discomfited men. "An' I aims tuh find out what he did with it. You men stay here," he flung over his shoulder. "I'll be back soon."

**O**UTSIDE, he shadowed Shane to the corral. Quietly he crept up on the unsuspecting man and watched him carry the saddle bags and set them on the ground. The sheriff's eyes narrowed. Did he imagine the tense eagerness in Faro's figure as he approached the horse? Perhaps the gambler was only anxious to make a quick getaway.

Big Bill eased the six-gun from its holster and crept closer, better to observe the other's actions. Shane was anxiously feeling along the horse's neck.

"Put 'em up!"

Shane jumped at Walsh's command and looked into the sheriff's .45.

"Now whut?" he gasped, in a tone meant to be resigned.

"I jest want tuh do a little more lookin' around before yuh leave," the sheriff said casually. His sharp eye

noticed the gambler's uneasy start. "Yuh know you might be concealin' sompthin'," he went on stepping closer to Shane and the horse. "I think I'll hev a look—"

**C**RASH! Shane's fist landed against Walsh's chin with all the force of desperation behind it. The unexpected blow rocked Walsh on his feet and would have downed a less powerful man. The sheriff was surprised by the strength shown by the gambler, but the man was fighting against the gallows.

Walsh, grappling as Shane tried to land a foul blow felt his own fist land with a soft sensation as it crunched into the other's nose. The blow sent Shane staggering. He clutched wildly at the air and, losing his balance crashed, to the ground.

The rat, cornered, wasn't licked. He reached under his arm for his gun that had been returned to him.

Big Bill's .45 had been knocked from his hand by the first surprise blow. Without an instant's hesitation, the sheriff threw himself onto Shane, twisting his wrist as he landed.

The gun went spinning. The bone snapped. Shane went limp and the battle was over.

Walsh rose to his feet as several of his deputies tumbled out of the office and came running to the corral.

"Take 'im tuh the calaboose," he commanded, breathing hard from the exertion of the fight. "We've got 'im dead tuh rights now."

Under the questioning eyes of his men, he walked over to Shane's horse and sent exploring fingers along its mane. With a triumphant grunt he pulled the diamond stickpin out from where Faro had concealed it, and held it up for inspection to the open-mouthed deputies.

"Hangin' evidence," he said triumphantly, "hangin' in the horse's mane."

# BORN to FIGHT

*Jim McCleery, Shanghaied  
into the Foreign Legion,  
Proves His Mettle in  
this Smashing Yarn  
of Grime and Gore!*

*A Complete Novelette*

By **BOB DU SOE**

*Author of "Loot at Kwang Kum,"  
"Escape," etc.*

## CHAPTER I

### *Bayoneted Invitation*

**R**ED-HEADED, blue-eyed, and gifted with a jaw like the west end of a box car, Jim McCleery stood with his back to the wall, a good head taller than the fighting, cursing mob around him. He was determined to stick there in spite of hell and all the gendarmes in Marseilles.

Close beside him, battling with equal energy and good intentions, stood a much smaller man, lean-jawed, squint-eyed and with two ears as big as his grimy hands.

Neither of them had the least idea of what it was all about. Someone had upset a table, feet and fists had begun to fly, and the next minute



*He caught the man with an*

the big Yankee engineer and the Cockney fireman had found themselves the center of attack.

A bottle crashed against the wall over the little man's head, showering him with broken glass and sour, red wine.

"The bloomin' swine!" he spat. "Look out for 'im, Yank, 'e's comin'!"

The man who had hurled the bottle came charging after it, head down and arms working like pistons. He was a big man, bull-necked and powerful, but that made no difference to McCleery. He caught the man with an uppercut that lifted him a foot off the floor and dropped him in a heap at their feet.

Another bottle crashed into the



*uppercut that lifted him a foot off the floor*

wall, then a chair. And then all at once the center of attack shifted from the beam-shouldered American and the little Cockney, backed against the rear wall of the cafe, to the door opposite leading out into the street.

"Beat it, Yank! Beat it!" the little man shouted. "It's the bloomin' johndarms!"

He made a dive for the entrance as he yelled. McCleery saw him duck between someone's legs and the next second he was gone. McCleery, however, was built on different lines. He would have had trouble enough ducking under a giraffe, to say nothing of slipping past a cordon of irate gendarmes. However, he had all the

nerve necessary to attempt it and he waded in.

Swinging right and left he made excellent progress for a minute or two. He got as far as the end of the bar, from which he could see the lights of a half-dozen ships blinking peacefully across the waters of Old Port. His own ship lay at dock around the corner in the *Bassin Joliette*.

She was shoving off in the morning; and he and Cockney were in the early watch. He made a hasty estimate of the two gendarmes blocking the doorway and hurled himself at the one on the right. They went out through the entrance together and down on the sidewalk. McCleery

landed on top and nothing remained but to get on his feet.

The gendarmes, however, in spite of their bicycles, capes, and little white clubs, were a lot more efficient policemen than many people gave them credit for being. Before McCleery could free himself from the man under him, the other gendarme reached deftly over and rapped him alongside the head.

The blow landed in just the right spot and there was strength enough behind it to have cracked any ordinary skull.

WHEN he opened his eyes again, McCleery lay on the floor with a rivulet of blood dripping from his ear. Standing over him was a thick-chested, black-bearded man he had noticed at one of the tables before the fight.

The man wore a uniform of khaki topped with a black-visored, red-crowned *képi*, the uniform of the French Foreign Legion. There was a short gold service bar on the sleeve of his tunic just above the elbow and three inverted Vs at his cuff that indicated the rank of a sergeant; but none of this meant anything to Jim McCleery.

The man in uniform was arguing with the police and McCleery decided he must be the object of their discussion, though he had no idea what they said. The gendarme finally gave up the argument with a wave of his arms and the man from the Legion reached down and hauled McCleery to his feet. There was nothing gentle in the way he did it and no lack of strength in his short powerful arm.

McCleery wiped the blood from his face, put on his cap and grinned.

"Well, I guess I'm the goat," he said. "What are we going to do about it?"

The big, bearded sergeant muttered something in French and pointed

down the quay toward the ancient battlements of old St. Jean. That meant about as much to McCleery as the few words of French, but his ship lay around the corner in the same direction, so he went peacefully along.

At the bridge across the moat, however, he stopped. He decided he had gone far enough, and then unconsciously his hand slipped into his pocket. With a look of blank astonishment he dove into first one pocket then the next, and then he burst into a stream of indignant oaths.

Somone had picked him clean. His six months pay in good American dollars had vanished into the thin night air.

"The dirty, thieving swine!" he swore. "They've cleaned me! Do you savvy that? They robbed me!"

The sergeant showed no concern. He nodded toward the gate across the bridge and took a hold of the Yank's arm.

McCleery jerked away.

"Get your paws off of me!" he ordered. "Who got that roll? You were there. Who got it?"

The sergeant gave him an angry shove toward the bridge, and then McCleery sank his fist in that mattress of hair on the big fellow's jaw. Had he followed that with another good jolt and taken to his heels, he might have reached the ship and safety; but he was preoccupied with the loss of his roll and he was not the running kind.

THE sergeant swore, then he yelled, and too late McCleery realized he was trapped. Two black Senegalese soldiers appeared instantly from nowhere, it seemed, and each of them had him covered with the muzzle of a rifle. There were bayonets two feet long on each of the rifles, and with these at his ribs he was helpless.

They forced him through the gate, along a dark, damp corridor to a large

room, equally dark and damp, and there they left him.

## CHAPTER II

### Recruits

**M**CCLEERY raved and swore but the result was nil, except that it brought a number of protests in half a dozen different tongues. He realized then that he was not alone.

"So, Meester Yank, you come back, eh?" A derisive laugh came from one corner, and McCleery strode over to investigate.

"You weel not believe me, eh? You theenk they not catch you."

McCleery struck a match and found a fat-faced, greasy-haired Spaniard leering up from a pile of blankets, a man he had never seen before and one he was not at all particular about seeing again. However, the man seemed confident that he knew what he was talking about, and his remarks needed explaining.

"What the devil do you mean?" McCleery demanded. "What is this lousy place, anyway?"

The Spaniard sat up with the last flicker of the match and his attitude suddenly changed.

"*Dios*, you are not heem—you are not Beel, the *Americano*."

"I'm an American but my name isn't Bill," McCleery retorted. "What in blazes is this all about?"

"Your pardon, *senor*, I make mistake. Thees is headquarters of the Foreign Legion. This man, Beel, he enlist for the Legion when he ees very drunk. When he comes sober he decide he do not want to stay—you understand?"

"No, I don't, but it doesn't make any difference. Go ahead."

"Well, he say he ees going to get out. I laugh at heem because once you are in, you are in."

"Oh, you don't say so!"

"Yes, but Beel, he pretty smart

fellow. He tell the sergeant he ees got some baggage put away somewhere and eef the sergeant weel go with heem he weel sell it for to buy more drinks. You understand now?"

"Go on. Go on."

"Well, that ees about all I know. The sergeant he say all right and they go. Now the sergeant he comes back but he no bring Beel with heem. He bring you instead. You look very much like this other *Americano*; that ees why I make mistake."

"So that's it!" McCleery swore. "This fellow, Bill, gave the sergeant the slip. The black-whiskered devil had to bring somebody back here with him so he picked on me. And on top of that, he cleaned me for five hundred bucks. Well, by gosh, it ain't going to work!"

"But, *senor*, I am afraid you are out of luck. We take the boat tomorrow morning for Oran. The sergeant weel say you are Beel. You look like thees man and you are *Americano*, so what can you do?"

"What can I do? By Heaven, I'll show you! Is that lousy sergeant running this whole army? Aren't there any officers in this dump?"

"To be sure, *senor*, there are plenty officers. But you weel not be allowed to talk weeth them in the first place, and they would not believe you eef you did talk weeth them."

**B**UT the papers! This man, Bill, had to sign some papers, didn't he? That isn't my name. That ought to prove something."

"Zut, that weel prove not a thing. There are very few who come to thees army weeth their right names. No, my friend, eet is most unfortunate but I am afraid you are out of luck."

"You think so? Well, you watch me."

With new fuel added to his indignation, McCleery picked up a bench. The guard jerked open the door,

stuck in his bayonet and followed it with his round, black head.

"Get out of my way!" McCleery barked, and, shoving the bayonet to one side, he started out into the corridor.

The big, flat-footed Senegalese promptly shoved him back into the room again, and then McCleery let fly with that ever-ready fist of his. He got as far as the end of the corridor as a result of that swing, but there he collided with another guard and another of those long, needle bayonets.

"Get out of my way!" he ordered. "If you don't, I'll wrap that tin peashooter around your neck!"

The Senegalese stuck out the bayonet with a determined shake of his head. McCleery threw up his arm and flung it aside. His other elbow caught the negro in the stomach; and he started down another angle of the corridor only to run headlong into two more guards.

That was the end of his dash. A whistle shrilled up and down the tomb-like halls and sphinx-faced Senegalese came at him from every angle.

"*Sacré nom de Dieu!*" The familiar voice of the sergeant followed the blast on the whistle. And then he discovered the cause of all the trouble, and his first outburst was mild compared to the oaths that followed.

MCCLEERY demanded that he be allowed to see an officer. He might as well have asked for a conference with the marshal of France.

"Drunk!" the sergeant declared in French. With four bayonets clawing at his ribs, they turned McCleery around and marched him back the way he had come.

With a final jab the door was slammed in his face and there was nothing to do about it.

When he had exhausted his full repertoire of oaths, McCleery be-

gan to realize that the situation was probably very much as the Spaniard had described it. He wondered what had become of Higgins, the little Cockney, and what they would do when he himself did not report back at the ship.

Nothing, most likely, he decided. If he wasn't on board when they got ready to sail, they would simply cast off without him.

HE sat down on a bench to think it over and if possible to figure a way out. He was still sitting there when daylight crept in through the high, barred windows and his predicament was not altered. His demands to speak with an officer came to nothing and no one came near the room but the negro guards.

There were about a dozen other recruits in the big, barren room—Germans, Russians, Italians—but the Spaniard was the only one who spoke English, so he got little satisfaction out of any of them.

Coffee and bread were brought to them shortly after daylight. While McCleery was drinking his coffee, the door opened again and in walked Higgins. McCleery stared dumbfounded, and then the Cockney spotted him and came grinning across the room to join him.

"What in blazes are you doing here?" McCleery demanded.

"Well," the little man shrugged. "secin' as 'ow you decided to join the bloomin' outfit, I thought I might as well go with you."

"Me! Join this outfit! Are you crazy? I was framed! I thought the dump was a jail 'til I got here. And on top of that, they rolled me for six months pay!"

Higgins cocked one eye at him, like a jaybird peering down a worm-hole.

"Wot the bloomin' deuce are you tryin' to give me?" he demanded.

"I'm telling you," McCleery de-

clared, "I got rapped on the head after you ducked out, and when I came around that big stiff with the beard that was setting across from us had the whole thing fixed. If I had it I'd bet the whole roll that he's the one who cleaned me, too."

"Cripes!" the Cockney exclaimed. "But wot did 'e bring you 'ere for?"

McCleery related what he had heard from the Spaniard.

"He had to grab somebody," he concluded, "so he picked on me."

"They didn't say nothin' like that back at the cafe. And knowin' wot a blarsted fool you are sometimes, I didn't ask no questions."

"But why didn't you get word to the ship, or wait until I'd had a chance to talk to you?"

Higgins sighed. "The bloomin' ship sailed on the two o'clock tide. There wasn't time for nothin'."

McCleery groaned.

"She sailed! Then we're sunk for sure. If I ever get my hands on that bull-necked, black-whiskered swine, I'll beat him to a pulp."

"No, you won't," the Cockney declared. "Not in this army. They're particular about things like that."

"What do you know about it?"

"Oh, I've 'eard a few things 'ere and there. It ain't 'arf bad in some ways. So long as we're 'ere now, we might as well make the best of it."

McCleery cursed and paced the floor. His disgust was complete. And then the door swung open and in stalked the sergeant. He bellowed a string of orders in French, then went out.

THE others in the room began rolling their blankets, and presently another soldier entered the room and handed McCleery and the Cockney a uniform each. One was too big and the other too small, as might be expected.

McCleery looked at them with still further scorn.

"All right," he muttered. "I'll take the rap, but I'm doing it for just one reason. I'm going to catch that sergeant in an alley by himself some night, and I'm going to stuff his dirty, black whiskers down his throat."

## CHAPTER III

### *Extra Duty*

WITH Sergeant Boudet in command, the twelve *bleus* crossed the Mediterranean on the open forward well deck of the regular weekly steamer and disembarked at the half-French, half-Arab port of Oran. From there they were herded aboard the train and ordered out again at the Foreign Legion Headquarters at Sidi-Bel-Abbes.

A score of men came piling out of the barracks as they marched in on the parade ground, in search of a familiar face or a fellow-countryman; and McCleery was forced to admit that they were an efficient, soldierly-looking lot of men.

A new sergeant took charge of them here, a six-foot, barrel-chested man with a voice like a fog horn. He read their names aloud from the list given him by Boudet.

"Gomez!" he barked, and the fat-faced Spaniard McCleery had talked with that night in Marseilles promptly answered.

"Bert Higgins!" the second name was called, and the little Cockney replied with a lusty, "'Ere!"

"Bill Smith!" came next, but nobody answered.

"BILL SMITH!" the sergeant bellowed, but there was still no response.

"That's supposed to be me, I guess," McCleery finally spoke, "but that's not my name and you might as well get it straight to begin with."

"*Sacré nom de Dieu!*" the sergeant exploded in French, then switched to

what he probably intended for English. "Who do you think you are talking to?"

"I'm talking to you," McCleery replied.

The sergeant's eyes opened wide. His face grew red and his bristling blond mustache stood up like the hair on a dog's back. With just two strides he was in front of McCleery and the look he gave him would have humbled a Bedouin jackass.

"So? An American!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, an American," McCleery replied, and the crowd snickered with delight.

"Yes, what?" the sergeant roared.

"Yes, sir," McCleery answered with a resigned shrug.

"*Bon Dieu!*" the sergeant swore. "Was there ever anything so dumb? *Oui, mon Sergeant,*" he corrected.

"Repeat that and do not forget it!"

"*Oui, mon Sergeant,*" McCleery repeated.

"Now tell me your name. What is it?"

"Jim McCleery, *mon Sergeant.*"

"But that is not what I have on this list. What name did you give at the Bureau of Enlistment?"

"I didn't give any name. I didn't enlist."

"You did not enlist. *Bon Dieu*, are you crazy? What are you doing here, then?"

"You ask that guy that brought us here. See if he's got the nerve to tell you—and tell the truth."

The sergeant threw up his arms in utter disgust.

"Imbecile! Fool! You will report to the captain. I wash my hands of you!"

THE prospects of a talk with the captain did not awe McCleery in the least. However, the meeting did not materialize. When the sergeant demanded an explanation from Boudet, he probably got it and that settled the matter.

When the twelve names had been checked from the list, the bewildered little band of recruits was marched away to the barracks. There their training got promptly under way without further waste of words or time.

They were taught first how to arrange their clothes and equipment on the little shelves over their bunks. They learned the necessary commands in French and they learned them a lot quicker than McCleery ever dreamed was possible.

THEY discovered, too, that the strenuous, concentrated training which followed was the toughest of any army on earth. After the first good sample, they needed no explanation of the physical fitness of the older hands around them.

McCleery saw little of Sergeant Boudet for some time after that. He drilled with the squad of awkward's four hours each day and worked like a mule the rest. The only glimpse he got of the town was from a distance as they tramped out through the gate and back again on their practice marches. From fifteen kilometers these marches increased to forty and they carried a good hundred pounds on their backs every step of the way.

From the squad of awkward's they graduated to the company of confusion. And then one day McCleery, the Cockney, the Spaniard and two others were ordered out of line and assigned to a regular company.

"Now we're gettin' somewhere." the Cockney declared.

"Do you know where we're going?" McCleery demanded.

"To Company Twelve."

"Right, and one of the sergeants of Company Twelve is that black-whiskered old goat, Boudet."

"Cripes, Yank, you're right! So 'e is!"

Boudet received them with a glow-

ering frown. He had not forgotten that night in Marseilles, and no doubt he never would. But neither would McCleery.

Company Twelve was a full-fledged company and its members went for an evening walk into town whenever they felt like it. McCleery and the Cockney both had most of their enlistment bonus intact, and the prospects of a night out filled them both with delight. It would be their first real freedom since that night in Marseilles.

However, Boudet must have read their thoughts. He turned them down at inspection and gave them four hours extra duty for not having polished their shoes.

"The dirty, bloomin' swine!" the Cockney swore. "There ain't nothin' wrong with our boots. 'E did that on purpose."

"You tellin' me?" growled McCleery.

"Blarst 'im, wot are we goin' to do about it?"

"Do? We're going over that wall back of the messhall."

The Cockney shrugged. He contemplated trouble, but he was game. They got over the wall without difficulty, followed the back streets to the *Rue Prudon*, then walked boldly into the center of town.

THE *Rue de la Republique* was thronged with soldiers and civilians; the Legion band played in the *Place Carnot*, and it looked like a large evening to the two *bleus* after their long confinement. The possibilities of bumping into Sergeant Boudet, however, considerably cramped their style.

"We'll get a month in the cells if the blighter sees us." Higgins declared. "Why don't we—"

McCleery seized the little man by the arm. "Look, crossing the street there in front of the bakery!"

"Cripes, it's 'im!"

McCleery waited until the sergeant reached the other side of the street, then he started over after him.

"Where the bloomin' 'eck you goin'?" Higgins demanded.

"I'm trailing him," McCleery replied. "Have you forgotten what we're here for?"

"N<sup>O</sup>, I ain't forgot. But yuh're t<sup>A</sup>k<sup>I</sup>n' an awful chance."

McCleery paid no attention. He followed Boudet to the corner, then down the alley past the market place to the street beyond. A block away the *Rue de la Republique* was ablaze with lights, but here the streets were dark and narrow.

"Cripes," the Cockney complained. "It's blacker 'ere than the inside of a whale. Where'd 'e go?"

McCleery pointed. "There—he just went in that door."

A single light burned dimly over a doorway down the street and when McCleery approached to investigate he found it was the entrance to a small cafe. Voices came from within—a woman's voice, and then Boudet's.

"Now wot?" the Cockney wanted to know.

"Keep quiet." McCleery pulled him back into the shadow.

There were more voices; then three men approached the light from the opposite end of the street and trailed each other into the little cafe. They were neither soldiers nor Arabs. Had the two Legionnaires been more familiar with the country, they would have recognized them as Spaniards.

"Cripes," the Cockney grumbled, "if you're goin' to wait for that bloke to come out, we'll be 'ere all night."

"What of it?" McCleery retorted. "We've waited three months already. What's a few hours more?"

An oath and a crash of glass from within the cafe cut him short. Then the door flew open and out rushed the woman whose voice they had heard a few minutes previous. She

spotted them at once and turned on them with a flood of French.

"Quick! Quick!" she cried. "They will kill him—the sergeant!"

McCleery and the Cockney knew just enough of the language now to interpret her exclamations.

"Let 'em kill 'im," Higgins shrugged. "E's got it comin', if you arks me."

"*Bon Dieu*, they are robbers—robbers! I tell you they will kill him!" the woman cried.

"Fine, then we won't 'ave to be doin' the bloomin' job ourselves."

"That ain't going to do us any good—somebody else beatin' him up." McCleery declared. "Come on!"

He was through the door and into the cafe before Higgins could offer further protest. In an instant he saw that Boudet was hard-pressed and he waded in.

The Spaniards were fighting with knives and the sergeant's only weapon of defense was a bottle.

McCleery seized an upraised hand that gripped a six-inch blade of steel and twisted it around until the swarthy owner screamed with agony. When the knife dropped to the floor he knocked the Spaniard flat with a straight-arm jab at his jaw, and sprang at the next.

A knife ripped through his sleeve, a knee caught him in the stomach and then the man went suddenly limp in his arms as the Cockney came down on his head with a chair. With a blow that must have broken the Spaniard's jaw, Boudet finished the third and the battle was abruptly ended.

THE sergeant ripped open his tunic then to examine a round, red blotch spreading over his shirt and the two Legionnaires stood staring at him in embarrassed silence.

"*Mon cher!*" The woman, evidently the proprietress, shoved them aside and forced the sergeant into a chair.

"It is nothing—a scratch," he scoffed. "Take my whistle and call the patrol."

McCleery glanced at the Cockney and the little man started backing toward the door.

"*Garde à vous!*" the sergeant barked. "I am very much obliged to you both, but discipline is discipline. You are under arrest."

"Under arrest!" the Cockney gasped. "Strike me pink!"

## CHAPTER IV

### *A Nasty Job*

NEITHER McCleery nor Higgins could decide when they were turned out of the guard house in the morning whether their release was due to the generosity of Boudet or the sudden orders from Headquarters that had come through during the night.

They were inclined to credit the latter. At any rate, Company Twelve spent the day with the medicine major, the barber and the armorer; and then they marched to the station and boarded the train while the band blared the Legion's favorite tune.

Three days later, with a final screech and rattle of brakes, the train stopped at Colomb-Bechar and the cramped, weary men climbed out of the ancient coaches to stretch their legs and gaze about them. To the south lay the vast, sweltering Sahara with its desolate outposts scattered along the camel trail to Timbuktu; and one of these posts was no doubt their destination.

They camped that night in the big military reservation nearby and in the early morning they headed south into the desert. Captain Faudre, tall, lean and grey, rode at the head of the column with the lieutenant. The adjutant chief brought up the rear with the fourth platoon, while Boudet and the other sergeant

marched with the second platoon and the third.

McCleery and Higgins plodded along with the second platoon under the immediate command of Boudet.

"They say as 'ow there's been a raid down 'ere somewhere," the Cockney remarked. "And we're going to reinforce one of the posts."

McCleery shifted his mountainous pack and spat in the dust.

"Yeah, some place by the name of Sidi Aard. And the tribesmen are probably at the other end of Africa by this time."

"I 'opes so. I ain't seen a thing in this bloomin' country yet that I'd want to die for."

"*En avant!* Step out!" the bellowing voice of Sergeant Boudet jarred on their ears. "*Bon Dieu*, you march like a lot of old women!"

Ten, fifteen, twenty kilometers they marched that morning, up hill and down, with only the ten minute rest at the end of each hour. The sun burned down like the blast from a furnace. The ground seemed to creep with the heat, but the steady tramp, tramp, tramp of heavy boots went stubbornly on.

McCleery, sweat streaming down his face, his feet like two clumps of lead, began to wonder at his ability to keep going. The hour's halt at midday was all that saved a good many of them.

THAT night they made camp on a rocky mound surrounded by a low stone wall that some marching column had built there before them, and they were ready to drop in their tracks. There was a guard to be posted, however, and the duty fell to the first and second platoons.

"That's luck for you, ain't it?" the Cockney declared with disgust.

McCleery shrugged. "Some of us had to do it. The others will get their turn tomorrow. Keep an eye on Boudet, though. If he was to catch

one of us asleep tonight, all the angels couldn't save us."

Twice while he walked his post that night, McCleery found the sergeant quietly trailing him. But weary as he was, the big red-headed American was determined not to get caught in a trap like that. The night passed uneventfully and at daylight they were again on the march.

Backs bent and heads down, they plodded on hour after hour, that smart appearance, of which the Legion is so proud, entirely forgotten. The non-coms raved and the men cursed back at them through parched, broken lips.

A MAN in the second platoon went down and stayed there during one of the afternoon halts and all the oaths Boudet could bestow on him failed to budge him. The sergeant finally seized the man by the collar, as he had McCleery that night in the cafe, and jerked him to his feet.

"By *le bon Dieu*, you will march," he declared, "or you will stay here and rot!"

"I can't! I can't!" the soldier pleaded.

"You," the sergeant turned to McCleery, "take his pack. Higgins, you take his rifle."

McCleery and the Cockney stared at each other, then the sergeant. But they did as they were ordered, and relieved of his burden the exhausted man was able to stagger on. McCleery wiped the sweat from his eyes, squared his shoulders and continued the march with his double load.

Somebody had to carry the extra pack but there were other men in the platoon more accustomed to those terrible marches than the Yank. That was another incident he would not forget.

They topped a great, barren dune just as the sun touched the distant horizon. Down in the valley below they made out the tower and four

walls of the outpost at Sidi Aard. It was a welcome sight, that tri-color hanging limp from the staff. German, Russian, Spaniard and Greek, it was not their flag, but somehow it made the going easier.

Captain Faudre brought the company to attention as they drew nearer and the men gazed ahead expectantly, waiting for some sort of demonstration. The sentries on the wall could not help seeing them. As a rule the arrival of reinforcements or a relief was an occasion for celebration.

"You'd think we were a gang of flea-bitten Arabs," an old Legionnaire declared. "They ain't even sounded a bugle."

There was indeed something strained and unnatural about the half-dozen sentries gazing down on them from above the gate. And then suddenly one of them threw up his arms with a shout of warning and leaped from the wall.

He was dead before he hit the ground but his act undoubtedly saved the company from a terrible slaughter.

