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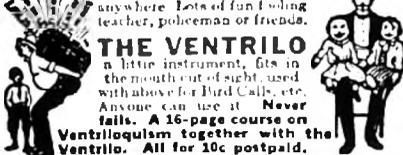
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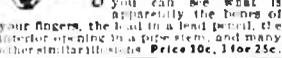
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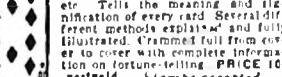
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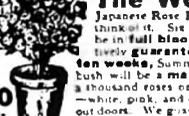
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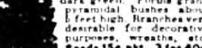
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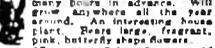
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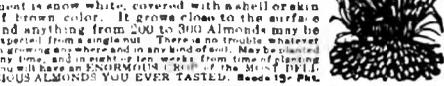
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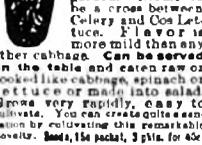
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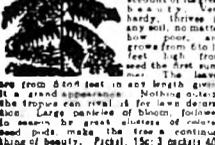
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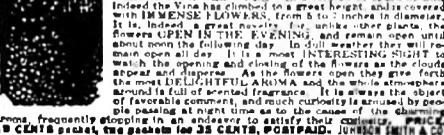
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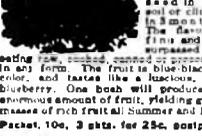
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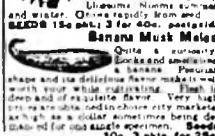
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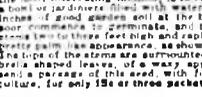
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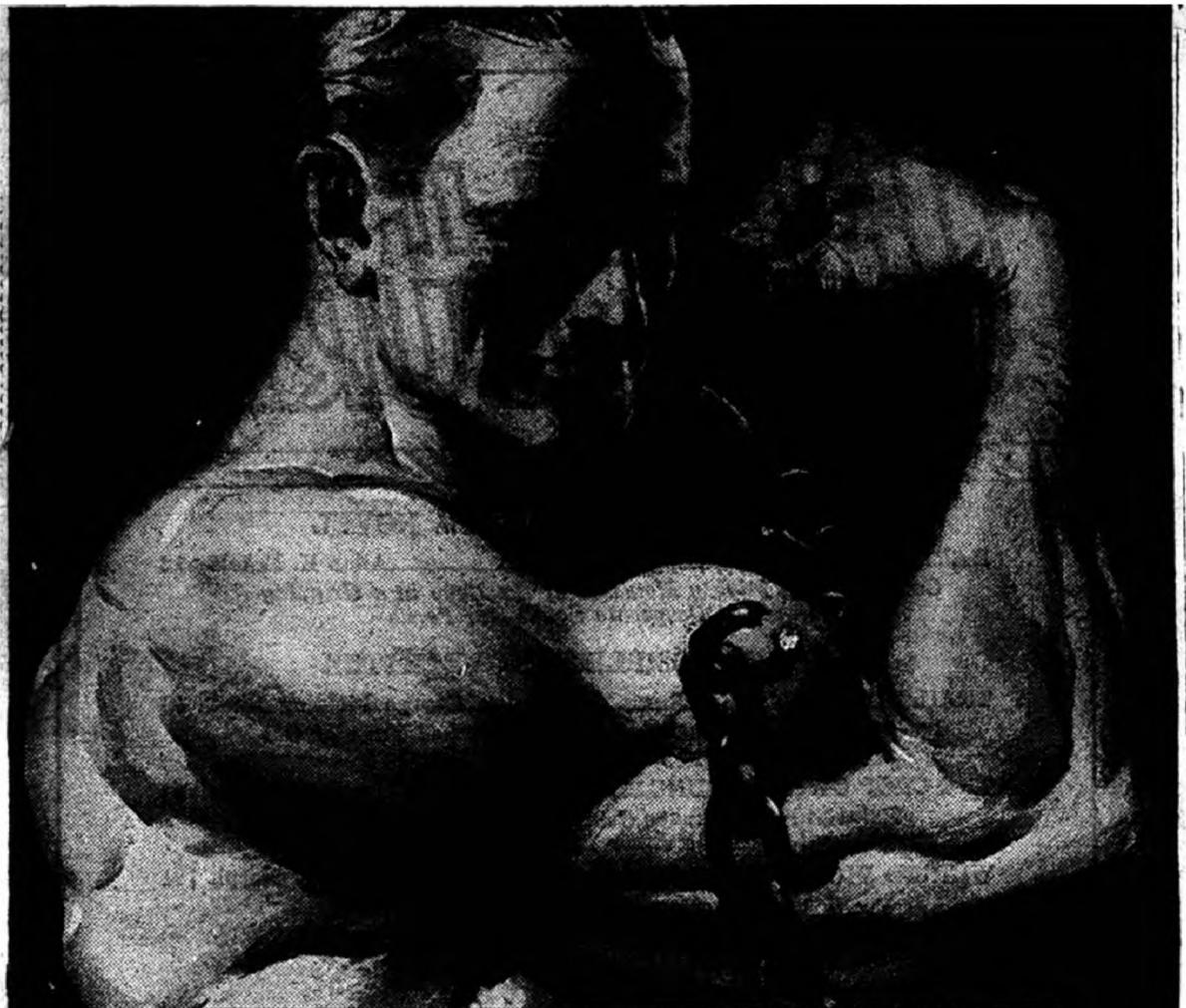


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Vol. X, No. 1

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

June, 1934

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Where Readers, Writers and the Editor Meet

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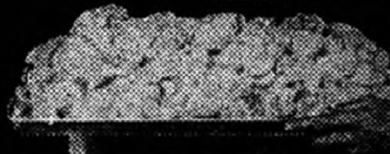
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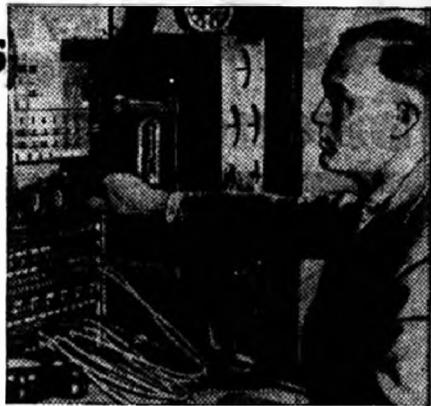
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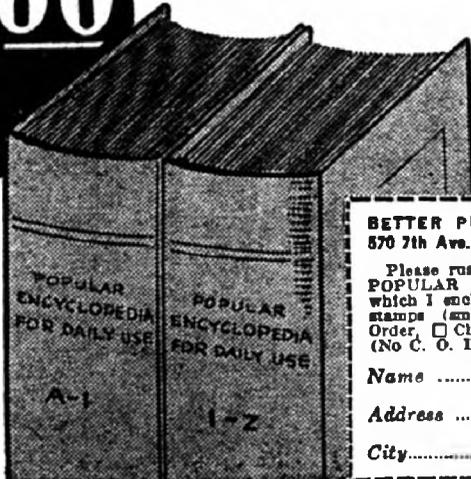
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Knight and Bradley cut them

HARBOR

CHAPTER I

Shark!

A Complete Book-

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Author of "White Ivory,"

JACK KNIGHT stood at the wheel of his battered little schooner, *Sea Foam*, and held her course steady through the gentle ground swells. His strong face was sunken and hollow-eyed, and his muscular body was burned almost to the shade of the Kanaka who sat on the deck house before him. He wore only a *pareu*, the dingy blue cloth

with which the natives draped their hips. Straight ahead glistened a quiet harbor, with a low beach of snowy coral, behind which rose a sloping curtain of jungle green.

In the still waters of the harbor, protected from the rages of the

Cannibals and Mighty Monsters of the Deep in



down with a sheet of flame

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tropical sea by a thin white line indicating a coral reef, native canoes floated idly. With the eye of a master, and a hand long accustomed to such dangers, Knight located a depression in the reef and steered his little craft into the harbor. There

he dropped his anchor and watched.

Natives were slipping over the sides of the canoes about him and disappearing into the water, to come up minutes later bearing the symmetrical shells of oysters, some of them as large as two feet in diameter. Other natives in the boats relieved the divers of their catch and, after hanging to outriggers for a breathing spell, they continued their search for the valuable harvest.

This labor continued in all of the

a Gripping Novel of Desperate South Sea Perils



O'Leary

canoes, except one near Knight's vessel.

It was this canoe, not fifty feet from his schooner, that caught his attention and held it with the most unusual thing he had ever seen in the South Seas.

Here sat a white girl attended by a native! She was fishing with a pearl *bonito* hook.

Knight stared at this strange apparition in amazement. The girl no more fitted into this scene, than one of the natives would have fitted into the dress circle at a grand opera given in a great city.

KNIGHT had little time to speculate upon such incongruity, however. He had hardly leaned over the rail to shout a greeting when the girl became occupied with an unexpected trouble.

A fish, attracted by the gleam of the pearl hook, streaked through the water and took it in passing. The fish was not a *bonito*. Knight saw a pointed fin break the water, and then the sleek nose and elongated body as it cleared the water in snapping at the hook. A ten-foot shark!

The shark gave instant battle. The surprised girl held tightly to her bamboo pole. The shark dived deep and came up on the other side of the outrigger, entangling the girl with the line, and hauling the line completely under the canoe at the same time.

He broke water and dived again. So fast and unexpected were his movements that, before the girl could realize the situation, he had jerked her completely out of the canoe and dragged her under the surface of the water.

KNIGHT hesitated only long enough to realize that the shark was headed in a direction that would take him under the *Sea Foam*. Grasping the knife that he carried at his waist, he mounted the taffrail of his schooner and jumped.

The weight of his body carried him down a dozen feet into the clear depths. From this point, heavy strokes of his muscular arms brought his head downward and propelled him deeper into the water toward the bottom. He could see, all about him, the multi-colored coral ferns and the brilliant fish which played among them.

A great shadow crossed his path. The shark had turned to attack the source of his pain, but not before he had skirted the bottom, and had thoroughly entangled on the corals there the line attached to the hook in his mouth.

Out of the corner of his eye, Knight caught a glimpse of the white clothing of the helpless girl enmeshed on the very floor of the bay. He himself was between her and the oncoming shark.

Two well-directed strokes of arms and legs, and he met the tiger of the sea head on. His knife sank home in the white belly of the animal.

Stunned but not stopped, the shark flipped himself around with one flirt of his powerful tail and gave all his attention to this new enemy. In the clear light under the water, Knight saw the open jaws lined with row after row of murderous teeth, sharp as needles.

THE shark came toward him with frightful speed. Knight flipped himself a bare inch out of the path of the open mouth. This time, he planted his knife with deadly accuracy just back of the shark's head.

The blade sank into living flesh and severed the spinal cord. A shudder passed the entire length of the shark's great body, and it was out of the fight.

Gushing blood dyed the submarine battlefield a rosy red.

The weight of the fifty feet of water above Knight, and the exertion of his terrific struggle, were beginning to tell on him. The pressure on his lungs was demanding instant relief, and he was on the verge of losing consciousness. Yet he could not return to the surface. With eyes now smarting, and through which he could only see in a blurred fashion, he looked about until he saw the white mass which would be the helpless girl.

With strokes that were rapidly becoming more difficult and painful, he reached the point where her clothes held her fast in the jagged coral. He slashed furiously with his knife, and finally managed to free her. Then, clasping her tightly, he shot upward to the surface.

With the help of his native, he got the girl aboard and stretched her out on the deck. Then came a battle for her life.

He worked a long time, almost frantically. He brought into use everything that he had ever known, everything he had ever heard, about



Jack Knight

handling drowned persons. He had almost abandoned hope when her eyelids fluttered weakly. When he saw that she would live, he felt in himself a surge of strange happiness.

The girl was fair and more beautiful than any girl he had ever seen in the South Pacific.

CHAPTER II

The King of Toiva

A BOAT rattled alongside the schooner and a white man came aboard. He greeted Jack Knight in English. The man was fat, and his round body was clad in immaculate white linen. His fleshy face was covered with a neatly trimmed, black Van Dyke beard.

It was his eyes, however, which held Knight's gaze longest. They were as blue as the still waters of the bay, and as hard and expressionless as the very coral rock which carpeted its floor.

The man stood and looked without emotion at the girl, who lay in the shade of the deck house where Knight was working over her. His



The Cannibal Chief

interest in her condition seemed purely casual, as impersonal as though she were one of the shells the natives had brought up and not a living being.

Knight, still working on his knees beside the girl, looked up at the newcomer. "She was nearly drowned," he said, "but I think she will live."

THE man did not answer, but instead, shouted to the natives in his boat, who scrambled aboard. "Take her to the house," he ordered. After watching them, as though they were transferring freight to the canoe, he turned back to Knight again.

"I'm sorry the girl's foolishness has caused you this inconvenience," he said. Thus he disposed of the matter.

The stranger was at least fifty years old, and he seemed to exude a kind of oily coarseness. Jack Knight was conscious that the man had a certain power; and he was conscious, too, of an immediate and strong dislike for him, not unmingled with disappointment at learning

that he was somehow concerned with the girl.

He tried to cast off his dislike of the man. "My Kanaka and I left Tahiti for the *rahui*, the pearling season, at Luova," he said, after telling the man his name. "We ran into a typhoon less than twenty-four hours out, and we've been running before it for ten days up until yesterday. But where does this island lie? I've never heard of it before."

A cold smile lit the man's face. "Nor has anyone else. Toiva, I call it. It is not on any chart, and it is out of the paths of both sail and steam."

"Then who does it belong to?"

"To Lucian Bradley, at your service. May I offer you the hospitality of my little home, such as it is?"

IN Bradley's big canoe, the natives quickly paddled them ashore.

Despite its peaceful green-and-white beauty, there was a suggestion of something sinister about this lovely place. Knight felt it, the minute he set foot on the beach. It was nothing tangible, nothing he could see. But it was there just the same, as surely as he himself was there. He noted it in the attitudes of the natives who clustered about the beach at their approach.

The Polynesian is a happy and carefree person, despite his sad history at the hands of the whites. But this little handful of men were different. Their movements and gestures, even their greetings, were marked with that spirit of oppression which Knight felt. They labored under the heavy burden of some great fear.

Stately palm trees, slender and erect, dotted the snowy, coral beach. Under their scant shade huddled a village of native huts of dried palm leaves.

Looking to the hillside back of

them and to the left, Knight saw the glistening white of a low, rambling, wooden house surrounded by a broad veranda. On the beach below the house, was a colorless wooden shed, from which ran a dock terminating in a lagoon which extended inward from the bay. A small motor launch floated beside the dock, and out in the lagoon a schooner of at least twenty tons lay at anchor, her sticks bare and her gear stowed.

On the veranda of the house, a comely young native woman in a bright red *pareu* brought them brandy and soda in answer to Bradley's shout.

"So, you're in the shell trade," Bradley commented.

"Yes."

"You only have one diver with you?"

"My other two were washed overboard a week ago. However, I dive myself," Knight added. "I've been in these waters for fifteen years, and I can go down about as far as any of the natives can."

"That's a piece of luck," Bradley said without enthusiasm. "I could use some more good divers right now."

"SORRY," Knight returned, "but I'm not looking for a job. I go it on my own, all the time. I want to get away from here early in the morning and rush on to Luova. It's just being opened after the government has had it closed for five years. There will be plenty of shell there, this time."

"But not so many pearls," Bradley observed.

"Oh, occasionally someone finds a good one. There's always the chance of picking up a fortune, you know. That's the only thing that makes the game worth the hardships."

Bradley's immobile face did not change expression. "It's unfortunate



Bradley

you don't want to stay with me," he said. "There are many pearls here, and there will be more."

"I'm sorry," Knight returned, "but I'm going to Luova. Can you give me sailing directions?"

"No."

Knight looked at his fat host in surprise.

"What?" he exclaimed.

Lucian Bradley toyed with the glass in his hand and spoke softly. "You see, it is imperative that nobody find this island and disturb me. If I gave you sailing directions, my location would be a secret no longer. I'm afraid you'll have to accept my poor hospitality here on this island— indefinitely."

JACK KNIGHT laughed loudly at the man's presumptuous statement. Then its serious import struck him and he sobered.

Realization came to him that he had not the slightest idea where this island lay. After the storm had blown his binnacle and compass overboard, he had drifted before the winds, completely lost.

Uncharted and unknown as this

island was, Knight could have no possible means of knowing the direction or the distance to any kind of civilization. To all intents and purposes, he was at the complete mercy of the man before him; for so long as he was without knowledge of the island's location, just so long would he be a prisoner here.

AS the import of the man's words sank in, Knight fought down the frenzied anger which enwrapped him. He managed to hold in check an impulse to leap across the table and pound that stony face into a pulp.

An interruption gave him the opportunity to regain self-control for a moment. It was caused by the sight of a second white man, who had come around the house on the shell path and now stood on the veranda, his hat clutched in nervous hands.

The middle-aged fellow was gaunt and hollow-cheeked, and harried lines formed a network about his eyes and face. He stood waiting Bradley's pleasure like a prisoner before the bar of justice. Bradley turned to him, with cold, questioning eyes.

"I overheard this man say he was sailing in the morning. I'm going with him." The man's body was palsied under the stress of some emotional struggle, and in his haunted eyes there flamed for a moment a feeble spark of defiance.

Bradley's sensuous lips opened in a faint cynical smile. "Indeed, Doctor Michaels?"

"Yes! I have stayed in this beastly hell-hole as long as I can stand it. I'm going back to civilization!"

"Well, Doctor? Regardless of all the dangers?"

"Regardless of everything! Regardless of death itself!"

"Regardless of even the police, Doctor?"

"Yes! To be safely in the hands

of the police would be an undisguised blessing to me!"

Bradley tinkled the spoon in his glass casually.

"But suppose Mr. Knight delays his sailing? You are determined to leave tomorrow?"

The pitiable man understood the significance of Bradley's question, and his gaunt body drooped perceptibly.

But once again the feeble spark of his manhood flamed up.

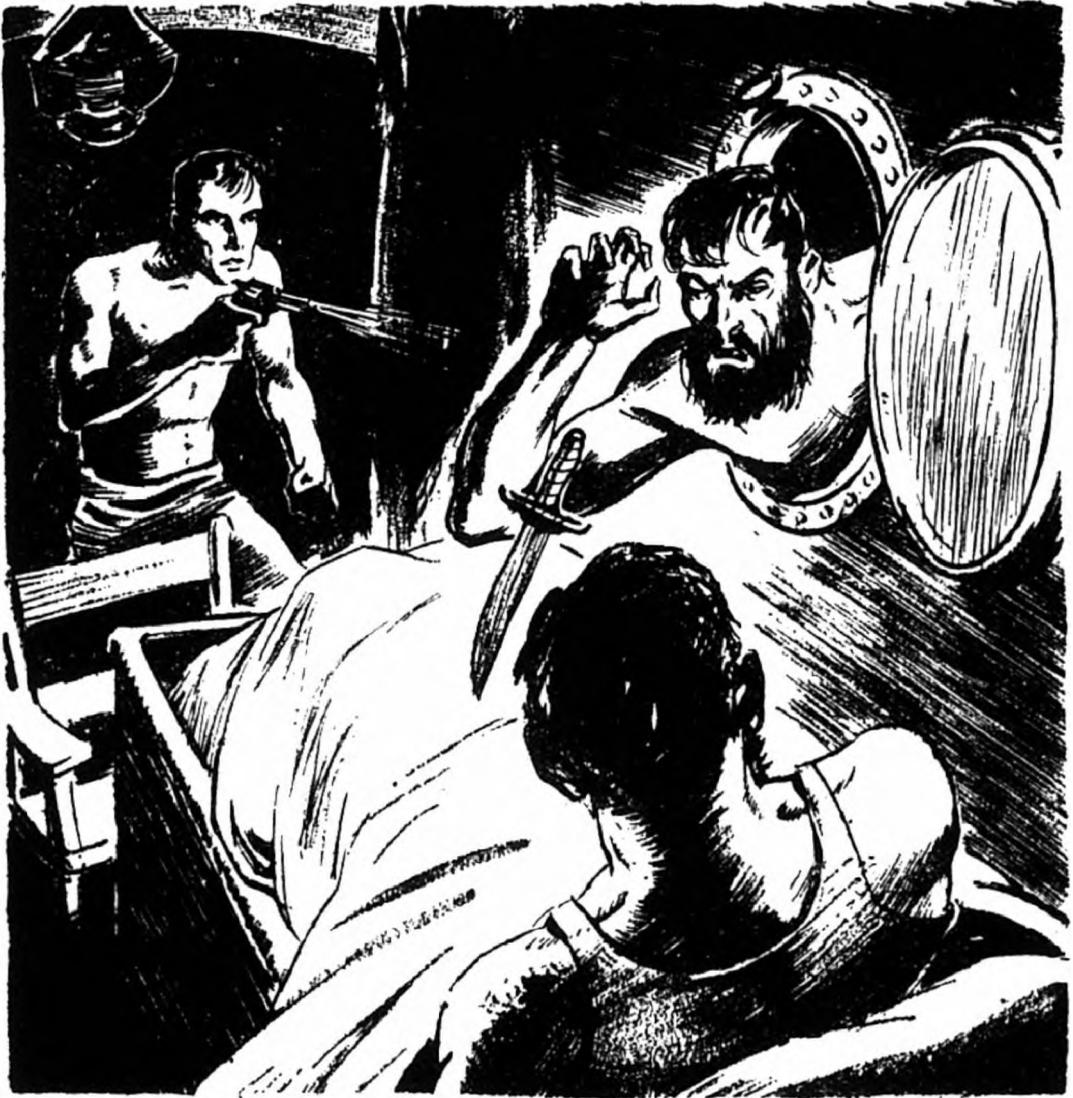
"Then I'll go through the jungle and try to get a boat from the village on the other side!"

"You are brave, Doctor Michaels. It takes genuine nerve for one to face those cannibals back there in the hills. I recall the fate of poor Desmond. He felt the same longing for civilization that you feel. Wanted to see the bright lights and feel the pavement under his feet. He set out through the jungle just as you are going to do.

"Poor devil! The cannibals got him just in time to serve up at a feast to one of their more important gods. Quite an honor for him." Bradley chuckled dryly. "Roast leg of Desmond. Well, I wish you a pleasant journey, Doctor. And give my regards to the people back home."

BRADLEY looked after the retreating figure of the man until he had disappeared around the corner of the house. Then he shook his head sadly.

"Ah, the ingratitude of man. Poor fellow! Michaels is a great scientist. He had a great future in New York as a surgeon, but then the dope got him. He finally got so bad that he let a very important man die under the knife in a simple operation. They kicked him out of the profession in disgrace, and he only escaped criminal prosecution by mak-



He fired squarely at O'Leary

ing a run for it. These islands are full of such doctors.

"I gave him refuge in return for certain scientific work he is doing for me. And now he is leaving me flat." Bradley shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

Once again, hatred of this caloused hypocrite surged up in Knight's breast, and he gripped the table with clenched hands. In a lifetime of contacts with the dregs of mankind which had drifted to these waters, with bullies who were little less than outright pirates, he had never come in contact with a creature of such icy cruelty. The

man seemed to derive positive pleasure from cold and merciless torture.

Bradley finished off his drink. His voice was oily. "Knight I am very happy that you are not going to leave before tomorrow. My ward, poor helpless thing, would be heart-broken if you sailed before she had the full opportunity to express her appreciation to you for saving her.

"Shall I show you to the room we have reserved for our much too rare guests? We seldom are fortunate enough to have an intelligent person to talk to. My ward particularly misses young people—like yourself."

Jack Knight had great difficulty

in restraining himself from doubling his fists and beating the leer off the man's face. There came to his mind quickly the picture of the fragile girl, lying half drowned and helpless on his little schooner, and of Bradley's cruel indifference to her condition.

"Thanks," he said evenly. "I think I *will* accept your hospitality for a while."

When darkness had come, Jack Knight lay sleepless in his bed, staring wide-eyed at the ceiling of his room. Before sleep came to him, he knew that he must see and talk to this girl and find out who she was—and what she was doing in the company of Lucian Bradley.

CHAPTER III

Haven of the Damned

KNIGHT was awakened late the next morning by Kukoa, his Kanaka, who stood outside the open window, greatly agitated. "The boat, the *Sea Foam*, she is sunk in the bay! Come quick!"

Stunned at the news, Knight piled into the white trousers and shirt he had worn ashore and, followed by Kukoa, ran down to the beach. His heart sank. Where the *Sea Foam* had floated lightly last night he saw the still surface of the bay, from which protruded only the top of his mast.

"Damn that frozen-faced pirate!" he exclaimed. "I'm going back there and strangle him to death with my own two hands!"

"Kanakas say you can't kill him," Kukoa answered. "He just laugh and then beat you. Everybody afraid of him. Kanakas tell me plenty last night."

"Here's one that's not afraid of him," Knight said blackly. "Come on."

He found Bradley at the storeroom

on the beach, overseeing a handful of natives who were weighing the shell brought in on the previous day. A gun hung at his side.

"I have already heard of your misfortune," Bradley said with sadness. "I know what it means to a man to lose his ship. And you wanted to sail today. Too bad, isn't it? Oh, well, life is just full of disappointments. We must all try to bear up under them."

Knight stood before the man with clenched fists, legs spread wide apart. "What's the idea of sinking my schooner?"

One of the many pet monkeys, no larger than a cat, which Knight had seen playing around the native huts, was chattering away in the very top of a near-by coconut tree. Bradley looked up at it for a moment; then drew his gun and fired a bullet through the harmless little creature without stopping to take aim. He replaced the weapon in its holster. The significance of this display of extraordinary marksmanship was not lost upon Knight.

Bradley continued the conversation.

"As I was saying, I'm sorry that your schooner went down. No doubt, it was more badly injured in the storm than you realized. But don't give up hope. Perhaps I can help you.

DESMOND, who did some work for me, was the only diver I had who worked in a suit. But he's gone, poor devil. I could give you his job, and pay you in transportation back to Tahiti."

Knight said grimly: "You dirty rat, I know you sunk my vessel to keep me here. Well, I had already decided to stay."

"I know the young lady will be very happy to learn that," the man interjected smoothly.

Knight continued: "I'll stay here, and I'll even do some diving for you. But make no mistake, I don't like you even a little bit. I think you are about the slimiest octopus I ever saw in these waters. I'll stay here until I am ready to go, and when that time comes, neither you nor those cannibals nor all hell is going to stop me!"

Bradley smiled coldly.

"**N**OW that we understand each other," he said, "come along with me and I'll show you what I am doing here." Together they set off down a path which led back into an obscure point of the woods on the hillside.

As they walked, Bradley explained: "With the valuable assistance of Doctor Michaels, whom you met yesterday, I am cultivating pearls. Not artificial ones, but genuine, perfect pearls, raised in the oysters themselves. We have isolated the little parasite that gets into the oyster and which the oyster, in self-defense, surrounds with nacre. This nacre hardens into layer after layer, and builds up the pearl.

"Of course, many pearls have a grain of sand as the nucleus, but we discovered that the oysters could very often expel sand. So we cultivate these little microscopic tape worms, and plant them in the folds of the meat of the oyster. This is done in the laboratory. The oyster is not as easily able to eject these parasites as he is a grain of sand.

"In the bay, which is protected, we gather the spat or baby oysters, and guard them carefully for three years in the shallow part of the lagoon. At that age, we infect them with the parasite, and plant them in deeper water. There we leave them until we are ready to gather the harvest.

"But—and here is where we pride

ourselves on a discovery unknown to anybody but ourselves—we are able to anaesthetize the oysters at any time we like. Thus we are able to open them up and keep continuous check on the growth of the pearls, as well as harvest them. In this way, we do not have to kill fine, large oysters.

"You know, when once an oyster starts covering the parasite with nacre, he gets into the habit of it. And so he adds layer after layer to the pearl, just like the layers of an onion. The pearls grow bigger year after year. And I get richer and richer.

"We are a rather exclusive group here. Each of us has his little history. My own story doesn't matter. You've heard the story of Michaels. And as for the girl—she joined me very suddenly during one of my flying visits to Tahiti. She was quite eager to leave there, on account of the inquisitiveness of the police. They wanted to ask her embarrassing questions about why she poisoned her sweetheart."

KNIGHT stopped dead in his tracks.

"Bradley, you're a damned liar," he asserted.

Bradley shrugged his shoulders with a fine lack of concern. By this time they had reached a clearing, in the center of which was a large, low building constructed of black basalt rock. They were crossing the clearing when a man emerged from a trail on the other side. Knight had not seen him about the place before.

"That's O'Leary, another one of my delightful companions. He is formerly of Queensland, where he carried on his business of sticking a knife between the ribs of sailors who had the misfortune to let him see that they were carrying money. A fine example of manhood, O'Leary

is—absolutely without fear—which point he likes to advertise.

"I send him up in the hills to trade with the cannibals. They don't seem to have any desire to feast on him. He's too tough and, I suspect, his flesh would taste too strongly of that stinking pipe he smokes. Which proves that those black boys are not entirely without fastidiousness."

AS the man approached, Knight saw a burly Irishman, heavily bearded and wearing only a ragged pair of dungarees. Stripped to the waist, the hairy barrel chest and massive shoulders gleamed with perspiration. He was carrying a rifle, and three natives followed him bearing heavy bundles on their backs.

There was something vaguely familiar to Knight about the man, as he approached them. He had seen this man somewhere before, of that he was certain. The man cast one incurious glance at him and spoke to Bradley.

"Thim natives is rearin' up on their hind legs," he said. "That's how come I hurried back. They're squawkin' because thim trade guns won't work. One of the chiefs tried to shoot his gun and it blew up. He seen that the barrel was only a coiled wire covered over with solder, and he was fittin' to be tied. He shore would like to see you roastin' over his fire."

Bradley smiled indifferently. "The fools," he said. "Do they think I'm going to give them guns that they could use against me?"

"I'm only tellin' you," O'Leary returned. "Things is gettin' bad up there. I could see it everywhere. Thim blacks is gettin' a bellyfull. What they need is a lesson."

Bradley lit a cigarette calmly. "You go back up there and don't come down again until you have

traded the last one of those rifles. And tell them natives that if they don't like the way I run my business, I'll round the whole bunch of them up and sell them to a labor ship."

With that dismissal, Bradley turned his back on the burly Irishman and started toward the laboratory building. O'Leary's eyes followed him with a murderous gleam, and his hand dropped to a knife in his belt. His rifle clattered to the ground. "Damn you, Bradley," he muttered, "you've sent me into thim hills for the last time!"

With speed that was amazing in a man of his heavy build, he drew the knife and threw it.

The gleaming weapon would have sunk into Bradley's back squarely between the shoulders—except for one thing. Knight had seen O'Leary's deadly intent and had dived, landing on him in time to upset his aim.

The point of the knife-blade struck the stone wall of the building and snapped, falling to the ground. O'Leary whirled and glared at his assailant.

Then recognition came to him and he shook with rage. "You!" he said. "Are you just following me around the world to meddle in my affairs? That night on the dock at Tahiti! I told you I'd get you, and now I'm going to do it!"

THE man's horny fists closed spasmodically and the cords in his heavy neck bulged.

Knight, filled to choking with disgust at this back-stabber, answered him levelly.

"Yes, still collecting the knives you like to play with, aren't you?"

O'Leary, in an overpowering rage, suddenly lost all control. Springing at Knight, he swung a massive fist at the latter's head.

Powerful and quick as the blow

was, however, Knight had little trouble in dodging it. And in turn, he landed two stinging blows of his own, one in the man's midriff and the other on his hairy chin. He got in still a third one, and managed to duck the man's other falling fist.

O'LEARY let out a howl of rage and plowed in again, his sharp eyes gleaming with the lust to kill. Blood spurted from the lip Knight had broken with his first blow, and trickled down the dirty beard.

O'Leary was trying to reach out and grasp Knight with his gorilla arms. In them, Knight well knew, he would be done for. But without shrinking back a step he met the hairy Irishman with a rain of fists.

O'Leary was heavier by half than Knight, but the latter was not without some little scientific knowledge of boxing. It was a contest between brain and brawn, with sure death for Knight if he lost. He had only his little bit of knowledge with which to meet not only the man's abnormal strength, but every dirty trick the dock rat might have concealed in that murderous brain of his.

On tiptoes, Knight waited for the approach. As O'Leary rushed in, Knight sent a lightning fist to the point of his chin and escaped to the side. O'Leary bellowed with pain and rage, and returned two wild blows.

Knight sidestepped them neatly and dropped back to regain his breath.

He studied the distorted countenance of the murder-mad man before him carefully. And O'Leary, too, had come to the conclusion that he had an antagonist worthy of more careful attention.

His next attack brought him in with a more respectful regard for the stinging and well placed punches Knight was delivering. His heavy

fist landed on Knight's jaw and spun him around. The blow knocked Knight groggy, and before he could clear his head, the Irishman's fist caught him on the ear and knocked him to the ground.

O'Leary let out a yell of mixed triumph and hatred and dived at Knight, landing with his full weight on the latter's body. It knocked the wind out of the lighter man, and left him momentarily helpless.

The bully buried his chin in Knight's neck, and his arms, strong as steel bands, encircled his victim's ribs. They tightened about him like a clamp, with nutcracker force.

Weakly now, Knight brought to bear his last remaining effort. Interlacing the fingers of his two hands, thus locking them together, he brought them down full force on the back of the man's neck at the base of his brain. The rabbit punch!

The big Irishman went limp.

The pressure of the encircling arms left Knight's agonized lungs, as the Irishman rolled over on the ground. He was knocked out cold.

KNIGHT got to his feet weakly. Lucian Bradley had been leaning against the laboratory, casually observing the fight. Now he walked over and stood beside Knight, blankly observing the prostrate figure.

"You seem to have met before," he observed.

"Only once," Knight panted. "I happened along a dock one night in Tahiti, while he was plying his trade. He doesn't seem to have forgiven me for saving the life of a drunken sailor."

"And I am afraid he won't," Bradley commented. Then after a moment he added, "I don't think I quite understand you, Knight. In the light of—a—the events during our short association—"

"Of course, you wouldn't," Knight

said. "But one of the reasons is simply that I wouldn't stand by and see anybody—even you—killed without a chance to defend himself. I'll let you be puzzling out that quirk of human nature, which is undoubtedly strange to you, until I am ready to tell you the other reason. It will be just as foreign to your understanding."

That night, as he lay in the darkness of his room, wide-eyed, he listened long to a new sound.

Tonga drums filled the air, their pulsating rhythm echoing back and forth in the vastness of the mountains.

CHAPTER IV

Trouble

JACK KNIGHT went out to the veranda the next morning. The girl was having breakfast at the table.

She was clad in white silk, and a string of coral beads encircled her neck. This was the first time Knight had seen her since the natives had brought her ashore and had taken her to her room. She had recovered from the effects of the submersion, and now seemed far more sadly beautiful than ever.

Jack Knight joined her at the table, where she thanked him for having rescued her. They became well acquainted before the meal was over.

During the conversation, Tahiti was mentioned. "My father used to sail out of there," she said. "He was Captain Bob Richards."

Knight looked at her in surprise. "Why, old Captain Bob is as good a friend as I have anywhere. I haven't seen him in years, though. Where is he now?"

"He died two years ago. He was killed somewhere on these islands."

The girl seemed disinclined to say

more about her father, and Knight did not press the matter. Instead, he seized the opportunity to tell her what he had on his mind, not knowing at all how she would take it.

"I intended to leave this island immediately, but when I saw the kind of brute Bradley is, I decided to wait and talk to you. I could see that the situation is one that must be terrible for you.

"When I saw that the others were practically being held prisoners here, I decided to offer you the opportunity to escape, to help you if you want to leave here. Bradley knows what I think of him and I won't be doing anything behind his back."

The girl looked frightened. "But you shouldn't take such a risk," she objected. "Bradley is a terrible man; he would kill us both before he would let me go. I wouldn't let you risk it."

"Then you want to leave! And I am to take you. If nothing else, I owe at least that much to old Captain Bob. You *do* want to go, don't you?"

THE girl looked about her nervously. The native woman was not in sight.

"Yes, after I do what I came here to do," she admitted. "But I can't go yet, even if you do find a way. You see," she added in a low voice, "the man my father was in partnership with was Bradley. I know that my father's share of the pearls was considerable, but when he died—or was killed—I couldn't find any trace of them.

"My father was suspicious of his partner. I didn't know, however, until later who my father was associated with.

"Bradley got those pearls, I know, and he still has them hidden around here somewhere. He even taunts me with the fact. They are rightfully

mine. I want to find them before I leave, and prove that he was my father's murderer."

"Then I'll help you," Knight promised eagerly. "When I get your pearls, you'll let me take you away from here, won't you?"

A gleam of hope flitted across the girl's face. "Yes," she answered.

SUDDENLY, Knight recalled the words of Bradley when the man had been talking about his household. He drove the thought from his mind.

He could not help asking a question, however. "Why did you come here in the first place?"

The girl's face saddened again. "I am afraid I could never make you understand," she said. "I can hardly realize it myself, now that it is all over.

"When my father died I was penniless. You can't possibly know how difficult it is for a white girl without money in these islands. There is nothing in the world she can do to live respectably.

"There is no use telling you the details of the long struggle. But at last I was so heartsick and hopeless that I was ready for anything. Then I heard that Bradley was in Tahiti on one of his infrequent visits. I went down to the docks and stowed away on his boat. I was determined to get back the fortune he'd stolen.

"He found me before he sailed. He brought me along, however, just for the pleasure of torturing me. I'm sure. But I decided to stick it out—it is at least a home, until I accomplish my purpose."

A new voice joined the conversation. Bradley strolled in casually, a bland smile on his face.

He sat down between the two at the table. "Yes," he said, "a home is a wonderful thing. Food—beautiful clothes—loving friends—bushels of

glowing pearls to let trickle through your fingers—if you can find them—and a handsome young man to make love to you over the breakfast table. Yes, life is beautiful, indeed, Sylvia."

"Stop it!" Knight slid his chair back and got to his feet with doubled fists. "Bradley, you've tortured this girl as long as you're going to. I'm taking her away with me."

Bradley calmly poured himself a cup of coffee. "Before you find the pearls?" he asked.

The conversation was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a black. The man was in a state of almost complete exhaustion. He spoke to Bradley excitedly in the native dialect. Bradley listened to him without change of expression.

After he had put several questions to the native, he turned and said to Knight, in his usual slow and calculating speech: "The blacks at the other end of the island don't seem to appreciate me. Last night they captured O'Leary and all his carriers. This boy was the only one who escaped."

"That'll be the end of O'Leary, I suppose," observed Knight.

"I'M rather glad it happened,"

Bradley answered. "It gives me just the opportunity I have been waiting for. I've been needing more laborers for quite a while. So, by way of punishing them for capturing a white man, I'll just go get a shipload of them and bring them back here and put them to work."

"Blackbirding, eh?"

"Call it what you will. Those natives have robbed me of a valuable man, so I'm collecting damages. I'll be needing you along, so get ready—we'll sail in two hours."

Bradley's trim schooner lifted her anchor and ran gracefully out of the lagoon, rounding the point of the island and skirting the shore line;

she was a thing of beauty, with her snowy sails swelled by a stiff breeze and the sharp edge of her bow cutting the clear blue water with knife-like sharpness.

JACK KNIGHT stood on the quarter deck beside Bradley, who was at the wheel. All on board was activity. A dozen lean natives aloft piled on more canvas, while still others below stowed or spread out for inspection boxes and bundles of trade goods.

The clean-washed decks were lined with bolts of cloth, figured with every color of the rainbow. Packages of brass jewelry gleamed yellow in the sun. Shiny trade guns, which would do well to shoot a half a dozen rounds before blowing apart, lay stacked in long boxes. The deck was a storehouse of articles calculated to arouse the cupidity of the simple natives.

Between shouted orders, Bradley talked to Knight. "The fools," he said, "they think they can get the best of me. Did you hear the drums last night?"

"Yes. It sounded to me like they were spelling trouble."

"Trouble?" Bradley laughed harshly. "These dumb blacks can't make trouble for a smart man. They're just piling up trouble for themselves. They'll find themselves working my copra, and they'll wish they had let well enough alone."

"I imagine you'll have a hard time arguing them into consenting to work for you."

"I don't need their consent. I take what I want. And that's what I'm going to do now. I'll show those fellows a stunt they haven't seen worked before."

A little after daylight the following morning, Bradley hove the vessel to in a quiet harbor, and dropped his anchor. Half a dozen native

canoes drifted idly about him, while their occupants fished.

Partially loading a canoe with odds and ends of the trade goods, Bradley and Knight went ashore. A small crowd collected about them. Bradley sent word to their chief that he had a shipload of goods which he would dispose of, and asked that the chief come aboard with all the members of his tribe who wanted to trade.

He gave the messenger one of the rifles and a bolt of cloth to be handed to the chief as a present. He and Knight then returned to the schooner and waited.

A short time later, a canoe pushed off from the shore and pulled up alongside the boat. The chief and his two canoemen came aboard and greeted Bradley.

THE chief was tall and well formed. He wore a colored *pareu* about his hips, and his long hair, bleached yellow with lime, was gathered in a huge knot on the top of his head. He wore heavy earrings of tortoise shell, which so distended the lobes of his ears that the trinkets touched his shoulders. The septum of his nose was pierced and in it inserted a piece of pearl shell, polished and cut. He carried a long spear, finely carved and ornamented.