The others on the wall immediately followed his example midst a hail of lead from within the fort. Machine-guns, rifles and revolvers appeared in an instant at every angle of the parapet and a cursing bearded tribesman was at every trigger.

"*En avant! Fire!*" The command came from Captain Faudre; then he toppled from his horse.

**B**EWILDERED, unprepared, the first platoon was cut down almost before they could move. The lieutenant saw their predicament and, realizing they were in no position to attack, he ordered them back to cover. He stopped a second to aid the captain; succeeded in throwing him across his horse, and then he paid for his bravery with his life.

One of the men who had flung himself from the wall staggered to

his feet and started to join the company as they fell back. But he had taken only a few steps when another bullet crashed through his shoulder.

McCleery saw him fall. Bullets whistled about him by the dozen. His chances were one in a thousand, but he was one of those admirable individuals born to fight. Darting back, he seized the man in his powerful arms and carried him to safety.

**T**HE company was entirely in command of the non-coms for a minute or two, and then a string of orders came from the captain. The men discovered him, bare-headed, a long red groove across his cheek, clinging to the trunk of a palm for support while he strove to bring order to the disorganized company.

"Schmidt!" he called to the adjutant. "Dig in over there by the oasis. See that the wounded are cared for. Call the roll and report at once."

"*Oui, mon Capitaine.*"

"Are any of those men who jumped from the wall still alive?"

"One. He is badly wounded, but he can still talk."

"Thank God. Have him brought here at once so I can question him."

"*Oui, mon Capitaine.*" The adjutant saluted and hastened away.

McCleery and the Cockney were detailed to help the lone survivor of the post around to a sheltered position where the captain could question him. When they had made the man comfortable as possible, they stepped back to await further orders.

The captain glanced at McCleery.

"I saw you drag him to cover," he said. "Good work, Legionnaire."

McCleery shrugged, embarrassed. He hadn't given the incident a second thought. He had seen the man struggling to save his life and he had merely gone back to give him a helping hand.

"Tell me about it." The captain turned to the wounded soldier

stretched out on the ground before him. "Were you men on the wall when we marched up, the only ones left?"

"*Oui, mon Capitaine*, they kept us for bait—like you saw—and killed all the rest."

"When did they attack?"

"Last night. There must have been three or four hundred of them. The attack came so swiftly that they were over the wall before we could do much about it."

"You made no organized resistance whatever?"

"*Bon Dieu*, we fought until there were no more than a handful of us left. We must have killed over a hundred of them."

"Then where are the dead? There was no sign of them—no indications that there had been a fight. Where are their camels? Surely a band as big as that didn't come here on foot."

"They must have known you were coming, *mon Capitaine*; and they set the trap for you. They dragged the dead all down that wash beyond the oasis. The camels are hidden on the other side of that dune to the west."

"How many are there now—in the fort?"

"A COUPLE of hundred, at least, and there's two of them know how to handle the machine-guns. It was hell to see you coming—marching straight into the trap—but there was nothing we could do any sooner. There were twenty guns at our backs."

"You did all that could be expected," the captain replied. "No men could have died more bravely than those who jumped with you from the wall. Have you any idea what the devils plan to do next? They are surely not going to stay there and hold the fort."

"No, they planned to blow it up. They emptied the magazine, took all our rifles, and planted a half-dozen charges of powder around the wall

and under the barracks. I've an idea they figured on getting your guns and ammunition, though, before they touched it off."

The captain nodded. "No doubt. That means they will wait for us to attack."

"They haven't much water. With us holding the wells, they won't be able to wait but a day or two."

"Then they will probably attempt to drive us away from the wells. We must have lost a full platoon in that first blast of fire. We can't afford to lose any more."

THE adjutant, returning to report, had overheard most of the conversation and he stepped forward to offer a suggestion.

"They can't have much of a guard with their camels," he said. "We might be able to seize one of them and get word to Bechar for a squadron of bombers."

The captain shook his head. "We've got to act ourselves, and at once. They'd know our intentions and fight their way out before the planes could get here."

"*Mon Capitaine*," Boudet had accompanied the adjutant and he stepped forward at a salute to offer another idea.

The captain nodded. "What is it?"

"Why couldn't a couple of us get inside there and set off those bombs? I'd like to try it myself, with your permission."

The captain stared at Boudet as if he thought the sergeant had lost his mind. Boudet, however, was in earnest and the captain realized the tremendous advantage that would be theirs if such a move could be accomplished.

"A splendid idea, Sergeant," he said. "But do you think you could possibly succeed?"

"The difficult part will be to get inside the post. But I can speak a few words of their lingo and if I

can secure a burnoose and turban, I think I could make it."

"You'd have to have help. You might set off one of the charges, but they would discover you before you could get to the next. One wouldn't do us any good."

"I WOULD rather have someone with me," Boudet admitted, "if there is anyone who will volunteer to go."

McCleery peered sharply at the sergeant and took a prompt step forward. "I will go, *mon Capitaine*," he saluted.

"Good," the captain agreed. "There is your man, Sergeant."

The sergeant returned McCleery's stare with a frown. It was evident that he would have preferred someone else. The Cockney recovered from the shock of McCleery's offer and stepped up beside him.

"I'll go, too, *mon Capitaine*," he volunteered. "The Yank and me sort of work together an'—"

"One is enough," Boudet declared.

"You had better take him," the captain advised. "I don't know yet how you are going to get inside the post, but the thing has got to be done right if it is going to do us any good. If one of you fail, there is still the chance that one or the other will succeed."

The sergeant shrugged. "Very well, if you think best. They can go at once to the ravine where the *bicos* dumped their dead and dig out some rags for a disguise. In the meantime, we must arrange for a sham attack and, as nearly as possible, I would like to know where these bombs have been placed."

"You can depend upon every bit of assistance the company can give you," the captain assured him.

McCleery touched his *kēpi* and withdrew, the Cockney trailing after him.

"Wot the bloody 'eck did you go

an' do that for?" the little man demanded. "Cripes, we ain't got no more chance of gettin' inside that bloomin' fort than we'd 'ave gettin' into a 'arem."

"You chump," McCleery retorted. "Don't you suppose I know that? It's Boudet I'm thinking about. We'll get him this time—him and his cursed discipline."

"But cripes, Yank, this ain't no time to beat up on the bloke. 'E's figurin' to blow up the post. 'E might even get killed while 'e's at it."

"That means it's our last chance—if he isn't just bluffing."

"I don't think 'e is. 'E acts like 'e meant it."

"We'll see. Come on, we've got to get those burnooses he wants."

"Does 'e mean we're to take 'em off them dead Arabs?"

"Of course. Where else would we get them?"

"I don't know, but that's a bloomin' narsty job. You 'ad no business sayin' you'd go with him."

## CHAPTER V

### *A Struggle for Life*

SWATHED in Arab rags, their faces blackened with ashes from an old cook fire they found near the wells, McCleery and Higgins waited with Boudet for final instructions from the captain. Then the trio slipped away in the darkness to work their way around to the rear of the fort.

"When are you goin' to let 'im 'ave it?" Higgins inquired in a whisper.

"When we get far enough away so the captain can't hear him yell," McCleery replied.

"And wot are you goin' to tell the captain when the bloke gets back and squeals on us?"

"By the time I take that six months pay out of his hide, he won't have any squeals left in him."

The Cockney shook his head with decided doubt and they crept on after Boudet. The captain was to give them half an hour in which to make a wide circuit of the post and work their way up from the rear; then he was going to launch the pretended attack at the front.

While the tribesmen were thus drawn to one wall to repulse the attack, it was Boudet's plan to scale the other and trust to their disguise to get them safely down into the courtyard.

They completed the circuit without trouble and the sergeant called a halt less than a hundred yards from the rear wall.

"I'll go first," he said. "The guard posted here will be pretty sure to race for the front when the firing starts, but there is no sense in us all getting killed in case they don't."

"Very considerate of you," McCleery drawled, "but there's a matter you and me are going to settle first Sergeant, 'fore we start climbing any walls."

**B**OUDET peered sharply at him through the darkness.

"What is the matter with you? Whom are you talking to?"

"Never mind that bunk," McCleery replied. "Your stripes aren't going to do any good this time. There's no patrol for you to turn us over to, either"

"Fool, do you think I need stripes or a patrol in order to deal with you? I will meet you any time and any place you say, when we are finished with this. But now we have work to do."

"Yeah, and if you get a slug in your gizzard, where do I collect that roll you pinched?"

"Roll? *Sacré*, what are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the cleanin' you gave me, along with the shanghaiin' stunt you pulled that night in Mar-

seilles. If you didn't get the jack yourself, you know who did."

"**I** KNOW nothing about it," Boudet was emphatic. "The shanghai stunt, as you call it, I admit. I did you a favor. But, *nom de Dieu*, I am no thief. If you were robbed it was no doubt by those who started the fight. That is an old trick in Marseilles."

"Yeah, I've 'eard of that," the Cockney put in. "Maybe 'e's right."

"All right, then, to the devil with the money," McCleery retorted. "But what about the railroadin' you gave me? A favor, was it? Well, I'm not swallowin' that. Stick up your mitts and take what's coming to you."

"Fool!" growled Boudet, and let drive at McCleery's head.

McCleery caught the blow on his shoulder and swung with a left that flattened the sergeant's nose. And then, all at once, the machine-guns and rifles of Company Twelve let go with a loud roar beyond the fort and Boudet dropped his guard. Out shot McCleery's right and the sergeant went down on his face.

"Cripes!" the Cockney gasped. "Now you've done it, and they've started the attack. Wot are we going to do?"

"Guess I shouldn't have hit him that last time," McCleery muttered. "He wasn't looking. Shall we do the job ourselves?"

"Do it ourselves! You bloomin'—"

"Come on!" McCleery seized the Cockney by the arm and dragged him across the intervening ground to the rear of the post. He stood him against the wall; climbed up on his shoulders and leaped at the parapet.

For a second or two he hung there, strengthening his hold. Then he pulled himself up and immediately he was confronted right and left by the Arab sentries.

The tribesmen stared at him dumbly for a moment. His disguise

had fooled them, but they began at once to question him. McCleery knew his inability to answer would promptly prove his undoing. In a flash he seized the man nearest him and leaped down into the yard.

HE landed on top and might have gotten away with it, but the tribesman seized his burnoose with a yell and down on top of them came the three other guards.

McCleery struggled to his feet, hoping to fight his way out, but the odds were too great. He saw one of the tribesmen level his rifle, and one of the others lurch forward with a knife. The Yank might have warded off the blow from the knife, but a lead slug was a different matter. He suddenly wondered if perhaps he wasn't the fool Boudet had called him—and then down from the wall leaped the sergeant and Higgins and each of them flattened one of the tribesmen to earth as he came.

McCleery got in one of his mighty uppercuts then. The sergeant sent the fourth guard to his maker with the man's own rifle-butt, and the struggle was abruptly over.

"By heaven, you got here just in time," McCleery declared.

"Yes, you thick-headed ass," the sergeant swore.

"Grab a rifle—quick!" he ordered. "I will go to the front and set off the charge at the gate. You attend to the one at the corner to the right and Higgins will take the one at the left."

"*Oui, mon Sergeant,*" the Cockney replied.

McCleery nodded and, seizing a rifle from one of the unconscious Arabs, he followed Boudet around to the front of the post. Outside, the Legion fire still raked the top of the wall; and half a hundred cursing, fight-maddened tribesmen crouched there waiting for the attack. The rest milled about at the base of the

wall, screaming their hate and impatient to join them.

The sergeant disappeared in the mob and the Cockney followed him. McCleery began working his way over to the angle of the wall at his right. The frenzied mob paid no attention to him. His head and part of his face covered with the turban, he was fairly safe.

He reached the corner and began a guarded search for the fuse. Then he discovered one of the tribesmen squatted down against the wall, guarding the very spot he sought.

The eyes of the milling, elbowing mob were all raised to the wall above—all, except those of the native guarding the fuse. Those eyes peered straight into McCleery's, in a stare gleaming with suspicion. There was no time to waste.

DELIBERATELY McCleery lowered his rifle and fired. It was a desperate move, but he was depending upon the mad screams and the roar of rifles and machine-guns above to drown the shot. It did.

Yelling with the rest, he waited a second to see what would happen. No one paid the slightest attention. He saw the man in the corner slump forward, and he dropped down beside him. Still no one noticed him; and, shoving the dead man aside, he found the fuse.

It was a crude affair, evidently made by the tribesmen themselves, but there could be no mistake about it. McCleery turned his back on the crowd; spread his flopping rags to conceal the flare of the match and lit the fuse.

Even then he remained there watching it, guarding it, until another second would have meant his own death. Then he backed away and ducked through the angry mob.

With a roar and a flash of flame, the wall rose from the ground in a thousand pieces and rained to

earth again, burying a score of screaming, struggling men beneath it. Another deafening explosion followed the first, and another shaft of flame shot skyward near the gate. Boudet had succeeded, also.

Backing away from the frantic, demoralized mob, McCleery waited for the third and final blast that should have come from the other corner. It was all that was needed to complete the rout. The Legion machine-guns were pouring lead through the two gaping holes and the slaughter was terrific. But still there was no report from the Cockney's corner.

Risking a bullet from his own guns, McCleery darted across the yard toward the opposite corner and there he collided with Boudet headed in the same direction. A struggling, snarling group in the corner told the story. Higgins had been discovered! He was standing there with his back to the wall, bare-headed, fighting for his life.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Fighting Fools*

**“W**E’VE got to save him!” McCleery shouted at the sergeant, and started pushing through the mob.

“We’ll get him! Follow me!” the sergeant shoved the Yank aside, and yelling something in Arabic that drew the attention of the tribesmen, he battled his way through just as the Cockney went down. Boudet whirled about, facing the crowd, then, and McCleery sprang forward beside him.

Spitting hate from their wide-open mouths, the Arabs closed in on them. McCleery fired once, then his hammer clicked on an empty chamber and he seized the rifle by the muzzle. The sergeant fired twice; then he, too, wielded his weapon by the barrel.

Gun-butta crashed down on flesh and bone with all the strength they could put into their blows. McCleery felt a stab of pain in his side; another in his leg. Blood trickled down over his cheek from a knife wound.

With a bayonet Boudet would have been in his glory. Every blow found its mark. But that leap from the wall to aid McCleery had cost him two broken ribs, and they wracked him with pain now every move he made. An Arab blade slashed through the flesh of his arm and his rifle sagged. McCleery saw him sway and shoving him back, he faced the remainder of the angry crowd alone.

How long he could have survived was a question. He battled like a man gone mad, and then the sergeant once more stood beside him; up on the other side staggered the Cockney.

The few tribesmen left fell back then and raced for the protection of the barracks where the others were attempting a final stand.

“Cripes!” the Cockney gasped. “I thought the bloody swine ’ad me skinned and quartered!”

“Quick! The fuse!” reminded the sergeant. “Did you find it?”

“Sure I found it, but one of the blarsted fools was sittin’ on it and I ’ad to crack ’is bloomin’ skull ’fore ’c’d get out of the way. One of the others seen me do it.”

“All right, touch it off, then run for the rear of the barracks!”

Higgins touched a match to the fuse and they raced for the protection of the barracks. The blast ripped another vast hole in the wall—and then Company Twelve came pouring in through the opening to surround the barracks.

Boudet, McCleery and the Cockney were ahead of them, struggling to free themselves of their cumbersome rags, when the sergeant yelled and pointed. “They’re sneaking out on us! Quick! Head them off!”

From a window at the rear of the

barracks, the tribesmen were racing for the wall in a desperate attempt to escape. As McCleery and the Cockney reached the sergeant's side, they saw two men drag one of the captured machine-guns from the barracks and follow the others.

"Look at the blighters!" Higgins shouted. "They're stealin' our guns!"

McCleery saw; he made a flying dive for the two Arabs with the machine-gun, and the three of them went down in a hopeless tangle. Boudet and the Cockney were not far behind. But that machine-gun would have been a valuable capture to the tribesmen, and half a dozen others came at once to aid the two McCleery had downed. They were on top of him like a pack of wolves.

**R**IGHT and left the big Yank swung his huge fists. He had lost his gun and he had nothing else to fight with. A knife reached for his throat; a gun barrel caught him a wicked blow on the head, but he seized the knife and buried it to the hilt in the man who had wielded it. The blow from the gun barrel staggered him, blinded him, but he fought harder.

Blow after blow he sent home with those big fists. He had no idea of what or whom he hit, but he knew that he must keep on fighting and he did his utmost. Finally there was but one remaining target for his swings, big black-bearded fellow.

It was some time before the frantic yells of the Cockney seeped in on his dazed brain. The man he was doing his best to batter senseless was Sergeant Boudet.

"*Sacré Dieu!*" the sergeant swore, when he finally quit. "Are you blind, you cursed fool? Let me have that gun!"

McCleery staggered back, wiping the sweat and blood from his eyes, and the Cockney shoved him out of the way while Boudet hastily set up the machine-gun.

The time for that, however, was past. There were no more tribesmen to train it on. The post was in the hands of Company Twelve. Captain Faudre, with the adjutant, was trying to bring the company to order.

"You blarsted fool!" the Cockney swore. "Are you never goin' to let up on 'im? And after 'e saved your bloomin' neck, too."

"I didn't know it was him," McCleery declared. "He was still wearin' that blamed nightgown and I thought—"

"*Rassemblement!*" the captain shouted, and the company hastily assembled.

"*Garde à vous!*"

The line snapped to attention. The captain eyed them with pride.

"Sergeant Boudet," he called, "front and center. Legionnaires McCleery and Higgins, step out."

The three came forward. Faudre touched his *képi*.

"Sergeant, you did an excellent bit of work," he said. "I will certainly mention it in my report."

"Thank you, *mon Capitaine*," Boudet saluted. "But these two men deserve as much credit as I do. I could not have succeeded alone."

"You are generous, Sergeant," the captain replied, "but rest assured they will receive proper credit. You may go to the barracks now and attend to your wounds. Dismissed."

"I'll be blowed," the Cockney exclaimed, when Boudet was out of hearing, "and after that bust in the nose you gave him, too."

"I'll take it all back," McCleery declared. "He's a square shooter in lots of ways. I believe what he told me. He's a fighting fool, too. I'm going to take him up on that man-to-man offer he made, some day, just to see how good he really is."

The Cockney stared. "Well, I'll be blowed! If you do, you deserve to get your bloomin' 'ead punched," he said, shaking his head.

# Bitter Justice



*He fired again, and a second native went down*

*Eerie Jungle Sounds and a Huge Monster of Swift  
Death in a Breath-Taking Story of Brazil's  
Great Valley of the Amazon*

By NILS B. STAHR

**T**HE sullen voice of the jungle, sounding through the mid-afternoon heat in the monotonous drone of deadly insects, was punctuated occasionally by the death scream of an animal caught in fang, or claw, or sinuous coil.

Beneath its canopy of trailing vines and boughs that interlaced

against a brazen sky, the jungle lay like a drowsing monster, sending its fetid breath in a low-flung bank of steam. High in the arching tree tops, bright-hued birds plucked vermin from their feathers and were mute in the relentless heat.

The Johnson Expedition into Brazil's great Valley of the Amazon

struggled grimly through tangled underbrush, over rotted tree trunks, slashing away the Lianas that clung to every ancient limb. The Indian guides and bearers were silent as they moved in the weird light of their fire-sticks.

They were like bronze devils in a hades of their own making, and fear was on their faces.

**WATCHING** them unceasingly, driving them deeper and deeper into the jungle, each by his own method, three white men also showed the marks of fear. Two of them, Dr. George Johnson and Jim Roland, his second in command, feared that mysterious expanse through their knowledge of it. The third man, Billy Evans, was in terror of it through his ignorance.

Somewhere in the dense growth nearby, there was a sudden hoarse cough, a piercing shriek and the crackling of underbrush. Then silence fell.

Evans froze in his tracks and his eyes became sick.

"Damn it, Jim, can't those natives lead us through clearing? Why don't they beat the bush ahead of us?"

Roland faced him and his own eyes were haggard and bloodshot. "Steady, Bill. It's just a jaguar, or a boa, grabbing himself a meal."

Johnson nodded and forced a smile. "We're letting our nerves ride us. I've got either the creeps or ticks crawling up my spine, this minute."

Ahead of them a resounding crash, dulled in the heavy atmosphere, was followed by an inhuman, long-drawn cry that rose up through the dripping lianas and was lost in a strangely hideous silence. The Indians crouched on their copper-colored haunches, their wild eyes blazing in the light. The three white men stood tensely, with half uplifted rifles.

The jungle sounds resumed. But the Indians remained motionless,

staring ahead into the brooding shadows, or glancing back swiftly at their masters.

"What in hell is that?" Evans' voice trembled in a paroxysm of futile rage and horror.

Johnson shook his head and his expression was grave. "That's the third time we've heard it now. Frankly, I can't make it out. What do you say, Jim?"

Roland returned his questioning gaze blankly. "I haven't an idea, Doctor. I never heard anything like it before."

A wailing cry went up from the Indians in a sort of chant. Roland sprang ahead and the others followed him.

"They're balking again!" Evans exclaimed bitterly. "A good rawhiding, Jim."

**ROLAND** spoke coolly over his shoulder. "Let me do this, Bill. You've got 'em bad-tempered enough as it is."

When they strode in among the natives, they saw what had caused the wailing. Two of the dark-skinned guides had plunged out into the tangle and returned, bearing between them the crushed and mangled body of one who had been with them only a few minutes earlier. He had made the awful mistake of cutting his way too far from his companions. For a time the Indians were silent, their eyes watchful.

Jim bent swiftly over the bloody figure and straightened at once. "Done for," he said curtly. He stood up and turned to Johnson. "What sort of animal would do that, Doctor?"

"God knows, Jim. I've told you before, about my suspicions, but—"

"You mean—" Evans spoke almost in a whisper.

"As I say," Johnson added, "I've heard that there's a possibility—that's all—that some prehistoric monster

might have survived the centuries, or perhaps the species carried on. They'd have more than two million square miles in which to live. That's what we're here for, as you know. To try and find the bones—anything which might indicate that such monsters actually did once exist." He frowned. "But not still alive!"

**T**HE high-pitched wail rose again and Evans whirled. His hand dropped to the heavy automatic that hung in its holster on his hip. He still clung to his rifle.

"Damn their yelping," he screamed.

His movement seemed to be a signal. A lean, insane-eyed Indian sprang into the air and flung his muscular arms out in a wide sweeping gesture of appeal. Another shrieked brokenly and whirled to face the white men.

Jim recognized the danger signs of jungle madness and started toward them with outspread hands, his rifle caught beneath his armpit muzzle, down. Johnson moved up beside him. There was a concerted movement among the Indians, so swift that it was like the instinctive maneuvering of wild animals hunting in a pack. Their terror suddenly passed all bounds of reason.

A knife flung from a tawny hand glittered as it spun through the air, catching the patchwork rays of sunlight that filtered through the trees. Johnson coughed and staggered. One hand went to his chest and plucked weakly at a carved bone handle that quivered where its blade was buried to the hilt.

He stared oddly at Jim and his knees buckled. As Jim caught him, a second knife whirled crazily toward them.

Jim dodged, but the blade slashed his cheek. He was on his knees shielding Johnson and he had dropped his rifle. He fired through his holster with the automatic at a

guide whose knife was already raised for throwing. The fellow spun and shrieked unintelligibly as he fell. Jim fired again and a second native went down, writhing in the underbrush.

Strangely, as though by concerted signal from some jungle code, the Indians turned and ran, vanishing almost immediately in the thick growth beyond.

Jim looked into Johnson's face and knew that the doctor was beyond human aid. He lowered the body to the ground and slowly got to his feet, still gripping the warm butt of the automatic.

His roving gaze swept the little clearing on both sides and he turned to search for Evans.

The jungle was uncannily silent. He studied the twisted growth, expecting to find another motionless figure, silenced by a well-flung knife. He stood rigidly for a moment, straining his eyes.

"Bill—where are you?" His voice rang sharply.

**H**E stiffened as he caught a movement beside a thick, vine-laden tree. Evans stepped out hesitantly, still clinging to his rifle. His eyes were staring and unnatural with the light of horror. His mouth hung open and for an instant he made no effort to speak.

"Are you all right, Jim?" His gaze was riveted to the blood that stained Roland's face and dripped slowly down to spread crimson on his khaki shirt.

"Quite. They got Johnson. Are you hurt?"

Bill glanced at the still figure and looked swiftly away. He shook his head.

"God, it was quick!" he exclaimed plaintively. "I saw a knife coming at me and dodged behind a tree. It was all over before I could get organized. I dropped the damned rifle

somewhere—just picked it up when you called.”

He broke off sharply, studying Jim's face. “Well, let's get going. I'm fed up on this.”

**J**IM regarded him with a mixture of pity and contempt in his gaze. “We'll bury George he said slowly. “Those Indians have headed for the river, Bill. We're lost anyway, so there's no need to hurry.”

“Lost!”

Jim nodded gravely. “George knew this country as well as any white man can know it. I'm confused, I'll admit it. But I think those damned Indians are striking for our camp. If they get to it, they'll butcher Kendall and take our raft.”

He shrugged. “Everything we own is aboard it.”

Evans lurched unsteadily. His feverish eyes smoldered and his flesh showed raw from the stings of black flies and vicious ants.

“Well, what are we waiting for, then?” he snarled. “Johnson's dead. Let's try and get out of this while we've got a chance. Night'll be down on us—”

Jim looked again at the body of George Johnson. His voice rasped harshly when he faced the haggard man beside him.

“Bill, from now on you do as I say, understand? If you hadn't mistreated those Indians, they never would have turned on us. They were afraid of us at first. You made them hate us.”

He turned away and from a discarded heap of supplies that had been dropped by one of the carriers, he took a spade and an ax. He chose a spot beneath a giant massaranduba tree that rose a little higher than the surrounding ground.

Evans stood in silence while he dug a shallow grave.

Together, they lifted the body from the underbrush and lowered it.

When it was covered, Jim searched for massive rocks which he placed over the grave. He straightened and bared his head.

For a moment he stood there in silent tribute, then wheeled abruptly to face Evans.

“All right, Billy, let's try for it.” His voice had become gentle and there was no longer anger in his eyes; only a blending of regret and grim determination.

The swift dusk of the jungle blotted out the faint light that had penetrated through the tree tops. Strange sounds reached them, now at a distance, again close by. The insect symphony droned everywhere and attacked their faces, clustering in angry little clouds about both their heads.

Jim walked in advance with a torch. Its wavering light cast leaping shadows about them, giving to the jungle the fantastic illusion of some weird stage setting for a tragedy. Again and again he stumbled over a half submerged log, or tripped on a length of vine as thick as a hawser line and tougher. He heard Evans cursing bitterly at the insects and at the weight of his pack.

“**C**OME up closer behind me. You'll get better light,” he called over his shoulder.

“Damn it, I believe you're going in circles,” Evans retorted. “Why in hell did you come down here, if you didn't know what you were up against?”

Jim smiled acidly to himself. “Sorry, old man. I didn't know you were coming along, you know.”

The thought brought with it to Jim a host of memories and again he found himself puzzled by the peculiar circumstances under which Evans had joined the expedition at the last minute back on a Hoboken pier.