After a long ceremonial greeting in the native dialect, Bradley took the chief about the ship and showed him the goods he had for disposal. The chief examined the things with a strong show of interest. When he had seen it all he asked:

"What do you want in exchange for these goods?"

"Pearls and shell, or cocoanuts. Anything you have that will be of value to me."

The chief shook his head negatively. "We do not have much of either. Our people have been at war with our enemies in the hills, and have

had no time to dive. We have many prisoners, however, to work for us. We could give you the prisoners, they are all strong fellows, to work for you."

"I DON'T need them to work for me. They are of little value to me. But if you have enough of them I will give you some of the trade goods in exchange for them."

The chief seemed satisfied. After long negotiations, he made arrangements to bring the prisoners aboard early the next morning. Carrying still another gift from Bradley, he went ashore to make his preparations.

Bradley, in his white linen suit, leaned over the rail and watched the chief paddling ashore. "That was better luck than I expected," he said to Knight. "I had intended getting the whole bunch of them aboard and sailing away with them. Now I will take not only them, but their prisoners as well."

"You dirty blackbirder!" Knight snapped. "I've never in my life seen anyone quite as coldly brutal as you are. You're a new type of person to me. Haven't you any conscience at all?"

"None whatever," Bradley smiled. "I had one once, but circumstances soon made me get rid of it. The world has no place for a man with a conscience. It will trample him in the mud, and then throw him to the dogs. I know—because that's what happened to me.

"But I got away from both of 'em—the world and my conscience—and when I go back, it will be I who trample the rest of them. I'll have the only thing that will keep you afloat in the world. Money! I'm getting that at a pretty rapid rate."

Bradley laughed bitterly. "Knight," he finished, "it might interest you to know that twenty years ago I was

a respectable business man back in New Hampshire."

Bradley started back toward his cabin, but after a couple of steps he turned and faced his companion. Knight leaned against the rail and watched him speculatively.

"I know what you think of me," the fat man said. "You hate me. Well, I like to be hated. It shows me that people are afraid of me."

Jack Knight laughed at the man.

Bradley continued: "Go on hating me. I'm glad you came here. You're the first man that's had guts enough to be even interesting. Michaels and O'Leary, they're just punks—no guts. Well, don't you turn yellow on me. Keep on fighting me. Your arrival is the first interesting thing that's happened to me in years."

"Don't worry," Knight said. "I'll be with you until I find that girl's pearls for her. Then I'm taking her back where she belongs—with white people!"

CHAPTER V

Cannibals

WHEN the sun went down, Lucian Bradley started a lively activity aboard. All the trade goods that had originally been placed on deck for the inspection of the chief were stored safely in the after hold, and the hatch battened down. From the forward holds the sailors brought great bundles of barbed wire, with which Bradley built a fence across the deck of the ship, separating the stern from the forward end.

"You can't tell about those blacks," Bradley said to Knight. "Just when you think you are fooling them easiest, they pull some kind of a dirty trick on you."

During the night they saw canoes enter the cove and draw up on the beach. By daylight the beach was

swarming with the blacks, and Bradley signaled to them that he was ready for them.

Led by a canoe containing the chief, the natives left the shore and started swarming toward the boat. Bradley watched them through the glasses he had glued to his eyes.

"Most of 'em are armed," he said. "They shouldn't be carrying weapons just on a trading expedition."

Through another pair of glasses, Knight studied the approaching boats carefully. It was true that at least half of the men in each canoe were carrying spears and bows and arrows.

Bradley gave an order to his black helpers and armed them with rifles from his own cabin—not trade rifles, but heavy, substantial weapons of modern design. "You can't tell what those birds may have in their minds," he explained to Knight.

WHEN the chief's canoe had approached to within a hundred feet of the schooner, Bradley suddenly shouted at them to stop.

"You can't come aboard with those weapons," he said. "If you want to come aboard and trade peacefully, pass your weapons on back to the men in the other canoes. You can't bring 'em up here."

The chief stood up in his canoe and explained that they were bringing their prisoners aboard and that it was necessary that they have arms to keep the captives from escaping. By way of proving his point, he made one of them in the canoe stand up, so that those on board the schooner could see that he had his hands tied behind him.

The chief's explanation seemed plausible. Bradley, however, took the precaution of warning his own men to be ready for any kind of treachery. He made a quick examination of the network of barbed wire fenc-

ing behind which the crew was stationed. It was solid enough to withstand a strong attack. Then he signaled the chief of the natives to bring the men aboard, one canoeful at a time.

The chief's canoe came alongside and he and his two oarsmen clambered up, herding before them half a dozen blacks whose hands were bound behind them.

Bradley motioned to the open forward hatch. "Put 'em down there," he ordered. "And don't untie their hands."

SIX boatloads of the savages and their prisoners had come aboard, and the water around the schooner was now black with other canoes and men. Jack Knight felt a distinct uneasiness.

As friendly as the savages appeared to be, he was worried. But Bradley, on the other hand, with the indifferent self-assurance he always had, shouted his orders and apparently ignored any danger that the group of blacks might present. As much as he despised the man, Knight recognized the fact that he was utterly without fear.

Suddenly a commotion broke out on deck. It seemed to start with a quarrel among the savages themselves. But it spread so quickly that Knight had little or no time to discover its origin.

The excitement and the shouting expanded like wildfire, from the deck of the ship to the surrounding canoes. The natives shouted and brandished their spears, and a black wave of them rolled up from the sea to the schooner's deck.

Instantly Knight knew that they had been tricked by the pagan devils, for the men whose wrists had been bound suddenly leaped up with their arms free and were supplied with weapons from the canoes.

As though it all had been prearranged, more blacks poured over the rails of the schooner to join the fracas.

Knight and Bradley, standing near each other, whipped out their pistols and fired into the crowd. They were answered with a rain of spears.

Jack Knight placed his bullets slowly and carefully, as he and Bradley retreated backward on the deck to a point behind the barbed wire entanglement. Lucian Bradley used his pistol with a brilliant show of marksmanship. For the first time since Knight had set eyes on him, the man seemed in a joyous mood. As he triggered his weapon, Bradley laughed. It was cold and harsh, the laugh almost of a madman. And between shots, he shouted insults at his black foemen.

THE little group of Bradley's sailors stood under the break of the quarter deck, fearfully watching the oncoming cannibals. Bradley and Knight lined them just behind the protection of the barbed wire. There the men with their rifles knelt.

Bradley gave the order to fire.

The grim battle settled down to deadly earnest. Bradley's men poured a withering fire of lead into the shouting natives on deck while, flanking them on either side, Knight and Bradley picked off the newcomers as fast as they showed over the ship's side.

Arrows and spears rained on the little group. The cannibals were masters of the art of throwing their weapons and could hurl them in the air over the protection of the barbed wire in such a manner that they would fall point first among the defenders. Three of Bradley's men fell, pinned to the deck, by this deadly assault.

Their small success inspired the natives to more frenzied effort. Their

chief jumped in the air and shouted, his black face, with the pearl ornaments in his nose, a hideous sight to behold. He charged forward, followed by his warriors.

The whole black wave of them swept toward the quarter deck in an overwhelming mass. They brought up short against the barbed wire.

Surprised shouts of pain filled the air, mingling with the war cries of those behind them. This devilish wire was new to them. And the whole line was torn and lacerated, and their black bodies painted red with their own blood as a result.

The defenders poured a constant stream of hot lead into the foremost ranks of the cannibals. Their numbers piled up slowly before the barbed wire entanglement.

However, the defenders themselves were not without their serious wounds. The sharp point of a spear laid Jack Knight's scalp wide open, and blood trickled down into his eyes, almost blinding him. There was not one of them behind the wire who had not suffered at least one serious injury, except Bradley himself. That man seemed to live a charmed life.

Then a new shout came from the attackers, the native word for fire! Smoke suddenly billowed out of the forward hold of the schooner.

EARLIER, Knight had glimpsed some of the tribesmen bringing cocoanut husks aboard. He had had no time to give it a second thought then, but now he knew what they had been up to. The natives' method of carrying fire is to ignite the inside of cocoanut husks, which will smolder for hours and break into a flame when blown upon. The blacks had set fire to the ship!

This new peril lent the fury of desperation to the defenders and they fought with a renewed vigor;

their increasing bullets slew so many of the attackers that the lines wavered back and forth momentarily, then broke in wild panic.

The cannibals dived over the side to escape death. They deserted the ship like rats and floundered in the water like great schools of black fish, until they could crawl into canoes and start paddling madly ashore.

Knight and Bradley lined their men up along the rail and poured lead into the retreating figures until the last of them were out of gunshot range. Then, with buckets dipped into the bay, they swashed salt water into the hold of the schooner until they had the fire extinguished.

Well nigh exhausted, and bleeding from half a dozen wounds, Jack Knight dropped into a chair in Bradley's cabin. He poured a cupful of Bradley's rum and dribbled it on his cuts as an antiseptic.

"This is one time, Bradley, when you didn't just step up and take what you wanted. You just about got what was coming to you. It's a damn' shame that the chief didn't pin you to the deck house with that spear of his. You would have deserved it. Take a couple of stitches in my scalp, will you?"

Bradley patched up the wounds on Knight's head. "This is only the first act," he said. "Those blacks won't rest a minute until they've repaid my little visit. Then, there'll be a different story. We'll be there to welcome them."

CHAPTER VI

Bloody Feast

LUCIAN BRADLEY now made as much haste as possible to get his decks cleared and set sail for home. There, he knew, the savages would make another attack

on him. Stripped to the shirt, he drove his sailors relentlessly, casting overboard the dead bodies of the cannibals and dismantling and stowing the barbed wire barricade.

The water around the boat became animated with the sharp fins and white bellies of a host of sharks come to feast on the floating bodies. Bradley watched the grim banquet with relish; Jack Knight with cold revulsion.

THEN something on the distant beach caught Knight's eye and held him. A white man burst out of the jungle thicket and ran toward the water's edge, pursued by three natives. Knight recognized the burly figure of O'Leary.

The Irishman had almost reached the water's edge, waving his hands frantically to attract the attention of the boat, when one of the natives overtook him. As the black pounced O'Leary turned and grappled with him. The other two caught up and joined the fray.

O'Leary's massive hands and feet threshed out like the pistons of a steam engine. One of the natives had mounted his back and had an arm around his neck, gradually choking him. Even with this handicap, O'Leary knocked one of them down and stamped on his head with bared heel until the man was lifeless.

The savage on O'Leary's back clung to him like an octopus. Try as he might, O'Leary seemed unable to detach him. Then, as a last resort, the big Irishman deliberately fell over backward onto the ground, carrying the native under him and pinning him down.

The force of O'Leary's heavy weight falling on him loosened the native's hold. O'Leary made quick work of him with a jagged coral stone.

Finishing the second man, O'Leary

heaved the stone at his last antagonist and crushed the man's skull. But now half a dozen more shouting cannibals broke out of the jungle.

O'Leary ran to the water's edge. In he dived, and swam with long powerful strokes toward the schooner. Bradley had joined Knight in watching O'Leary's escape. Knight heard the clank of the anchor chain as it was being hauled aboard. He looked sharply at Bradley.

"Why aren't you getting a boat over the side to pick him up?"

"It's no use," Bradley answered indifferently. "The sharks would have him before we can get to him."

KNIGHT cursed the cold-blooded man under his breath, and shouted to the Kanakas, who got busy lowering away the dory from its davit over the stern.

Bradley looked at him with an amused smile. "You're using bad judgment," he said. "You're trying to save a man who will kill you the first time your back is turned. You'd better let him go."

Knight did not bother to reply, but jumped into the dory and took the tiller. Under his verbal barrage the two sailors shoved the boat out through the shark-infested waters to meet O'Leary.

The big Irishman was almost exhausted when Knight gave him a hand into the boat. He was completely bare of clothes, and his body was covered with cuts and bruises which bled freely. The man lay in the bottom of the boat, panting, as the Kanakas turned about and started toward the schooner.

The water all about them had become a seething marine battlefield. The smell of blood had attracted sharks without number, and other of the more formidable creatures of the bay. Fighting over the spoils, barracuda and sword fish preyed upon

each other in their furious battle for the dead bodies.

Far to the left, Knight had seen a school of mantas in their peculiar "dance." These gigantic rays, twenty feet square, were swimming single file in a hundred-foot circle, the outer edges of their great black wings cutting the water and waving like the wings of horrible bats of mammoth proportions.

These aquatic dragons had broken their "dance" and were mingling freely with the other fish in search of prey. One of them broke the water just ahead of the dory. Its square body resembled a great black blanket with a white underside. Its cavernous mouth opened in flight, and it swallowed one of the dead bodies whole, a mere fraction of a second before the onrush of a vicious hammer-head shark. The shark's terrific speed brought it into violent contact with the manta and his razor teeth locked in a death grip with this natural enemy.

THE water churned into a white froth, and the vicious lashes of the battlers carried them from the surface to the floor of the bay and back again, almost upsetting the little dory. One whip of the tail of either of them would have left the rowboat a mass of floating kindling wood, and its occupants more raw meat for the feast of the fishes.

O'Leary raised up on his elbow and stared long at the schooner. "Look!" he growled with a curse. "Bradley's leaving us here, damn his dirty soul. He's sailin' without us."

The schooner was a full quarter of a mile distant. Knight saw the sails going up on its mast. Slowly it was getting under way, with Bradley at its wheel.

The dory was nearer the narrow mouth of the bay than the schooner itself, and Knight figured that there

was a possible chance of intercepting it.

Toward this end, he jammed his tiller hard to the right and snapped orders to the Kanakas to bear down on their oars.

O'Leary lay in the bottom of the boat and gazed at the moving schooner with a venom-filled face. He cursed Bradley with all the eloquence afforded by his life-time of practice. He shook his fist at the schooner and shouted his vituperation at Bradley. "I'll kill you, you damned scum, if it's the last thing I ever do!"

The schooner was gaining ground. Knight saw that, as they were, they could not overtake it. "Get up here and take this tiller, O'Leary," he ordered. "You're rested enough to do that."

WITH O'Leary at the tiller, Knight grabbed a spare oar and lent his own efforts to those of the Kanakas. The little dory picked up speed. Sweating and toiling, Knight urged the Kanakas to back-breaking labor.

He felt a ray of hope when he saw that they were beating the schooner to the channel in the mouth of the bay. A hundred more strokes and they would meet.

The schooner bore down towards them and they shipped their oars to float alongside. The ship came to within half a dozen yards of them, when the Kanakas in the boat let out frightened yells.

Bradley had shouted an order, and the sails of the schooner had swung about to the other tack while Bradley had jammed his wheel over hard. The schooner answered by veering her course sharply to the right. Before the men in the boat could get their oars in the water, the bow of the schooner hit them head on and ripped the dory apart. The blow

flung the four men into the water, floundering helplessly.

As Knight's head bobbed up to the surface, he saw the keen forms of sharks converging upon them. At the same moment, one of the Kanakas screamed in death agony, threw his hands high in the air, and disappeared under the surface, followed by the flipping tail of one of the great sea tigers.

Just beside Knight, O'Leary splashed feebly. Overhead was the low bowsprit of the schooner with its fiddle strings almost within reach.

Knight saw all these things instantaneously. He reacted with as much promptness while the schooner had moved less than half a dozen feet in its slow progress.

He caught O'Leary around the waist and shouted, "Grab the fiddle-strings when I shove you up."

Then with all his strength, he lifted O'Leary. The latter's hands clamped tightly around the bowsprit bracings.

This effort carried Knight far below the surface of the water. A shadow flashed through the blue before him just as he hauled himself up and caught the ropes alongside O'Leary. The sleek head of a shark with open mouth missed his leg by inches.

THE two men pulled themselves aboard the schooner almost completely exhausted. The second Kanaka who had been thrown overboard was nowhere in sight.

The two dripping men made their way aft to face Bradley. The latter smiled at them.

"You almost missed the boat," he said easily. "That would have been unfortunate."

Knight stood before him, spraddled and with doubled fists. "I ought to kill you for that trick," he grated.

"But you won't. You need me alive to tell you where the pearls are." Knight was breathing heavily. It was only the truth of Bradley's assertion that kept him from throttling the man then and there. O'Leary stood beside Knight, but so strong was the power of Bradley's virulent personality that O'Leary could only glare at him with hatred, not daring to attack him face to face.

Knight questioned, "Bradley, what was the idea in your leaving us here?"

Bradley explained smilingly. "I am expecting my home to be attacked and I am in a hurry to get back there. Under the circumstances, minutes count, and I could not afford to wait for you. You must certainly realize that I have no desire to see my friends' heads decorating the end of a cannibal's lance."

Overcome with fury at the man's gibe, Knight stamped off to his cabin without another word. He was even more eager than Bradley to be back to protect the girl.

CHAPTER VII

The Hand of O'Leary

THE schooner ran along smoothly before a favorable wind. A mile off the port quarter, the low coastline of the island faded quickly as the sun dipped under the horizon and darkness blanketed them. Bradley was below, where he had gone after ordering Jack Knight to stand a trick at the wheel.

Knight stood alone on the after-deck, enjoying the refreshing coolness, when a figure suddenly loomed up beside him in the darkness. By the feeble light of the binnacle, Knight made out the form of O'Leary, his husky body draped only in a native *pareu*. At the Irishman's side was a long knife and a

pistol. O'Leary's movements were stealthy and he looked around cautiously before speaking to Knight in an undertone.

"I'm goin' to settle things with that human octopus. I hate him, and all the Kanakas are afraid of him. He'd kill everyone of us as soon as look at us."

"So what?" Knight replied.

"So we'll beat him to it and get him first. I've been talkin' to thim Kanakas and they're ready to back me up. I'll go down to his cabin and put a crimp in him while he's asleep. Then we'll go back and load up his copra and shell, and leave this damn island for good. You can navigate the ship. How about it?"

"O'Leary, without a knife and a dark night you'd be as helpless as a baby, wouldn't you? Suppose I did let you kill him, which way would you sail to find civilization?"

"We could find it somewhere. We'd keep sailing until we did."

"Provided you had water and food enough, which you couldn't be sure of. Nothing doing, O'Leary. You don't get to stick your knife in Bradley's back and we don't leave this island for a while yet. I've got more business here."

"But, listen—"

"I'm not listening to any more of that."

O'LEARY slunk away in the darkness, and Knight kept his station at the wheel.

All on board the ship was quiet—ominously so—except for the wind sailing through the rigging. Knight stood at his wheel with muscles tense. His nerves were on edge, his ears keen for the slightest significant sound. It was as though he were waiting expectantly for something to happen.

As the minutes dragged on and then multiplied themselves, this feel-

ing grew on him. It was as much as he could do to keep from lashing the wheel and going forward to investigate, so sure was he that this unnatural silence presaged trouble.

He had just about determined on this course of action when Kukoa, his own Kanaka, who was with the crew, came to him, whispering in the dark. Kukoa reported that, led by O'Leary, the natives were going to kill Bradley and capture Knight.

"The Irishman say he make you steer the boat back to Tahiti, then he kill you. He not know I come this island with you."

KNIGHT turned the wheel over to Kukoa and went below. The passageway in the deck house leading to Bradley's cabin was dark. Knight gripped his knife and felt his way along with silent steps. His fingers groped in the darkness until he found the handle of the door. He turned it silently.

The interior of Bradley's cabin was pitch black, except for a small circle of moonlight which shone through the porthole and made a splotch on the bunk upon which Bradley was sleeping. Groping about the room, Knight's hand came into contact with a pistol lying on Bradley's desk. He was about to pass on to awaken the man, when the yellow ray of moonlight was suddenly blotted out. Knight froze in his tracks.

Peering through the porthole was the ugly face of O'Leary, which even in the shadows was a malevolent thing to see. O'Leary could not see Knight, deeper in the darkness of the cabin.

O'Leary got his head and one shoulder in the porthole and Knight caught the gleam of moonlight on an upraised knife.

Knight's response was like the strike of a snake. He grasped the

pistol off the table and fired it squarely at O'Leary. The explosion of the shell was deafening in the small cabin. A yellow dagger of flame leapt from the weapon, followed by the pungent smell of burned powder.

O'Leary let out a wild yell of pain and the knife dropped from his nerveless fingers to fall thump on the bed. He tried to wriggle his head and wounded shoulder out of the porthole.

Bradley sprung up and shot the gleam of a flashlight about the cabin, bringing it finally to rest on the agonized features of the Irishman. Then the light traveled back to Knight, who stood with smoking gun in hand, completing the tableau.

"What's this?" Bradley asked with amazing calm.

"Get on your feet in a hurry," Knight said. "O'Leary and the Kanakas are trying to take over the ship."

"Mutiny, what?" Bradley said. "Well, we'll take care of that mighty pronto."