He remembered the day he first had met Billy, at a house party given by

Peggy Bryan at her father's country estate. He had almost finished the task of fitting out for the expedition. The three of them, Peggy and Evans and Jim, were standing together watching the sun go down behind the White Mountains. Bill leaned indolently against a gaunt rock that thrust from the ground.

"When you can get scenery like this," he had drawled, "why the devil do you go to Brazil, Roland?"

JIM recalled that he had laughed. "If it were a matter of scenery, I wouldn't budge."

"Every man to his choice." Billy's tone was lightly edged with contempt. "All I know about Brazil is that it's a place where they cultivate nuts."

And then, a few days later, when their southbound tramp was ready to sail, Billy had appeared on board with his credentials all signed and approved by the high powers of the scientific society that was backing the expedition.

One of them happened to be his uncle.

Jim's train of thought was shattered by a heavy crashing in the jungle on their left. It was followed instantly by unearthly cries, so high pitched and agonized that it was impossible to distinguish whether they were from human or animal. He halted and dropped his heavy supply pack. Before it struck the ground a rifle barked and he heard the thin whine of a steel jacketed bullet as it passed his head.

Turning, he saw Evans slowly lowering his rifle. A wisp of smoke curled upward from the muzzle to lose itself in the gloom. Evans' face was contorted in a frenzy of rage and terror that he could not control.

"Easy, Bill. You nearly nicked me that time." Jim spoke coolly.

"God, my finger slipped on the trigger." Bill was staring into the

impenetrable blackness on his left, where all was now strangely silent. He was trembling and his voice sounded hollow and unnatural.

"It's that—that same thing again," he said weakly.

Jim strained his ears to catch, if possible, the crunch of great cloven hoofs, or massive paws. In the swift tension he questioned himself whether it would not be better to relieve Evans of his gun until his nerves quieted. He decided against it instantly, on the dual grounds that in emergency Bill might be useful; and secondly, to disarm him would be to weaken his morale.

"Whatever it is," Jim said quietly, "it's feeding. Let's shove along."

Evans followed more closely at his heels, breathing heavily beneath the weight of his burden, his reddened eyes gleaming balefully in the flickering light of the torch.

They came to a sluggish stream that crept out from the morass with the deliberate lazy movement of a giant serpent that has fed well and seeks a place to rest.

"We'll follow this if we can make it," Jim said. "It gets to the river, somewhere."

Evans grunted. "Thank God you've found something right."

THE little creek twisted sinuously among gaunt trees, through infrequent swamp clearings. Often it was lost beneath the arched vines that strung above it.

Jim smothered a swift exclamation as he sprang forward into a sudden clearing that had obviously been trampled beneath a heavy weight. A contorted figure sprawled in a mass of trodden undergrowth. Jim bent over it and turned the battered head face upward. It was Manuel, their lead guide.

His body had been crushed almost beyond recognition.

Jim got to his feet a little un-

steadily. His eyes were dazed, more from uncanny bewilderment than horror or fear. He had known other jungles; deserts, too, and mountains, lost islands and strange seas; and he had come to accept it as a foregone conclusion that each of them had its mysteries as it had its endless threat of death to man.

Evans stood speechless, his jaw hanging in the relaxation of complete terror.

"There must be more than one of —them," Jim said.

EVANS stared about him at the dripping trees, and his hand clutched spasmodically around the barrel of his rifle.

"Come on," he said hoarsely. "If we stop every time we find a stiff—"

He broke off as the jungle resounded to the hunting call of a jaguar. Other calls answered it, and animals of high and low degree in the kingdom of desolation took up the cry.

"They'll drift toward fresh water now," Jim muttered. "We'll pitch camp for the night, Bill. No use going on now. We'd be easy prey in the darkness."

Evans nodded.

He sat on a rotting log while Jim began to unpack.

"Gather up dry wood, Bill. We'll need a roaring fire."

Evans returned Jim's gaze defiantly, as though he resented the tone of command.

"No jungle animal will approach fire," Jim added.

Evans went to work promptly, and in a little while the yellow flames were leaping up toward the festooned trees like darting fangs. Jim cooked a frugal meal and they sat facing each other across the fire.

"Is this all we've got to eat?" Evans demanded.

Jim smiled, without mirth. "Until we find the raft. If that's gone, we'll have to live on the jungle." Some-

where on the river, he hoped that Kendall would be waiting.

A bough cracked above them and Evans jerked convulsively. Jim regarded him curiously.

"Why did you come into this, Bill?"

His tone was friendly and sympathetic.

"Was it just that you wanted the adventure of it?"

"What else?" Evans snapped. "Adventure, hell. It's torture. I was a damned fool. Anybody who pokes into the jungle is a fool."

Jim gazed into the dancing fire. "Maybe you're right," he observed. "Unless you except the men who came here and got something done—men such as Roosevelt, Rondon, Dyott, Bates—chaps who took the long chance for their research. And now—Johnson."

"Where do you rate?" Evans inquired, with a sneer in his voice.

Jim shrugged and nodded toward the body of Manuel, that lay back in the shadows. "You and I team along with him, I guess. We're failures."

Evans' already stricken face blanched to a greenish hue in the yellow light. He coughed. "Do you figure we're done for? We can't get through, you mean?"

JIM laughed mildly. "Oh, no. You turn in, Bill. I'll stand first watch. A good rest will ease up your nerves. Probably we'll come to the river within an hour's march in the morning. Kendall won't give up the raft without a battle."

Evans rolled wearily into his poncho and blanket, drawing his head well beneath them as protection against the buzzing insects of the night.

Jim added more logs to the fire and while he kept a wary eye on the jungle about their little clearing, he set about once more to dig a grave in the rotted ground.

He buried Manuel without ceremony, but with no lack of respect. A heap of rocks marked the spot where no prowling marauder of the jungle would be able to make a grizzly feast.

Jim sat on his haunches beside the fire. All about him the night sounds rose as the fire threw contorted shadows against the blackness of the trees. Occasionally, he caught the green glow of wild eyes staring at him from the underbrush. When he moved, they would vanish as suddenly as they had appeared. Now and then a deep savage cough sounded close by, and frequently there came the bitter howl of a slinking jaguar, or the anguished cry of a doomed animal.

Outwardly alert, with every nerve stretched taut and every muscle ready, he allowed his thoughts to wander back into civilization, across miles of jungle and sea.

**T**HEY carried him to the scene on Lake Winnepesaukee, set between the rolling White Mountains of New Hampshire, when he had driven a canoe shoreward through the white-caps that were beaten up by a sunset breeze. Peggy Bryan reclined in the bow.

"Now for a swim," he had said, "and then away I go, confound it. It's been awfully good to be up here."

She had glanced up quickly. "Today, you mean? Why, the party isn't half over."

"I know. But I have to be in Boston. I'm to meet some of the backers of our expedition."

"Oh. When do you sail?"

"This week, as soon as we're outfitted."

He drove the canoe toward the beach and backed water. As it slid up on the sand beach, he had helped her out.

"It should be a glorious adventure,"

she had said. "I'm wishing you all the luck there is."

**T**HEY had stood together and he still held her hand. Her slender figure was silhouetted against the blue expanse of lake and sky. Spray that had been driven over the bow clung to the dark curls of her hair like gems against velvet.

"That's a good omen right at the start," he told her. He had turned away from her for a moment and gazed across the dancing water. "I wish," he added, "that I had known you before."

He recalled the enigmatic beauty of her smile as she replied. "One of the penalties you pay for always wandering."

That had been all that ever existed between him and Peggy. Jim got up uneasily and flung another log on the fire. Sparks shot upward and were lost in the damp breath of the night. He glanced at his wrist watch. It was time to call Evans. He felt suddenly exhausted, eager to let himself sink into complete oblivion. The memory of civilization had not served to calm his nerves.

Evans was snoring. Jim roused him with an effort.

"All right, Bill, your watch."

Evans growled unintelligibly and sat up, rubbing his eyes. "Hell, I didn't get any sleep at all," he said resentfully.

Jim dropped to the ground. "Keep the fire up. Call me in two hours."

He fell asleep almost instantly, unaware of Evans' nervous chatter just beside him. He awakened with a feeling of chilled discomfort. His muscles were stiff and he sat up with the blanket drawn about his shoulders. The fire was down to dying embers and the smoke hung low in the jungle dampness. He gazed about him in the partial daze of half wakefulness. Evans was not there.

The realization brought him to his

feet with swift awareness. He swept the clearing with a glance that missed nothing. Bill's rifle and pack were gone, which was evidence enough that he had quit camp of his own volition. Jim stood motionless for a few moments considering the course to take. Daylight was beginning to show like a haggard gray mask above the laced curtain of the trees.

HE knew instantly that his only move was to trail Evans through the jungle. It was, he told himself, a bad attack of fever, or a fit of temporary madness, that had sent the man alone into the treacherous depths that he feared so much in his normal mind.

Jim turned to take up his own pack that contained the greater part of their food and ammunition. The thongs were parted and he saw that the pack had been rifled. He bent down and swiftly checked the contents. A few tins of food was all that remained.

He straightened and studied the ground about him, although he knew in advance that it would not be necessary now to follow any trail. Evans would head for the river by way of the winding creek.

The proof of desertion was sufficient now.

A square patch of white that clung to a briary vine on the edge of the clearing caught his eye and he strode toward it. As he leaned down, Jim saw that it was an envelope and in the faint light he read the blotted writing.

It was addressed to him and in the lower left-hand corner were the words: "Ship letter."

He drew a folded sheet and bent low to read its message.

Dear Jim Roland:

There are things one cannot say, or should not, at certain moments. When you told me that you were leaving, you regretted that we had not known each other

before. I could not tell you, in return, that Billy and I are no longer engaged. That would have made it too obvious that I had regrets of my own. But now that Billy has suddenly determined to go with you, I can say; be very careful and come back. We may, when you return, come to know each other better. Good luck.—Peggy.

He thrust the letter into his pocket. It came to him in that bitter instant that Evans had intended to kill him back in the jungle when that awful crash had spoiled his aim. He realized, too, that Peggy had sent the letter to the ship before they sailed; and in the easy camaraderie on board, it had been simple for Evans to steal it from his cabin before he saw it.

JIM slipped the pack over his shoulder and plunged into the jungle. By following the least congested course through the brush, as close beside the stream as he could walk, he had no difficulty in finding the marks of Evans' boots. He listened intently for the jungle sounds and watched the tangled gloom about him with wary, angered eyes.

He had no desire to kill Evans in the event that he overtook him. On the contrary, he preferred to administer punishment of another kind. He doubted that the raft would be where they had left it, or that young Kimball had escaped the Indians. That would leave Evans and himself together, to face the jungle and ferret out a way to live if they could.

Jim knew that, when the moment came, he would divide the supplies and the ammunition and give Evans his choice of a course to follow. Then he, himself, would take another.

At least, he told himself bitterly, it was possible for a man to choose his own company even in the heart of the jungle.

Suddenly, the stream on his left began to widen perceptibly. The

current increased and the natural growth became less difficult to penetrate. He stumbled on doggedly and became aware of a change in the atmosphere. The unforgettable smell of the river came to him and, presently, he emerged from the dense foliage to come upon a gentle slope, heavily overgrown with lush swamp grass.

**B**ELOW him, the Amazon spread to the distant wooded shore, a vast brown stream that swept majestically to the sea.

At first, in the brazen morning sunlight, it was difficult to distinguish objects against the drab mud color of the river and the ground that lay beside it. Then suddenly, Jim saw the raft, a slender dark object moored in a cove, almost hidden, except from high ground.

As his eyes swiftly accustomed themselves to the light, he caught a movement on the shore.

He recognized Evans trudging along the muddy beach toward the raft, bent beneath his pack, dragging himself in a final spurt of desperation.

Jim moved down from the rise rapidly and came to the shore, where the ground was baked and it was easier to keep up the pace. He was overtaking Evans swiftly.

Two little human figures, in a universe that was otherwise motionless except for the crawling river and, high in the relentless sky, a lone buzzard soaring in tireless spirals. One man dragging himself as though each step might be his last; the other forcing onward, grimly. Each of them with haggard, unshaven faces, eyes dulled from suffering; both of them mud-spattered and ragged from the jungle thorns.

Jim gasped and his eyes widened in horrified amazement as he saw a movement in the water almost beside

the plodding Evans, even before Evans himself saw it. When Evans did, he seemed to freeze in his tracks and his pitiful cry swept back on the still air. His rifle hung uselessly in his hand. His pack slipped to the hard ground and turned over.

From the river's edge there sprang with incredible speed a huge, glistening anaconda, its head twisting high in the air as it drew its thirty-foot length from the lagging current. The serpent flung itself forward. Evans screamed a second time and leaped aside, but it was as though a terrified rabbit had attempted to evade the flashing stroke of a waiting rattler.

**T**HE long writhing body gleamed hideously. The huge head darted accurately toward the helpless Evans, who had lost what little strength remained in his weary, jungle-tortured body.

As the snake hurtled through the air like a giant lariat thrown with unerring accuracy, its tail churned the water and spray shot up to sparkle in the sun. The huge head turned and in an instant the first coil wrapped itself about the struggling, screaming Evans.

He had, instinctively, reached for his knife, but like his rifle it was knocked a dozen feet through the air, spinning dizzily.

Jim sprang ahead. Twice he raised his rifle and lowered it. To send a bullet into that writhing mass of man and serpent would have been as dangerous for one as for the other. Evans, in the mania of utter terror, acquired the strength of two men, and with arms and legs he fought against the slowly tightening coil that had gripped his body.

As he sprang almost within arm's reach of the lashing tail that had now been withdrawn from the river, Jim forgot all other things except the primitive horror of his task. He forgot Bill's motive for coming into

the jungle, forgot Peggy's plaintive letter; even the unforgivable desertion in the dark jungle dawn.

He stepped closer and his sheath knife glittered evilly as he struck a long, deep blow that cut through gleaming scales and thick flesh. He struck again and subconsciously knew that each blow, each thrust, was an answer to the ageless jungle code. Man against beast, beast against man, and only the fit survived.

**T**HE anaconda lashed the hard-baked shore, struggling to maintain its coil about Evans and at the same time to encircle the new enemy. Jim leaped away and sprang in again, plunging the knife to its hilt so that only the recoiling agony of the serpent itself aided him to withdraw the blade. Blood spurted from the gaping wounds as though it was a carmine stream, ejected with the force of a pressure pump.

Evans, still struggling, screamed horribly. Jim saw his face, purple and distorted, not like anything human. He tried to shout a reassuring word, but sounds gurgled in his throat as he fought. He was red with blood and the knife no longer gleamed, for it, too, was coated and dripping.

His arm rose and fell as he plunged the knife into the twitching, scaly flesh, again and again. Those repeated thrusts began to tell. The whipping body beat down with gradually decreasing power.

Jim seized it with one hand and followed up its thickening, slippery length. Above him the great head weaved back and forth and he stared up into cold, drab eyes that were as evil as the oldest sin, as bitter as revenge, as relentless as inevitable death itself.

The head swung downward. Jim waited until it hung just above him, then struck again. His blade sank into the thick neck. He reached up

with his free arm and held the neck, then slashed with all of his remaining strength. He felt the knife cut through—

The severed head moved convulsively and he flung it down. The coil that encircled Evans slowly loosened and the huge writhing body twitched and beat in its death struggle. Evans fell forward and lay motionless. Jim stood for a moment wavering, then he, too, plunged to the ground and lay there sucking in the air in great draughts.

Presently he forced himself to sit up. Evans was staring into the sky and his naked chest rose and fell as he gasped. Jim looked down into his face and turned away, embarrassed somehow, by the fear he saw there.

The beheaded anaconda still jerked on the hot clay bank, and already a droning cloud of jungle flies hovered over it.

**A**BOVE them, buzzards had circled lower.

"It's okay now, Bill." Jim's voice sounded far away in his own ears.

Evans mumbled unintelligibly. Jim crawled across the intervening space between them and bent over him with probing hands. Evans cried out in pain. As he examined the battered body, Jim realized the source of the jungle mystery—the crashing sounds and the awful cries—the crushed bodies of Manuel and the native guide.

The anacondas were hungry, and whatever came within their reach fell into the killer's coil.

He straightened and forced a haggard smile. "Some ribs cracked, Bill. I think that's all."

Evans groaned weakly and met Jim's gaze with a pleading in his own eyes.

"You can't—kid me, Jim. I'm done for."

He put out a torn hand and drew

Jim closer. "Listen," his voice became stronger and he breathed more evenly, "in my kit—you'll find a letter—"

Jim started to speak, but Evans rushed on. "It's for you—from Peggy. I stole it." He lowered his gaze and Jim looked away to relieve him.

"Peggy and I were—going to be married," he resumed hurriedly. "She broke it off. That's why I joined up with you. Got my uncle to make a place in the expedition for me. Told him I wanted adventure."

Again Jim opened his lips to say that he had found the letter; that he understood.

"I wanted to—kill you," Bill went on. "I tried to. That damned noise—killed my aim. That's all. Go back, Jim—tell her she's right. I'm a rotter."

Jim raised him gently against his

shoulder. "Forget it, old man. Peggy doesn't care a hang about me."

For the first time Evans met his gaze fairly. "I know her better than you do, Jim. She loves you."

**F**AR up the shore from the direction of the raft, a lone man moved toward them at a trot. Jim recognized Kendall instantly and knew that he had seen them through his binoculars. He sat up swiftly and stared against the sun.

"It's Kendall," he said quietly.

Evans nodded. "When we get to Para," he said thoughtfully, "I'm taking a ship for Europe, Jim. You'll be catching a freighter, or something—for the States."

Jim's hand touched the crumpled letter in his pocket; the letter that had been lost and found.

"Yes," he replied. "I'll go back to the States, Bill."

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## CHAPTER I

### *Figure of Evil*

**Z**ARBOLA!  
Previous to the world war of 1961 the name would have meant nothing in any language. Now, in the world language, Xephon, it meant City of Golden Spires. It also meant North America: two hundred miles square, the City of Golden Spires housed most of the inhabitants of the continent.

Zarbola! Truly named City of Golden Spires! Formed of countless colossal buildings rearing their shafts at six-block distances, the space between was made into park and lighted by the life-giving, carbon dioxide, daylight tubes.

In the center of this gigantic metropolis soared the seven hundred and twenty-six story Central Control Building. Under its dome, made of the glittering yellow metal, klingsite as were all the other domes,



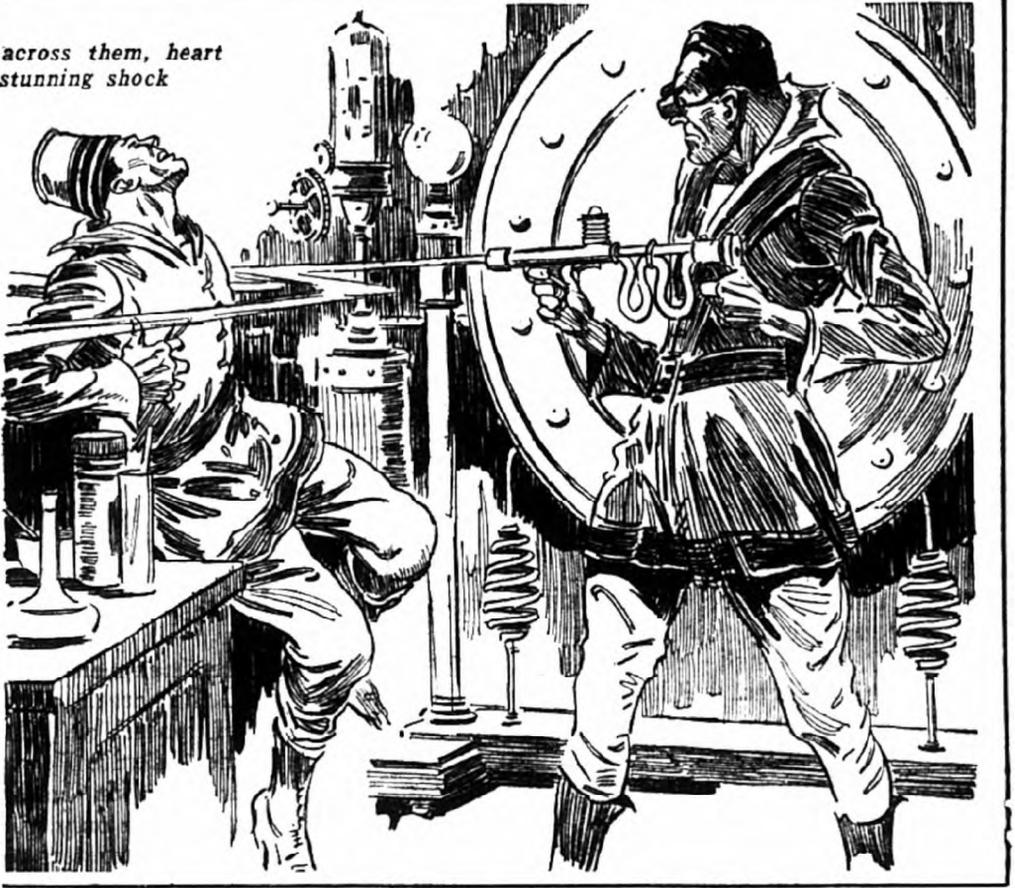
was the office of the Head of the Control Bureau.

At his desk, on the afternoon of August fourth, 2361 A. D., sat the Head himself, Cell Raggan. He was studying a paper written over with the terse Xephon script; and as he read it, deep lines creased his forehead.

He got to his feet and paced the great room, gazing absently through the glass walls at the giant city that rolled out of sight in every direction. Then he stepped to his huge klingsite desk and pressed the telesite switch.

The transmitted image of a broad-shouldered young man leaped out on the telesite screen taking up the east wall of the office. This was Ornich Fax, secretary to Cell Raggan, powerful in the city's affairs in spite of his youth.

across them, heart  
stunning shock



"Fax, summon Tenlow Hass and then come to my office, please"

"At once, sir," the secretary replied.

The screen went blank. Raggan took up his agitated pacing, the furrows in his brow growing deeper.

The buzz of the announcer told him that Fax and Hass were at the door. He spoke the combination releasing the lock, and sat down at his desk as the two came in. A gleam came to his old eyes at the sight of them, but was clouded at once with the stern look of the leader in an emergency.

Two giants, these. Ornich Fax, dark and slow-moving, was three inches over the Zarbola average of six feet two; and Tenlow Hass, flaxen-haired and lightning quick in thought and act, was only half an inch shorter.

"Hass," Raggan began bluntly, "how long has it been since you heard from Operative T45S6?"

"Two weeks and four days," replied the young Zarbola Secret Service Chief.

"You've had no word whatever from him in that time?"

"None whatever. His wave-length has been dead. I've had a special operator on it constantly, and not a syllable has come through."

"It is not the wave-length of T45S6 that is dead," said Raggan bleakly. "It is the man himself."

"What?"

"Yes." The Head handed him the paper he had been studying. Hass took it and he and Fax read:

Report of T45S6. To Head of Control Bureau. Duplicate to Chief of Secret Service:

I have discovered the source of that

which you suspected. But in so doing I have been myself discovered and captured. Able to communicate only in script, I have found a messenger in my dungeon which I hope can be relied on to get a message to your attention.

Headquarters for that which you suspected is in sublevel seventeen, building 126 F, northeast. Come at once, for God's sake, if you—

The message ended in a scrawl.

Hass gazed at Raggan, his blue eyes cold as ice.

"Duplicate to Chief of Secret Service," he quoted. "I got no duplicate."

"I know," said the Head. "If you had, you'd have reported here at once, of course."

"How did this come to you, sir?"

"An electrical worker from building 122 F, northeast, brought it."

"And he? Where did he get it?"

Raggan drummed on the arm of his chair. "Building 122 F, a tenement tower, is unsanitary enough to harbor rats, it seems. This man chanced to see one dragging along sublevel two, and noticed something white tied to it. He caught it and found the white thing was a message tied to the creature's hind legs, which themselves had been bound together so the rat could be captured. That message was this report."

"And the duplicate?" mused Fax. "I wonder where that is."

"God knows," replied Hass. "The rat that bore it may be dead in a sewer—or it may have been caught by one of the band we're after."

"In which case," said Fax calmly, "they know that we know—and anybody going to sublevel seventeen, building 126 F, will be warmly received!"

**H**ASS nodded. Both looked at Raggan.

"There's a chance," said the Head, "that the band didn't catch the second rat. We'll have to act on it. You, Hass, with a hundred opera-

tives and neuron-rods, shall clear out their nest—"

"I wouldn't try that," a voice interrupted. It was a harsh voice, a mocking voice, the voice of none in that room. It came from the tele-site screen on the east wall.

The three whirled around. On the screen showed a strange picture—a figure bulky but deformed under its white tunic, topped by a bearded, hook-nosed face in which were set gray-green, evil eyes.

"I wouldn't try to clear out my nest with a hundred times a hundred men," the harsh voice went on. "Because if you do, your city will be destroyed in less time than it takes to speak its name."

**S**PEECHLESS, the three men stared at the image on the screen. How was this intrusion possible? The line went only to the Telesite Power Station, one hundred floors below. Over that line should come only pictures picked up on the master receivers.

And how was it that the reverse switch was open, allowing this hook-nosed man of mystery to listen in on conversation in the Head's office?

The figure bowed ironically.

"Allow me to introduce myself. I am Boc Mornug—future ruler of Zarbola, and the rest of Earth. Hear my terms:

"Before ten o'clock tonight you, Cell Raggan, will publicly announce your resignation. You will announce as your successor—myself. You will instruct all Bureaus to place themselves under my control. You understand?"

"I understand I am dealing with a madman," snapped the Head. But his voice quivered.

"I think you know I am not mad," sneered the bearded mouth. "And I think you will obey my command."

"If I don't?"

"Then every building in Zarbola

will smash to the ground at the stroke of ten tonight. You have until then to surrender unconditionally. My wave-length is RV3449B½. Gentlemen, good afternoon."

The burly, twisting figure faded; the gray-green eyes remained, mocking, sardonic, till the last.

Hass drew a long breath.

"And now we know," he said quietly.

"Now we know," nodded the Head. "The tremor that shook this building twice in the past three weeks was due to no natural cause. Boc Mornug did it."

"But—how?"

"The Head of the Science Board does not know."

"What can we do?" half whispered Fax.

"I think we—must surrender." The words were wrenched painfully from Raggan's lips. "Though perhaps Zarbola's destruction is preferable to deliverance to the terrors of mad, criminal rule."

He slumped down in his chair. "Please go. I have no orders, Hass, my son. This is beyond the Service—beyond all but the duties of my own office."

Hass started impulsively to speak. Fax shook his head silently. They went out.

"To the Telesite Station," Hass snapped to the elevator attendant. "I want to know how that devil got through to the Head's private screen."

THE mystery was shortly solved. At the foot of the giant Station control board lay four dead men. Death, not treachery, had opened the Head's official line to the hook-nosed outlaw.

In spite of the horror of the sight, Hass knew relief.

The two descended to Secret Service headquarters on the two hundredth floor.

## CHAPTER II

### *In the Power Tunnels*

"LET me hear of this," begged Fax, when they were in Hass' secluded, insulated office. "The Head has kept it secret even from me."

"And from every one else save from myself, the Head of Science, and Operative T45S6," replied Hass. "Well, there's no more need for secrecy."

"Four months ago there was a curious lessening of crime in Zarbola. I suspected at once that a master brain was banding the criminal element for some large-scale operation."

Fax nodded. "That much I know."

"Well, three weeks ago, and again a few days ago, a mysterious thing happened. This building, Number One Dome, swayed on its foundations. The movement was slight; only a few persons felt the tremor; but Dod, of Science, surveyed the foundation pillars and discovered that the building had settled about four-hundredths of an inch.

"Seismograph records were consulted. There have been no earth tremors for years serious enough to shake the building. What did it?"

"Here, then, were two puzzles: a cessation of petty crime and the inexplicable tremor that had shaken the Control Building. I linked the two together and, shortly after the first tremor three weeks ago, I sent Operative T45S6 to spy through the underworld and see if he could learn anything.

"I thought perhaps the master criminal, whoever he might be, was planning to shake down Zarbola's bank buildings and loot the wreckage. How far I was from the mark! How infinitely greater is the plan of this outlaw—whom we now know as Boc Mornug!"

"I begin to see why the Head

wilted so completely at the man's threat," said Fax.

"Yes. He knew that the threat of levelling the city at its foundations was not an empty one."

"But who is Boc Mornug?"

"We know little of him. He was once assistant to Head of Science of the city of Gramshar on the Black Sea. He disappeared six years ago, after killing a man, and was presumed dead himself. Now—he turns up here."

Both were silent, reviewing the paralyzing situation.

Boc Mornug, outlaw scientist, had organized Zarbola's criminals. He had found a way of overthrowing the city's mammoth skyscrapers. Now the city must be turned over to him and his army of murderers—or be destroyed with all its dozens of millions of citizens.

Head of Control, Raggan, must decide Zarbola's fate before ten o'clock.

**F**AX glanced at his electric watch and swore softly. It was now nearly six.

Absently he gazed through the wall, watching an African air-liner settle down, watching passengers stream from its triple ports, watching workers begin to roll out klingsite casks containing, no doubt, the refuse clay of the diamond mines, from which science was just beginning to produce small amounts of synthetic radium.

"Well," he said finally, gazing at Hass, "we each know what the other is thinking."

Hass nodded. "If a large force goes after Mornug in sublevel seventeen, it will be easily discovered and the bandit will wreck the city. But two men might creep up on him undetected, where an army would spell doom. However—there's no reason for you to risk your life, Fax. This is a police job."

"As a civilian who would be one of the first killed by Mornug," retorted Fax, "I think I have a right to share this."

Hass hesitated, then flipped open a drawer and took out two dull metal rods. Neuron-rods, releasing a charge that acted directly on the neurons, or nerve cells, of any living organism. They were adjustable so that the cytoplasm of the neurons could be shocked to temporary insensibility, or completely disintegrated, which meant instant death.

Hass handed one to Fax and took the other himself.

"Any last messages you want to leave, old boy?"

"No," said Fax, "unless you think I ought to report to Cell Raggan."

Hass shook his head. "He'd command us not to try this. You know how the old man feels about us."

A softer look crossed Fax's face. He did know.

They went to the elevators. Miles to the northeast lay building 126 F, in the heart of the tenement district. Under the sinister, four hundred and fifty story pile lay destruction for Zarbola, a secret guarded by an army of cutthroats. Two against a horde, invading a literal underworld of tunnels holding secrets which even the designing engineers knew nothing of, Fax and Hass set out to pit their wits against the brilliant brain of Mornug.

"**T**HE subways will be watched, and I Mornug knows us now by sight," Hass mused as they emerged from the Control Building. "How will we get to building 126 F?"

"The power tunnels are supposed to be safe and secret," suggested Fax.

"They are. But we can't waste time walking to 126 F. We have less than four hours in which to work. We'll have to go by air, and try an old scheme of mine."

Openly they climbed into the ma-

roon helicopter which Hass used on official business.

A figure skulked behind a nearby machine.

"We're watched," muttered Fax.

"Good," said Hass. "I want us to be."

The speedy machine rose rapidly. At once a second machine soared after them.

"Why not shoot it down?" ventured Fax.

Hass pointed. Behind the trailing machine another was rising. "Mornug is taking no chances!"

North and east Hass rocketed, till building 126 F loomed on the horizon.

"And now for the trick," said Hass grimly. He pointed at a dingy, old-fashioned tower. "At the rear of that building is a single terrace. We'll skim the side, round it quickly, and drop to the terrace. You understand?"

"But what of the helicopter?"

"I'll set the controls. It will go on empty—and our trailers, I hope, will follow it."

Fax nodded, his own jaw grim. He belted a pneumatic shock suit about him and unlocked the catch of the floor trap.

"Ready?" said Hass, a human ball in his own suit.

Fax nodded again, ready to draw his head turtlewise into his suit as he leaped. The building swept closer.

**Q**UICK as light Hass banked around the rear wall. The single terrace, littered with tenement rubbish, showed beneath. Setting the controls, he dropped through the trap, with Fax after him.

The two human balls bounced and rolled from one end of the terrace to the other. One stopped a dozen feet from the parapet wall. The other rolled half over it and, after an agonizing instant rolled back again from the threatened drop of four

hundred stories—too much for any shock suit to withstand.

At once the two leaped for the terrace doorway. Just in time! Barely five seconds after they dove out of sight the nearest pursuit machine swept around the building on the tail of the helicopter. In a moment the third machine appeared; in a straight line the three roared northwest.

"To Alaska, I hope," Hass growled. "There's almost enough fuel in my machine to get it there."

The pursuit seemed to be shaken, the pursuers eluded. The two went through the terrace entryway into the building.

**B**EFORE a metal door in the littered, dirty corridor, Hass stopped and whispered the phrase that opened it. He motioned Fax within the revealed room.

"A little hideaway of mine," he said in a low tone. "Come on, change your tunic."

He produced two garments, dirty, smelling faintly of the sewers. They put them on.

"Now some local color."

He wiped his hand along the dirty floor, smudged his chin and Fax's cheek, and tousled his hair.

"That'll do."

Two choice bandits stepped from the room and slouched to the nearest bank of elevators.

"Sublevel ten," Hass said truculently to an attendant who incredibly managed to look frowzy in a new city tunic.

The cage shot downward, stopped before a blank door. The door slid back and the two got out.

"And now?" said Fax.

"Now for the power lane."

"But that's eleven levels below here!"

"I know," said Hass. "But I didn't want to go lower with that attendant watching us. No use taking

chances. There'll be no one on the stairs."

True prophecy. Stairs were archaic in Zarbola, used by nobody, existing only in the older buildings. They reached sublevel twenty without seeing a soul.

Neuron-rod in hand, Hass opened the heavy door leading to the sewer system. A whiff of rank air touched their nostrils. He peered out.

"No one in sight."

They concealed their rods and stepped onto the narrow walk flanking the viscous river of the sewer. Here, in the vast system that drained the City of Golden Spires, furtively lived the criminal element; just as, if old records are correct, the criminals of ancient Paris lived in its underground drainage system.

**M**ANY times Haas had raided the sewers to clean them of the human rats infesting them; but the ways were too intricate, the hiding places too numerous, ever to ferret them out completely. And now a master rat had crawled down here to threaten the mighty city's very existence.

"How do you get into the power tunnels?" asked Fax.

"The nearest panel is about a hundred yards ahead—"

Two men suddenly stepped from a branching passage and stood before Hass and Fax, barring the narrow walk. They approached, slowly, suspiciously.

"Where are you two going?" demanded one, in the argot of the underworld.

"What do you care?" snapped Hass, gripping his neuron-rod under his tunic.

The speaker started angrily forward, but his companion, a small man with shifty eyes, caught at his arm.

"Come on. Leave them alone. The Chief said everybody must report at once."

"I know," said the other thug. "That's why I'm wondering why these two are going away from 126."

"We've got private business to tend to, then we're reporting to the Chief," said Hass surlily.

"You'd better finish your private business quick, or the Chief will burn you alive," was the threat. But the two stood aside while Fax and Hass clambered past them.

More groups, they encountered, all crowding toward 126. All eyed them, but apparently accepted them as fellows. In a moment Haas and Fax turned right, into a smaller sewer vault.

Hass stopped before a massive alloy panel and muttered a combination known only to the Service, some member of which always accompanied a worker when repairs were needed on the power lines. The panel slid aside; they hurried through the low archway; the door slid shut behind them.

"Now we ought to be safe," Hass breathed, climbing down a narrow flight of steps to the power level.

The power tunnels lacing the city at the lowest of all levels were walled throughout with a vitreous compound that was practically undrillable. The rare panels leading to them were unlocked by a phrase known only to a few.

**E**VERY foot of the tunnels was wired for alarm; and if a hand were laid on any section other than the doors, a squad of fighters was rushed to the spot. So efficiently were the all-important power cables guarded.

Down the six-foot tunnel, skirting beside a waist-high, metal-sheathed cable that stretched ahead endlessly in the steady light of the carbon dioxide tubes, ran the two. Toward 126 F and the secret menace beneath its bulk. It was nearly seven o'clock, and at ten—

Fax ground his teeth. At ten the Head would either turn Zarbola over to organized crime, or Mornug would topple those great buildings to the ground, burying their millions in a wreck of metal and glass and stone.

Fifteen precious minutes later, panting, they halted at a branch passage. Hass bent over the symbols stamped in the metal sheathing of a small cable looping away from the big one.

"126 F," he said, and made for the nearest stairway.

Over their heads swished the sewers. Over that were the two levels through which shrieked the foul air of the ventilating system. And above that was—sublevel seventeen, bottom storage level, three floors beneath the machinery levels, below which no honest citizen ever went unless he was a workman on a repair job, or a Secret Service man.

Sublevel seventeen! What mystery did it hide? And would they ever live to learn it and reveal it to Zarbola's officials?

### CHAPTER III

#### *Discovered*

THE archaic stairs from the sewer system up to sublevel seventeen were, for once, crowded with men. Fine specimens, these—crafty of eye, sneaking of manner, stamped with the pallor of prison and of life underground. And in their midst, carrying their lives in their hands, walked Fax and Hass.

With the rest they debouched into sublevel seventeen and turned into one of the vast storage chambers. The chamber had been cleared. Bare and bright under the daylight tubes, its space was broken only by occasional tremendous foundation pillars.

It grew breathlessly crowded. The last trickles of corrupt humanity drifted in; eight brawny thugs closed the doors and remained out-

side as guards. There was a hush. All eyes swung toward a door in the end wall. This door abruptly opened, and Hass and Fax clenched their hands.

Walking with a queer, twisted hitch, like an animal with a short leg, the man whose image had shortly before been pictured on the Head's screen, came down an aisle kept open for him and mounted a low platform. A moment he stood silent, his grey-green eyes darting over their unwholesome faces.

HE looked like a white-tunicked Satan reviewing an army of minor devils. And this thin-lipped ruffian, wanted for murder in Gramshar, capable of such enormities as wiping out a city—this was the man who aspired to rule Zarbola!

"Men," he began, his metallic voice reaching every corner of the great room, "I have called you here for two reasons. The first is to tell you that we are ready to strike. This afternoon, less than two hours ago, I delivered my ultimatum to the Head of the Control Bureau. I gave him until ten tonight to turn the city over to us unconditionally."

The mob roared. Pillage! Ransom! Excess! Mornug held up his hand; the roar stilled.

"The second reason I called you here was to tell you at last precisely how I am able to destroy the city in case Cell Raggan is mad enough to defy us. Some have doubted my power. Some have said the foundation pillars were too strong for explosives to harm and too well guarded for borings to weaken. Some say I am bluffing in spite of the fact that twice I shook the Control Building to prove my words to you."

The cold, gray-green eyes swept the men, and few were the eyes that did not flinch at their impact. Fax, finding the merciless stare on himself for an instant, could hardly repress

a shiver. It seemed as though he had been read to the soul, his greasy tunic stripped from him as though it had never existed.

**"THIS** is how I can destroy Zarbola if I must:

"Science has produced synthetic radium. The process is closely guarded, but I am scientist enough to make my own." The great chest of the man swelled arrogantly. "Furthermore, I can make it by the pound, where others deal only in milligrams. And I have been so making it in the laboratory adjoining this storage chamber.

"Now, under the north side of every building in Zarbola save this which houses us, a pound of radium in a klingsite tube is buried. Every tube is wired to the great main power cable of Zarbola. The Secret Service believes this cable cannot be tapped, but I—I have done it!"

Breathlessly, almost forgetting their peril in their eagerness to hear, Fax and Hass leaned forward. Mornug went on:

"At the stroke of ten tonight, unless Cell Raggan surrenders all Zarbola to us, I shall throw the switch that directs all the tremendous power of the Central Power Plant into the radium tubes.

"That will cause the radium to discharge instantaneously the total energy it normally gives off over thousands of years. And that, my friends, will cause the collapse of all atoms of matter within a hundred feet of each radium tube.

"They shall be compressed to a tenth their normal bulk. Thus the north foundation wall of every building in Zarbola will drop ninety feet, and the building will topple as if a giant's hand had pushed it. You see—"

The uproar of the mob cut him off.

Bank buildings shattered and spill-

ing their gold! Men and women who might escape, delivered to them as slaves! Later, terrified at Zarbola's fate, all other cities of the world given over to them!

For minutes the shouting stunned the ears. But finally Mornug raised his hand again. Tense silence followed the uproar. And now the gray-green eyes no longer roamed. They centered malignantly, icily, on two men. And the two men were Fax and Hass.

"It can't be that he's recognized us in all this mob," Fax muttered.

"I don't think so—" The sweat of relief gleamed on Hass's forehead. "There! He's going on with his talk."

**B**UT the relief was premature. "So you have been told of my plans and of how I can carry them through," the voice boomed on. "And now, having learned what you came here to learn, you will please follow me into my laboratory—*Ornich Fax and Tenlow Hass!*"

In stunned silence the two heard their names pronounced—heard also the hiss of indrawn breath from men beside them. Then shouts began.

"Fax! Hass! Secretary to the Head—Chief of the Secret Service!"

The two whipped out their neuron-rods to make a last stand. But the gesture was futile. In an instant a dozen men were fighting to strike them down, tear at them, claw them to pieces.

Through the din burst the bellow of Mornug.

"Back! Back, I say! The man who harms them shall burn alive!"

Torn between fear of the man with the snaky, grey-green eyes, and hatred of the spies from the upper world, the crowd receded. Helpless and unarmed, Hass and Fax stood in a close, living circle. Mornug sneered at them in cold triumph.

"Open a lane for them, men." The

mob, mad to kill, was slow to obey. "Open, I say!"

A grudging lane was formed to the door from which Mornug had first come. Mornug strode down it, paused to see that Fax and Hass were duly being shouldered forward, then opened the way to his laboratory and stepped within.

More dead than alive, still stunned by the suddenness with which it had all happened, the two prisoners followed him. The door banged shut.

They faced their captor, the diabolical genius who had crept under the foundations of their city like a secret pestilence and who now showed his teeth for the first time.

"**F**OOLS, to think you could invade my stronghold undetected!" Mornug sneered. "I know every move you made. The elevator man, in the building where you landed from your helicopter, is mine. He reported your downward trip at once. The instant you set foot in the outer chamber I was notified."

"Well," said Hass, white-lipped, "now you've got us you may as well kill us at once. For if you think we will turn traitor and help you—"

"You will help exceedingly, I think," Mornug interrupted. "Though not, perhaps, willingly." He smiled, and Fax could feel the hair rise on his scalp.

"Raggan will give his decision shortly before ten o'clock. That decision may well be, 'No.' He may decide that Zarbola might better be destroyed than surrendered, my men being what they are. Is it not so?"

Neither Hass nor Fax moved; but both knew the reasoning was correct. The Head was faced with a horrible choice: surrender meaning slow death and outrage in every form, defiance meaning quick destruction. Who could say whether he would surrender or defy, both evils being almost equal in magnitude?

"Very well," continued Mornug, as if both had agreed. "That is where you fit into my plans. When the Head tunes in on my telesite screen there—" he pointed to a standard screen amid a jumble of laboratory equipment—"he shall see you two bound to heavy klingsite chairs where you are standing now.

"He shall also see a semi-circular screen of tungstone, the new insulator against the emanations of radium. Behind this screen will be synthetic radium stacked around you like cordwood.

"He shall finally see the tungstone screen raised and yourselves exposed to the emanations—to melt slowly to shapeless, blackened things. Unless, of course, he gives the right answer. Now you see why you were not killed when I denounced you a moment ago."

The grey-green eyes glinted malevolently.

"The threat to you two may be just enough to swing the Head's decision. Just the added pressure I have been wanting. For he loves you two as if you were his own sons."

Fax shook his head. "That is not true. We are only his subordinates, nothing more."

But he lied, and he saw that Mornug knew it for a lie. Raggan did indeed love the two younger men as if they were his sons. And the sight of them, tied helpless and threatened with exposure to raw pounds of radium, would do terrible things to him.

**M**ORNUG smiled. "We shall try the experiment anyhow. And now we shall put you in a safe place for the several hours remaining before the Head communicates with me— Stop! Stand where you are!"

Both were leaping at him, hands clawing savagely for his throat. Vainly! Quick as thought a neuron-rod appeared in his hand. It flicked

across them, heart high. Fax felt a stunning shock, then things began to go black. He felt himself hit the floor, felt Hass pile on top of him, and after that knew nothing.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Flying Fury*

**R**ECOVERY from a neuron-rod shock is painful. The shocked one quivers and trembles, while every nerve in his body feels like a red hot wire. The brain is clear in spite of a blinding headache; but the body is a thing of torture.

Fax recovered first. He gazed at Hass, and saw the Service man stir too, and open fluttering eyelids.

"Where—" began Hass.

Both, trembling as though with palsy, gazed around. They were in a cavern, evidently a burrow outside the foundation walls of the building, with a metal door separating it from sublevel seventeen proper.

"Look!" whispered Fax, pointing.

Near Hass was a shrivelled, blackened tunic. Lying on it was a shining metal disc with the symbols T45S6 stamped on it.

"The place where your man wrote his last note," Fax gritted out. "He got the fate Mornug was threatening us with, if the look of that tunic means anything."

"Burned alive," quoted Hass. "Radium rays—ripping through flesh and bone—destroying and disintegrating—" He controlled his shivering a little. "Wonder what time it is."

Fax glanced at his watch. It had stopped, of course. A neuron shock, while not harming metal, strongly magnetizes it. Another horror was added to their situation—uncertainty as to time. Had they lain there ten minutes, or two hours? Fax was inclined toward the latter guess.

Several rats crawled through holes

near the door and ran squealing across in front of them.

"How the devil did T45S6 catch them?" Fax wondered idly.

By now their convulsive shuddering had worn off. They got to their feet, stretching their arms.

"What can we do?" Hass put the question both had in mind.

The walls of their dungeon were of native rock. The door, sole exit, was of heavy klingsite. They had only their bare hands as weapons.

"There isn't even a loose rock to throw at whoever comes in for us." Fax sighed. "If only we had some missile, some shred of hope—"

Hass glanced suddenly at him, blue eyes icy with concentration.

"That's it! A rat! Help me catch one. Quick!"

"A rat? Why do you want—"

"Don't waste time—help me!"

Mystified, Fax helped him. He took off his tunic and held one end while Hass held the other. They went to the largest rathole and knelt, one on each side, with the tunic poised like a net above it.

Minutes passed and no rat appeared. Fax had no notion what was in Hass' mind, but that it was urgent he could see by the tense mask of his face as they listened for the scabble of paws.

**A**T last they heard it. Both held ready. A pointed, small snout emerged from the hole, followed by the repulsive body of its owner. The rat squealed as it saw the two, turned, but was enveloped.

"Now," said Hass, his voice vibrating with impossible hope, "help me get the thing in my right hand so I can hold it motionless with my fingers around its jaws."

Easier said than done; but eventually the rat lay clamped in Hass' bare hand, trembling with vicious fear. The men sat down, with Hass hiding the rat behind him.

"When they come, Fax," he said, his eyes blazing, "be ready to jump!"

Finally there was a soft sound as the metal door began to slide open. Two men stood on the threshold. Not three, or half a dozen. Only two! Enough, of course, when the deadly neuron-rods were their armament. Fax saw Hass' eyes gleam brighter.

The shorter of the two advanced warily, with neuron-rod pointed at the prisoners. The taller followed with a coil of wire in his hands.

"You!" snarled the man with the rod to Hass. "Get up and stand with your face to the wall."

Hass glared back at him. Also he stared covertly at the other man, and noted that both his hands were occupied with the wire. Only the one neuron-rod was covering them.

"Get up!" repeated the man with the rod.

Hass moved as though to obey. Then his right hand shot forward.

Now there are certain reactions in the complex world of men's minds that can be counted on pretty definitely. Hass counted on a definite reaction in this instance—and won!

**H**AD he thrown a rock at the man's head, the man probably would simply have ducked and then turned his neuron-rod on Hass. But there is something terrifying about seeing a huge rat, all snapping teeth and red eyes and clawing venom, flying through the air directly for your face.

The man shouted and instinctively threw up his hands, rod and all, to shield his face from the flying fury. The shout was still ringing in the little cavern when Fax's hands found his throat.

Fax rushed him back against the rock wall. There was a sickening crack as the man's head hit the rock; then he sagged to the floor.

Fax picked up the neuron-rod and whirled to use it on the other man.

But he found that Hass already had him down. Hass' head jerked toward the coil of wire.

"Tie and gag him," he panted. And then, when this had been swiftly done: "Your man?"

"I think," said Fax evenly, "he won't need tying."

Hass gazed at the figure by the wall, noted the queerly contorted limbs and staring eyes.

"Quite," he said briefly. "Come along."

**T**HEY approached the metal door, gazed out. Before them stretched Mornug's laboratory—that secret room of science, of the existence of which no official in Zarbola had dreamed till now. It seemed to be deserted. They stepped into it.

Fax's elbow dug into his companion's ribs. He pointed.

Before the telesite screen a semi-circular barricade of tungstone reared head-high. Behind that, they knew, would be the piled tubes of radium Mornug had threatened them with.

Beyond that was an inner barricade of tungstone—and then, no doubt, two klingsite chairs placed directly before the telesite screen. All was ready for them. They had not escaped an instant too soon!

Hass nodded toward the door leading to the great outer chamber which Mornug used as an audience hall. They started toward it.

The laboratory continued still and apparently deserted. The panel was partly ajar. No trouble about unlocking it.

"No, no, please!" came a calm voice behind them. "You must not leave so unceremoniously."

They swung around—to see Mornug and three of his men covering them with neuron-rods. Where they could have appeared from was a mystery—but there they were!

With an oath Fax jerked up his

rod. It fell from his hand as Mornug, with easy accuracy, paralyzed his arm.

"Bind them to the chairs before the telesite plate," he said to his men. "Then we'll wait for our honored Head to get in touch with us and see what threatens these two he thinks so much of. He'll give in, I think—at least I hope he will. I'd rather rule a city than a heap of glass and klingsite and corpses."

## CHAPTER V

### *Raggan Decides*

**S**IDE by side, bound immovably to the heavy metal chairs, Fax and Hass sat facing the telesite screen. Circling behind them was the inner insulating screen, shielding them for the moment from the emanations of the stacked pounds of radium. They could imagine the precious stuff, piled head-high between the outer and inner barricades of tungstone.

Also they could see, by twisting their heads, that chains looped through pulleys in the ceiling were fastened to the inner barricade. Thus it could be raised by hands protected by the outer screen, to expose the two to the emanations.

Mornug gloatingly inspected their bonds—particularly the wire that fastened their arms to the arms of the chair. Fax's fingers clenched impotently at the near approach of the man. If only he could fasten those fingers on the throat that was so close as Mornug bent to see that the wire was tight! But his arms were held rigid.

Mornug nodded his satisfaction as he stepped away.

"That will hold them. However, we will gag them. They might try to shout secrets to Raggan when his image appears on the screen."

With death in his heart, Fax felt a heavy fabric band fastened over

his mouth. Mornug had spiked, by that move, a very desperately cherished hope.

Hass was gagged too. Glancing sideways at him, Fax saw that he was pale as death. But no emotion was allowed to show on his face. It was a mask, every muscle admirably controlled.

But complete control, at the approach of death, is impossible. Hass' hands gave him away. His fingers moved jerkily, convulsively on the metal arms of his chair.

Fax sagged down against the bonds and waited, as did Mornug and the rest, for the picture of the Head of Zarbola's Control Bureau to appear on the telesite plate and his voice to sound from the transmitter behind it.

"Nine-thirty," said Mornug, gazing at his watch. There was a pause, timeless, eternal. Then: "Nine thirty-six— Surely he would not be so mad as to try to rush my laboratory, knowing that such a move would send Zarbola in ruins to the ground. No! He comes!"

And indeed it seemed as though the Head were coming in person, slowly materializing on the telesite screen. A misty figure quickly solidified into the well remembered body of Raggan and greeted the eyes of the bound men like a look into paradise.

**T**HE Head of Control was before them, his eyes wide and blank as he saw the two men wired to the chairs with Mornug standing beside them. Raggan was seated before his transmitting screen so closely that he filled the screen on Mornug's wall from side to side and top to bottom; a seated figure six feet across and six feet from abdomen to crown.

"Boc Mornug," sounded the Head's voice—cracked and aged seeming now, nothing like its usual, crisp self, "I am here."

"It is well that you are, Cell Raggan," said Mornug insolently. "In twenty-four more minutes you and most of the rest in Zarbola would have been dead, with your fallen skyscrapers as your headstones. Have you come to a final decision?"

There was a silence, then. A terrible, pregnant silence, in which the fate of millions upon millions of people was being weighed. Should they be given quick and merciful death, or slow torture and ruin?

**T**O what a choice was this man, leader of the greatest of all great cities on earth, being driven! Hauntedly, helplessly, his eyes kept seeking the eyes of Fax and Hass.

Fax and Hass returned his gaze as stoutly as they could, trying to will him to disregard them and make his decision as though they had not been in Mornug's power. Fax kept his body still in spite of the agonizing terror that tore at his nerves. So, too, did Hass, save for the revealing small fluttering of his hands.

The silence was broken at last—by a low moan from the Head's lips which he had not been quite able to repress.

"Why—are you holding Hass and Fax?"

Mornug smiled that satanic smile of his. He pointed to the tungstone insulating screen that surrounded them.

"You see that barricade, Raggan? Behind it are tubes of radium. Many of them. When the tungstone screen is raised your two young friends will be exposed to the full power of the emanations.

"It will be interesting to see what will happen to their bodies. Interesting for you, that is. I already know—I'm perhaps the only man on earth who does—precisely how a thousand pounds of radium acts on human flesh! I can tell you that the sight is not a nice one."

Raggan moistened his lips.

"Well?" came his cracked, unsteady voice.

"It is simply an extra argument for you to abdicate as I command," said Mornug suavely. "If you turn the city over to me, I guarantee life to them and to you. You shall have not only life, but positions of authority—if you recognize my rulership."