THE flashlight settled on a chest of pistols and belts of ammunition, with which Bradley supplied himself and Knight. Bare to the waist, and with his lower body clad in flamboyant silk pajamas over which his weapons were strapped, Bradley turned the door. "Now let's go talk to the black devils," he said.

His hand had hardly touched the knob of the door when the sound of running footsteps filled the corridor. The two white men were blockaded in Bradley's cabin.

Instead of opening the door, Bradley bolted it from the inside. "We'll go out the porthole and meet 'em on deck," he said.

Once outside, they came face to face with another bunch of the Kanakas who were rounding the

deck house and headed aft. The blacks halted momentarily, then surged forward. Bradley blocked their way with arms crossed. He did not even draw his gun.

So great was the fear that Bradley had implanted in these men, that their line wavered. They came to a stop a full ten feet away from him.

Bradley's voice was low but fraught with sinister threat. "Go forward, you black swine! Go down in that forward hold. I'll kill the first one that comes out. Hurry!"

THE Kanakas held their ground for a moment against him, but Bradley did not move or speak again. He merely stood, boring them with his cold eyes.

Gradually, the last ounce of their resistance drained out of them. Singly and by twos, they turned and herded themselves down the ladder into the forward hold. With a slight motion of his hand for Knight to follow him, Bradley strode the length of the deck and clapped the hatch down on the blacks, making them prisoners.

"That reduces the odds by half," Bradley observed calmly. "We can handle the rest of 'em, including O'Leary, just as easily."

The noise coming up from the corridor now indicated that the other group had finally succeeded in bursting down the door to Bradley's cabin. Finding it empty, they set up a great howl and started pouring back onto the deck.

O'Leary led them. He was armed with a gun he had found in the cabin, as were several of his followers. The Kanakas lined up instinctively back of the hairy Irishman, who stopped dead when within twenty paces of the two men who stood facing him and his little army.

The yellow moon shone down

upon them through the ship's rigging. The white leader of the mutiny was a picture to inspire terror as he and his little band stood there. Half-naked, his hairy body was blood soaked, and his left arm hung useless by his side, the result of Knight's bullet. Under a head of tousled hair, his whiskered face was malignant.

Knight and Bradley awaited the next move with guns leveled.

O'Leary growled at them. "Do you want to surrender yourselves to us? Or do you want us to kill you and throw you overboard to feed the sharks?"

Knight stood tense and did not answer. Bradley laughed a cold, cackling laugh.

"O'Leary, put that gun down before I kill you. You know you're not man enough to touch me."

"Ain't I, though?" O'Leary answered. "You've rubbed me the wrong way for the last time. I ain't takin' your orders any more. I'm givin' 'em now."

KNIGHT saw that there really had been a transition in the man. Bradley had driven him so hard that even the last thread of the man's fear had snapped, and now he was fighting with the desperate bravery of a cornered rat. There would be no turning back now.

Suddenly an orange flame stabbed the night, as O'Leary's gun roared. Bradley was spun around and knocked to the deck by the force of the bullet, but he scrambled to his knees and his own gun started belching a string of bullets.

The schooner became a hell ship. The deck swarmed with the advancing mutineers, armed with guns and clubs. Knight and Bradley cut them down and thinned their numbers with a sheet of fire, but the remainder came on, goaded by their

own maddened fury and the battle cries of O'Leary.

Knight and Bradley retreated to the slight protection of the quarter deck, where Knight handed Kukoa his extra gun. The three settled down to defend themselves. From this point, they reloaded their hot weapons and laced the deck with their lead. Still the mutineers crept forward, darting behind masts and hatch coamings.

A handful of the Kanakas, braver than the others, clasped their gleaming knives in their teeth and scurried up the ratlines to places high on the mast. From there they could throw their knives downward upon the unprotected heads of Knight and his partners.

The defenders picked them off one at a time with well directed shots, and they fell thumping to the deck or dropped over the side into the sea.

KUKOA had left his place at the wheel without taking time to lash it fast, and now to Knight's dismay he caught a glimpse of the dark outline of the shore close at hand. The schooner would soon be aground and a hopeless wreck.

Knight risked the bullets of the mutineers and dashed across to the wheel, where he drew it hard over and lashed it with a grommet. The ship slowly answered and changed her course.

But O'Leary, too, had seen the dark shore line. His mutiny had not been a complete surprise and the results were still in doubt. Overcome with his murderous intent, he saw a new opportunity to wreak vengeance on Bradley. He shouted in dialect to his men:

"Scuttle this old tub! Two of you men go below and open the sea cocks! We'll drown these devils like rats. We're close enough to

swim ashore and reach the plantation."

Knight responded to this new threat of calamity by concentrating his entire attention on the open door of the hatchway which led below. As fast as one of the natives was outlined against the white woodwork of the doorway, Knight sent a carefully aimed bullet through him. If so much as one of these men succeeded in getting below, he could easily open the valve which would allow sea water to rush in through the bilges and sink the ship. This would cut off all hope of his ever seeing civilization again.

While his bullets carefully guarded the vital doorway, Knight's mind raced in search of a quick way to put an end to this mutiny.

The answer lay in O'Leary. It was he who inspired it and kept it alive. Without him, Knight was confident, the Kanakas would soon lose hope.

O'Leary was safely hidden behind one of the steel cargo winches, from which point of safety he was directing his fire. Knight's problem was to reach him, without first getting a bullet in himself for his trouble.

WITH this lead in view, he directed Bradley and Kukoa to keep O'Leary engaged and also protect the hatchway door until he returned. Then, refilling his gun and tucking it in his waist, he let himself over the stern of the boat, hanging by his hands and with only his fingers in the gunnels carrying his weight. In this way, hanging outside the hull of the boat, he worked his way forward to a point abreast of the anchor winch.

He suddenly heaved himself over the ship's side, and with two quick steps had the muzzle of his gun in the surprised O'Leary's back.

"Drop your gun or I'll put a bul-

let through your dirty carcass!" Knight ordered.

O'Leary whirled around. Knight brought his weapon down full strength on the man's gun hand, and O'Leary squatted before him disarmed. "Now tell those Kanakas the little fracas is over."

O'Leary merely glared at him.

Knight brought his weapon down sharply on the man's head once, twice, and again, until O'Leary gave in and shouted to the Kanakas.

It had only been the brutal domination of O'Leary which had kept them fighting after so many of their numbers had been killed. They were only too glad to drop their weapons.

"Now you're coming up to the quarter deck," Knight ordered. "I'll see that Bradley puts you in a place where you can't hurt anybody for a while."

The ordeal of facing Bradley was too much for O'Leary to stand. His old fear of the man returned and consumed him. Heedless of Knight's gun, he took three running steps and dived over the side into the water. Knight watched him swim shoreward, while Bradley shouted orders to put a bullet through him.

Knight stuck his gun in his belt without shooting and returned to the quarter deck alone. "I'm not shooting even him, while he's helpless in the water," Knight informed Bradley. "With that bullet in his shoulder, he'll be damned lucky if he gets ashore at all."

BRADLEY lit a cigarette as calmly as though he were on a hotel veranda. "I can't quite make you out," he said to Knight. "You seem to have established yourself as my bodyguard. What are you doing—saving me so that you can kill me yourself as soon as you find out where I have those pearls hidden?"

"I don't know a man in the world

I would rather kill than you," Knight answered, taking a light from the match which Bradley offered. "Whether I kill you or not, all depends upon the circumstances that may crop up later. Right now, we've got to get ready to meet the attack of those cannibals."

"What I've wanted for a long time was an enemy worth fighting," Bradley said. "It was a lucky day for me when that hurricane blew you into my harbor."

"And for me, too," Knight answered meditatively.

CHAPTER VIII

Death Journey

IT WAS late in the afternoon when the schooner dropped anchor in the lagoon before Bradley's house. Knight and Bradley stood at the rail, waiting for the sailors to lower the boat.

The beach was deserted. The copra lay spread on the mats surrounding the storehouse down by the dock—unattended. The place was deserted around the Kanakas' huts. No boats floated on the bay. The scene was lifeless—empty.

An ominous stillness pervaded the air, hung over the bay like a suffocating blanket. As if even they had retired in terror, the monkeys no longer chattered in the cocoanut palms. Knight surveyed the lifeless scene with a sense of foreboding.

It affected the Kanakas, too. They trod the deck with hushed voices, nerves jumpy.

And it affected Lucian Bradley as well. He stood with massive hands clutching the rail, his hard eyes in an expressionless face glued to the silent white house buried in the tropical greenery. His orders came in subdued monosyllables, and his movements were jerky.

Without exchanging words, Knight

and he went ashore and approached the house with a common urge. Speech was unnecessary.

The door of the cottage was barricaded with furniture when the girl let them in. Her face was drawn and her eyes restless. When Knight and Bradley entered and stacked the furniture back against the door behind them, the tension of her nerves snapped and she dropped into a chair and cried.

"These drums!" she said. "All night long they were pounding—pounding. And they were getting closer and closer—hemming me in. I thought I would go mad! Their eternal thumping and thumping!" A shudder ran through her body.

BRADLEY looked at her without emotion. Knight placed a hand on her shoulder encouragingly.

"Where are the Kanakas?" Bradley asked.

"In the kitchen and the pantry. Michaels is there, too. I brought them all in so that we could defend ourselves. But we haven't any guns. I sent one of the men down to the storehouse to bring back pineapple knives during the night. He didn't come back."

Knight stood with hands in his pocket, looking out of the window. The clearing around the house extended no more than a hundred yards to the very jungle itself. He watched it curiously.

No birds moved about in the tops of the trees. To Knight that was a sign that something—somebody—lurked in the shadow below. He was sure he saw hideous painted faces peering from behind clumps of shrubbery.

He turned to Bradley. "That thicket is full of savages," he said. "And there will probably be more tonight."

"They won't dare attack us," Bradley said, but for the first time Knight

noted that some of the man's assurance had deserted him.

"They certainly will! They've reached a point where they'll dare anything. You've spilled too much of their blood for them to rest until they have your head."

"I tell you they won't dare!" But Bradley was talking to convince himself. His grip on his emotions was giving way.

"We're going to be ready for them," Knight said, with sudden energy. "It'll be dark in another half hour and we've got to have those guns off the boat. We're going to get them."

Bradley looked out the window and his face hardened. "All right," he said. "We'll go get the weapons. Michaels will have to protect the house while we're gone."

"We're not leaving this house in charge of Michaels," Knight answered heatedly. "He couldn't be depended upon in a case like this. It needs somebody stronger."

AND it needs a strong man to make that trip to the boat. It'll be dark before we can get back," Bradley said. "So, I'd better go and take Michaels with me. You can stay here and protect the house—and Sylvia."

"You'd like to get on that boat and put out to sea, wouldn't you?" Knight said contemptuously. "Well, you started this show and you're going to stay here for the last act. I'm taking Michaels with me to get those rifles! You're staying here!"

At Knight's call, the doctor put in his appearance. When Knight explained their task, he saw the feeble spark of the doctor's manhood flame up for a moment. The gaunt shoulders squared and the weak chin took on a determined set.

Armed with pistols and knives, they left the cottage and shoved off to the schooner in the boat just

as darkness settled over the bay with characteristic tropical suddenness.

Knight, followed by Michaels, entered the black hatchway and groped forward toward Bradley's cabin, where the arms locker was. He turned the knob of the cabin door and snapped on his flashlight, flooding the cabin with its yellow glow.

Four savages were busily engaged in trying to pry open the door of the rifle cupboard. They whirled in surprise at his entrance.

The cannibals were of hideous aspect. White bones were strung through their noses, and their faces were painted in grotesque masks of red and white lines and splotches—typical war paint. Their black bodies glistened in the feeble light of the torch.

ALL hands were startled by this sudden meeting, but instantly recovered. A groan of dismay came from Doctor Michaels.

Knight whipped out his gun, but quick as he was, the savages had sprung sooner. Thrashing arms and legs filled the narrow confines of the cabin. Knight's weapon was knocked from his hand before he had a chance to use it.

Desperation came to Michaels and he fought viciously against the two natives who clutched at him.

Heaving bodies, black and white, tumbled, bounced against the narrow walls, and fell to the floor, intertwined in struggling embrace. The spare furniture of the cabin crashed and splintered, and the sound of the rending wood and of the grunting and shouting contestants intermingled in the stuffy air with the smell of the rancid grease which the cannibals had applied to their bodies.

All before Knight was a whirling and dizzy scene of fantastic fury. His head swam. The old scalp wound opened up to bleed afresh, when a resounding blow from a sav-

age fist knocked his head against a corner of the demolished bunk.

Death waited patiently by to embrace the losers.

New cuts and bruises appeared on Knight's body, and his side ached with the agony of a broken rib. His pounding fists felt heavier and heavier with each defensive blow.

HE fell to the floor, knocked flat by one of the blacks, but dragged himself up again armed with the splintered leg of a chair. Clubbing the stout wood, he brought it down heavily on one of the savage skulls. The cannibal thumped to the floor dead with a crushed skull, and Knight whirled in time to crash his weapon squarely into the face of another of the brutes, laying him down to join his brother on the floor.

Freed of his own attackers, Knight came to the assistance of the doctor, who lay on the floor being pounded almost into insensibility by the other two blacks.

One of the natives had his arm raised to deliver a final blow, which would have inevitably finished the doctor. Knight brained him with his club and the man fell flat, atop the outstretched scientist. Then with almost his last sustaining energy, Knight caved in the skull of the final savage.

The flashlight which had fallen to the floor shone on the bloody scene of carnage. Knight picked it up and, aided by its light, got the nearly exhausted doctor to his feet. "Good work, Michaels," he said encouragingly. "Keep it up! We've still got to get those guns back. Remember, the folks at the house are depending on us for their lives."

Thus, with Michaels laboring weakly under Knight's constant encouragement, they got half a dozen rifles and a case of ammunition loaded into the dory. The rest they were unable to carry, and so left

in the locker which they barricaded with the broken furniture in the cabin. Not daring to use the flashlight, they unloaded the dory on the beach in the darkness and set out afoot toward the house.

Michaels staggered along under the weight of the cartridge case which he was carrying, trailing Knight by half a dozen paces. Knight heard him groan suddenly and turned to discover the trouble.

MICHAELS had sunk to the ground. He lay there panting, the fallen ammunition case beside him. "It's—my heart—too much exertion—couldn't stand the strain."

Knight laid his armload of rifles down and knelt beside the fallen man. "Sure, you can make it. You've got to, Michaels! Come on, try to get up. You can't stay here."

The feeble man tried to get to his feet, but fell back, clutching his chest. "It was too much," he gasped. "I can't go on."

Suddenly three shots rang out in rapid succession from the house. Then came a pause. Then two more shots. "They have attacked," Michaels gasped. "Go on and take the guns. I can't follow you."

"But I can't leave you here," Knight insisted. "The savages—you've got to try to make it!"

"It's no use," Michaels gasped feebly. "Go on without me. They need you at the house. Take the guns."

Knight stooped over and lifted the enfeebled man in his arms. "I'll take you up there and come back for the weapons," he said.

Michaels squirmed weakly in an effort to break away. "I'm finished," he said. "You can't take me and leave the weapons here. They are more valuable than I am."

And before Knight could divine his purpose, the tragic doctor clutched

the pistol out of Knight's holster and turned it on himself. While Knight held him, he put a bullet through his own heart.

CHAPTER IX

Escape

JACK KNIGHT finally reached the cottage, staggering under the combined load of the rifles and ammunition. He dropped the weapons on the floor of the darkened room while he opened the cartridge case.

"Where is Michaels?" Bradley asked.

When Knight told him how the man had died so that the others might have a chance to escape, Bradley merely grunted.

But the old doctor's death affected the girl more deeply. Knight heard her weeping softly in the darkness.

Bradley called four of the Kanakas in from the kitchen and armed them with rifles. He and Knight kept two for themselves.

Outside, the drums which had set up their ominous thumping at nightfall were becoming louder and more terrifying. The very air of the room vibrated with their fear-inspiring rhythm.

"I got three of the black devils that tried to crawl up to the house," Bradley said. "But more of 'em will be sneaking around."

He had hardly spoken when the window glass suddenly crashed in, and a heavy object thumped and rolled across the floor. Knight lit a match and, holding it cupped in his hands, cast its light on the object. Bradley cursed. Sylvia screamed.

They were gazing at the gruesome and severed head of Doctor Michaels!

The girl struggled to overcome her horror for a while and then sobbed, "Let's try to make it to the schooner. Anything would be better than stay-

ing here. Listen to the drums—they're getting louder."

"They just threw that head in here to break our nerve," Bradley explained. "It's a regular trick of theirs. We'll keep 'em off till daylight."

"But we can get away through the tunnel—"

"Shut up!" Bradley snapped.

"What tunnel are you talking about?" Knight demanded.

"We're staying right here," Bradley returned.

"**I**F he won't tell you, I will," the girl answered defiantly. "There's a tunnel that runs from this house down to the warehouse at the water's edge. We could go through it and get to the boat, to get on the schooner. He built it for just such an emergency as this!"

"This is not an emergency, you cowards," Bradley snapped. "It's just an ordinary situation that's come up."

Knight said grimly: "Bradley, you let Michaels die rather than tell us about that tunnel."

"He's better off dead. That tunnel is my business, and mine alone."

Before the conversation had gone any further, one of the Kanakas slipped in from the kitchen. "They make fire," he said excitedly. "Outside, the kitchen she burn."

Even while the native talked, Knight smelled the pungent odor of burning cocoanut husks being wafted in through the broken window. Looking out, he saw the tiny glow of half a dozen little fires set along the sides of the frame cottage. Soon the structure would be a roaring furnace.

"Now you'll use that tunnel, Bradley. We'll all be roasted alive, unless we run out to meet the spears of those blacks. They've got us trapped!"

Bradley looked at the fires himself,

and saw they were gaining headway. "We'll go down to the schooner," he said. "But I'll make those dirty savages pay for this, if it's the last thing I do."

He and Knight rounded up the group of fear-inspired Kanakas who, with their few women, were huddled in the kitchen. In the bedroom of the house, he rolled the bed away and opened up a hidden trap door in the floor, from which steps led down.

The tunnel was cut in the porous coral, narrow, and high enough only to allow a person to walk upright. In its darkened interior dripped glistening drops of water.

Bradley led the way, followed by the girl and next, Knight. The Kanakas trailed behind. The girl clutched Knight's hand nervously as they stumbled over the stones.

AT last they came to the end of the tunnel, to steps which led upward into the warehouse. In complete darkness, they followed up the steps. One of the Kanakas got the boat alongside the dock and rowed the three of them out to the schooner, returning, trip after trip, until he had got the Kanaka women abroad. The men swam out.

Behind them Bradley's castle lit the sky with leaping red tongues of flame, which outlined the hideous painted bodies of dancing and shouting savages armed with spears and clubs. Bradley looked at it grimly for a long moment, then dismissed it from his mind. He turned and ordered the Kanakas to clear out the wreckage and dead bodies in his cabin.

Knight was busy on deck with Bradley, when he heard a light splashing in the water. A man crawled over the bow and stood dripping on deck. It was O'Leary, haggard and exhausted.

Bradley turned and glared at the

gigantic Irish figure. "Well?" he demanded.

"I couldn't stay out there in that jungle full of cannibals," O'Leary whined. "They'd get me again and kill me. I been hidin' out from 'em all day. You're sailin' away from here, and I've got to go with you. You can't go and leave me here to be ate by them blacks."

"Why can't I?" Bradley asked coldly. "The only thing I owe you is a bullet."

"No," O'Leary begged. "Take me with you! I couldn't stand to stay here."

Bradley laughed harshly. "You'll stay here—just like the rest of us. We're not leaving—yet."

KNIGHT spoke up. "What do you mean, we're not leaving here?"

Bradley answered calmly: "Do you think that I'm going away and leave the results of all the years of hell that I have gone through? All the plans I've made, all the work I've done, all the loneliness and solitude I've suffered to make myself a place among men—do you think that I'm going to leave here without taking with me the results of all these things? Just because a handful of dirty savages don't like the way I do business?"

"Knight, you're a fool. I told you I was a strong man. You don't believe me. Well, you'll see! We don't leave here until I have got one more job done, and that can't be done until daylight. If those blacks want to attack us before that time, we'll stay here and face them!"

"What's the other job you've got to do?" Knight demanded.

"I'll show you as soon as the sun comes up. In the meantime, we'll get the diving gear ready. I've got two suits aboard, Knight, and you and I are going to use them. The job is on the bottom of the lagoon."

CHAPTER X

The Sunken Schooner

UNDER Bradley's direction, the three men worked silently and without lights. They brought the two diving suits and placed them on deck. Then they brought up the air pumps and coiled the long hoses and lines beside them. They stacked the heavy blocks of lead along the rail, to be attached to the suits when the divers were prepared to sink to the floor of the lagoon.

The little crescent moon had finally sunk behind the horizon. Their silence and the darkness had kept those on board from the immediate discovery of the natives. But with dawn, their security would end.

The sun finally burst over the horizon and lighted up the whole tragic point of the island.

"We'll have to work fast," Bradley said. "As soon as the natives see the activity here, they'll plan some kind of an attack. Knight, can your Kanaka handle the pumps?"

"Sure," Knight answered. "I'll call him."

O'Leary spoke up. "I'll handle the pumps for you," he said "I've handled plenty of 'em."

Bradley greeted his offer with a harsh laugh. "If you as much as lay a hand on one of those pump handles, I'll tear you to pieces and throw you to the sharks. Now, get busy and help us get into these suits." As Bradley and Knight got into their rubberized coverings, Bradley said to Knight:

"Directly below us, at eight fathoms, is the hulk of an old schooner. Just inside the deck-house door is an iron box. That's my safety deposit box. The two of us are going down to bring it up together. It's too heavy for one man."

"One of us could do that job

alone," Knight said. "Take a line down and tie it on the box, and the other one haul it up."

"I WOULDN'T send you down alone to get your hands on that box. You could move it and hide it too easily. Neither would I go down there and send it up to you. You could leave me down there and escape with it. We go down together."

With the aid of O'Leary and Kukoa, they got the brass helmets screwed over their heads and the diving suits tied tightly at their wrists, leaving their hands bare. Armed with long knives stuck under ropes tied around their waists, they descended into the clear water. Streams of bubbles traced a white line upward to the surface, as Kukoa pumped them fresh air.

They came to rest on the floor of the lagoon, which was carpeted with a gorgeous jungle of coral resembling nothing more than a great bed of flowers and shrubbery in a fantastic array of color.

Here and there were brilliant giant sponges and great oysters clinging to lumps of coral. Also, Knight observed, there were *pahua*, a giant clam whose innocent open shells would snap closed when anything touched them, with a force that meant death to whatever was caught between its edges.

Then to their left, Knight saw the moss and coral-coated hulk of the sunken vessel which they were to explore. It lay on its side, half buried by growth.

At this depth, Knight's body felt light as an oyster shell, and he, together with Bradley, easily made his way to the open door of its deckhouse. They reached the door together and peered into the interior.

Out of the darkness shone two malignant phosphorescent eyes, larger than dinner plates. Both men jumped

back quickly, but they were too late.

Two long tentacles, larger in diameter than a man's arm, shot outward from the submarine monster and encircled them tightly. Knight slipped out his knife and slashed at the arm, endeavoring to sever it. The tentacle, armed with two parallel rows of sucking disks large as a silver half-dollar, clamped him tightly.

It was as tough as sole leather, and even as he slashed, other tentacles protruded from the door and wrapped themselves about him and Bradley. They were in the grasp of a giant octopus.

The blurry eyes of the horrible monster gleamed with rage. Knight got a glimpse of the great beak of the devil, and its monstrous circling lip. Helpless in its grasp, they would soon be devoured.

KNIGHT struggled vainly and managed to sever one of the arms. This only infuriated the monster the more, and other arms encircled the men more tightly, dragging them slowly to within range of its deadly beak.

The men slashed furiously at the animal, but without much hope of success. They seemed doomed.

Then Knight bethought himself of an old Maori diver's story he had heard. He made a renewed effort.

He tugged hard in an effort to draw himself away from the body of the animal, resulting in the animal's stronger efforts to pull him closer. Taking advantage of this, Knight suddenly released his resistance and, aided by the pull of the fierce brute, flung himself upon the animal's body. With all his strength and with flashing speed, he jabbed the long keen blade of his knife alternately into the animal's two eyes.

This surprising move had an instantaneous effect on the octopus.

As though struck by lightning, the

great octopus suddenly relinquished its hold on the two men. Its arms writhed and twisted in intense agony.

At the same time, it poured out great quantities of smoky fluid which darkened the water about it, the last admission of defeat. Behind this screen, the animal made its escape and disappeared.

Weakened by his struggle, Knight was for signaling to the surface to be taken up for a rest. But Bradley had other plans.

Knight felt Bradley's hand clutch his shoulder and lead him through the ink-stained water, to the iron chest just inside the door. Each gripping a ring on his side of the chest, they made their way out of the sunken boat and pulled the signal cord. There was no response.

KNIGHT pulled again more insistently, and, feeling a premonition of trouble, untied the extra lanyard which ran up to the ship, taking it from around his waist and tying it to his handle of the chest.

Still there was no answer to the signal.

The water was so blackened by the sepia left by the octopus that Knight could not see Bradley, who stood within three feet of him. But he felt movement of the chest, which indicated Bradley, too, knew something was wrong.

Knight's thoughts flashed to O'Leary. He dropped his end of the chest and tore the lead weights off his suit. Then he knew some terrible thing had happened on deck. The air pressure in his helmet suddenly began reducing!

His hands went to the air tube at the back of his helmet. The tube did not now run upward but hung so that part of its length had already sunk to the floor of the lagoon. And more of it was coming down in coils.

The air tube was disconnected from the pump and was falling overboard!

He was trapped without air in a heavy diving suit, a hundred feet below the surface of the water.

Knight took many long breaths of his remaining air. At the same time, he ripped the rubber garment off his body with the blade of his knife.

Slashing it around the shoulder, he at last threw the brass head and shoulder plate off and was free, swimming under the pressure of this great depth and not able to see about him in the murky water.

He threshed about for a moment in an effort to find out if Bradley had escaped from his own suit. His hand finally touched the man.

Bradley's own air tube had followed his to the bottom, and the man was plunging about in a frantic effort to free himself. Knight tried to help him. Bradley, with the panic of a drowning man, caught hold of Knight and held him locked fast. He would have held on until they both were drowned.

And to save his own life, Knight hit him squarely in the pit of the stomach with all his strength. Bradley dropped to his hands and knees on the floor of the water.

Knight tried to get him on his feet, but the man kicked a moment and then became still.

Knight ran his hands over the man's body to find out the trouble. He knew that he himself could not stay under water much longer. The pressure in his lungs was crying for release.

THEN his hands came into contact with the mystery of Bradley's sudden cessation of movement. Bradley lay with the entire side of his body clamped permanently between the massive shells of one of the giant clams. In falling, his body had come into contact with the great

pahua, which had closed upon him in a grip that nothing but death would release.

It was thus that Lucian Bradley collected the reward for his labor at the bottom of his lagoon. The stolen pearls had been paid for.

Knight swam upward and emerged on the deck of the schooner bleeding and almost exhausted. Without benefit of a rest period after his submersion, he dragged himself across the deck to where his Kanaka lay dead beside the pumps, with a knife wound in his back.

From the pumps extended about two feet of the air hoses. They had been squarely cut with a knife.

Grimly, Knight made his way into the cabin. He stopped at the door when he heard O'Leary's voice.

"You thought you was too good for me, young woman," the man was saying. "But now you ain't got nobody but me to depend on. Them other two is at the bottom of the sea, where they belong. We're goin' to sail off and leave them here—just you and me and them Kanakas. I been waitin' for this a long time."

Knight saw red. He kicked the door open and plunged into the room, gripping his knife with fury.

O'LEARY saw him coming and whirled about, grabbing his own knife. He met Knight's slashing attack murderously.

The two men fought silently and with all the stubbornness of those to whom defeat means death. The girl crouched back in the corner of the room. Bare body to body and face to face they struggled, the silence broken only by their heavy breathing and the clash of knives. After it seemed they would both fall from exhaustion, O'Leary broke loose and dived at Knight with the scream of

a maniac. His blade ripped Knight's shoulder down to his elbow.

KNIGHT made a defensive lunge and his own blade buried itself squarely under the mad Irishman's ribs. Its point penetrated the heart. O'Leary stood quivering a moment. His weapon slipped from his hand and clattered to the floor. Then his knees buckled and he sank down, dead. Weakly, Knight turned to the girl. "Can you steer?" he asked.

"And me a sea captain's daughter?" the girl answered.

"Then come out on deck and take the wheel, please, while the Kanakas and I get up the anchor and canvas. We're done with this hell hole forever." On deck, Knight quickly hauled up the iron box tied to the lanyard and placed it at the girl's feet. "Your pearls, miss," he said.

The anchor was aboard and the white canvas of the schooner sparkled as it billowed out in the sun. The little boat cut the water through the mouth of the lagoon, while Knight studied a chart he had found secreted in Bradley's cabin.

Behind them, canoes laden with cannibal warriors had put out from the shore, but the trim ship left them far astern. "North-northeast, a quarter east," Knight said, "and we'll be in Tahiti in ten days."

The girl spun the wheel. "North-northeast, a quarter east she is, sir," she echoed, with the first of her smiles Knight had ever seen.

"Now that you are rich, Miss Ship-owner Richards, maybe you'll give me a job as captain of this boat. I have none of my own now, you know."

"I am not 'Miss Ship-Owner.' I am still Sylvia to you, and always will be—Jack."

Which she was—and more.

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Trails of Treachery

*Indians on the Warpath in an Action-Packed Yarn of
the Old Scouting Days in the Wyoming Territory*

A Complete Novelette

By GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

Author of "Men of Steel," "Africa Wakes," etc.

CHAPTER I

The Challenge!

THE ashes of the little cabin were cold—three days cold, Jerry Grainger thought, looking down from his saddle with narrowed eyes.

The bodies that lay just outside the door were cold, too. The rats and the insects had left enough flesh on the tortured faces to allow them still to be recognized, even though the sun of those three days was already beginning to whiten skulls from which the scalps had been torn by ruthless hands.

"Kendrick himself," muttered red-faced Captain Holmes, stiff in his saddle at Grainger's side, "and that'll be his wife. God!"

Behind them, the dozen blue-shirted troopers of the scouting party from Fort MacDowell cursed helplessly.

"The murderin' red devils!" growled old Sergeant O'Hara, pulling his battered campaign hat farther down on his weather-beaten brow.

Jerry Grainger swung his lithe young body to the ground. He walked slowly around the charred rectangle which had been the home of the Kendrick family ever since Kendrick had taken up this isolated placer claim on the banks of the turbulent Red Paw River.

Life in old Wyoming Territory

was uncertain enough in those days, and Grainger had seen plenty of dead men—yes, and dead women. But there was something about this charnel house which set a cold hand of particular horror upon his heart. Completing his circuit of the cabin, he came back to Captain Holmes' stirrup.

"Well, Grainger! What d'you make of it? Cloud-in-the-Morning's outfit, of course?" the captain snapped impatiently.

He had never liked Grainger, always claiming that he was too young to be chief scout at an important post like MacDowell. If he were in command, by Gad, he'd—

Grainger shook his head. His bronzed face was hard as iron; his muscles tensed beneath the sheath-like, fawn-colored buckskin of his hunting dress.

"No Cheyennes ever did this job, Captain," he said, in a voice shaking with suppressed rage.

"What the devil d'you mean, Grainger?" Captain Holmes' face grew redder still, as he bellowed his astonished question.

"It's a hell of a thing to say, sir," Grainger spat out the words like offensive morsel, "but this isn't an Injun job. It's common knowledge that the Cheyennes at Juniper Creek are hungry most of the time, because that thieving agent, Griggs, keeps 'em on starvation rations—and you'll

The man dove from the front seat, ran toward the brush



notice that there're several charred sides of bacon, the remains of a sack of beans, and some other grub in those ashes. No hungry Injuns would've burned the cabin until they'd ransacked it for grub."

"Doesn't prove anything," the cap-

tain objected. "Young warriors get hot-headed and forget things like that, when they start killing and burning."

"Young warriors do. But not Cloud-in-the-Morning. He's the smartest war-chief the Cheyenne na-

tion ever produced," Grainger answered steadily. "He overlooks nothing. And look here."

He stabbed a finger toward the ground beside the three pitiful bodies. There in the soft earth was the distinct print of a foot.

"I've been here a dozen times," Grainger remarked. "I know Kendrick and his wife always wore moccasins. And since when have Chyennes taken to wearing hob-nailed boots?"

The blood drained slowly from the captain's face.

"You mean—" He could not put the appalling thought into words.

"**I** MEAN this job was done by white men, Captain. If you can call 'em men. Dirty skunks that were after Kendrick's little cache of gold. They lifted those scalps to make it look like an Injun job. Hell, there's a dozen signs it ain't Injun doings."

"You're crazy, Grainger!" cried Holmes. "No white men could do a thing like this. Who could they be, anyway, and where could they come from?"

"I've heard tell of some pretty bad eggs straying into these parts from up Montana way, Captain," the scout answered. "There's lots o' room here to hide up in." He swept an arm around the splendid panorama of rolling plains that stretched away to the blue haze above the distant mountains.

"I don't believe it. I *won't* believe it," stormed the captain. "You don't know what you're talking about, Grainger. I wish to God I had Laramie Jones here."

Grainger's lean face darkened.

"I'm damn' sick and tired of hearing about this Laramie Jones," he snapped. "Every time I do anything, one o' you old-timers says, 'Yeah, that's all right, but you should've

seen what Laramie Jones did over at Fort Fowler last spring.'

"Every time I can't pick up a trail in five minutes, you crab about what Laramie Jones could do if he were here. I've never seen this Jones, but I'll bet I've forgot more about scouting 'n he'll ever know!"

"Here comes the Injun agent now, sir," called a trooper from the rear.

A plumpish, unkempt man in badly-fitting "butternut" clothes came riding slowly along the trail from the west. Beside him trotted a half-naked Indian lad, barefoot and swaying with weariness. The noose of a rawhide lariat was about his neck; it was made fast to the plump man's saddle. And the youth's bare shoulders bore bloody witness that the quirt which dangled from the plump man's wrist had had recent and frequent employment.

"Well, Mr. Griggs!" snapped Holmes, by way of greeting.

"Just roundin' up a stray Injun that wandered off the reservation, Cap'n," smiled Griggs, his pale eyes flickering from captain to scout and back again. "What's happened here? Kendrick's cabin burned? My God! It must have been Cloud-in-the-Morning and his young men!

"**T**HEY said they were going huntin'—but I suspected 'em—you'll remember, Captain Holmes, I warned your colonel. I said I didn't trust Cloud-in-the-Morning! Oh, this is terrible, terrible! God knows it's not my fault! I asked for troops—"

"Hold your tongue, Griggs!" Holmes bade the agent. "If you fed your Indians properly, instead of trying to get rich on the government ration funds, maybe they wouldn't go on the war-path! Now—"

"I'll report your words, sir!" interrupted the agent, blustering.

"Report and be damned!" Holmes bade him. "Now then, Scout Grain-

ger here says this devil's work was done by white men and not by Cheyennes. What do you think of that, Griggs?"

The agent's eyes opened very wide.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed.

"And nonsense I say, too," growled Holmes. "It's enough for me to know that Cloud-in-the-Morning's on the war-path."

Grainger's mouth set in a hard line.

"I'M telling you, Captain," he insisted, "that white men did this killing. I'm telling the colonel the same thing when I get back to the fort. But first, sir, I'm asking your permission to lead this patrol on the trail of the low-down skunks. I can follow it."

"Yes, till we run into a nice ambush with a hundred redskins swarming around us," retorted Holmes. "We'll go back to the fort, turn out a troop and get after Cloud-in-the-Morning with sufficient force."

"You can tell your fairy stories to the colonel, Grainger. Sergeant, dismount the men and bury these bodies first; then we'll be off."

The sergeant barked an order; but his eyes were not on the troopers as they obeyed it. He was peering to the eastward, along the old Laramie trail.

"Somebody else comin', sir," he reported. "Ridin' hell fer leather. looks like—yep—he's a trooper, sir."

"Dispatch rider from Fort Fowler, I expect," the captain remarked.

The Indian agent grunted.

"If a dispatch rider's safe, ridin' alone, guess I am," he observed. "I'll be gettin' back to the agency, Captain. Maybe I can get some word of Cloud-in-the-Morning's whereabouts. Anyhow, I'd better be there to look after things. My Indian clerk's not much account."

"Suit yourself, mister," replied Holmes. "I'm not responsible for your safety."

The agent had already disappeared around the corner of a low sandstone bluff when the dispatch rider came galloping up. He fairly flung his sweating horse on its haunches, and shouted his news from the midst of the resulting cloud of red dust:

"Injuns're up, Captain! Four settlers killed on minin' claims 'tween here and Fort Fowler! I got dispatches from General Terry for the colonel at MacDowell, orderin' all troops out after the redskins!"

"Listen to that, Grainger!" cried Holmes. "Now you'll sing small, I guess! It's Cloud-in-the-Morning's band, isn't it, soldier?"

"So Laramie Jones thinks, sir. He's out on a lone scout now." The trooper glanced at the young scout curiously.

"Say, are you Grainger?" he asked.

"That's me. Jerry Grainger."

The trooper's hand went to his saddle-bag.

"Then I got a letter fer you," he announced, fishing out an envelope. "From your pal, Laramie Jones."

GRAINGER took the message. It was addressed in pencil, in a scrawling, ill-formed hand, to "Jerrie Grainger, Chief Scout, Fort MacDowell."

Inside was a single sheet of paper, with a penciled message in the same writing:

"I'm shore sick of heerin about the grate scout Jerrie Grainger. Wyoming's gittin to small to hold the both of us. I'm ridin out on a lone scout an I'll be at the Sugar Loaf hill on the Laramie trale today an hour after sundown. Meet me thar if you got the guts and well sec whose the best man. You'll know me—I'll be warin a red shirt. Yours truly, Larramey Jones Chief Scout, Fort Fowler."

"Well, I'll be damned! The nerve

of that blankety-blank!" snarled Grainger. It had never occurred to him that his own reputation as a scout might be as much gall and wormwood to Jones as was Jones' to him. He crumpled the challenge in a hard brown fist.

"I'm ridin' east, Captain" he announced. "Got to follow this trail while it's hot. You tell the colonel I'll have some report for him by morning."

"You're doing nothing of the sort, Grainger," cried Holmes. "Your place is at the fort. The colonel may need you."

"He won't need me half as bad at the fort as he needs me trailing the devils that did *this*," Grainger retorted, jerking a thumb toward the remains of the cabin. He was mounting as he spoke.

"You're insubordinate, Grainger!"

"Maybe. I'll take a chance on how the colonel'll look at it, anyway. See you later, Captain."

He slacked his rein and his pony broke into a steady lope from a standing start.

CHAPTER II

Ambushed

GRAINGER drew in a deep lungful of free air as he rode eastward. He was always happier alone, away from the military restrictions of "duty with troops." Now he had two missions: to trail the scoundrelly bandits who had, he was certain, wiped out the Kendrick family, and to meet the challenge of this upstart, Laramie Jones.

"We'll see who's the best man, will we, Mister Jones?" he muttered angrily. "We sure will! And then I'll prove to old man Holmes whether I can tell an Injun killing when I see one, or not!"

Late that afternoon, Jerry Grain-

ger rode into a gap between two wooded bluffs. He reined his horse to a walk.

Beyond that gap, he knew, was Sugar Loaf Hill, a solitary, round-topped eminence alone in the midst of a wide valley. He meant to approach the place with all due caution.

"I'd better," he reflected, "work along through the woods apiece, and see if I can get sight of Mister Laramie Jones. If he means to fight fair and open, all right. If not—"

THE thought had scarcely passed through his head when there came a loud report from the forest on his right. Something tugged at his hat; beyond there came the loud spat of a bullet hitting a rock, and the whistling shriek of a ricochet.

Grainger flung himself from his horse and dived into the shelter of the underbrush.

"Why, the bushwhacking varmint!" he snarled, as he wriggled through the thicket and began dodging up the hill, zigzagging from tree to tree. "I'll sure rub him out for that!"

The treachery of that shot from ambush filled his heart with fury. His hands tightened on the grip of his Springfield carbine.

"Just let me get a bead on him!" he muttered.

His eyes searched the woods ahead with a fierce eagerness. But he saw nothing. No movement betrayed the whereabouts of his assailant. He reached the upper edge of the wood. Beyond was rocky ground—the top of the ridge, scattered with boulders and affording ideal cover for a lurking enemy.

From behind a tree, Grainger lifted up his voice in challenge.

"Jones!" he roared. "Laramie Jones! Come out here and fight like a man!"

A mocking laugh was his only answer. He caught a glimpse of a man in a red shirt scurrying between two great boulders. He fired, knowing that he was too late; an instant later a bullet ripped a long splinter from the tree behind which he stood.

HE saw the red-shirted figure dashing down the farther slope of the ridge toward a spot where a horse stood, with reins over his head, waiting patiently after the fashion of plains-bred ponies. By the time Grainger had reloaded, his enemy was in the saddle and riding away eastward toward Sugar Loaf Hill.

Grainger wasted no bullets at so fleeting and distant a target. Instead, he went stumbling and plunging back down the wooded slope to his own horse, flung himself into the saddle and galloped in hot pursuit.