"I must think," groaned Raggan. "I must think."

The voice of Mornug cracked out, shedding some of its urbanity.

"Cell Raggan, why are you trying to delay? Why are you blocking the screen with your body? Who is behind you?"

"No one is behind me," said Raggan wearily. "That is, only a Xephon transcriber is here, taking notes which I can show to my people to justify any action I may be forced to take."

"Move aside and let me see."

The image on the screen shifted. For a moment it was clear, showing the office of Head of Control. In it to one side, a girl was seated, with blanched cheeks and horror-filled eyes, jotting down Xephon symbols on a square of paper. No one else was in the room.

"All right, Raggan."

The screen was again filled by Raggan's body.

**"YOU** have less than twenty minutes, Cell Raggan," snapped Mornug. "Remember, at ten o'clock precisely I shall hurl your city to the ground if you do not—"

He broke off with a sharp cry.

"Raggan! Raggan—damn you—"

With utterly no warning the lights had gone out. Every light in the great room. And the faint humming of various of Mornug's machines was stilled, too. Utter silence enfolded the room, and absolute blackness.

"Raggan!" screamed Mornug, in-

sensible of the fact that the telesite plate had also gone dead and there were no ears there to hear. "Raggan—I'm going to raise the tungstone screen from before the radium!"

A strangled exclamation tore from Fax's lips as he heard a preliminary creak of the pulleys.

Then he heard a frantic scuffling from Hass' chair beside him. Heard Mornug's voice: "Stop! Stop! Don't raise the screen! He's caught me! *I'm being held here—*"

Instantly Fax divined what had happened in the darkness. Mornug had backed too close to Hass' chair. Hass' muscular fingers had gripped Mornug's tunic. The outlaw leader was being held so that he, too, would perish from the radium if the screen were raised.

"Don't raise it till I give the command!" screamed Mornug. "Don't—"

He tripped over Hass' feet in his effort to squirm out of his tunic. His head banged against Fax's chair. Fax felt hair sweep across his bound hands. His fingers clutched for it—and found it. An even deadlier hold than Hass'. Hair! A beard! His fingers twined in that beard in a grip only death could loosen.

**A**ND then, across the pandemonium burst further uproar. The great door of the laboratory clanged open even as Mornug's men came running around the screen to aid their leader.

"Hass! Fax! Are you all right?"

"All right," Fax tried to say, into the heavy gag. Then he felt the beard tear loose, leaving much of itself in his fingers.

"Operative T61S8, with five hundred men," a voice said to Hass.

Then, a few minutes later, Fax was being unbound.

Back in the office of the Head of Control, Fax glanced from Raggan to Hass and back again.

"I don't understand this yet," he

said plaintively. "It can't have been coincidence that the power station failed at just the right moment to rob Mornug of his power to overthrow the city."

"No," said Raggan with a tired smile, "it wasn't coincidence." He turned to the Xephon transcriber sitting nearby—the girl who had taken notes of the last talk between Mornug and the Head of Control. "Show him, my dear."

**W**ITH a twinkle in her eyes, the girl handed Fax her pad of paper. On it he saw written:

Z.S.S. (Zarbola Secret Service.) Z.S.S. Shut down central power station. Mornug helpless without it. Mornug helpless without it. Z.S.S. Z.S.S.

Fax raised his head bewilderedly. "But we were gagged!" he exclaimed to Hass. "You couldn't have even whispered that message."

Hass grinned.

"Our lips were gagged—but not our hands. Didn't you hear my fingers moving on the arms of my chair? I was sending a tap-message, in the Service code. And this charming young lady, who used to be my private transcriber before she was promoted to this office, heard it, transcribed it, and rushed a teletype message to my floor.

"From there two messages went out. One to a force of men waiting in the power lane near building 126 F—just in the hope that they *could* do something, you know. The other to the central power plant. The men rushed the laboratory in sublevel seventeen just as the power was shut off—and here we are."

"And Mornug?" said Fax.

Hass sobered.

"Most of his men were killed in the rescue rush. He'll be with them in the morgue. There'll be no collapse of the City of Golden Spires—nor any reign of terror under murderers and thieves!"

# WHEN GUNS TALK



"I'm going to kill you," Spud said firmly

*Spud Donegan Was Out for Vengeance and His Plans Were Made With Craft and Cunning, But—*

**By C. K. M. SCANLON**

*Author of "Skeleton House," "Here Comes McBride," etc.*

**S**PUD DONEGAN bent over the green-clothed table in Slinky Harrigan's waterfront poolroom and smashed the eight ball into the corner pocket on a difficult angle shot.

"Your eye ain't gone back on you none, has it, Spud?" said a soft voice behind his back.

Spud Donegan, whose thin angular face still held a wretched prison pallor, jerked swifty around and

stared into the smiling eyes of Detective Mike Hagen.

"I heard you were back," Hagen said. "Goin' straight now, ain't you, kid?"

"Yep, I learned my lesson," Spud replied, relaxing. "I got smart up the river."

The big detective smiled broadly and stuck out his hand.

"Shake, Spud, I'm with you. You wouldn'ta got sent up last time if

you hadn't been so dumb. I hope what you said is the truth. I hope you got smart up there."

Hagen walked to the side door, waved and stepped out.

Inwardly Spud laughed. Right now he was only killing time, waiting for the clock to strike a certain hour; then he would be on his way to do a job he had promised himself he would do as soon as he got out of stir.

After that—well, he intended to do just what he had told the fat Irish detective.

**S**PU D DONEGAN swept stealthily along the cement walk leading to the garden of Judge Ferrelli's house. The window where he had made entrance the night before loomed immediately before him, deep in shadow. Spud lifted up on his toes and pressed his face flat against the pane.

No movement showed in the dark interior. It was just as he had anticipated. Ferrelli, a bachelor who had lived alone, had left the study and gone upstairs to his chamber. Spud pressed a jimmy beneath the window and pried it open. A faintly pungent odor assailed his nostrils as he crawled in noiselessly over the sill.

He floated across the floor of the dark study without noise. Feeling the opposite door with his foot, he cautiously put a hand to the door-knob and turned it. He pushed through, then paused momentarily at the foot of the stairs.

A slice of yellow light showed at the bottom of one of the doors opening on the upper hallway. That was Ferrelli's bed chamber. The judge hadn't yet retired. Spud threaded silently up the stairs.

His right hand came out from his coat pocket. Something in it glinted blue and metallic in the dim aura of light from the crack under the door. He paused for an instant to draw a

heavy breath, then thrust the door open and burst through in a single swift movement.

"I've come back, Ferrelli!" he grated, watery eyes cold and hard as marble agates. "I've come back to get even. You sent me up river, blast you! I served my time, an' now it's your turn!"

"Spud Donegan!" Ferrelli finally gasped, his staring eyes focusing at last on the prison-pallid figure confronting him. "What do you want? What are you going to do?" His voice broke into a thin squeak.

Spud smiled malevolently at the man in the bed.

"I'm goin' to kill you!" he said firmly, fist tightening over the grip of the automatic.

"But that won't get you anything," Ferrelli wheezed in frantic effort to sway the other man's intentions. "Nothing but the hot squat!"

Spud laughed openly, twisted the automatic he held before Ferrelli's eyes.

"Oh, no, it won't," he replied. "This is *your* gun, see? I lifted it last night from the desk in your study. You notice, too, that I got gloves on, don't you? There won't be none of my fingerprints showin'! But after I plug you, I'm going to fold your hand around the gun. It'll be plain suicide, see!"

"I figgered it all out by myself up in the stir. Smart, ain't I?" Spud shoved closer to Ferrelli's bed. "All right, get set," he snarled. "I gotta get close, so's the powder burns'll show."

**F**ERRELLI swayed on shaking elbows. "No! Wait!" he screamed. "Wait!"

"I ain't waitin' for nothin'!" Spud's tense finger constricted on the trigger. There was a sharp report, the faint odor of scorched flesh and burning powder. Ferrelli fell back on the bed. A neat round hole in his

forehead trickled blood that ran crazily down his face.

Spud bent over him quickly, lifted the dead man's right hand, folded it carefully over the grip of the automatic.

Then, backing swiftly out, he slipped down the stairs and made his getaway unobserved.

"SIMPLE suicide," the Medical Examiner said, after finishing his examination of Ferrelli's body. "No further investigation is necessary."

Detective Hagen took the automatic which he had been examining for extraneous fingerprints and removed the bullet clip.

"If you've no objections, sir," he said to his superior, the precinct detective-lieutenant, "I'll just take this clip along with me. And I want to look over the study again before we go."

"You didn't find any strange fingerprints on the clip, did you?" the lieutenant asked sharply.

"No, that's just it," Hagen replied. "I didn't even find Ferrelli's. That's what makes it look funny."

His superior's eyes widened perceptibly.

"Take it," he nodded. "If you find anything pertinent, we can reopen the case."

An hour later Detective Hagen was sitting in Spud Donegan's cheap furnished room down in the waterfront district.

"What's on your mind?" Spud asked, his pale watery eyes jerking furtively. "Yeh, I heard Ferrelli bumped himself off."

Without removing his gloves, Hagen put his hand in his pocket and tossed an automatic clip over onto a table near Spud.

"Did you ever see that before?" he asked, mild blue eyes ranging over Spud from head to foot.

Spud glanced down at the clip, then looked up at Hagen.

"What's this, a frame?" he piped, sniveling. "What's the idea?"

"Pick up the clip an' look it over," Hagen said, hard eyes boring into Spud's.

Mechanically, seemingly without conscious volition, Spud picked up the clip and fumbled it around in the palm of his hand. Then he shook his head negatively.

"No, Mike, I ain't never seen it before. It ain't mine. I ain't got no rod."

"Okay," Hagen said. "Give it back to me."

He took it deftly with his gloved hand and dropped it in his pocket, then got up and stepped toward the door.

"That's all I wanted, Spud," he said disarmingly. "He's still just as dumb as ever," he thought as he walked from the tenement.

BACK at the central station, Hagen went to the fingerprint files and extracted a card record—the one cataloging Spud Donegan. Then he removed the bullet clip from his pocket carefully with his gloved hand. After dusting it with fine wood ash from a small phial, he applied a fixitive to set the impression. The fingerprints on the clip now compared exactly with those on the card he had taken from the files.

An hour later he was back in Spud's room.

"I came back again, Spud," he said calmly, but he kept his right hand in his pocket when he spoke. "You said you never saw that other clip I showed you. But I know you've seen this one here before."

Hagen tossed the prepared clip on the table, along with the card he had taken from the files.

"I got that outa the gun we found in Ferrelli's hand. An' it's got your fingerprints on it!" Hagen snapped explosively. "You killed Ferrelli with his own gun, then planted it in his

hand to make it look like suicide. There's the evidence!"

Spud Donegan jerked back as though he had been shocked with electricity.

"It's a frame, a lousy frame-up!" he blurted hoarsely. "It's impossible. I used gloves—" He broke off suddenly, abruptly. A sick, deathly expression surged over his twisted face as he realized the purport of his words. Hagen had tricked him! Grating out a blasphemous oath, he coiled and sprang at the big detective.

But Hagen's revolver flashed from his pocket, swiftly covering Spud. Over his shoulder he called sharply:

"Come in now, Lieutenant. You heard him confess."

The door opened and Detective-Lieutenant Simmons entered, gun in hand.

"Yes, I heard him," he rasped.

But Spud Donegan, covered and cornered as he was, didn't give up. He ducked and slipped under the muzzle of Hagen's revolver, talon-like hands clawing for the big detective's throat. Hagen sidestepped and whipped the steel bracelets from his belt. His revolver lifted at the same instant.

There was a dull thud, a sharp metallic clck, then a muffled groan as Spud Donegan slumped to the floor, the manacles secure on his wrists.

"You're just dumb, plain dumb," Hagen said, without heat. "You never learned a thing up the river. Sure, you used gloves. But it was awful dumb of you wiping Ferrelli's fingerprints off the bullet clip."

Spud's jaw dropped. Lieutenant Simmons looked puzzled.

"But how did you know it was Spud Donegan?" he asked.

Hagen smiled.

"I wasn't real sure until he popped off like he did. At least, I didn't have enough evidence for conviction, even though I did see a trace of white paint on the toe of his shoe—"

Simmons glanced down at Spud's foot, as did Spud himself.

"The door into Ferrelli's study had just been freshly painted, and I found a smudge mark like the toe of a shoe just above the sill."

Spud sighed, then buried his head between his manacled hands.

"Even so," Hagen added, "murder would never have been suspected if he hadn't been so dumb as to wipe the fingerprints from the bullet clip."



**Next Month: A Pulse-Stirring Nov-  
elette of Breathless Action and Grim  
International Intrigue—Packed with  
a Punch on Every Page!**

# THE BLUE SULTAN

By MAJOR GEORGE F. ELIOT

*Author of "The Rajah of Jhanpur," etc.*

**AND MANY OTHER GRIPPING ADVENTURE YARNS!**

# The Deputy from Paint Rock

*Deputy Larry Rainey Rode Hell-for-Leather to Gila,  
Across the Border—Straight into the Face of Blazing  
Guns as He Stroved to Avenge a Dry-Gulched Pal!*

*A Complete Novelette*

By JACLAND MARMUR

*Author of "Double Edged Mutiny," "The Monkey God," etc.*

## CHAPTER I

### *Giving the Lie*



"GUS, I don't give a hang what yuh say. I aims to agree wi' Steve Grimes. This here's the queerest rustlin' outfit ever I heard tell of. Et just don't smell right to me—an' I've rode herd an' shot it out

wi' enough o' the coyotes to know what I'm talkin' of."

The rangy young rider, sitting his foam-flecked big dun easily, drawled this out in a quiet bass, his sun-and-wind-tanned face creased in a deep frown. Grey-headed Gus Dawson, marshal of the Border town of Paint Rock, who had reined in his hard-ridden mount beside his deputy, pushed his Stetson back from his sweated brow and grinned sourly.

"Mebbe they don't know the rules, Larry," he growled sarcastically, ramming his reloaded .45 back into its holster. "Anyhow, they've high-tailed for the Border an' the boys is roundin' up the herd so—"

"Herd!" Larry Rainey snorted in

disgust and mopped his forehead and the nape of his neck, where damp curls of his flame-colored hair protruded from the rim of his Stetson. He broke his hot six-gun, ramming fresh shells into the empty chambers to replace the ejected ones.

"Gus, this yere's the third time some greaser's tipped yuh off that a herd o' Pedro Miguel's rustled beef was goin' across the line, an' each time exactly the same thing's happened. We ride out wi' a posse just about sundown. The rustlin' herd riders flings wild lead for half a hour an' then ride hell-for-leather 'cross the line, leavin' beef an' all. An' I'm risin' to remark that there's some unnatural things about it."

Larry's face hardened and his eyes glinted with points of fire as he went on in a brittle voice:

"First off, no band o' rustlin' breeds'd run stolen beef afore dark—an' it wouldn't be no piker's fifty head. Second place, Pedro Miguel's brand ain't been touched on a durned one o' them longhorns. Third idea o' mine is that three times runnin' they've never got close enough to us to git hurt, an' it's pow'ful unnatural for thet pack o' wolves to run off

leavin' fifty head o' steer they wanted without *some* one carryin' away lead souvenirs.

"An' in the fourth place, Gus, I think Steve's hunch was right in the first place. Pedro Miguel *wants* a posse o' durned fools tearin' up the canyon yere so's he kin have a free hand for his real game, an'—"

"Yuh're pipe dreamin', Larry," Gus interrupted sternly. "It ain't that I got any love fer Miguel. But I don't aim to see no stolen beef run 'crost the Border, no matter who it belongs to."

The hard lines of Larry's face softened.

"I know it, Gus," he muttered. "Jest the same, I'm a curious critter. I'd give a pow'ful lot to know where Pedro is while all this yere's happenin'."

"Yeah. That was Steve's idea. He went huntin' the breed rancher 'stead o' ridin' wi' the posse. We'll mosey back to Paint Rock an' see what his wild goose chase has learned him. The boys'll run the beef back."

Larry Rainey nodded, but to himself he growled harshly:

"If that Miguel's a cowman—I'm John D. Rockefeller's son an' heir!"

This strange and succinct conversation between the law officer of Paint Rock and his youthful deputy had taken place as they sat mounts on a knoll of land overlooking Diablo Canyon. With the setting sun behind them, their figures were silhouetted sharply against the crimson sky as they turned tired ponies toward the wagon trail leading to the Border cattle town of Paint Rock.

ON all sides stretched the vast, rolling range country, scarred to the northward by the jagged cliffs of the badlands. Southward lay Mexico, the low mountain range a serrated line of blue haze against the darkening heavens; and the twilight

was filled with the fading sounds of the riders of the posse as they headed the reclaimed stock northward toward Diablo Pass—the lowing of beef on the move, the far-off shouting of men, the dull rumble of hoofs.

For some time the pair rode in silence as the lengthening shadows of thick sage, mazanita and chaparral clumps deepened. Each man was busy with his own thoughts. They still rode abreast of each other as they rounded a sharp bend in the trail, Larry Rainey on the inside, his eyes fixed intently over the bobbing ears of his big dun.

Suddenly he stiffened in the saddle, and at the same instant barked out a sharp warning.

"Gus! Look out!"

Almost at the same moment, the sharp staccato bark of a .45 cracked on the still air, a tongue of flame and a jet of smoke leaping at them from the shelter of the black shadows. Larry had reined in sharply, the whine of the ball singing past his ear. The big dun reared high on its haunches.

GUS wheeled his own mount in a flash, and acting out of pure instinct alone, both men hurled themselves from the saddle on the other side of the road, crouching alertly with six-guns ready for action.

For a matter of seconds they could see nothing except the riderless mount that had first caused Larry's sharply barked warning. The animal, fully saddled, with the reins trailing the dust, was muzzling the burned grass along the trail's edge, as a good cow pony will do. Suddenly Gus clutched his deputy's forearm.

"There! Behind that chaparral clump!" he snapped harshly. "The dry-gulchin' rat!"

His Colt came up swiftly. The hammer flew back. But Rainey



Larry whirled and  
worked his Colt  
twice

struck his arm sharply aside, and the reverberating shot sent the lead slug whining harmlessly into thin air.

"Steady, Gus!" he barked. "That man's bad hurt. Look at that pony.

By Gawd, Gus, it's Steve's pinto!"

Larry came erect to his full height, holstering his own weapon. For the dark shape of the man who had fired the first shot at what, in his semi-conscious condition, he had

taken to be enemies, lay sprawled out full length now in the gathering dusk.

Rainey sprang swiftly across the dividing ribbon of the road, the marshal close behind him as he dropped to one knee beside the wounded man. Gus Dawson, peering over his shoulder, let out a soft gasp.

"My gosh, Larry, it's Steve Grimes!"

Larry nodded bitterly, pillowing the stricken man's back against his knee. Steve's eyelids fluttered, and when he recognized the familiar, homely features of his friend bending over him anxiously, his weather-tanned face creased in a feeble grin.

"They—got me, Larry," he gasped weakly. "I—I thought yuh was—"

"Easy, Steve, easy," Rainey soothed huskily. Then his steel-grey eyes hardened. "Who done it, Steve?"

"My—my hunch was right." The dying man's body stiffened suddenly against Rainey's knee. He sat bolt upright, his face a ghastly white beneath the deep tan of the open range. His hand came up feebly from the ground to clutch the cartridge belt about his waist.

"**L**ARRY!" he uttered the one word with startling vitality, the hand at his holster belt struggling as if to pull a shell from its leather slot. Then he fell back inertly, and Gus and Larry, bending close over, heard only his last gasping words:

"Cross the line, Larry! In Gila they—they change the—"

His body slumped slowly forward—lifeless.

In grim silence Larry Rainey lowered the man's shoulders to the ground and stood up to face the marshal of Paint Rock. They eyed each other for several seconds without a word, while the twilight shadows deepened on the scene and the scent of the open rangeland

swept upon them on the wings of the cool night breeze.

It was Gus who spoke first.

"Dead," he breathed softly.

"Murdered!" Larry corrected.

"Yuh mean—"

"Look at his chest, Gus! The slug come out there. The hole's big enough to put yore fist into. The dry-gulcher's slug caught Steve straight between the shoulder blades!"

"What'd he mean by—"

"**I** DUNNO. He found out some—thin', Gus. He knew too much an' they drilled him in cod blood—from behind."

"But what—"

"I dunno. But I aims to find out." Larry Rainey's eyes were narrowed points of fire, his lips a thin bar of iron. "Steve Grimes an' me rode the range together—ever since we was kids, Gus. The man who drilled him answers to me."

"What yuh aimin'—"

"Steve played a hunch an' paid for it wi' his life. I'm followin' that same hunch, Gus. I'm ridin' 'crosst the line into Gila."

He turned sharply on his high-heeled riding boots and picked up the bridle of the dead man's pinto pony. Behind him Gus Dawson protested angrily.

"What good'll it do?" he demanded. "Yuh knows well as I do the breed o' vultures an' rats in Gila. It's the hide-out for every blasted outlaw an' murderin' buzzard from here to the Gulf an' back. I can't ride no posse o' men to Gila. It's acrost the line, an'—"

Larry turned abruptly.

"I didn't say nothin' about no posse. I'm ridin' alone."

"Yuh're askin' for murder, Larry. Yuh ain't a law officer once you cross the Border. Them scum'll—"

"I'll carry my own law wi' me."

Rainey stepped forward. His voice

was soft and low, but its hard bitterness betrayed his grim determination and the depth of his emotion.

"I tol' yuh, Gus, that Steve was my friend. Yuh're aimin' to tell me that I can't cross the line as a deputy marshal o' Paint Rock. Good! That suits me fine. I don't need no badge for what I got to do. I'm on my own, Gus."

He turned swiftly and lifted himself into the saddle of the pinto.

"Yuh kin bring pore Steve back to town on my dun. I'm ridin' his pinto. It's fresh. One thing yuh kin do for me, Gus. If I don't find Pedro Miguel in Gila, I'm comin' back to Paint Rock for him. Savvy? Hold him there till I git back, some way, any way."

"Larry, yuh're plumb loco to—"

"So was Steve, I reckon, Gus. *Adios.*"

The rider wheeled the pinto, the animal spinning on its haunches. The next moment Rainey galloped into the gloom, settling his mount into the long, steady pace of the range-bred pony. The marshal of Paint Rock silently watched his figure until it merged completely with the darkening landscape.

## CHAPER II

### *Rainey's Folly*

**R**IDING the gun trail to Gila, young Rainey had no plan whatever. He knew only that that trail started in the stronghold of Border banditry across the line. This much was plain from what the murdered man, Steve Grimes, had gasped out before his death. The rest of his enigmatic words was a mystery, although, plainly, some vital meaning they must have had.

And Larry knew also the grim truth of old Gus Dawson's warning. You might ride into Gila, but

whether you rode out again or not depended upon the swiftness of your eye, the speed and the accuracy of your draw.

A coyote set up its high-pitched yap-yap at the rising moon as Rainey slowed down the little pinto on the outskirts of the cluster of shacks and dives that was Gila. The town was in darkness as he rode down the center of the single dirt street, but from the swing doors of the Gila *cantina* a smoky swathe of yellow light cut a wound in the night; and from the interior there poured out the sounds of high, brawling revelry.

**L**ARRY dismounted, walking his pinto toward the hitch-rack. On the rim of the cluster of animals his keen eyes instantly spotted half a dozen ponies who bore the unmistakable signs of recent hard riding.

The supposed "rustlers" of Pedro Miguel's beef? Larry grinned wryly to himself. In his mind there was now not the slightest doubt of it.

Those men were Pedro's henchmen. But why set a band of men to stealing his own stock?

For a moment Rainey hesitated. Then he led his pinto quickly into the shadow of the crude shack, between the planked wall of the *cantina* and the next low building. Leaving the reins trailing the ground, he turned, walked quietly up the narrow veranda, and pushed aside the swinging doors deliberately.

Young Larry Rainey was putting his head squarely in the jaws of almost certain death.

Just within the entrance he stood stock still for a moment, his keen eyes taking in every detail. Smoky oil lamps swayed from the bare rafters. Half drunk men guffawed loudly at the side tables where games of every description were in progress, their loud, guttural voices

punctuated at times by the shrill laughter of the dancing girls.

The place smelled of vile whiskey, stale beer and evil *pulque*, a veritable pest hole of vice, harboring every hard case and cold-blooded killer along the Border.

Eyes narrowed and hairy paws fluttered free for action as the tall, flame-haired puncher, his Stetson pushed far back on his forehead, marched toward the bar.

He moved with the awkward, clumping walk of the range man who is always more at home in the saddle than afoot.

He stared neither to the right nor to the left, but straight before him, his face a grim, enigmatic mask. At the bar he stopped, idling with apparent carelessness.

No overt sign had been made, no angry word spoken, yet at his appearance a hush had fallen upon the grizzled crowd of shaggy outlaws and breed hangers-on. The cluster of men sidled unobtrusively to one side, and Larry Rainey stood alone in front of the bar, sensing instinctively the electrically charged atmosphere and the tense hush of expectancy.

"I'll take a beer," he drawled softly to the barkeep.

THE man's swarthy face split in a grin as he expertly slid the foaming glass toward Rainey. But his coal black eyes, darting hastily to one side, shot a warning glance to one of the onlookers that was not lost on the Texan.

"You are Meester Rainey from Paint Rock. Ees eet not so?"

Larry, holding his drink with his left hand, drained the glass, set it down calmly and flipped a coin across the bar before half turning to face his questioner. He saw a short, shaggy-headed man with a dark face and cruel lips half hidden by the sagging ends of an unkempt

mustache, who stood several paces from him.

"Yeah," he drawled quietly. "I'm Larry Rainey. And yuh—"

"Juan Lopez." The other's shifting eyes belied the thin-lipped grin. "We have not met before?"

"No," Rainey countered. "Ain't had thet pleasure." Then, on a desperate chance, he shot out shortly: "But I've heard Pedro Miguel talk plenty 'bout yuh in Paint Rock."

LOPEZ stiffened perceptibly. Behind him, Rainey had the sense of men crowding closer. Not daring to turn, he edged forward carelessly. Lopez backed off also, as if seeking to protect with his back the side door, at the corner of the car, that led to the back room.

"You are look for someone in Gila?" Lopez spat out suddenly.

Rainey slowly shook his head.

"No, but I'm aimin' to have a talk wi' Miguel."

In spite of his apparent carelessness, every muscle in the tall Texan's frame was tense and taut as set steel springs. He sparred desperately for time, feeling his way in a hostile, lethal atmosphere.

Quietly he sent out another long-chance remark, nodding idly toward the closed door behind Lopez.

"That his office?"

Juan's shaggy brows contracted.

"Si," he growled. "That ees hecs office. I am work for Miguel. What you want? Talk queek, Rainey. Law officers from Paint Rock do not—do not stay long in Gila."

"I'm aimin' to stay long enough to talk wi' him—personal. Some jaspers tried to rustle some o' his beef 'crost the line but—"

"They did not succeed?" Lopez shot out.

"No, but—"

Lopez grinned broadly, a grin full of jeering mockery.