When he thundered out into the open valley, the red-shirted man was already half-way to Sugar Loaf, and it became immediately apparent to Grainger that his tired mount would never catch up with the fleet roan bestrode by the would-be assassin.

Yet he kept on, wary of possible ambush. This way, also, the trail of the marauders led; all afternoon Grainger had watched for possible signs of their turning off the trail, and had found none.

"I'll get 'em if I have to follow 'em to hell," he growled between clenched teeth. "Yes, and Laramie Jones, too. By God! I wouldn't be much surprised if he turned out to be in cahoots with 'em—him always riding out on his lone scouts!"

The thought came as a shock to his anger-filled mind, clearing it like a douche of cold water. If Jones were in league with the murderers, it would explain much—their knowledge of the country, the ease with which they avoided the cavalry patrols—oh, many things.

Gold thieves and murderers! Fine pals for a government scout! It began to look to Grainger as if the honor of the service were involved in this mess.

When Grainger rounded Sugar Loaf Hill, the man he pursued was nowhere in sight. The farther side of the valley was broken with small coulees interspersed with clumps of trees; the man might be anywhere there.

Between Grainger and the nearest trees was perhaps a thousand yards of open grassland. He did not hesitate, but drove his tired horse at full gallop straight across the valley. He knew that a man on a galloping horse offers a poor enough target to the best of marksmen, and this rascal in the red shirt had already missed him twice under far more favorable circumstances.

He reached the trees unscathed; not a shot broke the stillness of the valley. Riding through to the other side of the grove, he reconnoitered again.

THIS time he saw dust rising from the trail. He was about to spur his pony in pursuit when he realized that the dust was approaching. A tinny clatter came to his ears; the next moment there appeared, wearily surmounting a small rise, a horse and wagon, driven by a heavy-set, bearded man whose shoulders drooped with fatigue.

The horse was a bony old crow-bait who appeared barely able to put one foot before the other. The rickety wagon was hung about with tinware, baskets, odds and ends of all sorts, and the wagon box was piled with similar oddments.

"A peddler!" thought Grainger, and waited.

The bearded man was a stranger to the scout, but there was nothing suspicious in his appearance. He

seemed just one of those itinerant peddlers who were a feature of life in the old West, traveling the wretched trails winter and summer, selling their wares to white man and red man alike and going unmo- lested by both because they were useful.

NOT till the wagon had almost reached the clump of trees did Grainger move. Then he called out: "Hi, stranger! See anything of a man in a red shirt?"

"Whoa, Betsy!" The peddler pulled in his decrepit horse. "Lordy, man, yo' gimme a turn, yellin' sud- den-like thataway. Feller in a red shirt, says you? No, I ain't seen no- body sense I left Fort Fowler. Not even Injuns. Who're you, anyhow, stranger?"

"Grainger, government scout from Fort MacDowell," Jerry answered. "All right, pardner. Get along; I'm riding east."

"Yo' better be cairful," the ped- dler warned. "They do say as the Injuns are makin' war-medicine."

He was a neat-looking chap, this peddler. His beard and hair were carefully trimmed; his hands were clean; his clothing, though worn, was neatly patched. He had, indeed, al- most an air of faded gentility about him, despite the rough Western idiom of his speech.

Grainger looked after him curi- ously as the wagon creaked west- ward along the trail; then he shrug- ged his shoulders and rode on. He had other things to think about, be- sides the better days that some wan- dering peddler might have seen in the dim past.

He surmounted the small rise over which the wagon had appeared, reached a second clump of trees and again reconnoitered. Behind, the sun was sinking, was almost out of sight, half-veiled already by the pur-

ple mists which crowned the jagged peaks of the Monitor range.

The trail led up to a rock-strewn mesa, from whose eastern brink, he knew, it wound down again into an- other valley. Still there was no sign of Red Shirt. Grainger dismounted to examine the trail for "sign."

The horrid wail of a screech-owl sounded almost at his elbow; another answered it a hundred feet away. Grainger felt the hair rising on the back of his neck.

Those were no screech-owls; they were Indian signal-calls! He'd heard the like before!

Before he could lift his carbine there came a rush of dark figures from the rocks and trees about him. A dozen sinewy hands tore the weapon from his grasp; a dozen rifle muzzles confronted him in the hands of exulting young Cheyenne war- riors, stripped to the waist and painted for war. The mesa, so life- less and silent an instant before, swarmed with painted, yelling red- skins!

THEIR dark eyes gleamed murder; knives and tomahawks glittered as they pressed in. But above their heads Grainger saw the feathered headpiece of a war-chief, and he made no attempt to get out his six- shooter. Resistance would be hope- less in any case; talk might do much more.

For Grainger knew Cheyennes, and he knew very well this harsh-faced chief, Cloud-in-the-Morning, who now came forward, shoving his young men aside, to stand face to face with the white scout.

"My white brother is far from his fort," said Cloud-in-the-Morning in grating tones. It was an ominous be- ginning, rendered more ominous by the red-and-black war paint which streaked the face and naked breast of the chief. It looked as though

the Cheyennes were "up," after all. And in that case—

"I am searching for evil men, Cloud-in-the-Morning," Grainger answered quietly. "I am sorry to see that you are leading your young warriors on the war-path. Why is this?"

The chief's eyes glared red.

"Because all white men are evil!" he snarled. "The agent steals our food, our blankets, and leaves us hungry and cold. Then, when white thieves steal gold from the miners and kill them, the blame is placed on my people and the soldiers are sent out to kill us.

"**W**HY should we not die like warriors, fighting, and not like dogs? Why should we not kill you, Grainger? You have come here searching for us, that you may lead the soldiers to kill us. Good. You have found the Cheyenne warriors, but you will guide no soldiers to their campfires! You die now."

He lifted his hands. Instantly several of the young Indians fell upon Grainger. They twisted his hands behind his back and bound them cruelly tight, with strands of rawhide. This done, they began to drag him along between them, urging him on with kicks and blows, dancing about him, promising him all sorts of torments.

Grainger felt the blood running cold in his veins. This was more than he had bargained for. He had always been more or less friendly with Cloud-in-the-Morning, had indeed done the war-chief one or two favors at the post; he had had little fear that the Cheyennes would do him any actual harm. But these Indians mean to kill him. He could not doubt the deadly menace of their words and gestures.

"What a fool I was not to shoot it out with 'em!" he thought.

CHAPTER III

Injun Torture!

IT was plain that the chief believed his people had a just grievance—as indeed they had, as far as the agent was concerned. But how did they know of the reports that had reached General Terry at Fowler, regarding the supposed Indian responsibility for the killing of the isolated placer miners and the stealing of their gold caches?

It was this which had brought them to the pitch of desperation, this which had sent them on the warpath, on the ancient theory of being as well hanged for sheep as for lambs. So much was very plain to Grainger. And it seemed to the scout that there was some sinister purpose back of it all.

If the Indians took the warpath and did a few killings of their own, there would be little doubt that all the recent crimes along the old Laramie trail would be laid at their door. No one would stop to ask whether the Kendrick family or any of the others had been killed before the Cheyennes left the reservation, or afterward.

The slate would be wiped clean when the Cheyennes were finally rounded up by the troops—as they must be—to pay in blood for their defiance. It was therefore obvious enough to whose interest it would be to arouse the Indians.

The real murderers—the white men who, Grainger was certain, had perpetrated the Kendrick horror and probably all the others as well—must be behind this affair, somehow. They must have managed to convince Cloud-in-the-Morning that his people stood prejudged, convicted of crimes which were not theirs.

Could this be the work of Laramie Jones?

Certainly Jones knew Indians;

and just as certainly, Cloud-in-the-Morning knew the truth. He knew who had put these mad thoughts into his head.

Grainger's heart began to beat a little faster. There was a chance yet.

If only he could convince Cloud-in-the-Morning of his own sincerity, the chief might give him the clue that would enable him to unravel the whole bloody and terrible mystery.

IT was in a little hidden pocket in the hills that Grainger captors at last halted; a little semicircular grassy glen, far from the trail, where some of the younger warriors watched the ponies of the war party. At a word from the sub-chief, Grainger was stripped to the waist and tied to a tree.

"Call Cloud-in-the-Morning," Grainger requested in the Cheyenne tongue, looking about him in the gloom for the chief's feather headdress. The sub-chief laughed and struck the scout sharply in the face.

"He will be here soon," he said. "He will come to watch you burn, white man. Gather wood, warriors, and bring fire. We shall see how bravely a white man can die."

"Looks like my number's up," said Grainger to himself. "Where the hell can Cloud-in-the-Morning have got to?"

Enthusiastic hands were piling brush-wood about his feet. A warrior was blowing the dull coals of the horse-herders' fire into a blaze. Another was carefully cutting small pitch-pine splinters with his knife, grinning wickedly at Grainger the while.

"Soon there will be a hundred of those splinters burning in your hide, white dog!" snarled the sub-chief. "And that is only the beginning."

"Here comes the chief," called a warrior.

Cloud-in-the-Morning's face was cold and expressionless in the fire-light, as he strode toward Grainger.

"Let the ceremony of death begin," he ordered briefly.

"Wait!" cried Grainger. "Cloud-in-the-Morning, listen to my words."

"You have no words fit for a chief's ears, Grainger," said Cloud-in-the-Morning, grimly. "All white men speak with forked tongues."

"Have you ever known me to do so, Cloud-in-the-Morning?" demanded Grainger. "Yet, not long ago, there has been someone who has spoken to you with a forked tongue. It is of that man that I would talk with the great war-chief of the Cheyenne nation, ere he lead his people over a precipice."

"I do not listen to the white man any longer," the chief answered angrily. "I have heard too many of those lying words. I have spoken."

He folded his arms.

A yell went up from the crowd of warriors, the yell of blood-hungry animals eager for the kill. The man who had been whittling the pine splinters sprang at the prisoner, three or four of the wicked little things in his fingers ready to thrust home in Grainger's body.

AS he did so, the glen echoed to the whip-like crack of a rifle. The warrior plunged forward against Grainger, blood spouting from his bullet-torn throat. As he did so, the keen knife in his left hand ripped downward, tearing the skin of Grainger's right side and shearing through the rawhide thongs which bound his right wrist. Grainger bent instantly over, snatched the knife from the warrior's relaxing hand, and cut the other thongs.

With a howl, the sub-chief sprang at him. Again the mysterious rifle

cracked; the sub-chief stopped in full career, spun round and collapsed across the fire, scattering red embers in a dozen directions.

Grainger hurled himself to one side as a tomahawk whizzed through the air and buried itself in the tree just where his head had been. He grabbed the sub-chief's tomahawk, flung it into the face of the nearest warrior. Leaping at another who came charging over the sub-chief's body, he bore the man backward by the sheer fury of his rush.

A knife flickered toward his throat. He swung the painted body of his immediate foe to meet the deadly thrust, dropped the man amidst a shower of hot blood, and, stooping, dragged from beneath him the legs of one who came to the attack from behind. Something heavy flew from the Indian's hand and thudded to the ground. Grainger caught a glint of blue steel, pounced on the thing, found it was his own Colt.

HE shot down a big warrior who was just swinging a tomahawk in a killing blow, jammed the muzzle of the gun into a painted stomach at his left and pulled the trigger again. Then he was on his feet, running for dear life toward the hills above the glen of death.

A hatchet flicked past him. Guns were exploding all over the glen, and bullets were whining all around him. But he was free, and armed, and his heart sang within him as he ran for the shelter of those wooded hills.

Above the frantic uproar of the warriors rose the voice of Cloud-in-the-Morning:

"The ponies! The ponies, you fools! Quick!"

"Yay-ee!" yelled a voice in answer. "Git along, you Injun cayuses! Scatter!"

Three or four pistol shots punc-

uated this yelling, and the ground was shaking with the hoof-beats of frightened ponies. One plunged past Grainger in the darkness, and with a single leap he had the animal by its beaded nose-stall, dragged it trembling to a halt, and swung himself astride its bare back.

CHAPTER IV

An Account to Settle

KICKING his heels into the pony's side, Grainger rode up the hill, away from the completely panic-stricken Indians, who were now thinking of nothing but recovering their all-important mounts.

A shadow loomed at his side.

"Hi yah, pardner!" said a laughing voice. "Guess we foxed them red-skins pretty neat that time."

"You did, you mean!" replied Grainger, trying to see this stranger's face in the darkness. "All I can say is—thanks! And if you ever want a man to do you a good turn, just come to Fort MacDowell and ask for Jerry Grainger. You sure saved my bacon for me."

"Grainger! So you're the famous scout, eh?" There was a distinct sneer in the stranger's tone, and all the laughter had left it.

"I reckon," the man went on, "that you and me got a little account to settle. Grainger, jest as soon's we git far enough away from them red-skins to keep our hair from bein' lifted. I'm Laramie Jones!"

At the same instant, the disc of the rising moon peeped above the crest of the distant hills. Its first silvery rays showed Grainger a lean, sinewy form riding beside him—and glinted on a red shirt.

Grainger fought down the first words that rose to his lips. This man might have tried to kill him that afternoon; but certainly he had

saved him from a terrible death in the evening.

"I think you're right, Laramie Jones," he said, in a voice which quivered with his efforts at self-restraint. "We'll settle that account any way you say. Right now if you want to."

"Yuh bushwackin' murderer!" snarled Jones suddenly, and Grainger saw his teeth gleam between retracted lips. "Yuh low-down skunk! Sendin' me a challenge to a fair fight, and then tryin' to rub me out from behind a tree! Wisht I'd a known it was *you* them Injuns had! Yuh'd be burnin' now."

"**WHAT** the hell do you mean?" shouted Grainger. "It was you that sent the challenge, you liar! And it was *you* that tried to ambush *me*! What sort of a bluff are you trying to pull on me, anyway?"

"Why, yuh ornery, lyin'—Whoa! Wait a minute!" Jones checked his raging outburst in full career. "Yuh say yuh got a challenge from me? Let's talk sensible an' stop yellin'. We'll have the redskins atter us. What about this yere challenge, Grainger?"

"You ought to know," said Grainger sullenly. "I got it this morning at Kendrick's cabin—or what used to be Kendrick's cabin before it was burned—"

"Kendrick burned out?" interrupted Laramie Jones. "By God, that makes five miners burned out this week! I'll git the bloody-handed devils that are doin' it, if it takes me a year!"

Grainger's mind fastened instantly on the implications of Jones' words.

"You don't think it's redskins, then?" he demanded.

"'Course not," replied Jones scornfully. "I seen three of the places. Not a sign o' redskins; not to me, anyhow. Plenty signs of low-down

white men that wanted to make it *look* like Injun doin's. If yuh couldn't see the same, yuh shore ain't got much right to call yerself a scout."

"But the dispatch rider that brought your challenge said you thought it was Cloud-in-the-Morning's war party," Grainger exclaimed.

"That's what I give out. Didn't want any word to git around that I suspicioned different," Jones explained. "I didn't tell no one what I figgered on, 'cept ol' Gin'ral Terry. I want to git these skunks dead to rights. But what about this challenge yuh keep talkin' about?"

"A trooper from Fort Fowler gave it to me at Kendrick's cabin. You know what it said, damn you!" Grainger's self-restraint was slipping. "Challenged me to meet you an hour before sundown at Sugar Loaf Hill—to find out who was the better man. Said you'd be wearin' a red shirt so's I'd know you—"

"By God!" interrupted Jones in a tone of utter astonishment.

"—then you tried to bushwhack me on the way, as you damn' well know," Grainger wound up. "Yes, and ran away like a coward, when I took after you through the brush."

"**YUH** shore are an awful slick liar, Grainger," said Jones slowly, "or else—or else yuh're tellin' the truth. In which case, boy, there is some of the dirtiest work a-goin' on in these parts that's ever been heard of in Wyomin' territory. The which is sayin' a lot."

"Say, you saved my life and all that," burst out Grainger, "but I'm getting damn' tired of being called names. We're far enough away from the Injuns now. C'mon, get off your horse and fight a man! I'll teach you to call me a liar!"

"Hold everything a minute, Grainger," said Laramie Jones, with per-

fect calm. "I ain't afeerd to fight yuh. Jest wanta do a little thinkin' first. See yere. I don't suppose yuh'll believe me when I tell yuh, that I got a challenge from you, at Fort Fowler last night.

"YUH dared me to meet yuh at Sugar Loaf Hill, an hour before sundown today. Yuh said yuh'd be wearin' buckskin huntin' clothes, so's I'd know yuh. I went; and a feller in buckskin huntin' clothes shore tried to bushwhack me. I chased him, but he got away. He shore had a fast-runnin' roan hoss."

"Roan horse!" yelled Grainger. "Why, the man in a red shirt who tried to rub me out got away on a roan horse!"

There was a moment of grim silence as the two scouts rode on through the moonlit night, side by side.

Grainger's thoughts were in a turmoil. If Jones wasn't lying—but, hell, he must be lying! Trying to cover up, that was all. He was the man behind the murders. It all checked.

Even his rescue of Grainger—for he must have feared that Grainger, at the last minute, might induce Cloud-in-the-Morning to listen to reason. And Grainger's appearance at Fort MacDowell with Cloud-in-the-Morning would mean the finish for whoever had deceived the chief into taking the warpath.

The only thing Grainger couldn't quite understand was why Jones hadn't shot him dead as he came up the hill away from the Indian fires. There was plenty of chance to do it, and the Indians would have been blamed. If Jones feared Grainger on his trail so much that he went to all the trouble of an elaborate plan like this challenge business, then why not take so good a chance of getting rid of the man he feared?

Could it be possible that Jones was not lying? That there was some other, sinister mind behind all this business? Some scheming fiend who feared both scouts, and who planned to have them kill each other, or at least to have one killed and the other held for murder? Some devil who, not daring actual murder of a government scout in broad daylight, had gone so far as to try to bushwhack each, thus inflaming each against the other to the point of shooting on sight?

A man can change his clothes swiftly, reflected Grainger, but not the color of his horse. And he had already noted, in the moonlight, that Jones' mount was a piebald pony of decidedly variegated hues.

But it was nonsense. Who in these parts had the brains to think up a plan like that? No one that Grainger could think of; certainly none of the thugs and road-agents occasionally encountered in trail-side rum-shops. No; Laramie Jones was his man. Grainger resolved to play safe, to watch and wait for the fellow to betray himself.

"GRAINGER," said Jones suddenly, in a hard voice, "I can't figger out things no way, 'cept that yo're lyin'. If yuh wanta fight—"

"Holy snakes!" interrupted Grainger. "Look at that!"

He pointed off to the northwest. A red glow throbbed against the horizon.

"Fire!" cried Jones. "Another pore devil gettin' wiped out—"

"Poor devil nothing!" snapped Grainger. "There's only one house over that way, and that's the Indian agency at Juniper Creek. Come on, Jones! It's ten miles if it's an inch, but we've got to get there!"

If Laramie Jones hesitated, it was only for an instant.

"All right," he cried. "I'm with

yuh, Grainger. We'll ride together—till we see what's goin' on at the agency."

"You're damned right we'll ride together, Jones," muttered Grainger to himself. "If you think you're going to get out of my reach, you're crazy!"

CHAPTER V

Who Is "the Boss"?

THE red and sinister glare grew and throbbled like a living thing on the horizon as their ponies sped on, with the distance-eating lope of the plains-bred horse.

There was no further speech between the two scouts. Each rode in silence, nursing his own dark thoughts. But they were scouts first, and everything else afterward. Their instincts, stronger than any reasoning, pulled them to a simultaneous halt.

"I seen somethin' 'gainst the skyline," muttered Jones.

"On that ridge, right ahead there," confirmed Grainger.

"White man—saw his hat," said Jones.

Grainger threw caution to the winds.

"Scout to the left, will you? I'll go right, and we'll close in on him as he comes down the hill," he suggested.

"I'm on my way," agreed Jones, and faded into the night, his pony's hoofs silent on the grass.

Grainger urged his Indian mount to the right, made a wide semicircle and halted, peering up at the ridge. He could see nothing; but his ears served him better than his eyes. He caught the low pad-pad of hoofs, and after that, came the faint echo of a human voice.

His pony threw up its head. Grainger's plunge to earth, his swift

snatch for its nostrils were not quick enough to stop a whinny that rang through the silent hills like a clap of thunder.

"Hi!" said a rough voice only about a hundred feet away. "What the hell's that?"

"Jest a stray Injun pony, I reckon," somebody else spoke up. "Come on, Bill. We got to hurry—I wanta git back. I don't trust the boss, sendin' us off thisaway. Looks as if he wanted to git rid of us. An' he knows where the cache is."

Grainger had remounted and was riding closer. Now he could see the two men, vague shadows in the moonlight.

"Hands up!" he ordered sharply.

The shadows stopped moving.

"Who're you?" a voice demanded.

"Government scout," Grainger announced. "Where are you men from, and where are you going?"