"That ees because Meester Daw-

son, the marshal, and you, are too smart for them. No?" he insinuated. "Do not worry about these rustlers. We feex them eef they come down to Gila."

"If et's all the same to yuh, I'll wait for Miguel in his office. Seems like I'm restrainin' yore celebratin' hereabouts."

He started forward as if to make for the closed door, but stopped short in his tracks at Juan's harshly barked order.

"Stop! Miguel ees ride to Paint Rock. You weel not see heem to-night."

"Jest the—"

"Reach! *Pronto!*"

From behind him the order was a snarled growl in Rainey's ear. Facing him, Lopez let out a soft chuckle of mirth. In his ribs Larry felt the unmistakable pressure of the muzzle of a .45.

Slowly his arms went above his shoulders and a boom of guttural laughter from thirty hoarse throats greeted his sudden helplessness. The next moment rough hands reached about his waist from behind, unclasped his cartridge belt and yanked belt and holstered gun away.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Tight Squeeze*

**U**NARMED, he faced the leering Juan Lopez who stood now with hairy arms folded calmly across his breast. The expression of Larry's face had never changed.

His eyes bored directly into the breed's, lips compressed, jaws clamped down.

But in his brain a hundred wild conjectures raced. He had been taken by surprise because he had not expected hostilities to commence in exactly that manner. It was plainly evident that his expressed intention of entering that closed

room had precipitated the swift action of Lopez's henchman. But why?

All this flew with the speed of lightning through Rainey's mind as he waited for the other to speak. Again he had to spar for time, still feeling that hard pressure in his ribs. Lopez came forward, sure of himself now, until he stood directly in front of Rainey.

"Many men have come to Gila looking for some one, Meester Rainey," the breed mocked. "They have find—nothing!"

"Not even the dry-gulchin' rat who drilled Steve Grimes from behind?" Larry spat out between clenched teeth.

**L**OPEZ looked up at him with his darting, beady eyes.

"He ees dead?" He shrugged his shoulders. "I did not know eet. Maybe he, too, was too—too inquisitive. No?"

But Larry had gained his point, for he felt certain that Lopez knew nothing of the murder of Steve. Cursing the folly that had placed him at the mercy of Juan's gang of cutthroats and killers, he braced himself for action.

"What yuh aimin' to do wi' me?" he asked with a forced quaver in his voice.

"I have not yet decide, Meester Rainey, but I theenk—"

"Then I'll make up yore mind for yuh."

The lean Texan barked this out violently. At the same instant he dropped like a flash to his knees, hurling his body forward at Juan's legs. Timed perfectly and totally unexpected, his swift action took the man behind him with the drawn gun completely by surprise.

If the gunman fired from the hip now, his slug would have found Rainey's back gone, and the lead ball would have torn through Lopez' heart. And before the man could

recover his senses sufficiently to lower his weapon, Larry had pinned the breed's legs and sent him crashing to the floor.

So close were the two entwined that a shot could not be chanced. Juan struggled desperately to free himself. But the moment he felt the breed's weight topple upon him, Larry's free hand shot out and upward for the other's holster.

Swift as lightning he ripped the weapon from its sheath and with a savage straightening of his half-bent knees hurled Lopez to one side. Leaping to his feet before the astounded crowd, he sent his boot crashing against the closed door just as the bark of a .45 snarled behind him.

The lead slug dug into the planking of the wall. But the door had flown open and Larry, springing forward and whirling at the same time, worked his colt twice. Lead and flame jetted from the gaping muzzle. The man with the gun slumped soundlessly to the floor.

A wild, excited jabber arose. Hairy paws flew to holsters, but before the crowd came fully to its senses, Rainey had slammed the door closed between him and the snarling men of Lopez's gang.

**S**WIFTLY the Texan whirled and took in the contents of the little room. Barely two full minutes had elapsed since he had first raised his arms at the growled order behind his back to the time he stood now, panting slightly, expecting every moment to hear the vicious attack renewed.

An ancient, high roll-top desk stood against the wall under the smoky light of a swaying oil lamp, close to the side window looking out upon the alley facing the *cantina*. This desk Rainey hauled in feverish desperation against the door, keeping low in a crouch as

lead tore with thundering reports through the upper panels.

"Stand clear o' thet door!" he bel-lowed warningly. "Stand clear or yuh gits drilled!"

He sent two answering slugs through the thick wood, more to gain time than in any hope of effectiveness. A howl of pain and the hoarse barking of men greeted his shots, but Rainey reflected bitterly that his weapon was almost empty—and he had no cartridge belt.

**H**IS eyes flashed about the small room. What was its secret Lopez was so intent on guarding? A repeating Winchester leaned in one corner and in spite of the pungent, acrid smell of burned gunpowder, a sweet, clammy odor tickled the Texan's nostrils.

Larry pounced for the rifle, snapped open the magazine, and cursed softly under his breath as he dropped it again to the floor.

"Empty!" he muttered to himself. "But there must be shells some place in here fer that—or fer a .45."

He darted first toward the window and flung it open, breathing thanks that he had not tethered his pinto at the front hitch-rack. A glance sufficed to show him that the pony still stood where he had left it, a dark smudge in the shadows.

Swiftly he sprang back toward the desk barricading the door, and flung up the top. Behind the desk the door shuddered as shoulders crashed against it, but Rainey, oblivious to all this, let out a low gasp of satisfaction.

Heaped on the center of the exposed desk-top lay a small mound of grey-black, metallic granules. Larry ran his fingers through it quickly.

"Gunpowder!" he barked to himself.

Then he tore open a side drawer. A holster belt, the sheath empty but

the cartridge slots filled with shells, lay folded carelessly in it. Rainey had no need to investigate closely to know caliber and make. With a low grunt he yanked it out and strapped it about his waist.

FEVERISHLY he raced back to the window and straddled the sill. From his position there he turned and emptied the remaining shells in the chambers of his Colt at the door, grinning broadly as he heard the wild scramble for shelter on the other side.

"Keep 'em thinkin' I'm here. Keep 'em busy," he growled to himself. He broke the smoking weapon and rammed fresh shells into the chambers from the belt he had discovered in the desk.

Without an instant's hesitation then, he dropped quickly out of the window to the ground. Crouching low, he darted along the dark alley to where his pinto stood, head in air, nostrils distended. Quickly he lifted himself into the saddle as the pony wheeled on its haunches and started off at a furious gallop up the street.

The loud thunder of hoofs must have aroused the men inside the *cantina*, for they came pouring out through the swinging doors, black shadows flying toward mounts in the patch of yellow light thrown from the interior of the saloon.

Larry turned in the saddle, far in the lead, the blaze of battle in his eyes, and worked his .45. The hammer fell with a hollow click on the shell! Rainey cursed softly and worked the gun again and again.

Nothing but dull clicks sounded as the hammer fell on the loaded chambers.

"By Gawd!" he barked hoarsely under his breath. "What a danged fool I been!"

Behind him a fusillade of six-gun fire pursued him, the balls whining about his ears. Crouched low in the

saddle, riding free with knees alone close pressed against the galloping pinto's sides, he broke the weapon and ejected the useless shells, eyes narrowed, blazing with an eager fire.

From the holster belt he had found in Miguel's office he reloaded the weapon and rammed it savagely into its leather sheath. Then he leaned forward on the neck of his racing pony, urging it on in long space-devouring strides as he raced for the Border and Paint Rock.

To the pony that had once been Steve's he whispered encouragement. And he repeated again his enigmatic oath to the night.

"By Gawd! Gunpowder an'—what a danged fool I been! Spread out, pinto. Uncurl yoreself! We got business in Paint Rock."

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Asking for Murder*

IT was late at night when Larry Rainey flung himself stiffly from the saddle of his tired pinto before the hitch-rack of the Paint Rock Cowboys' Rest. The rigid lines of his face relaxed in a momentary smile as he saw Pedro Miguel's jet black mare on the rim of the cluster of mounts.

Inside, the riders of the surrounding ranges were at the height of their nightly festivities. Loud laughter, the clink of glasses, the rattle of chips, and the deep bass growls of punchers drifted through the swinging doors in a medley of familiar sound.

The tall, grim-eyed Texan entered unobtrusively and edged his way through the crowd toward the bar. Without appearing to do so, he maneuvered carelessly toward where old Gus Dawson stood talking earnestly to a man whose back was toward Rainey.

The marshal looked up suddenly, spied his deputy over the other

man's shoulder, and his speech died abruptly on his lips. For a moment his jaws hung open in surprise. Then they closed with a snap and his bright eyes sparkled with genuine relief.

"Thank Gawd, yu'l're back, Larry."

The man to whom Dawson had been talking turned sharply on his heel. It was to this man that Rainey spoke, as if he had not heard Dawson's words at all. His steel-grey eyes were hard as flints.

"I been a-lookin' fer yuh, Miguel," he drawled with ominous quiet.

The other looked up at him from under beetling black brows. There was something in the low, brittle voice of the lean, flame-haired rider that penetrated to every corner of the crowded saloon.

**PEDRO MIGUEL** was a short, obese man, florid faced and deep chested. Shaggy hair bunched out from under the brim of his sombrero. His eyes were restless agate points sunk deep in fleshy pouches, and the jagged line of a scar running from the bridge of his nose to the middle of his right cheek gave to his swarthy face the appearance of a continuous leering grin.

He wore a low slung holster belt about his fleshy middle. Besides this, across his heavy shirt two bandoliers hung, the leather slots jammed full of loaded cartridges.

"I been a-lookin' fer yuh," Larry repeated softly; and at the tone of his voice men backed away.

Pedro's fleshy lips cracked in what was intended for a grin of welcome.

"Gus Dawson here," he countered, "he has been worry for you, Rainey. He tell me you have ride across to Gila. Eet ees good you—"

"Yeah, Pedro. I been ridin' down to Gila. Figgered mebbe the jaspers what's been tryin' to run yore beef might be down thataway."

"You an' thee marshal have beat

them again, hey, Rainey?" The breed's face took on again its mask of a mirthless grin. "I theenk maybe you learn them that they cannot steal stock while you an'—"

"I don't reckon yuh'll have to worry none no more about them rustlers, Pedro," Larry cut in softly.

**T**HE breed's brows lifted and his shoulders came up in a swift gesture.

"Me? Worry? No, *amigo*, I do not worry." He half turned to go.

"Yuh're shore packin' a heap o' ammunition, Miguel," Larry snapped suddenly. "Figgerin' on meetin'—"

"I ride into thee badlands," Pedro explained over his shoulder. "*Adios.*"

He took a pace forward, but no more. Rainey had not stirred, but his ominous words brought Miguel up short in his tracks.

"I tol' yuh I been a-lookin' fer yuh!" he snapped again. The breed turned to face him with lowering brows.

"I met up wi' someone yuh used to know down in Gila," Rainey went on levelly. "Jasper what calls hisself Juan Lopez an' says he worked for yuh. He stole my holster an' six-gun. This yere one," Larry tapped his belt with a swift gesture, "is one he—loaned to me. I'm aimin' to return it to him, Pedro—*through you!*"

The breed's mouth opened, but whatever he had intended to utter was never spoken. For with the words, without the slightest warning, Larry's sun-browned hand had pounced on the butt of his .45 and the blue muzzle was leveled unwaveringly at Miguel's heart.

A swift buzz of excitement swept the crowded place, then died to an utter stillness. Miguel sputtered helplessly, caught entirely unaware.

"Unhitch that holster yuh're packin', Pedro, an' lay it on the bar-top. *Pronto!* Not them over yore middle.

I aims to swap belts an' guns with yuh."

The orders snapped from Rainey's tight-stretched lips. Miguel hesitated.

"Pronto!"

TERRY barked the single word like the crack of a blacksnake. Slowly Pedro's hairy paws found the buckle of the belt. Rainey's gun followed his every movement as the breed laid it gingerly on the bar and backed warily off.

"You are go loco, Rainey!" he snarled savagely, suddenly finding his voice.

Without a word, as the unarmed man backed slowly away, Larry rammed his own weapon back into its leather sheath. He, too, unbuckled his belt, rolled it carelessly together, and then with a deft twist of his wrist flipped it through the air toward the breed.

Not until Pedro, still utterly dumbfounded, had caught it, did the strangely acting deputy marshal of Paint Rock speak.

"A fair exchange ain't hurtin' no one, Pedro," he drawled as Miguel, eyes narrowed to an ugly glower, started buckling on the holster. "Too bad yuh ain't gonna see yore pardner, Juan, no more, or yuh could return him his belt an' smoke iron."

Pedro's shaggy head snapped up at the obvious implication, lips drawn back in a snarl, eyes ablaze.

"Juan tol' me about yore drillin' Steve Grimes," Larry spat out.

The breed started upright.

"Eet ees a liel!" he barked hoarsely. "Juan could not even know I—"

He stopped short, realizing too late that he had been trapped into a dangerous admission by the tall puncher's clever ruse. His eyes darted swiftly from side to side.

"So yuh're admittin' yuh killed Steve," Larry thundered in a sudden bellow of rage.

"He draw first. I—"

"That's a lie, yuh rotten scum!" Rainey roared. "Yuh drilled Steve Grimes through the back."

The crowd let out a gasp that seemed to issue from a single throat. For Pedro Miguel, separated from Rainey by only a cleared space of sawdust-covered floor, carried a Colt .45, low slung in the holster belt the Texan had a moment before tossed to him. And Larry himself, helpless and weaponless, was unarmed. The Colt and holster belt the breed had laid on the bar-top were far out of his reach.

Larry Rainey had deliberately asked for swift and certain death.

FOR only the fraction of an instant the breed hesitated. Then like a flash his hand pounced for the butt of the heavy gun. The Colt whipped clear of leather and its muzzle swept the place.

"Reach! All of you!" he snarled, the six-gun weaving slowly from side to side.

Hands flew above shoulders, Larry's slowly, his bitter stare glued on Miguel. The breed glowered at him in bestial rage. Then he burst suddenly into a throaty, gurgling laugh that sent mocking, animal-like echoes beating back from the rafters.

"You are one smart fool!" he jeered triumphantly. "Fair exchange, hey? I have one Colt an' you have—nothing! Juan Lopez talk too much. Eet ees maybe good that you have keel heem.

"Si!" he thundered on in his hoarse, dry roar of triumph. "I keel Steve Grimes. He find out too much. Now what you do about eet, you loco fool?" For an instant he belowered his bestial laughter again. Then, sobering, his mouth still split in that inhuman grin, he started backing slowly toward the swinging doors, gun weaving steadily.

"Adios, my frien's," he jeered,

lusting in his momentary triumph. "I weel see you no more."

"Et was yuh who drilled Steve! That's all I wanted to know."

Rainey's hand came slowly down from over his shoulders. The breed stopped short in his tracks, his six-gun freezing in a dead bead on the Texan's heart.

"Keep up thee hands, Rainey!" he commanded savagely. "*Pronto!* Or you are dead!"

Larry Rainey made no answer. Instead, he started deliberately to step toward the gun and holster Miguel had a few moments before left on the pine bar-top.

"Stop!" Pedro thundered. "One more step—an' I fire!"

"Fire an' be damned to yuh!"

His movement toward where the Colt lay had not stopped. It had all happened in the barest passing of seconds. The crowd scraped boots quickly for the shelter of the far walls, pale-faced, eyes astrain, expecting every moment to hear the murderous thunder of roaring death.

From his position at the corner of the bar, Gus Dawson, muscles working and the eyes fairly popping from his head, shouted in a high-pitched, excited voice:

"Stop, Larry, yuh hell-fire's fool! Yuh're askin' fer murder!"

Rainey's sun-browned hand reached out toward the weapon. Directly opposite him Pedro Miguel let out a throaty growl. The hammer of his .45 drew back—and fell!

## CHAPTER V

### *The Slickest Game*

**N**OTHING but a dull click, loud and distinct in the absolute stillness, was heard.

The breed's face went ashen. Feverishly he worked the gun again and again. There was no discharge and no jet of flame and smoke from the cold muzzle. In a panic he made as

if to wheel and plunge for safety into the night.

"Stay where yuh are!"

The reclaimed holster belt buckled about his middle, Larry Rainey stood with feet braced wide, his arms hanging half bent at his sides, the right palm cupped and ready for instant action.

"That's yore own medicine, Miguel. I tol' yuh that smoke-iron come from Gila," he went on in a frozen voice. "So did the shells. Yuh drilled pore Steve from behind an' left him to die like a dog. But I'm givin' yuh a chance yuh never gave him."

**W**ITHOUT turning his head Rainey snapped a command to the astonished Dawson: "Slide yore Colt along the floor toward the coyote!"

"Yuh loco—"

"Do as I say, Gus," Larry said.

In utter silence the marshal drew his own weapon, stooped over, and sent it sliding along the floor. It cut a swathe of sawdust in its path and stopped just in front of the terrorized breed. He looked down at it with darting eyes, afraid to stir.

"Go fer that smoke-iron, Pedro," Rainey barked. "I'm a-givin' yuh first bite."

For only the split fraction of a second the breed hesitated. By his own words he had trapped himself like a rat in a corner. He had but one chance, and he knew it. Swift as lightning, he dove headlong for the Colt, pounced upon it, and came to one knee.

Larry waited like a frozen image for the timed instant of action. Then like a striking snake his right hand leaped for the butt of his own .45. Flame and smoke darted from both men's weapons.

The breed's slug caught the Texan in the shoulder, but Larry had no need to fire the second time. A

small round hole, red and gaping, appeared below the brim of Miguel's sombrero. With a violent convulsive motion his arms jerked up. The next moment he collapsed.

The crowd surged forward, Gus Dawson in the lead, all jabbering at once. Rainey swayed slightly where he stood, his gun sending up a slow thread of smoke.

"Good gosh, Larry!" the marshal exploded. "Steve's hunch was right. Yuh found the rustlers in Gila!"

**R**AINEY holstered his .45 and turned slowly to face Dawson.

"Rustlers, nothin!" he snapped. "Gimme a cartridge out o' that carcass' bandolier!"

Willing hands sprang forward. Larry calmly took a shell from the dozen that were held forward.

"That smoke-iron yuh held up the breed with, Larry, an' later give to him," Dawson persisted, his homely face creased in puzzlement. "Ain't there no shells in it?"

"Yeah, shore they is," the deputy replied softly. "I found 'em in Miguel's desk at his headquarters in Gila. Same as these shells here he was totin' in them bandoliers o' his. Sure they was shells in the iron—but there wasn't no powder under the slugs!"

"Yuh mean—" Dawson started, and ended in a gasp of astonishment.

Calmly, Larry laid the cartridges he held in his hand on the bar-top. Pulling his Colt from its holster, with the butt of it he tapped the lead slug loose.

"Pedro Miguel an' his gang changed the gunpowder o' them cartridges in Gila," he explained swiftly. "That's what pore Steve was a-tryin' to tell us wi' his last breath, Dawson. Look here!" he snapped, as he poured the contents of the shell into the palm of his hand.

"What in— White, greyish powder. That ain't gunpowder! What—"

"Heroin!" Larry barked shortly. "Miguel sent yuh an' me an' a posse off on them wild goose chases after his own henchmen supposed to be rustlin' his beef, so's we wouldn't bother him when he rode across the line wi' the stuff.

"There's a grain or two o' this rotten stuff in every shell he's wearin'—an' a couple o' saddle bags full o' others, I'll bet, on the black mare he was aimin' to ride off on! It's the slickest dope smugglin' game—"

"Well, I'm durned!" Gus Dawson exploded. "Yuh knowed that when yuh handed the breed yore gun?"

"A fair exchange ain't robbin' no one, Gus," Larry drawled with the trace of a smile on his angular face.

"Two o' the rats in one night!" The marshal shook his head ruefully. "I reckon I better resign, Larry. Pedro Miguel an' Juan Lopez—"

"Can't say whether Lopez is dead or not, Gus. He was on the other side o' that door," Larry interrupted quietly. "All I was aimin' at was to let Pedro think he was top dog an' hint that I knowed a lot. Yuh kin learn a heap thataway, Gus, when coyotes starts spewin' up the truth."

His hand went to his shoulder, red with blood.

"Bind up this yere slug hole, Gus, will yuh, until I can git 'round to see ol' Doc Jameson?"

**S**TILL in a puzzled daze, Dawson started expertly to bind up the Texan's wound.

"Beef rustlers—dope smugglers," Larry breathed with a faraway look in his hard, steel-grey eyes. "That wasn't what I was after, Gus. I was ridin' the gun trail fer the man who drilled pore Steve in the back." And then he added, quietly:

"I'm glad I got him, Gus. Steve—we'd been through a heap together, him an' me. Pedro said he wouldn't be seein' us no more, Gus, an' I reckon as how he won't."

# Smarter *than a* CHINAMAN



*Pierce whirled the human bludgeon in his arms and sent him flying*

*An Intrepid American Rubber Planter Comes to Grips  
with the Wily Son Ton of the Malay Peninsula!*

By **GEORGE ALLAN MOFFATT**

*Author of "The Death Ship," "Pyramid of Gold," etc.*

**P**IERCE awoke with a start, nerves taut and muscles tense. Somewhere out of the silence of the night had come a sound, a vague, indistinct groan telegraphed

to his dormant brain by the sixth sense that never sleeps.

He lay in his bed, staring up at the mosquito netting over him. From the outside, moonlight flooded into

the window of the shack he used for the headquarters of his small rubber plantation.

Then came a scream, a wailing cry of death that ended in a muffled groan.

Pierce was out of the bed, grabbing for the automatic lying on the table. Another scream cut the night. With a wild leap Pierce was outside the door, dashing for the chemical shack behind the quarters of the coolie workmen.

The long rows of rubber trees, stretching away from the headquarter's building, rustled weirdly in the night breeze. The leafy spread of their foliage swayed lazily.

**A** BLINDING flash of red leaped through the night at him, coming from a tank cart near the chemical shack. A bullet zipped through the skin of his arm, sending a burning sensation up through his shoulder.

He dropped to the ground. His automatic belched fire. A man jumped up, darted away from the cart and into the chemical shack. Pierce took another shot, but the bullet went wild.

From the direction of the natives' quarters a Tamil coolie, whom Pierce recognized as one of his men, came stumbling toward him. On his face death was written in haggard, drawn lines. In the bright moonlight, as the man staggered toward the headquarter's building, Pierce could see that the dark face was bloodless, a ghastly gray.

On the bare chest was a gaping wound where a knife had ripped through the body, leaving a red, slicing cut. Blood was gushing from it. The man came stumbling on, swaying crazily to the right and left. He fell to the ground in front of Pierce, his eyes looking at the American through a film of death.

"Sahib," he whispered feebly to

Pierce. "The Evil One comes. He—"

The words died away in the man's throat. The body jerked a little, relaxed in a quivering tremor, and then went limp in death.

Pierce was on his feet. Around the chemical shack black figures moved swiftly, like shadows in the night. There was the rattle of cart wheels behind the building. Pierce let two bullets fly. One of the moving figures gave a guttural grunt, grabbed his throat, sinking to the ground.

From both sides of the shack, rifles spurted flames of red. One bullet whizzed past Pierce's head as he plunged on.

The second one he never heard. There was a stinging sensation in his right temple. He felt sick at his stomach, violently sick. His legs stopped moving. Every part of his body went numb, lifeless. His knees buckled under him.

He knew he was sinking to the ground but he had no power to stop himself. He hit the grass in a limp heap, falling on his right side.

His senses reeled crazily. Every part of his body was paralyzed. He heard men shouting. Then silence, eerie and unreal.

**A**FTER a while, the blood started to course back through his veins. The numbness left his arms and legs. He moved slowly. His brain cleared, though it took him some time to collect his thoughts.

He staggered to his feet. The stinging pain was still on the side of his head. He touched his right temple. His hand came away covered with blood.

He looked around, still bewildered. In all the plantation, no form of life moved; no sound came to break the dreary stillness. Back in the clearing near the headquarter's shack, the dead body of the Tamil lay.

The moonlight flooded the half-

naked corpse, which lay on its face. The black powerful shoulders gleamed.

The white loincloth around the waist was red from blood that had saturated through the material.

Pierce staggered to the chemical shed. One look inside told him what had happened. The great vats, where the latex had been coagulated into rubber, were empty. The result of a month's feverish effort on the part of Pierce to fill those vats, to obtain the money he needed for operating his small rubber plantation, was gone.

On the side of the vats was a piece of white paper. Pierce walked over to it, pulled it off the nail. He walked out into the moonlight to read the letters printed across it in a crude hand. The message was simple and direct:

You were warned to get out of here. The next time will be too late.

Pierce smiled grimly, felt the cut on the side of his head where the bullet had creased the bone. He folded the paper up carefully and slipped it into his pocket.

## II

WHEN dawn came and the first rays of the sun had cut through the jungle mist, Pierce sat down to a breakfast of rice and curry, mango chutney and grated cocoanut. Two hours before, his Chinese boy had crawled back from the jungle where he had fled at the first shot the night before. He was still trembling and frightened, but he managed to prepare and serve the meal.

Five of Pierce's loyal Tamils had also returned. They told a story of how the workers had been ordered to leave the plantation. The command had come early that evening from Son Ton, the half-caste owner of

the great rubber plantation a few miles to the north of Pierce.

Son Ton was more than an owner of a large rubber plantation. His word carried fear to the hearts of every native in that part of the Malay Peninsula. They called him the Evil One. Cruel, relentless, ready to strike death to any who opposed his orders, Son Ton was virtually a king within the radius of his power and influence.

THE British authorities at Malacca knew his ruthless power and his lawless use of it, but they were helpless to do anything. Son Ton struck with a cunning that baffled any effort of the British to break his sway by the use of the law.

He had resented Pierce's coming into the jungle to establish a rubber plantation, but he was smart enough to withhold this resentment until the trees planted three years before by Pierce began to yield latex, which meant a fortune to whoever owned them.

The greater part of Son Ton's rubber holdings had been secured by theft and murder. Many white men had come into the jungle in that part of the Malay Peninsula to start rubber plantations.

The soil was fitted for such trees and it was only a matter of three years until the trees would begin to show profits.

None of these men, however, remained to profit from their years of labor. Son Ton disposed of them in various ways, according to the necessity in each case. Robbing the latex vats had caused many of them to leave because of the need of funds. Destroying the scars that let the latex run out of the trees was another way.

And if none of those worked, a shot in the dark or a cresse knife in the back disposed of the more stubborn and courageous.

Pierce had received the usual first warnings to leave. He ignored them. The robbing of the latex vats and the warning to the Tamil coolies to leave the plantation had been the next move.

As Pierce ate his breakfast, he had the warning note in front of him. The side of his head was bandaged. His humor was very bad.

"IN a little while," he said to the Chinese boy, "that yellow-faced Son Ton will be coming around to see if I am really dead. By now, he has my rubber safely stored away. It should bring him close to five hundred pounds. This crease in the side of my head is bad enough, but to have that fat, greasy-faced half-caste getting my five hundred pounds is worse."

"Me think you foolish, Tuan," the boy said weakly. "You no able to fight Son Ton, the Evil One. He ruin many white men and kill others. Next time, his bullet no crease head. It go through head."

"What a consolation you are, Hoy Ho," Pierce laughed. "A man robs me and then you tell me to run."

"Wise man sometimes runs," Hoy Ho said. "Fool stays and gets shot."