"Why, we're trappers from up Montana way, scout," the voice answered. "We heard tell there was good trappin' down in Colorado, so we thought we'd try our luck down thar. Yuh see—"

HE was edging his horse nearer, and Grainger wasn't at all sure both his hands were aloft.

"Yuh see," the man went on, "our trappin' grounds up in the Smokies sorta give out—take that, yuh lousy spy!"

The words were punctuated by the flash and cannon-like roar of an old frontier-model Colt. But Grainger had been ready. He rolled off his pony as the man's movement betrayed his intent. From behind the pony the scout fired once; the would-be murderer gave a sort of gasping grunt and then he tumbled out of his saddle.

The other man gave a yell of rage and spurred forward, gun roaring. A bullet ripped through the pony's

neck, and the poor beast went to its knees.

From the darkness beyond, a rifle cracked once. The man screamed, lifted himself in his stirrups and plunged forward over his horse's neck.

"**G**OT him!" exulted Laramie Jones, taking form in the vague light.

Grainger was bending over the man he had shot. The fellow was a rough-looking scoundrel, with a villainous, stupid face.

He was quite dead; shot through the head.

"Let's have a look at yours, Jones," suggested Grainger.

Jones lit a match.

The man he had shot lay beside his motionless horse.

In his fall he had pulled the reins down over the animal's head, and the beast had been trained to stand still under such conditions.

The second man was, if possible, even more scoundrelly in appearance than his companion. Blood was spreading darkly on the breast of his mackinaw. But as the match flickered in his face, he slowly opened his eyes.

He tried to lift himself on one elbow, his eyes glaring hate in the match flare.

"Laramie Jones!" he gasped out. "Damn yore liver! I'll—"

But the effort of speech was too much for his punctured lung. Blood gushed from his twisted lips; he collapsed, dead.

"You know him, eh?" Grainger said softly, trying to keep the edge of suspicion from his voice.

"I know him, shore," Jones agreed. "Black Bill Fenton, his name is. He's from Montana, all right, an' I reckon he's wanted for about a dozen stage-coach robberies, to say nothing of a couple murders.

"I seen him when they had him in the guard house at ol' Fort Keogh, 'bout a year ago. He broke out one night an' ain't been heard of sence."

"I see," Grainger remarked. "Guess we'd better search these two dead birds."

They found nothing suspicious; no sign of gold dust, or loot of any kind.

"You heard what was said about 'the boss' sending these rascals off—about a cache?" Grainger demanded.

"I shore did," rejoined Jones. "Say, we better be gittin' on. That fire's dyin' down. Maybe we'll find the answer to all this at the agency—an' maybe not."

Grainger possessed himself of the deceased Fenton's horse.

"**M**AYBE not," he reflected as they rode ahead. "Maybe not is right. Looks to me as though Jones is 'the boss'; and that Fenton was cursing him with his dying breath for a double-crossing traitor.

"I'm dead sure that a smart man who was working with skunks like those two would want to get rid of 'em as soon as he'd finished using 'em.

"Dead men tell no tales. I'm watching Mr. Jones mighty careful from now on."

It took them another hour of grueling cross-country riding to reach the agency. An hour during which the glow of the burning building died lower and lower, until at last, when they drew rein at the foot of the hill on which the agency was located, there was nothing left but a great mass of glowing embers, out of which a log or two thrust up red arms as though in silent accusation to an unhearing Heaven.

"Don't seem to be nobody about," Jones muttered.

"Come on, then." Grainger, stiff and sore from long riding, forgot his

aches as he urged his horse uphill. What would they find at the agency?

CHAPTER VI

Scouts' Honor

GRAINGER'S Colt was in his hand as he dropped to the ground, as close to the smoldering building as he could get for the heat.

His eyes searched the gloom; Nothing. He walked slowly around the building, aware of Jones moving silently at his side. His boot struck something soft. He halted, moving his foot a little.

"Dead man here, Jones," he muttered. "Got another match?"

A blue flame spluttered in the other's hand; both men bent lower.

"God!" breathed Jones softly.

The body was headless; the despoiled shoulders lay in a great pool of clotted blood.

It was the body of a plump man, clad in a brown civilian suit with the tops of the trousers jammed into riding boots.

"It's Griggs—the Indian agent," Grainger muttered. "I know his duds. But who chopped off his head? That's no Injun trick. Scalping, yes; but not cutting off heads. Never heard of an Injun doing such a thing."

"Neither'd I," said Jones, in an odd voice.

Both men straightened up; their eyes met. Instinct flashed a quick warning to Grainger—he had the feeling that Jones was about to whip out a gun. His fingers itched to level his own Colt and bid Jones "stick 'em up."

Poor Griggs, lying there so foully murdered.

"I reckon," said Jones slowly, "that Griggs mought's well be daid as breakin' rock at Leavenworth. They'se a government inspector at

Fowler right now, headin' out this way to check up on Griggs. Reckon Griggs couldn't stand no inspection."

Grainger looked down at the body.

"The hell you say, Laramie Jones!" he muttered. "Now that's right queer! I'm beginning to think—say! Let's look around here for sign!

"Look for wagon tracks! I've got a hunch!"

They found the wagon tracks, plainly visible close to the smoldering building.

"Small wagon — one-horse — come on, Jones!" cried Grainger, swinging to saddle. "The peddler! I'd forgotten the peddler!"

Side by side, they spurred out from the agency grounds.

"The north trail!" Grainger cried. "This way—it's his one chance. He'd not dare go south, to turn into the patrols that'll be out all along the Laramie trail. He'll go north—no forts that way."

They rode fast, keeping mostly on the grass at the trail's side and halting every now and then to listen.

"What yuh listenin' fer, pardner?" Jones asked, after the fourth or fifth halt.

"I hear what I'm listening for, right now," Grainger answered. "Listen—you hear it?"

FROM far ahead, borne on the wings of the mountain breeze, came a faint tinny clatter.

"Somethin' movin' on the trail up there—it's a wagon!" Jones announced.

"He's seen us by now! Ride like hell—before he takes to the brush!" Grainger cried.

The two ponies thundered forward along the trail side by side. Suddenly the wagon stopped. A tongue of red flame licked backward from it; a bullet whined between the two horsemen.

Again the rifle flashed from the wagon—again—again.

Grainger's horse stumbled, recovered, kept gamely on.

The wagon was very close now. Grainger saw a shadow dive from the front seat and run toward the brush. He drove his heels into the pony's sides, hurled the little animal straight at the fugitive. The man dodged back, saw Jones riding at him from the other side, whirled to run up the trail.

GRAINGER flung his Colt straight and true. The heavy weapon hit the back of the runner's head and down he went. The next instant Grainger was on his back, pinning him to earth.

"Wanted to take him alive," he panted as Jones ran up. "Wanted to see the skunk hang. He's knocked out, but he'll come to in a minute. Look at this poke o' gold dust he was carrying! We got our man, all right!"

He stood up, Colt ready in his left hand in case the unconscious prisoner should stir. His right went out to Laramie Jones.

"Shake, pardner," said Jerry Grainger. "I sure owe you an apology for what I've been thinking about you this past couple of hours."

Jones' hand met his in a firm grip.

"The same to you, Grainger!" said he. "I reckoned all the time it was you doin' all the dirty work."

"Me!" Grainger was suddenly appalled at the realization that he had been as suspect to Jones as Jones had been to him.

"But I'd sure like to know," Jones went on, "how this yere peddler worked his schemes. He ain't been seen about till today."

"That's no peddler," Grainger said grimly. "The peddler lies dead back there, beside the agency. This bird figured he'd get rid of his pals and make his getaway—as he had to, *pronto*—and how could he do it better than as a peddler, with nobody looking for himself 'cause he was supposed to be dead?"

He rolled the unconscious man over as he spoke.

The plump face of Griggs, the Indian agent, was bathed in the pitiless moonlight.

"Well, I'll be—say, Grainger! How'd yuh git wise so quick, back there? How'd yuh know that wasn't Griggs' body?" demanded Jones swiftly.

"The hands—they were clean—even the fingernails. Nobody ever heard of Griggs washing himself, much less cleaning his nails. And then I remembered the peddler—'bout the same build—neat-looking. The wagon tracks cinched it. It was Griggs' big chance for a clean getaway."

"Shake, ag'in, pardner," chuckled Laramie Jones. "I takes my hat off to yuh. Yo're shore a number one scout!"

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CHAPTER I

The Voices in the Cabin

MIDNIGHT. A stifling, brooding mugginess hung over the Yellow Sea. Close, tropical stars blazed their orange light overhead, reflected in the sullen, oily waters hissing resentfully from the sharp bows of the American Oriental liner, *President*, cleaving her way toward Shanghai.

On the lofty starboard wing of the ship's flying-bridge, Junior Officer Jimmy Farquhar, long legs spread and braced, swayed as she lifted to the uneasy heave of a ground swell.



With desperate fury,

He had just come on watch. For a moment, he was held by the spell of the sea which was his heritage. Leaning back against the rail, he filled deep lungs, oblivious to all but the night's magic.

"Where's that blasted fourth mate?" The irritated growl of the watch officer, impatient for relief, aroused Jimmy to sudden consciousness of his surroundings—the odor of paint through stifling heat, the binnacle's dim glow, and, throbbing like the return of his own bitter thoughts, the steady pulse of the dark ship under his feet.

"He—" Jimmy started to answer, then checked himself, painfully aware that the query was addressed, not to himself as it ordinarily would have been, but to the quartermaster. A hot flush spread over his tanned face. With it, the Old Man's words again rang in his ears.



he flung yellow figures from him

"There's no berth on this ship for an officer who gets drunk on watch! And in the mail hatch, of all places!" he had thundered. "You're through, mister! I'd relieve you now, but I can't replace you till we get back to San Francisco. You'll have to serve till then!"

That had been at Kobe. Jimmy had not been drunk! He had been doped! He had taken one glass of *Asahi* beer furnished by his brother junior officer, "Blackie" Regan. Ten minutes later, he had gone out like a light.

The fourth officer had just been hospitalized and Regan got the promotion for which Jimmy had been slated. Jimmy was sentenced to what amounted to banishment from posts of command on the sea. And he was only twenty-five.

With a quick stride, he crossed the bridge. He had a deep regard for truth and frankness. The angry sug-

gestion that rose to his lips—that Regan might be framing the third officer to get himself another promotion—would only provoke more trouble. So he choked it back. Clear, blue eyes smoldering with resentment, he went about the first duty of his watch—to retard the clocks one hour to China time.

A lithe, white uniformed figure, he swung down the ladder and stepped into the shaded light of the chart room. He checked his watch with a chronometer, descended to "B" deck.

At the entrance to the dining saloon, he opened the clock over the big mirror. He set the hands back from twelve-ten to eleven-ten. The slight click as he closed the front of the clock sounded curiously loud in the oppressive stillness pervading the dimly lighted passageways.

A sense of isolation, heightened by the moaning creak of timbers,

stole over Jimmy. He turned about to hurry away and came to a sudden stop. His ears had caught a voice; a dead voice—oily, toneless, sinister—scarcely above a whisper, drifting thinly from a stateroom door a few feet distant. Into the gloom of the passageway, a band of yellow light shot from the crack of the door standing slightly ajar on its ventilation hook.

JIMMY had heard that unforgettable voice before. Back in San Francisco, during the rush of last minute cargo loading when he had been supervising the stowage on the poop of a Chinese coffin, it had reached his ears for a mere instant during a sharp lull in the pounding din of steamwinches. He had glanced around and had caught a brief glimpse of the back of a scrawny Chinese talking to Blackie Regan.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders and was about to go on, when that thin whisper pronounced his own name!

Startled, Jimmy faced the door, straining forward rigidly. He heard the mumbling of an indistinct American voice within the stateroom. His mind again flashed back to San Francisco and the scrawny Chinese, with the warped hand, talking to Blackie Regan.

"You und'stand," the dead voice went on. "This other and you are finish."

There was a mumbled question in reply.

"No money!" There was a harsh note in the voice. "Till these—" the crisp rustle of paper came to Jimmy—"an'—the—ah—goods are deliver to proper han's!"

Jimmy's thoughts were in a turmoil. Was this why Regan was late on watch? Was he in that stateroom? If so, then his own name linked with that whispered, "*This other an' you are finish,*" hinted at

something, behind that doped glass of beer, deeper than a promotion to fourth officer! But first he had to make sure that the American in the stateroom was Regan.

Cautiously Jimmy tip-toed to the door. In his eagerness he forgot the flashlight he held in his hand until he knocked it sharply against the bulkhead.

An ominous silence fell on the occupants of the stateroom following the flashlight's clatter. Silently cursing his clumsiness, Jimmy darted a glance at the room number and dodged back into the darkened dining saloon. As he whisked around a protecting corner he glimpsed a withered, claw-like hand stealthily reaching for the hook on the stateroom door.

Jimmy immediately got a safe distance aft. Regan wouldn't dare absent himself from the bridge any longer. Much as Jimmy wanted to wait and see who came out of that cabin door, if he were seen in the vicinity he would instantly be connected with that rap on the bulkhead. He could not afford to fall under suspicion until he knew more about that conference.

AS he went about setting the rest of the clocks, every detail of his experience revolved swiftly in his mind. What were Regan—if it was Regan—and the scrawny Chinese plotting? There had been mention of goods. Guns? Not on Captain McHeltie's ship! What then? There did not seem to be any answer, especially one that required Regan to be promoted to fourth officer.

Suddenly Jimmy remembered that rustle of papers and the words that seemed to refer to them. The answer would be there. If he could only get a look at those papers—!

With discharge and disgrace moving inexorably minute by minute to

meet him, Jimmy had been in despair. Now, with a faint shadow of hope that he might clear himself, he underwent, with the quick resiliency of youth, a complete change of spirit. His clean cut face lighted. He unconsciously straightened his shoulders and a gleam of determination replaced the resentment in his eyes.

CHAPTER II

The Withered Hand

WHEN he had finished below, he returned to the bridge. Blackie Regan, a lean, swarthy fellow of medium height with a sneering gash of a mouth, was at his post. He looked at Jimmy suspiciously from close-set, shifty gray eyes.

"Took you a helluva long time to set those clocks!" he growled.

Jimmy looked down from his muscular six feet. "Yeah?" he grinned.

He didn't know he was grinning. Most people glare and snarl when aroused to fighting pitch. Jimmy grinned. It was the sort of grin he had worn the night he rescued Wong Koo, the ship's interpreter, from the murderous knives of thieving Lascars on the docks of Hong Kong.

His expression did not change at Regan's question. But he watched Regan with narrowed eyes as he added evenly: "And it took you a helluva long time to get on watch!"

There was a flash of apprehension in Regan's eyes. It was instantly gone. Jimmy could feel him tighten.

"It's none of yer dam' business when I come on watch!" he grated tensely.

"Yes, sir!" replied Jimmy blandly, and gazed thoughtfully after Regan as the fourth officer strode stiffly to the ladder and went down to the bridge-deck. As brief as the play of words had been, coupled with Regan's nervous anxiety, it was enough

to convince Jimmy that he had been right in assuming Regan to have been the man with the Chinese in stateroom seventeen.

Growing more sure of his ground every minute, he laid his plans to attempt to re-establish himself. Shortly before noon, he summoned to his quarters the ship's interpreter. Seated on the transom seat of his cabin, he mopped the perspiration from his face.

The muggy heat had just forced him to loosen the collar of his uniform jacket when Wong Koo, a well built young Cantonese with the face of a scholar and the heart of a warrior, appeared in the doorway, his teeth gleaming in a vast grin. Jimmy motioned him inside and closed the door. "Wong Koo," he said, "I need your help."

"I am most humbly yours to command," replied Wong Koo, instantly serious, alert. Jimmy was his hero. Jimmy had saved his life. His life was Jimmy's to use.

JIMMY briefly sketched the situation. "What I want you to do," he concluded, "is to get that man with a withered hand away from his cabin at ten minutes to twelve, and keep him away as long as you can."

"It will be easy to get him out of his cabin," nodded Wong Koo. "He is of the northern Chinese and disembarks at Shanghai tomorrow. I will get him to identify his baggage in the baggage room. I do not know how long I can keep him."

"That's all right," said Jimmy. "We'll just have to take a chance that I have time to find what I want."

It lacked only a few minutes of the time Jimmy had set when Wong Koo hurried away. Jimmy waited in his quarters until he had just time to arrive at the cabin below at the appointed minute.

When he reached "B" deck pass-

ageway, no one was in sight. Swiftly he stepped to the door of cabin seventeen and entered. Wong Koo had made good.

The man with the withered hand was absent.

Jimmy glanced quickly around the small room, which even at midday reflected something of the sinister nature of its occupant. Squatting in one corner, ever the symbol of traveling China, leaned a red-splotched basket of Chinese provisions. A small leather trunk beneath one bed and a suitcase on the transom seat caught Jimmy's eye.

With a stride he crossed the gray carpet. A quick search through the suitcase revealed nothing. He was turning towards the trunk when his eye fell on a briefcase, in a corner of the seat almost concealed by a spread newspaper.

Jimmy snatched up the newspaper. The briefcase was empty. But under it, in a pile of other papers, as though the briefcase and newspaper had been hurriedly thrown over all to conceal them, was a radiogram clipped to several sheets of letter-size paper that were covered with Chinese characters.

THE radiogram was coded, with the translation beneath the code groups. Among the words, Regan's name leaped out at him!

Before he had a chance to read the rest of the radiogram, footsteps sounded in the passageway outside. Jimmy stood tense. He heard Wong Koo's voice shouting a question meant to warn him. The footsteps paused. An answer went back in that dead voice.

The man whose cabin Jimmy had illegally entered had come back soon enough to cut off his escape. Determinedly, he stuffed the papers into his pocket. He shot a desperate glance about the room.

There was no place to hide. He'd have to knock the man out. That wouldn't do, either. The door knob was turning. With sudden impulse, Jimmy flattened himself against the bulkhead next the door. It swung open, concealing him for the moment.

The man with the withered hand must have instantly discovered that the newspaper and the briefcase had been moved. For a second there was complete silence. Then, with a hoarse cry of rage, he hurled himself toward the transom.

JIMMY, while the man was wildly pawing through his papers, slipped from behind the door, darted into the passageway. There was another cry behind him. He had had no hope of escaping observation. But come what might, he was grimly determined to hide those papers until he could find out what they contained.

In close pursuit, the man with the withered hand mouthed shrill whisperings. At the end of the passageway, Wong Koo gave Jimmy a blank stare; then, with his eyes on Jimmy's back, he stepped skillfully in front of his pursuer. Down they went to the deck with a crash.

Jimmy threw a glance back. Wong Koo was scrambling to his feet, full of apologies. A barrage of invectives was pouring from the man he had tripped as the Chinese rose and plunged on after Jimmy.

But with Wong Koo's crafty aid, Jimmy had a good lead. He spurred headlong across the empty dining saloon, up the midship companion to "A" deck. He would lose his pursuer aft and below, then double back to his quarters to hide his prize. He dashed through a doorway onto the after deck beneath the promenade overhang, only to bring up short. Directly in his line of

flight, their backs toward him, stood the Old Man and the chief mate!

CHAPTER III

Spawn of Darkness

DESPERATE, Jimmy turned: to be caught with those papers on his person would be disastrous. Visions of federal prison flashed across his mind.

The weather door to the hospital at his right was secured. He dared not risk fumbling with its clumsy fastenings. Trapped by a deck house on his left and his pursuer to the rear, Jimmy glanced quickly about.

Fortunately, except for the Old Man and the mate, the deck was deserted. A Chinese coffin stood just outside the hospital, its roughly hewn, dark-stained planks contrasting sharply with the clean whiteness of the deck. A loose, disarranged cover half revealed its gruesome contents.

With a flash of inspiration Jimmy raised the lid of the coffin. Beneath the shoulder of its occupant he slipped the folded papers.

Swift footsteps were tapping down the passageway. He struggled with the hospital door. It swung open just as his pursuer reached the deck. A quick look back as he slipped through the entrance filled him with a vivid impression of grotesque unreality.

A Chinese in European dress, his mummy-like head thrust forward on a scrawny neck, stood near the coffin, half raising a withered, claw-like hand. His baffled eyes, malevolent, hypnotic glowing bits of black jade, darted about like the eyes of a snake.

With a shiver, Jimmy secured the door behind him. He hurried through the hospital and the doctor's office. Soon he was breathing the clean air of the boat deck and a moment later had made the bridge, ten minutes late for the afternoon watch.

"You're a passenger now, eh?" greeted Regan with a sneer. "Doesn't make any difference when you come on watch!"

Jimmy smothered the sharp retort that flared to his lips. He had to get permission to leave the bridge before the bos'n and his crew finished their noon meal and sealed that coffin. Being late on watch was not going to make that easy.

With the possession of those papers had come a sense of imminent peril, vague, intangible, seeping through him like a chill fog. He paced the bridge, still shaky inside.