"Your Chinese philosophy is a lot of bunk at times," Pierce replied. "This Son Ton is the king bee around these parts. He plays his game so the police can't touch him. He's a smooth article, but you don't know just how smooth I can be."

"No white man smooth like Chinese," Hoy Ho said. "Son Ton smart man. He steal rubber and you no prove it is yours."

"If I could, I would be in Malaca trying to do just that," Pierce answered. "He stole this time and got away with it, but the next time it will be different."

There was a movement at the door. Pierce looked up, smiled coldly, and got to his feet. In the doorway stood

Son Ton. He was dressed in a long, flowing robe of red, interlaced with gold. On his head was the usual black skull cap.

He was a tall man, powerful in build. His face was heavy, with the fullness of the Oriental and the thick, cruel lips of a Portuguese. His eyes were small, black as coal, the eyes of a cunning manipulator.

"I thought you'd be around, Son Ton," Pierce said, his hand remaining on the automatic in his belt. "You didn't know for sure, when you left last night, if I was dead or alive."

Son Ton smiled coldly.

"My friend," he said in a soft, slurring accent, speaking perfect English, "you have been injured. I am very sorry."

"A bullet took away a hunk of bone in my temple," Pierce answered. "How much do you think you are going to get for my rubber? I'm figuring it should bring five hundred pounds gold, if you take it to Malaca."

SON TON'S face remained expressionless. He entered the room, sat down stiffly in a chair, arms folded in front of him under the waving sleeves of his blouse.

"You are a brave man, Pierce," he said quietly. "A brave man is a fool. The land you have taken for your plantation does not belong to white men, but I am willing to pay you for it."

Pierce sat down, looked at Son Ton in amazement.

"I hope I'm hearing right," he apologized. "Sometimes a bullet crease leaves you a little off in the head. Did you say you were willing to buy my plantation?"

"I am willing to give you a certain amount of money."

"I see," he said. "That is different."

"You cannot pay your bills if you

have no rubber to sell," Son Ton said softly. "If you are reasonable, I will see that you get something. If you are not, I can promise you nothing."

Pierce got up, his lean, bronzed face hard and tense.

"The fact is, Son Ton," he said dryly, "I am not at all a reasonable chap. I came here and planted rubber trees to get money out of them. And I'm going to continue to do that. In two weeks from now, my vats will be full again and I am taking the rubber to market. If you want to try to stop me, that is your privilege."

Son Ton got up slowly, backed to the door. His small black eyes were on Pierce's hand that rested on the butt of the automatic. The eyes flashed hatred, but the face remained as impassive as the face of a stone Buddha.

"Time makes even a fool see reason," he said. "I shall make no more offers; but should you desire to accept my proposition, I shall be glad to receive you."

Pierce laughed coldly.

"I've got a hunch that I will be coming to see you, Son Ton," he said. But it won't be about any proposition of buying me out."

Son Ton bowed graciously, backed out of the door.

He disappeared beyond the clearing of the plantation.

### III

**F**OR the next two weeks, Pierce worked with Herculean efforts to fill his latex vats. He drove the five Tamils that remained with him to the same efforts that he underwent.

Early in the morning, some time before daybreak, he was out among the rubber trees. He helped the Tamils pare the bottom out of the lozenge-shaped scars in the trees,

and wire the little buckets at the bottom of the scars, which caught the milky fluid.

At noon time, when the heat of the sun had dried the scars and stopped the flow of latex, the little tree buckets were emptied into large buckets.

The contents were poured into the vats on the tank carts and hauled to the chemical shed.

In the afternoon the same procedure would be repeated. Then, when night came, Pierce worked until the early hours of the morning in the chemical sheds, mixing the latex and coagulating it into a thick, pliable white rubber. He handled this work himself, giving his Tamils a chance to rest.

From vat to vat he went, stirring, heating and forming the white rubber into large squares that could be handled easily and quickly. And then, the night's work finished, he would manage to get a few hours sleep.

**T**HROUGH those two weeks he worked grimly, silently. He had no illusions of the odds he was up against. He could expect no help from the British authorities. He was in the jungles, where the law was forced to leave each man to work out his own protection, unless proper evidence could be presented so that they might act with a reasonable certainty of success.

Evidence was something Son Ton never left behind. When he murdered, it was from behind—a knife thrust in the back or a bullet from a bush. No Tamil could be gotten who would testify against him.

He played his ruthless game with an almost complete immunity from the law, even though the authorities were more than anxious to get their hands on him.

Pierce knew that every move he made was watched by the spies of

Son Ton. They were in the jungle. He could not be certain but that, among the five Tamils that had returned to him, there weren't several spies sent by Son Ton.

But he worked on. At the end of the two weeks, his vats were about filled.

He sent Hoy Ho to Malaca with a letter and special instructions.

"You fight Son Ton and he kill you," Hoy Ho protested with heat. "You lone white man. He powerful Chinaman. He steal rubber and get you out of the way."

"GO to Malaca and do what I told you," Pierce answered angrily. "I'm starting for Malaca tonight myself. If I get there, Son Ton will be minus a nice bunch of rubber; if I don't get there, I've got a hunch that it will be the last time he'll rob or kill anyone."

"He kill you," Hoy Ho pleaded. "His spies know everything."

"You just think they do," Pierce laughed. "Now, slip away and get to Malaca and do what I told you."

It was early in the morning when Hoy Ho left for Malaca on horseback. When he had gone, Pierce went down to the chemical shack to check over the amount of rubber he had for shipment. Carefully he examined the squares of rubber, weighing each one of them, then tabulating the exact weight.

Early in the afternoon, he had his Tamils pull the heavy ox carts up alongside the chemical shack, ready to be loaded for the trip he was taking that night through an isolated, half hidden jungle road.

As the afternoon wore on and evening came, Pierce knew that Son Ton was preparing to strike that night. Furtive forms moved among the jungle underbrush. One of Son Ton's men even sneaked through the rubber trees up to the chemical shack.

From the front room of his cottage, Pierce saw these things through the window. He saw two of his Tamils disappear into the jungle. Another followed. Five minutes later, the last remaining two slipped away from the native quarters, plunged into the jungle after the first three.

Pierce stood up. The muscles on his jaws tightened, his eyes, partly closed, were cold and hard. He examined his automatic, checked over the extra clips in his pocket, and then walked out of the house and down to the chemical shack.

The first shades of twilight had started to filter through the rows of rubber trees. The twilight lasted only a few minutes and then darkness, unrelieved by a moon so early in the night, fell over the plantation and the jungle.

Pierce worked rapidly. He knew now that every second counted. He had feared that the Tamils, faced with another attack, would desert him.

He had hoped for their assistance, but could not bring himself to ask it since he knew it would mean death to some of them.

THEY had slipped away at the critical hour, leaving him alone. If Son Ton only delayed his attack, Pierce knew that he had a chance, remote and hopeless though it was.

Under the cover of night, he loaded the squares of white rubber on the two ox carts. When this was done he yoked the oxen, cracked the long whip over their heads and sent them through the rubber trees to the little jungle road that led, in a round-about way, to Malaca.

The carts rattled over the uneven ground. The oxen breathed heavily. Pierce cracked the whip over their heads, following alongside the first cart. He wasted no time giving his little plantation a last look, as the

oxen and the carts plunged into the Stygian darkness of the jungle.

Had he looked behind, he would have seen two furtive figures moving stealthily up to his cottage. These two figures stopped, heard the sound of the two carts rolling over the jungle road; then, as if swallowed up by the night, they disappeared.

On over the jungle road Pierce sent the oxen. In the darkness he could see the outlines of the tall *tungai* trees. Vines hung down from the top branches, striking the faces of the oxen. They kept plodding on, heavily and stolidly.

**T**HE carts covered two miles. Only the subdued roar of the insect life of the jungle broke the stillness. On the road ahead, Pierce saw nothing move through the darkness. His hand left the automatic in his belt. His body relaxed, as if a feeling of relief had suddenly come over him.

And then it came!

Out of the jungle on both sides of the road darted black forms. It seemed that the night had suddenly rained them. Silent, deadly, swift as cobras striking, they came. The shining blades of long cresse knives flashed in the darkness as they closed in on Pierce and the carts.

Pierce's gun roared twice. A man screamed. Then the cloud of black was on him and over him. Knives ripped at his clothes. He ducked, let his body drop to the ground, coming up with his shoulders in a vicious upward movement.

His shoulders caught the bodies of three men, sent them sprawling backward. Pierce gained his knees, his right and left fists snapping out like pistons. As he connected, there was a dismal howling around him. Several of Son Ton's men grabbed their stomachs and danced crazily.

Then a knife ripped down Pierce's back, the sharp point making a thin slice in his flesh. He swerved. The

cloud of black forms was over him again, crushing him to the ground. He twisted his body around to the right. Two knives whizzed past him, burying themselves in the earth where his body had been.

He came up with a mighty heave. Two of Son Ton's men went flying in the air. Pierce rose to his knees. Two other attackers came at him with the fury of beasts. He caught one with a right to the chin, but the second closed in on him, powerful arms gripping him around the waist.

The rattle of the carts, moving, broke through the din of the fighting. There was a sharp command in Chinese. The man struggling with Pierce raised a knife high in the air. It cut the air with a sharp *zip*. Pierce's right hand went up, caught the descending wrist. His fingers closed around it like a vise; he whirled in a quick twist, throwing the man on him to the ground.

With every ounce of strength and weight in him, Pierce sent the knife down toward the man's body. There was a ripping of flesh. The man groaned weakly and then went limp.

Pierce was on his feet, making a headlong dive for the jungle brush as two other men came after him. He landed on his shoulders and head, squirmed to straighten his body out and then crawled deeper in the brush.

He heard the rattle of the carts die away in the night. He heard several Chinese talking in excited tones out in the road but they made no attempt to crawl into the jungle after him.

Pierce got up, adjusted his clothes, and smiled to himself.

#### IV

**D**AYBREAK came in a haze of gray mist that rose slowly off the jungle and the clearing of Son Ton's plantation. The headquarters of the plantation

was a low, white building, built after the style of Chinese houses in the interior.

The storage sheds and chemical shacks were some distance from the house, across a small ravine. When the gray mist began to lift and the first rays of light penetrated it, causing it to melt away, four men were near the storage shed. No other life was visible.

ONE of these was Son Ton himself. The others were burly Cantonese coolies, loading the white squares of coagulated latex onto Son Ton's carts from where it had been dumped on the ground.

The men worked quickly at sharp commands from Son Ton. Oxen were standing near, ready to be yoked to the carts to carry the rubber to the Malaca market. The last square was loaded. The coolies jumped to the ground, led the oxen up to the carts.

A little distance from the storage shed, Pierce crawled through the heavy jungle grass. His clothes were torn to shreds from his fight with the natives the night before.

There was an ugly knife cut down the side of his face. His back throbbed.

He crawled rapidly, his head bobbing up over the grass from time to time to watch Son Ton and the men. He saw the oxen being yoked to the carts. He jumped to his feet and dashed through the grass, keeping behind the sheds so he could not be seen.

He rounded the corner of the shed, running for the carts. The big, powerful Cantonese coolie standing at the head of the oxen on the lead cart saw him first. He gave a sharp cry of alarm. Son Ton swerved, started in amazement at the sight of Pierce. A sharp order snapped from his lips.

A coolie on Pierce's left side made

a dive for him. Pierce let his fist go out, with all the force of his running body behind it. There was a loud crack, a crushing of bones, as he connected flush on the man's jaw. The coolie went down like a load of bricks.

The Cantonese at the head of the oxen closed in on Pierce. The American ducked and grabbed the man by the legs, raising his body high in the air. The third coolie had started for him. Pierce swung the body in his arms around as a human bludgeon.

It crashed against the head of the oncoming coolie. This man dropped in his tracks as if he had been struck by a freight train.

Pierce whirled the bludgeon around in his arms, letting him fly toward Son Ton. This wily Chinaman ducked, however, letting the man crash to the ground, his head hitting a rock and knocking him unconscious.

SON TON'S right hand moved with the speed of lightning. A knife went through the air at Pierce. He twisted his head. The knife slipped by, nearly taking the skin off the side of his cheek.

With a spring Pierce was on Son Ton. A blow to the American's jaw sent his head back. Another blow caused his brain to reel. He shook his head violently, bored in, sending right and left to the body of Son Ton.

Back and forth over the narrow space at the end of the storage shed the two men fought, Son Ton with the cunning and the cleverness of a wolf and Pierce with all the stubborn determination of a cornered man. His automatic was in his belt. He knew he could not use it, that at the first shot the whole horde of Son Ton's men would be down on him.

The plantation was sleeping. He

and Son Ton were fighting at the end of the storage shed, hidden from view.

The strength and power of Son Ton amazed him. Pierce sent rights and lefts to the face and body of the Chinaman, but with each blow to the face Son Ton's head rolled, taking the power away from the blow. The blows to the body landed full, but did not slow up the Chinaman.

**P**IERCE'S arms were tiring. His head was swimming from the first two blows delivered by Son Ton. He realized grimly that he could not last much longer. He fainted with his left. Son Ton fell for the trick. With a speed faster than the eye, Pierce's right shot out, his body rising with it.

He landed flush on Son Ton's jaw. The Chinaman blinked stupidly for a second. His eyes went glassy. His knees buckled, as he sank heavily to the ground.

Pierce stood over him, swaying back and forth. The cut on his face was opened, blood gushing from it. The coolie he had sent to the ground with his first blow was struggling to get up.

And then suddenly the whole plantation seemed to come alive. Men were running around the headquarters' house jabbering excitedly.

Pierce backed to the wall, jerked the automatic from his belt. He held it limply in his hand. The coolie that had gotten up was staring at him, but his eyes were still dazed from the blow.

The sounds of hoofs came to Pierce. He wet his lips.

Then horses came around the corner of the shed where Pierce was standing.

On the leading horse sat Hoy Ho, his boyish face covered with a proud grin. Behind him, on a sorrel horse, was Upton Updike, British Commis-

sioner of the Native Police of Malaca. Behind the commissioner rode four of his men.

Pierce staggered out from the wall. Hoy Ho jumped off the horse and ran up to him.

The commissioner and his men dismounted.

"I bring Commissioner as you tell me," Hoy Ho cried. "I show him note. He don't understand but he come. You no dead. That is funny."

Updike walked up to Pierce. He was a tall man, with a lean face and cold gray eyes. Everything about him was typical of English efficiency.

His eyes glanced at Son Ton, who still lay on the ground, but no surprise showed in them.

"The note delivered by your boy," Updike said to Pierce, "stated that you would be ready to turn Son Ton over to the authorities with plenty of evidence to put him away. It looks like we have walked into some kind of a brawl."

**S**ON TON opened his eyes, stared in amazement at Commissioner Updike. Then the Chinaman struggled to his feet, his face bewildered and his eyes still dazed.

"I should have said," Pierce replied, "that I would be able to turn Son Ton over to you if I wasn't killed first. I came about as near to dying as I want to for some time; but I didn't, and you can have Son Ton with my blessings."

"That is quite easy to say," Updike replied, "but what is the charge? We have to have some kind of evidence for our courts."

Pierce laughed weakly, looked at Son Ton.

"Commissioner," Son Ton said, "this is all really amazing. I am loading my rubber carts when this wild man comes out of the jungle and attacks me and my men. What it is all about I have no idea."

"I can explain that," Pierce said to the Commissioner. "Three years ago, as you know, I took a piece of jungle and made a rubber plantation out of it. As you also know, Son Ton has gotten rich by driving white men away from rubber trees when they start to make money. Two weeks ago Son Ton raided my place and stole all my latex and rubber.

"**H**E knew I couldn't stand very many blows like that. Last night he repeated the act. My plantation was deserted. I tried to sneak through the old jungle road but his men closed in on me. They stole my rubber, tried to kill me. I came up on Son Ton while he was loading my rubber on his carts to take it to Malaca to sell. I didn't let him do it and a fight followed. You see the results."

Son Ton laughed coldly.

"It is all very absurd, Commissioner," he said. "The man is insane. He is making wild statements and he has no proof to back up his charge. The rubber on those carts is mine. It is difficult to prove that coagulated rubber belongs to anyone, but if you notice you will see that my weight labels are pasted on each square."

Updike looked at Pierce.

"We can't charge a man with robbery and murder on wild statements," he said coldly.

Pierce looked at Hoy Ho, grinned good-naturedly, and then turned the grin on Son Ton.

"A Chinaman is a pretty smooth article," he said to Updike. "You've got to think fast to get the best of him. I figured this shipment would be stolen and I knew from experience that coagulated rubber was just rubber. Son Ton must have wondered why my squares did not have labels on them. I suppose he figured that, being short-handed, I overlooked this.

"It so happens that I didn't. I wanted those labels, which will prove my ownership and send Son Ton to prison, some place where they could not be seen or removed. I figured the safest place was inside the rubber squares, so when I coagulated this latex I slipped the paper labels inside. I did all the coagulating myself, and Son Ton's spies had no chance of learning the trick."

Pierce walked over to the cart, pulled a square of white coagulated latex down. He picked up the knife Son Ton had thrown at him and cut the square open.

In the middle of it was a piece of paper. Pierce pulled it out and handed it to the Commissioner.

On the square was written in ink:

This latex was coagulated September 9th by James E. Pierce and is his property. Its weight is estimated at twenty-two pounds.

"**J**UST a little precaution I took," Pierce explained. "I knew I might be robbed. Nothing especially brilliant about the idea, but it was too smart for Son Ton. You will find my label in all the squares."

Updike looked at the paper and then at Son Ton.

His face remained cold and impassive as he said: "It looks like this is just what we have been wanting for ten years, Son Ton. This piece of paper is going to send you where you have belonged all this time."

The face of Son Ton twisted in hatred.

He turned, but the four native police had him by the arms. There was a click of handcuffs.

Pierce turned to Hoy Ho.

"Your Chinamen are not so smart after all, Hoy Ho," he said with a laugh. "But get busy. You're the only help I have. We have to get this shipment to Malaca or there won't be any money to hire additional help."

# The GLOBE-TROTTER



**P**IRATE gold! There's a subject that will grab the ear of red-blooded adventurers any day of the week. Loot of the Spanish Main—gold and jewels ravished from burning merchantmen, their decks slippery with the blood of their slaughtered crews! Fabulous hoards hidden away long years in forgotten caches!

What adventurer will not feel the blood running faster in his veins when he scents such bait?

That's why Ye Olde Globe Trotter thrilled to the core when he read



the remarkable journal by Henry Morgan Krech's pirate ancestor, which appears in this issue under the title, "We Flew the Jolly Roger." Mr. Krech is dubious about whether his ancestor's treasure is still there in the cave on Torgue—whether the sea has washed away the cave entirely, or whether others have long since found the place and looted it.

## *Plenty of Searchers*

But there are plenty of others who would jump at this chance to uncover pirate treasure. Thousands have hunted and dug the islands of the Spanish Main from end to end in their quest for fortunes of this sort, and just as Ye Olde Globe Trotter finished reading the Krech journal, along comes the United States Gov-

ernment taking official notice of another buried treasure expedition.

The Bureau of Biological Survey, which has charge of Blackbeard Island, off the coast of Georgia, has just granted permission to dig for old Blackbeard's treasure, to a group of ten Georgia and Alabama men.

## *"Me and the Devil"*

Edward Teach, called Blackbeard because of his whiskers, terrorized the southeastern coast of the U. S. after the Revolutionary War, until an American naval expedition killed him in 1780. His immense treasure was supposedly buried on what is now called Blackbeard Island.

"Only me and the devil knows where it is, and the one who lives the longest gets it!" the pirate boasted, when members of his crew tried to learn the location of his cache.

Blackbeard Island has been shoveled over from stem to stern during the last hundred and forty years, but these latest seekers—hard-headed business men, at that—have an instrument with which they believe they can locate the exact spot of the



cache. Maybe they'll be able to outwit old Blackbeard and the devil, too.

Blackbeard Island, seventeen miles long and four miles wide, located about fifty miles south of Savannah,

*(Continued on page 148)*



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(Continued from page 146)

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#### Other Treasures

Blackbeard's treasure is only one of the many fabled hoards which constantly lure the adventure seeker. Every buried treasure, every sunken treasure ship, every lost mine, is carefully noted by many a hopeful eye, ceaselessly speculated upon by many an undiscouraged searcher.

One of the latest of these ambitious schemes for recovering lost wealth is the curious craft now anchored in the East River, in New York Harbor. Devised by Simon Lake, who invented the submarine, it is intended to recover the fortune lying in the *Hussar*, a British frigate sunk during the Revolution.

Another is the project to raise the *Islander*, Alaskan treasure ship which sank in 1901 with \$3,000,000 aboard. For two years, and at a cost of \$200,000, salvagers have been raising the ancient hulk which sank off Admiralty Island.

#### Large and Small

It takes money to go in for treasure hunting on a scale such as that, but for many another search it takes only a pick and shovel and a stock of grub.

But from the big executive supervising expensive salvage operations, to the lone prospector hunting for Red Curly's treasure in the wilds of the Texas Big Bend, they're all the same breed—adventurers one and all. More power to them!

#### Club Full of Them

And, by the way, that's just the sort of gents—and ladies, too—you'll rub shoulders with in the *Globe Trotters Club*. Ye Olde Globe Trotter has been telling you folks about the club until he's getting hoarse. This time he's going to sit down and let someone else do the spiling.

Here's what a member thinks of the outfit:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have been reading **THRILLING ADVENTURES** for a long time but never

paid much attention to your department, thinking it the usual "Letters from Readers" department. One day I read your letters and the comments from readers from start to finish, and suddenly realized that I had been neglecting a very interesting and informative section of the magazine.

The opportunity, through your column, to learn of other members of the *Globe Trotters Club* who live in far away places, and the possibility of corresponding with them through their addresses given in your



department, thrilled me. It is a splendid way of bringing together red-blooded men in all parts of the world, and of exchanging ideas and information one with another. It also affords an opportunity to form worth-while friendships with these men, and I trust that I will be able to make many friends in this way.

My hobbies are an intense love for the out-of-doors, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, nature study; learning about people and places, chess, stamp collecting. I will welcome letters from *Globe Trotters* all over the world, in English, French or German. I will be happy to answer letters, to exchange stamps, or play chess by correspondence with *Globe Trotters* in remote corners of the earth who may not have a companion to play with face to face.

James F. Frank.  
3650 South Leavitt St., Chicago, Ill.

#### Waiting for You

There you are. Bro. Frank has put the proposition in a nutshell. We've got a fine crowd of red-blooded, thrill-hunting adventurers here; a crowd you ought to line up with right away if you have not already done so.

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(Continued on page 150)

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## CONCORD NOVELTY CO.

P. O. Box 623 City Hall Sta., Dept. L, N. Y. C.

(Continued from page 148)

on the remote edges of civilization. Better send in your coupon today and meet up with some of these interesting gents!

### Born Scrapppers

Speaking of interesting gents, reminds me that Bob Du Soe, who sure knows a heap of them, is on hand here with a letter to tell us about them—and about his yarn "Born to Fight", in this issue. Says he:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Some men are born to fight. You've known them and so have I, and I think you will agree that their lives are often crowded with thrilling adventures. It was my good fortune to accompany a group of re-



cruits for the Foreign Legion from Marsilles to Oran a couple of years ago, and about half of them were just that kind—the sort who would rather fight than eat. They had one glorious free-for-all the first night out, and it took the whole ship's crew to straighten them out.

A further proof of their love of conflict was the array of medals and service bars that adorned the fronts of some of their ill-fitting khaki tunics. They represented a score of battles and a dozen countries, and they were bound for no one knew how many more.

There was one in particular, a big, beam-shouldered, red-headed man, I got a glimpse of during that fight on the boat that was a pleasure to watch. Every swing of his big fist he hit somebody or something, and every time he landed he roared with delight. There was nothing mean or malicious about him. He fought because he thoroughly enjoyed it.

When he came in contact with a man smaller than himself, he disdainfully pushed him aside with the flat of his hand and went after someone nearer his size. When he was finished with that one, he was through. He didn't stop to kick him in the ribs or walk on his face, as some of the others did. He was fighting purely for the fun of it.

Well, you can't help admiring a man like that, rough and tough though he was; and the memory of him plagued me so long I

(Continued on page 152)

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Many exclusive features include: Micro-Tenator... Fidel-A-Stat... Separate Audio Generator... Ceramic Coil Forms, etc. Only Midwest covers a tuning range of 9 to 2,400 meters (33 Megacycles to 125 KC)—enabling you to easily and successfully tune in even low-powered foreign stations up to 12,000 miles away with crystal-clear, loud-speaker reception.

All 5 Wave Bands enable you to enjoy today's finest High Fidelity American programs. In addition, you get Canadian, police, amateur, commercial, airplane and ship broadcasts and derive new delight and new excitement from un-

equalled world-wide broadcasts... England, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, Australia, etc. Send today for money-saving facial **SENSATIONAL HIGH FIDELITY RECEPTION**  
This bigger, better, more powerful, clear-toned, super selective, 16-tube radio gives you absolute realism—entirely free of like, crystal-clear tone—unlike anything you have ever experienced before. You will hear one more octave—overtones—that cannot be brought in with ordinary radio sets. Now, hear every instrument, every voice, every shade and inflection of speech.



Take advantage of the amazing 30-day FREE trial offer. Send for FREE catalog.

Writes to Midwest... Listens to World-Wide Reception... Have some of the stations I have heard: EAQ, Madrid, Spain—DJB, Zezen, Germany—GSB, GSF, Daventry, England—KXME, Melbourne, Australia—VK2ME, Sydney, Australia—H2ABA, H2ABE, H2ABF, Colombia, S. A., and many more. Golden Hatfield, 2202 Grand Avenue.



Foreign Reception... Listen to Foreign Reception... We have heard the five continents with your Midwest. Have received Madagascar, Sydney, London, Paris, Vienna, Moscow, Madrid, New York, Shanghai, Tokio and also South American transmitters. Marcus H. Bushman, Apartado 96, Plaza Sao Martin, 172.



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(Continued from page 150)

decided to put him into a story and pass  
him on to you.

Bob Du Soc.

Based on Real Life

So that's how Du Soc gets his life-  
like characters; they're not fiction  
creations, but real, red-blooded men  
battling their way through the pages  
of his yarns.

Another character in this issue  
whom you must have spotted as a  
real man is Larry Rainey, in "The  
Deputy from Paint Rock". Jacland  
Marmur wants to tell us a bit about  
him and the Border country that  
knows him well:

Dear Globe Trotter:

The Border country in which "The De-  
puty from Paint Rock" is laid is one of the  
most fascinating places in the land, to  
my way of thinking. Whenever it is pos-  
sible, I hie me down there and sit in the  
shade—if there is any shade—and whittle  
while the old-timers do the talking.

There are lots of funny things happen  
down there, things some folks are inclined  
to think fantastic. But anyone knowing  
the country, its adventurous background,  
its history, and its mixed population, will  
agree that almost anything is likely to  
happen—and generally does. Especially if  
there's a Texan mixed up in it.

Larry Rainey never intended to be a law  
officer. All he wanted was to get the mur-  
derer of his friend and range partner,  
Steve. This he did in the only way he  
knew, and he stumbled onto one of the  
smartest tricks ever employed down there  
by greedy outlaws working back and forth  
across the Border. He became, in time  
after this, one of the country's best known  
and most feared law officers, as a result.

The trick of which I speak, until its dis-  
covery by him, was the cause of grief to  
law enforcement officers along the line for  
plenty long. Until Larry Rainey's guns  
found out the truth.

There's still plenty of excitement to be  
had along that river by anyone who has  
any sort of hankering for it at all. Almost  
any time. Even if you don't like whittling!  
Jacland Marmur.

Just as True to Life

Characters of quite another sort,  
but just as authentic in their depic-  
tion, are the deadly river pirates, in  
Captain Kerry McRoberts' story,  
"The Web of the Green Spider." The  
captain knows his Orinoco country,  
and its dangerous denizens, at first

(Continued on page 154)

# "Stop Worrying..."

NOW I CAN TELL YOU THE TRUE FACTS ABOUT

# SEX!



**WOULD YOU** like to know the whole truth about sex? All of the startling facts that even the frankest books have heretofore not dared to print are explained in clear, scientific manner, vividly illustrated, in the revolutionary book — "The New Eugenics". Here at last, the naked truth stands forth, stripped of all prudery and narrow prejudice. Old fashioned taboos are discarded and the subject of sex is brought out into the bright light of medical science by Dr. C. S. Whitehead M. D. and Dr. Charles A. Hoff, M. D., the authors!

### SEX ATTRACTION I

Sex appeal and sex satisfaction are the most powerful forces in your life. To remain in ignorance is to remain in danger of lifelong suffering. It is the purpose of this great book to show sex-ignorant men and women how to enjoy safely the thrilling experiences that are their birthright. It not only tells you how to attract the opposite sex, but also how to hold the love of your mate throughout a blissful married life.

### DANGEROUS!

... Unless you know the true facts about sex! Ignorance leads to shame, despair, worry and remorse.



Do you know how to add variety to your love-making? The most innocent kiss may lead to tragedy if you are ignorant of sex relations.

### WILL FEAR

grip you on your wedding night? ... or will it be the tender, thrilling experience that is your birthright!



## Banish Fear and Sex Ignorance Forever!

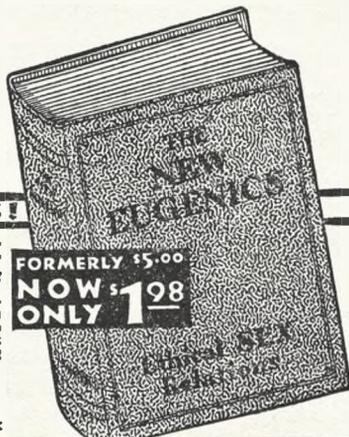
SEX IS NO LONGER a mysterious sin, mentioned only in the conversational gutters—it is the most powerful force in the world and can be made the most beautiful. Thanks to this bravely written book, it is no longer necessary to pay the awful price for one moment of bliss. Science now lights the path to knowledge and lifelong sex happiness.

### LOVE MAKING IS AN ART!

Are you an awkward novice in the art of love-making or a master of its difficult technique? The art of love-making takes skill and knowledge. The sexual embrace as practiced by those ignorant of its true scientific importance is crude, awkward and often terrifying to more sensitive natures. Normal sex-suited people are torn apart because they lack the knowledge that makes for a happy sex life!

### Sex Facts for Men and Women

- Twilight Sleep—Easy Childbirth
- Sex Excesses
- The Crime of Abortion
- Impotence and Sex Weakness
- Secrets of the Honeymoon
- Teaching Children Sex
- The Dangers of Petting
- What Every Man Should Know
- The Truth about Masturbation
- Venerical Diseases
- The Sexual Embrace
- How to Build Virility
- How to Gain Greater Delight
- What to Allow a Lover To Do
- Birth Control Chart for Married Women



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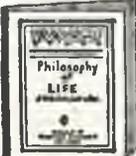
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20x2.50-19	2.40 0.85	32x4	2.05 0.65
22x4.75-20	2.50 0.95	33x4	2.05 0.65
22x5.00-19	2.85 1.05	32x4 1/2	2.35 1.10
20x2.00-20	2.85 1.05	32x4 3/4	2.45 1.15
22x5.00-18	2.85 1.05	32x4 1/2	2.45 1.15
22x5.25-19	2.95 1.10	30x2 1/2	3.65 1.85
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6250-52 SOUTH MORGAN STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

(Continued from page 152)

hand—in several instances the acquaintance was a bit too close for comfort or safety, he adds. Here is a bit about his yarn:

Dear Globe Trotter:

"The Web of the Green Spider" is based upon one of the most deadly dangers that exists in the Orinoco country, where there is about every known danger to white men. Death from insects, from fever, from natives, from jungle beasts—all these are there. But none of them is as deadly to the white trader or the diamond hunter as the river pirate.

Usually these pirates are half-breed natives or renegade whites. They use the natives to help them in their nefarious work. Hidden by the jungle, striking death from the bush, they work with a ruthlessness that is hardly matched elsewhere.

Some years ago there was a white river pirate who terrorized the country for five years, using a mysterious Indian tribe believed to be descended from the Mayans driven out of Yucatan by the Spaniards. These Indians held a relentless hatred for the white men, and the river pirate, using their hatred for his own ends, terrorized the country with robbery and murder until he was finally arrested and killed by the government police.

To weed out these vultures who prey on native and white traders alike has proved a difficult job for the government forces. The wild, untamed jungle offers a hiding place that enables one fugitive to elude a regiment of searchers. But by stubborn work and continuous effort the government has done a great deal toward cleaning out this country and making it safe for white traders and diamond hunters.

Captain Kerry McRoberts.

Tomorrow as Today

These fiction characters with their human prototypes we have been discussing are, of course, all taken from the world of today. But how about the world of tomorrow? How can an author pretend to give us real characters when his story is laid hundreds of years in the future?

Very easily, says Paul Ernst, who contributes "Sublevel Seventeen" to this issue; and here is how he does it:

Dear Globe Trotter:

If there is one thing we can be fairly certain of in a changing world it is that science will some day give us more beautiful cities in which to live saner lives. That the cities will be radically different from those of today is sure, though whether they will be like Zerbola, the city described in

(Continued on page 156)

## TILLIE and GUS—Latest Stuff

Also TILLIE and MAC



Muggle and Jiggs, Dumb Dora, Boss and Bubble, Peaches and Brownie, French Steno, Rapier, A Bachelor's Dream, A Model's Life, Adam and Eve, Kid and Althea, Harold Ten and Lilliana, Toots and Casper, The Gumps, Winnie Winkle, Gus and Gladys, Barney and Ma and Spark Plug, Boob McNutt and Pearl, Tillie the Teller, Cava-Mon Love, Chorus Girl Love, Turkish Love, Apache Love, Oil Man's Love, Papa Love, Sailing on Shore, What Tom Saw Through the Keyhole, When My Hubby Comes Home, What the Window Washer Saw,

alcohol and the Iceman, A Turkish Harem, Mexican Love, and 80 Snappy French Girl Poses, 16 French Lovers' Pictures, French Men and Women in Atlantic Love Poses, Also Hula Hula Danc-ing Girl. All the above will be sent you prepaid for only \$1.00.

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(Continued from page 154)

"Sublevel Seventeen," no one can say; the details of future life on earth lie beyond prophecy.

However, there is one part of future metropolitan life that can be foreseen easily and exactly. That is, the nature of the humans who will inhabit the new cities.

Designs of stone and glass and metal fabrication will change, but not human nature. No matter how advanced existence in the future may become, there will always be a criminal element ready to wreck civilization for power, and there will always be some master criminal ready to lead in the wreckage. As a corollary, there will always be a few able men on the side of law and order, as a rule unheralded and unsung, who will stand ready to give up their lives in an effort to keep organized crime at bay.

In an advanced civilization such as the world will some day inevitably reach, invention will provide terrific potentialities for evil as well as for human benefit. It has always interested me to speculate on what might happen when the known factor of unchanging human nature is thrown into a highly complex locale like Zarbola. I've done it many times in day dreams; placed the same old human animal in surroundings fit for the gods, and then watched to see if he made hash of his life with his glittering scientific toys.

In "Sublevel Seventeen" I have mixed the known element of human ambition with the unknown, imagined possibilities of a power-world vastly superior to our world of today. Whether the resulting explosion is probable, I leave it to the readers of **THRILLING ADVENTURES** to judge.

Paul Ernst.

*Pro and Con*

You fellows certainly have taken to these true features we've been running lately. Each of the feature articles has brought in a sheaf of interesting and highly intelligent letters discussing the pros and cons of the subjects.

Here is a reader who was inclined to doubt Captain John Powers' story of his trip into Yucatan—until he found verification in his own library!

Dear Globe Trotter:

The story which attracted me above all others in your December issue is that by Captain John Powers called "The Garden of Eden."

When I first read this story I suspected it of being fiction disguised under the label of a true adventure. However, on reading the account of the author as given in the Globe Trotter column, my suspicions became allayed and my interest was revived to such an extent that I reread it. I then

found myself partly believing it. Still greatly intrigued by its bizarreness and oddity, I decided to check up on some of the facts mentioned in it.

In my possession I have a set of books called "Travels in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan," by John L. Stephen. These books are little known, being published in 1860. Upon looking through them I found several things which seemed to



substantiate the account of Captain Powers. Among these are mentioned: the hostility and jealousy of the Indians, the remains of the great Aztec culture, the vast unexplored sections of the country, and, most surprising of all, the worship of a white god or group of gods by the Aztecs.

This last statement makes one wonder at the possibility of there actually being a "Garden of Eden" as described in the story. Despite several other strange and seemingly impossible things in the story, I am now in full support of it. I expect to visit Yucatan in the near future, and would like to get in touch with Captain Powers, if you can give me his address.

Tucker Gougelmann.

New Rochelle, N. Y.

As a protection to our writers, we cannot supply their addresses, but Ye Olde Globe Trotter is always glad to forward to them any letters you may send in care of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**.

*How About Compressed Air?*

Captain Hoyt's story of Easter Island was another which gripped the interest of the Globe Trotters. I've heard from several who have been to Easter Island themselves and seen the monoliths. And here is one who thinks he has found a flaw in the captain's yarn:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Being much interested in physics and not possessing much imagination—or too much, as the case may be—I disagree with certain points in Captain Hoyt's story of Easter Island. Captain Hoyt's story was well written and I certainly wanted to believe it, but I found a big error.

His big mistake was in saying that compressed air from the sliding monolith blew out the roof of the cavern. Doesn't it seem to you that enough compressed air

(Continued on page 158)



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(Continued from page 157)

to blow the cabin up, with thousands of tons of sea water on top of it, would certainly have blown the statue out of the mouth of the cave instead of allowing the monolith to fall into it?

In other words, the monolith, after compressing a small amount of air, would stop sliding on account of air pressure against it. Perhaps Captain Hoyt can explain it, but until he does I'm afraid I must remain a doubting Thomas.

Be that as it may, I'm for THRILLING ADVENTURES one hundred percent, and if other Globe Trotters can knock a hole in my argument—hop to it; I can take it. Jack E. Smith.

Kirkwood, Missouri.

All right, Globe Trotters—any of you physics sharks want to take up the cudgels for Captain Hoyt?

*Fresh Water Pearls*

And while you are handing out the information, perhaps some of you can set this Globe Trotter on the right track. He's calling for information from the outfit:

Dear Globe Trotter:

For a good many years I have been interested in prospecting for fresh-water pearls. Perhaps some member of the Globe Trotters can give me additional information on this subject, and possibly join me on a prospecting trip.

Fresh-water pearls are found in mussels, which are also called clams. They are found in most of the fresh-water lakes and streams throughout the U. S. Genuine pearls bring a good price, and there is always a ready market for them.

There are many streams in Texas and southern parts of Louisiana and Florida, where you could prospect all winter. I believe two could make fair money by working as they would at a regular job. And, besides, the joy of camping out and being in the open would be worth a great deal to anyone.

I am single, twenty-five years of age, and would like to hear from anyone, young or old, who would be interested in a proposition of this sort.

A. H. Marshall.

Silver Lake, Texas.

*The Butcher, The Baker—*

Time now for a few of the Globe Trotters to stand up and introduce themselves. Take a look around at the outfit—they're all here: the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, and loads of others besides. When you sit down with this gang you never know who your neighbor

is going to be or what romantic pursuit may be his means of livelihood.

Here's a flyer who wants to get better acquainted with the Globe Trotters.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am twenty-three and have been rambling around for some time. At present, I hold a transport pilot's license and am barnstorming around my own country a bit.

I have been, for the past two years, making my beans by flying. The ground covered has been from Great Bear Lake, in Canada, to Eagle Pass, on the Mexican Border. For two years before that I sailed in the "fo'c'sle" of freighters and tankers. I have rounded the Horn and know quite a bit about South America and the West Indies.

I am a qualified sharpshooter and have been on an expedition up the Para River, in Brazil. Let's hear from you, and if any of you have any questions about flying, shoot them along.

Pueblo, Colorado. Bill Campbell, Jr.

*Ambitious A. B.*

Next comes an able seaman, who thinks that he might fit well in some Globe Trotter's high school:

Dear Globe Trotters:

I have been knocking around the world for the past five years on freights, tramp steamers, and afoot. It's useless to attempt to name the numerous ports I've been in during those five years.

At this time I'm an A. B. on the beach

*(Continued on page 160)*

## LIST OF MEMBERS

### The Globe Trotters' Club

*(Continued from Last Month)*

- Audley Fish, 3957 Fifth St., Struthers, Ohio.
- Joseph C. Urban, 56 Hayward Pl., Wallington, N. J.
- Merrill O. Boggs, 715 W. Eureka St., Lima, Ohio.
- Raymond Thomas, Box 38, R. 1, Cape Fair, Mo.
- William Kramer, 2336 Newbold Ave., New York.
- Herbert Standeven, Wickford, R. I.
- B. J. Sparks, 127 S. Bouldin St., Baltimore.
- Joseph Caspi, 214 E. 168th St., N. Y.
- Bill Shockley, Freeport Rd., Blawnox, Pa.
- Joseph Kotlarski, 705 High St., Central Falls, R. I.
- Kenneth Stuart, 59 Main St., Stonybrook, N. Y.
- Richard W. Pollen, 3637 E. Broadway, Long Beach, Calif.
- Bernard Heath, 610 West 152nd St., N. Y. C.
- Floyd LeRoy Baker, 5628 Kendall Ave., Los Angeles.
- Roy Adams, 714 Cornell Dr., Dayton, Ohio.
- Sam Berger, 800 W. 56th St., Los Angeles, Calif.
- Nicholas Tomporis, 20 Hampden St., Worcester, Mass.
- Lester E. Martin, 83 Broadway, Lancaster, N. Y.
- Carl O. Yeager, Hillsboro, Ohio.
- Forrest K. Seran, 76 Thompson St., Salem, N. J.
- Adolph de Castro, 68 W. 72nd St., New York.
- George E. DeVoe, 4150 Oak St., Kansas City, Mo.
- Bud Mellers, 808 So. 2nd St. and San Jose, Calif.
- James Goffery, 140 Fozall St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
- Mathew Apt, N. Fulton St., Annada, Mich.
- Milton Faer, 241 S. 3rd St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
- James F. Frank, 8650 S. Leavitt, Chicago.
- Frank Singer, 546 E. 28th St., Erie, Pa.
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.....  
 (Print name plainly)

Address.....  
 City..... State.....  
 My hobbies are.....  
 ..... Age.....

To obtain a membership card, enclose \$3.35 a self-addressed stamped envelope

(Continued from page 159)  
 pending the outcome of the seamen's strike. I'd like to hear from anyone who cares to drop me a line.

I'm planning to attend high school next year, and I would like to get some dope on some small, inland town where I can finish my neglected education.

Fred Drawhom.

Sailor's Snug Harbor,  
 Providence, R. I.

*And an Adventurous Musician*

All roughnecks in the Globe Trotters, you think? No, sir—we're a cosmopolitan outfit, numbering members of the professions as well as those in more adventurous callings. Perhaps you've never considered musicians as especially adventurous. Maybe you'll change your mind after reading what this musical Globe Trotter has to say:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am a musician and, though only twenty years of age, I have been playing piano since I was seven. Perhaps some of my fellow Globe Trotters may think it odd for one so devoted to music to be as intensely adventurous as I am, but I can certainly say that my interest in music gave an added impetus to my yen for danger, romance and the faraway places.

Who can listen to the enchanting "Bolero," by Ravel, without feeling restless and conjuring up visions of the intriguing country of Cuba which the composition suggests? Or an exotic Algerian suite, suggestive of life in a land where danger lurks at every turn?

I'm anxious to correspond with any adventurous soul who cares to write.

John J. Zabel.

917 N. Milwaukee St.,  
 Milwaukee, Wis.

*Add an Egg Expert*

No need to go hungry in this outfit, either—not while we have such artists of the skillet as this epicure:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Please edge over a little and let me squeeze in around your campfire. I imagine I'm fairly capable of qualifying for admission. I once fried an egg on the steel deck of an oil tanker going through the Panama Canal. But I didn't eat the poor thing, though I have often eaten as bad in some of your Seventh Avenue Coffee Pots without the benefit of having engineered the feat myself. My five years in New York City failed to convince me that you guys know how to fry an egg properly.

While I have set foot in a dozen foreign countries, I'm afraid there is very little I could tell anyone that would be education-

al or inspiring. I could set them right on where to find the saloons and waterfront joints, all right; and could warn them to carry an ample supply of Flit into the underworld of Europe or Asia to ward off the minutia that welcomes the foreigner there. Yeah, I could do that much, and, in conclusion, if you will listen to a horse-shoe that has seen plenty of nails, let me say most solemnly and most earnestly that: Adventure is a beautiful god to worship but a dangerous one to follow.

David G. Murrell.

Wilmington, N. Carolina.

*Next Month's Issue*

Now, all you Globe Trotters, don't forget to gather around the festive board next month for some real fiction treats!

The March number gets off to a flying start with Norman A. Daniels' great complete book-length novel—SEALED ORDERS—which takes you to Darjeeling as you follow an intrepid American hero through pulse-stirring conflict and breathless adventure on a perilous mission! It's a knockout yarn from start to finish!

And then—Major George F. Eliot's colorful novelette of forbidden cities of the Orient, THE BLUE SULTAN, which races with action, suspense and excitement from start to finish.

Besides, many other novelettes and stories—by such ace authors as Arthur J. Burks, Harold F. Cruickshank, and George Allan Moffatt. 164 pages of the most gripping fiction you ever read! And another long talk with  
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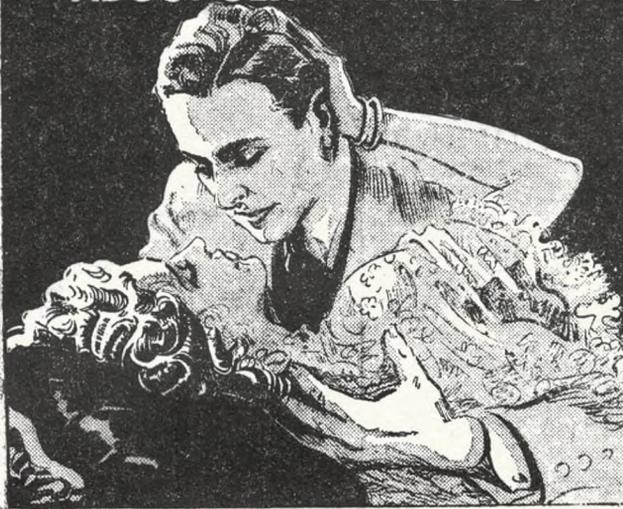



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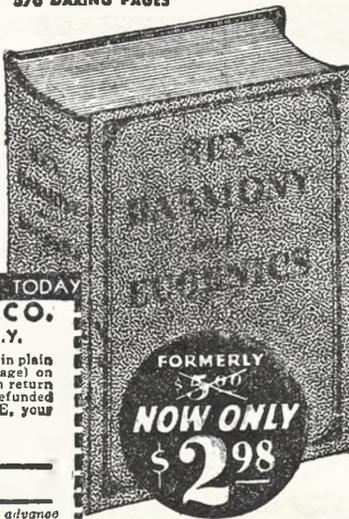
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IN THE PICTURE BELOW?



**Answer Quick! Get the Opportunity to . . .**

# Win \$2,250.00

**or Buick Sedan and \$1,250.00 Cash!**

Here's a lot of cash for someone. Would you like to have it? We are going to pay over \$5,000.00 in big cash prizes. Can you find ten of the hidden faces in the picture? Look sharply and mark the faces you find. Then fill in the coupon, mail quick, and you will receive opportunity to win as much as \$2,250.00. Some one, maybe you, will receive a new Buick Sedan and if prompt, \$1,250.00 cash extra or, if all cash is preferred, \$2,250.00.

Surely you would like to have this magnificent prize. It would come in pretty handy right now, wouldn't it?

We want people everywhere to have the opportunity to share in this great distribution of money. This is our unique way of advertising. Besides the First Grand Prize of \$2,250.00 including promptness, there are 100 other big grand prizes. The Second Grand Prize is a DeLuxe Chevrolet Master-6 Sedan or \$750.00 cash. Third Grand Prize is DeLuxe Ford V-8 Sedan or \$600.00 cash. Fourth Grand Prize is \$150.00 cash, and many others. Thousands of dollars in special cash rewards. Mail your answer on the coupon today.

## Send No Money — Just Mail Coupon

Study the picture of the country road and see if you can find ten of the hidden faces. Sharp eyes may find them. Some of them look straight at you, some are upside down, others are sideways. Look for them in the clouds, tree, around the dog's legs, in the bushes, etc.. It is not as easy as some people may think. Don't give up—keep looking and you may find them.

Hurry—mark the faces you find. Send your answer quick. Don't delay: Mail your answer today.

**\$1,250.00 EXTRA**

Send answer quick and we will tell how the winner can get \$1,250.00 extra cash  
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This Company is reliable. We belong to the Chamber of Commerce of Des Moines. We bank at one of the largest banks in the state of Iowa—the Central National Bank. The money to pay all of the prizes is already on special deposit in this big strong Des Moines Bank for that purpose.

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Remember, send not one penny with your answer. All you do now is to find ten faces if you can and mail the coupon. Send answer right away.

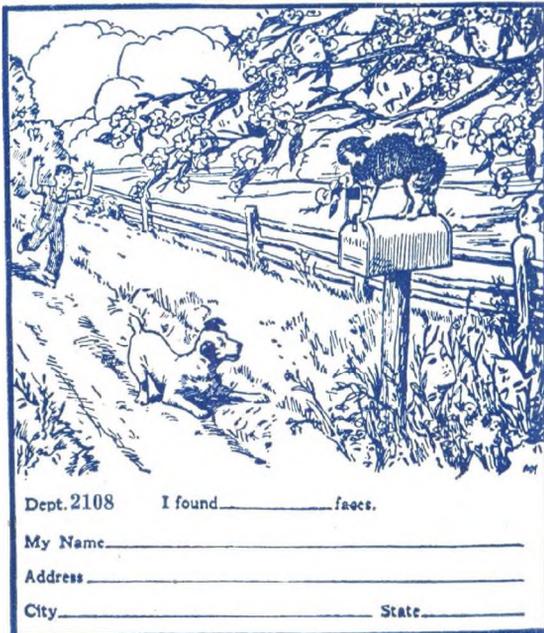
The money to pay every prize is on deposit in the big, strong Des Moines bank. Three prominent Des Moines businessmen will see that the prizes are awarded honestly and promptly. Get your share of the \$5,000.00 in cash prizes, besides thousands of dollars in special cash rewards. Over 100 prizes in all.

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**PARAMOUNT PRODUCTS CO.**

Dept. 2108

Des Moines, Iowa



Dept. 2108 I found \_\_\_\_\_ faces.

My Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_



# She Got \$400<sup>00</sup> for a Half Dollar

**I will pay CASH for  
OLD COINS, BILLS and STAMPS**

Mrs. Sam Dowdy  
of San Angelo,  
Texas, sold H.  
Max Mehl one  
half dollar for  
\$400.00.

## I PAID \$200.00

to J. D. Martin, of Virginia  
for Just One Copper Cent

"Please accept my thanks for your check for \$200.00 in payment for the copper cent I sent you. I appreciate the interest you have given this transaction. It's a pleasure to do business with a firm that handles matters as you do. I wish to assure you it will be a pleasure to me to tell all my friends of your wonderful offer for old coins."

Julian D. Martin, Va.

This is but one of the many similar letters we are constantly receiving. Post yourself! It pays! We paid Mr. Manning, New York, \$2,500.00 for a single silver dollar. Mrs. G. F. Adams, Ohio, received \$740.00 for some old coins. We paid W. F. Wilharm, of Pennsylvania, \$13,500.00 for his rare coins. I paid J. T. Neville, of North Dakota, \$200.00 for a \$10 bill he picked up in circulation. Mr. Mehl paid \$1,000.00 to Mr. J. E. Brownlee, of Heardmont, Ga., for one old coin. Mr. Brownlee, in his letter to Mr. Mehl, says: "Your letter received with the check for \$1,000.00 enclosed. I like to deal with such men as you and hope you continue buying coins for a long time." In the last thirty years we have paid hundreds of others handsome premiums for old bills and coins.

### All Kinds of Old Coins, Medals, Bills and Stamps Wanted

\$1.00 to \$1,000 paid for certain old cents, nickels, dimes, quarters, etc. Right now we will pay \$50.00 for 1913 Liberty Head nickels (not buffalo), \$100.00 for 1894 dimes ("S" Mint), \$8.00 for 1853 quarters (no arrows), \$10.00 for 1866 quarters (no motto), \$200.00 each for 1884 and 1885 Silver Trade Dollars, etc., etc.

### Big Cash Premiums for Hundreds of Coins Now Circulating

There are literally thousands of old coins and bills that we want at once and for which we will pay big cash premiums. Many of these coins are now passing from hand to hand in circulation. Today or tomorrow a valuable coin may come into your possession. Watch your change. Know what to look for.

## Amazing Profits FOR THOSE WHO KNOW OLD MONEY!

There are single pennies that sell for \$100.00. There are nickels worth many dollars—dimes, quarters, half dollars and dollars on which big cash premiums are paid. Each year a fortune is offered by collectors for rare coins and stamps for their collections. The prices paid are amazing.

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Knowing about coins pays. Andrew Henry, of Idaho, was paid \$300.00 for a half dollar, received in change. A valuable old coin may come into your possession or you may have one now and not know it. Post yourself.

### Huge Premiums for Old Stamps

Some old stamps bring big premiums. An old 10c stamp, found in an old basket, was recently sold for \$10,000.00. There may be valuable stamps on some of your old letters. It will pay you to know how to recognize them.

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Send the coupon below and 4 cents for my Large Illustrated Coin and Stamp Folder and further particulars. Write today for this eye opening valuable wealth of information on the profits that have been made from old money. No obligation on your part. You have nothing to lose—everything to gain. It may mean much profit to you.

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copper cents

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for this nickel

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to \$50  
for this stamp

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