The voice of a quartermaster sounded at his elbow: "Captain wants to see you, sir." He looked at Jimmy curiously.

JIMMY'S heart contracted. It had come, he thought. Well, he'd stick to his guns. He squared his shoulders, went into the chart room.

Captain McHeltie, a man of slightly more than medium height and of quick, athletic build, was pacing the deck. His grim uprightness, topped with a hardbitten face beneath a shaggy, gray mane, reminded Jimmy of case-hardened steel. He swung bleak eyes on Jimmy, lips tightening:

"Well, mister!" he snapped. "I have a report that you were hanging around the passenger quarters and couldn't get to the bridge on time for your watch! What about it?"

"Yes, sir." Jimmy's quiet voice was firm, despite the apprehension clutching his insides.

"You know the regulations, Mister! Any more of this and you'll be dealt with accordingly! That's all!" He glared a dismissal.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy. Surprised, intensely relieved, he turned on his heel, stumbled out the door. It was highly significant that the man with the withered hand had raised no out-

cry about those papers. Significant and sinister. Then he groaned. With the Old Man still in a cold rage over that mail hatch business, this latest development precluded any possible chance of leaving the bridge before his watch below. That coffin would be sealed and stowed on the poop for Hong Kong discharge alongside the one loaded at San Francisco.

AS he trod the bridge in the sticky heat, an awful, expectant stillness hung in the air, as though the whole universe were holding its breath. Even thinking was difficult. The voice of the Old Man came to him for an instant as he passed the wheel, "—typhoon to south'ard." Typhoon or no typhoon, thought Jimmy, tonight at midnight would be his only chance to get those papers—when he made his regular trip through the steerage.

At four o'clock, just relieved, he stood on the threshold of his room, lips pursed in a silent, amazed whistle. The tiny cabin had been thoroughly ransacked.

He surveyed the wreckage for an instant, then reached for an electric button to summon the room boy to straighten things about. A single sheet of note paper pinned to the pillow on his bunk caught his eye. Slowly he picked it up, reading the message written in a sprawling hand:

"If those papers are not returned before eight tonight, you will never reach Shanghai."

In the lower right hand corner, stamped in red ink, glared a peculiar Chinese *chop*; to Jimmy, the red ink looked like blood.

There was a sound behind him. Whitefaced, he swung around. It was only the bell-boy. He changed his mind about having the room squared

away. The explaining of that *chop* was more important.

"Tell interpreter come this side," he instructed.

"Yes, sah," grunted the boy and glided away.

"Mustn't get the jitters," muttered Jimmy. Taking a firm grip on himself, he started replacing the gear strewn about the room. He had nearly finished when Wong Koo appeared. Silently Jimmy handed him the death threat. Wong Koo read it, then stared with fascinated eyes at the lower right hand corner.

"IT is the *chop* of H'sin Tung!"
I he whispered tensely. Then, at the question in Jimmy's eyes, he betrayed his deep concern by the slight native ornateness that always colored his speech when under stress of emotion:

"Return the papers," he entreated earnestly. "Throughout the empire of my fathers, he is known as the Black Dragon. Spawn of the World of Darkness—trafficker in opium, slave girls, all that is evil. His talons, red with blood of his victims, extend to the far corners of the earth! None escape—mercy is unknown to his black heart! It is death to those who cross him!"

"The man with the withered hand—?" questioned Jimmy sharply. He stood tensed forward, feet slightly apart, mentally noting that Wong Koo's outburst was inspired, not of fear, but of regard for Jimmy's safety.

"No—," answered Wong Koo, dark eyes glowing fiercely. "He is an underling. The Black Dragon moves only in secret, under shelter of darkness."

And when, after offering his humble aid, Wong Koo had gone, Jimmy finished stowing his gear. He had no thought of returning those papers until the contents were known to

him. The prospect of physical danger put him on edge, keyed almost to a point of exhilaration. He shoved in the last drawer, then went into the officers' mess for dinner.

After dinner, he returned to his room. The gloom of the deserted passageway made him cautious. In spite of the heat, he locked the door and across the open port in the forward bulkhead drew a curtain.

Throwing his jacket on his bunk, he lit a cigarette. For the sake of what little coolness he could derive from the smooth leather upholstering, he lay down on the transom seat opposite his bunk.

The ship would arrive at Fairway Buoy pilot station at exactly midnight. Regan would receive the pilot, as he came aboard, through one of the side ports forward. For those few minutes, all eyes would be on the pilot—all but Jimmy's. That would be when he would make his trip to the steerage.

If he timed it to the minute, he could make the poop and have several minutes to work, with practically no chance of being observed. He revolved every detail, every possible chance of a slip, over and over in his mind. Loose articles bumped softly to the uneasy motion of the ship as she alternately rose to a swell and slid into the trough. . . . The faint whine of turbine gears came to him soothingly . . . drowsiness stole over him . . . he closed his eyes. . . .

CHAPTER IV

The Chinese Junk

HE WAS next conscious of what seemed to be a horrible nightmare. Of glittering, black jade eyes peering from an evil yellow face—of his own breath coming in great gasps and a numbness creeping over his limbs. He struggled, striving to cry out—to pierce,

from beneath leaden eyelids, the thick darkness.

With a mighty effort, choking and gagging, he struggled to his feet—half sensed a face vanishing from the port. Something filling his lungs from the muggy air sapped his strength. His knees buckled under him. But he managed to grab the door knob and turn the key. The door came open. Fresh air immediately revived him and he realized that there'd been no nightmare.

HE dashed down the short passageway and onto the boat deck. Not a sight or sound of anyone. Slipping quickly forward to where he would have a view athwartship, his gaze encountered the same absence of any human movement. From the bridge four bells suddenly rang, with startling clearness across the night, the hour of ten.

Raising his eyes, Jimmy saw the bulky figure of the watch officer as he paced slowly back and forth, to be silhouetted for an instant against a sky where scattered clouds had begun to scurry across the face of a pale moon. Eerie, blue streaks of lightning periodically flared across the horizon. A soft, weird moaning played in the rigging.

Jimmy hurried back to his room, snapped on the light. At once his eye caught the glitter, on the inboard edge of his bunk, of several bits of thin, curved glass. Lips tightening in understanding, he swept them into his hand, dropped them into a wastebasket. "Gas bomb!" he grunted.

A grim seriousness came into his eyes. Like the king cobra, H'sin Tung's murderous agent had struck with deadly intent, swiftly and silently. His cunning attack brought home with compelling force to Jimmy the ruthless strategy of this deformed Chinese.

True, Jimmy had escaped this time,

but he had yet to regain those papers. Again, with renewed caution, he ticked off every detail of his plan to open that sealed coffin.

The deep-throated bellowing of the ship's whistle, a jangling of bells, the silence that fell over her as she lost way, announced arrival two hours later at the pilot station. Armed with a screw-driver to raise the coffin lid, Jimmy slipped aft. Every sense was alert to a possible ambush from the man with the withered hand.

THE after deck was deserted of passengers or crew. Close air stirred fitfully to sudden gusts of hot wind. Grotesque, bleak-eyed junks like monstrous phantom ships slipped past, heeling to the freshening breeze. A huge one was standing just astern.

Making the poop, Jimmy stole soundlessly to the two coffins. They rested just forward of the looming white bulk of the canvas hooded hand-steering-gear. The near one, he was sure, was the one he wanted. He knelt beside it—

"Don't move!" hissed a tense, oily voice.

A galvanic reflex started Jimmy upright.

"Whup!" The cold nose of a gun jammed against his neck at the base of his brain. "Put up your han's!" hissed the voice. The potential death in that tone of command sent his hands unhesitatingly above his head. "Now, stan' up, slowly!"

Jimmy complied.

"Over here!" came the order, in the unmistakable tones of the man with the withered hand. Jimmy was shoved to a place in back of the steering gear.

"You—" he started to protest.

"Silence!" hissed the Chinese. "One move or soun' will be your last!"

Quick, soft footsteps came from the direction of the poop ladder. A vague bulk resolved itself from out the darkness.

"What in hell!" snarled Regan's voice. Jimmy started. The gun pressed tighter against his neck.

"Get busy!" snapped the Chinese. "I take care of this one."

Regan sprang to the coffins. He stared at the two of them for a fraction of an instant, then dragged one to the side.

A patter of rain swept across the deck. Lightning flared. With the cold steel of a gun holding him powerless, Jimmy's amazed eyes beheld a weird burial at sea. Without flag or bible, with only an oath from the struggling Regan as burial service, the coffin teetered for an instant over the leaping welcome of the tenebrous waters below.

Then, to the sighing dirge of wind wailing its muted keen through the rigging, the coffin slid over side. A minute later, the other followed.

Seeing what he believed to be his last hope of vindication snatched from his very fingers, an involuntary cry burst from Jimmy's lips:

"I'll—!"

Regan sprang across the intervening space. "You'll keep yer mouth shut! That's what you'll do!" he snapped. "Nobdy'd believe you anyway!" He thrust his face close to Jimmy's. A sardonic grin bared his teeth.

"I HAD to leave my post to stop a fight in the steerage," he suggested maliciously. "You couldn't be found.

"Probably up here dumping those stiff's over the side!"

The unassailable logic of Regan's sly deduction, together with the instantaneous thought of that illegally entered room, flared through Jimmy. A great surge of rage hurled him

into physical activity. He leaped for Regan's throat!

But even as he moved, something crashed down on his head! There was a blinding flash of light. A dull, sharp pain. Then complete darkness.

His next impression, coming sharply through the haze of returning consciousness, was of the low hum of the ship's turbines gradually rising to a high pitched sing. The ship was just getting under way!

Recollection lifted him to his feet in a dizzy scramble. He staggered aft to the poop ladder, placed a hand on the rail to steady himself. A sudden squall struck the ship. Rigging shrieked. Dark clouds blotted out the moon. Boat covers whipped, bellied with loud reports—

A LURID flash of lightning lit up the sea astern. Jimmy stared with distended, unbelieving eyes at what the light revealed. About one hundred yards distant—weird, grotesque, fantastic—stood a huge Chinese junk, battened sails slatting, her hull spectral-like against the storm. Mounted on her port quarterdeck squatted a snub-nosed brass cannon. Gnome-like figures aboard her were hauling from the sea two dripping Chinese coffins!

Braced to the heave of the deck, Jimmy tried vainly to pierce the blind darkness aft. But the next flash revealed only the dim lines of the junk dropping rapidly astern.

Following the first shock of amazement, Jimmy's mind raced to this new turn of affairs. Of one thing he was certain, the man with the withered hand believed him to have concealed somewhere the missing papers. Otherwise his life would not have been spared. But his only possible hope to prove his own innocence had disappeared in the storm.

Then, as he started to hurry back

to the bridge, an idea occurred to him.

He at last knew Regan to be implicated in some sinister racket of crafty H'sin Tung. H'sin Tung's agent was due to disembark at Shanghai. That junk must have been standing by purposely to pick up those coffins. Would she not put in to that port to deliver her gruesome cargo?

In his intense concentration, there flashed across his mind the conversation he had overheard in cabin seventeen. That oily, toneless voice: "No money! Till these—" the crisp rustle of paper—"an' the, ah—goods, are deliver to proper han's!"

The "goods" then, would be the coffins. The crisp rustle he had heard, the missing papers! Jimmy suddenly seethed with renewed hope. There was a possibility of being in at the pay-off. Then he would have Regan dead to rights.

THE junk, if she were Shanghai bound, would without a doubt put in at that great junk anchorage just off the Old City.

On the bridge, Regan met him with a surly growl: "The Old Man wants you at once!" He inclined his head toward the chartroom, turned immediately from Jimmy into the darkness. Jimmy stared after him.

"Got his dirty work in already," he thought. He could see the handwriting on the wall. There was nothing to be gained by waiting. He stepped into the chartroom.

Captain McHeltie's mouth was a hard, thin line.

"Well, mister!" he snapped. "I've had just about enough of you! Where were you when the fourth officer had to leave his station and stop a fight in the steerage?" He whitened with anger. "Had to lock up two members of the Chinese crew! Might have had serious con-

sequences! What the blazes is the matter with you, anyway?"

Strangely enough, there was a faint flicker of sympathy in the Old Man's eyes, as though he were anxious for Jimmy to vindicate himself. Jimmy flushed. The truth sprang to his lips:

"I—" he began unsteadily, then caught himself. Reason told him that his chances of convincing the Old Man of any such wild tale were absolutely nil. Regan was right. His lips were sealed. He cleared his throat, stood in grim silence.

"Nothing to say, eh?" said Captain McHeltie thoughtfully. Then he crashed a fist down on the chartroom table. "All right!" he roared. "But get this! You're restricted to ship in Shanghai, and if you cut up any more monkeyshines I'll take care of you properly! That's all!"

CHAPTER V

H'sin Tung

A MOMENT later, Jimmy found himself on the wing of the bridge. The force of the storm whipped his face with spin-drift. Restricted to ship! The alternative of defying the skipper fought fiercely with his long sea training to obey orders.

And then, while they waited for the tide at Woosung a few hours later, the absence of the coffins was discovered. To the ships officers, assembled by order in his oak-panelled quarters, the skipper covered the situation in no uncertain terms.

"I'm going to get to the bottom of this thing!" he roared. All eyes flicked toward Jimmy. But he was not otherwise singled out. "The company is now wide open to a boycott on Chinese traffic amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly!" rasped the skipper in conclusion. "You all know the inviolable rules regarding Chinese burial!"

He turned to the mate: "I'll hold you responsible for a thorough investigation, mister! You'll have a lot of explaining to do!"

Afterward, accusing glances were cast at Jimmy. He knew what they were thinking; that he had thrown the coffins over the side in petty revenge. On Regan's face there was that sardonic, knowing smile. Jimmy's first fierce rage gave way to cool determination. Orders or no orders, he was going ashore in Shanghai.

During the trip up the yellow Whang Poo, teeming with the colorful traffic of the East, he kept a sharp lookout. The junk he sought might have passed in while the *President* lay at Woosung anchorage. With the aid of a pair of powerful binoculars, he scanned the maze of junks constantly tacking with their patched lugsails and staring hideous eyes across the ships bows.

Just abeam the Yangtse Poo mills, his heart gave a sudden leap. A huge junk lay over on a starboard tack. That snub-nosed brass cannon squatted on her port quarterdeck!

Jimmy's hopes flared high. But he still had to get off the ship—unobserved, if possible. Too, he was sure that, once ashore, H'sin Tung's agent would watch his every move. And the black maws of those tortuous, narrow streets that yawned to the river front were fitting spots for a knife to be slipped between the ribs of the unwary. He did not think the man with the withered hand would hesitate a second time.

AT eight o'clock that night, Jimmy slipped down the after gangway. So far the coast was clear. Wong Koo, whose dismay at the prospect of actually entering the stronghold of the dread H'sin Tung was indicated only by a slight broadening of his speech, waited with a

launch near a small *kiosk* at the end of the jetty.

Jimmy shouldered his way quickly through a mass of noisy coolies. Then he became conscious of a familiar, grotesque figure lurking a short distance behind him in the shadows of a go-down.

Jimmy's lips tightened in determination. There was a dark space between two squat buildings just ahead. He increased his pace, slipped into the sheltering darkness of a narrow alley. Just inside, he flattened himself against a building.

IT was a deserted spot. His ear caught the sound of stealthy footsteps. Then H'sin Tung's agent, gun in hand, so close Jimmy could hear him breathe, peered cautiously into the darkness—

With a lightning move, Jimmy caught the wrist that held the gun. With a powerful upward twist he sent the gun spinning from the other's grasp. A sharp cry of pain burst from the lips of the Chinese: "Ugh-h!"

But he showed amazing strength and agility. He broke his arm free. A knife blade flashed, came down! Jimmy twisted his body clear just in time. Then, with a short, vicious jab, he caught the Chinese with his ham-like fist flush on the jaw! The fellow staggered and dropped without a sound.

Jimmy dashed for the launch. He rounded a pile of packing cases, crashed into a hurrying figure!

"What in blazes!" came the bellying tones of Captain McHeltie.

Jimmy recovered, leaped for the launch.

"Hey! You! Wait there—!" roared after him. The shrill scream of a tug-boat's whistle drowned further words. Jimmy was aboard the launch. A moment later she was speeding through the muddy water for the

Shanghai side of the river. There was no turning back at this time. Success had to be his or it would mean the beach. The beach in Shanghai! Jimmy shuddered. He had seen such fellows. Ragged, haunted looking specimens hanging around the Consulate, begging. Flotsam of the China Coast.

The primitive chant of dock coolies floated, distant and eerie, in ancient chorus from Pootungs go-down. Junks slipped past. Flickering oil lights winked on sampans.

Presently, they glided between two rows of great, sea-going junks anchored in a brooding solitude off the front reach of the Old City. They circled through twice and the second time, in the up-river end of the fleet, Jimmy spotted the junk with the brass cannon.

Scraping against the side of a scarred black hull a short distance inshore, the launch came to astop. To Wong Koo, Jimmy whispered:

"Keep the launch over near that jetty. Stay in the shadows and watch for my flashlight signal." Wong Koo nodded understanding. He attempted a reassuring grin, but it was unconvincing.

JIMMY disappeared silently over the side of the junk. Swiftly crossing the three intervening ships, he dropped to the deck of the fourth. He listened. All was ominously quiet. Of a sudden, the clear, exotic notes of a beggar's flute drifted across the water from somewhere in the tortuous maze of the Old City. Again silence oppressive, all enveloping.

Jimmy could see a companionway forward and a partly covered hatch amidships. Keeping in the shadows as much as possible, he slipped silently aft. Two narrow lines of light shot from beneath the doors of the great cabin under the poop. Listening closely, he could detect the in-

distinguishable jargon of Chinese voices. From beside the cannon he could see the launch, barely perceptible, crouched in the shadows of the jetty. He imagined he saw Wong Koo watching. As he turned, he knew he must have been silhouetted against the sky now bright with moonlight.

A swift, stealthy search of the forward compartment revealed only the dirty, tumbled bunks of a forecastle. He tried the midship hatch, cautiously descending a bamboo ladder into yawning blackness. With a soft thud he dropped to the lower deck. Vile odors of bilge, dried fish and mustiness choked the muggy air.

HIS light flashed about the small compartment. A pile of native wicker baskets bulked in one corner; cobwebs, dust, bits of filth, ropes and rags cluttered the place. Inch by inch, his light searched the black hole. Disappointment stabbed him.

Then he started eagerly. Just to his left, not three feet away, rested the two coffins. In an instant, he was beside the nearest one.

A sound from above jerked him upright, rigid! Repeated, it resolved itself into a slithering chorus of slipper-shod feet. A guttural jargon, subdued, earnest, reached his ears. Like a flash he was across the compartment and had dropped to the deck, sheltered by the wicker baskets. Figures gathered about the hatch opening. The pale, yellow flare of an oil light appeared. A slipper-clad foot felt for the ladder, followed by the floppy pantalooned leg of a Chinese. He descended. The light was handed down. Two others tumbled in, waited for a fourth.

In the flickering, dim light, the last Chinese to drop into the hold seemed gigantic. Dwarfing his evil-visaged companions to insignificance, his presence filled the room with a malign force. A thin, ascetic counte-

nance contrasted sharply with eyes that Jimmy could feel, rather than see, were luminescent with an evil fire. Turned full in his direction for an instant, they chilled his flesh as though an icy wind had swept him. Some sixth sense informed him that this huge Chinaman was H'sin Tung.

CHAPTER VI

The Cannon's Mouth

A VOICE from the hatch opening, rising above the guttural intoning of the Chinese, held Jimmy with bated breath. An American voice, its identity lost as it reverberated hollowly into the hold:

"Snap out of it down there!" it snarled. "The stiff's inside, all right. I want'a get out of this dam' graveyard!" It trailed off into vague mutterings. Regan—?

The Chinese were prying off the coffin lids. The atmosphere was stifling. A large insect scuttled across Jimmy's hand. The scene was incredibly weird, macabre. Crouching, yellow ghouls; the pale rays from the smoky lamp casting their shadows in grotesque, leaping blotches against the stained bulkhead in back of the coffins. Darkness blotted out the rest of the hold.

As the covers came off, a furry body brushed past Jimmy's face. Small, clammy feet pattered across his hand. With a shudder he involuntarily jerked the hand back, dislodging a basket.

The Chinese became ominously still. Jimmy's heart pounded. A huge rat scurried across the circle of dim light, shot over the coffins, disappeared in the shadows. A half-relaxed chattering filled the hold. But H'sin Tung still stood motionless, those terrible eyes peering toward the baskets behind which Jimmy crouched.

A sudden clatter of running feet

sounded on the deck above. A coolie leaned over the hatch, jabbered excitedly. The Chinese all scrambled up the ladder, H'sin Tung in the lead.

IN an instant Jimmy crossed to the coffins. A swift search of one proved fruitless. He tried the other. A smothered cry. He held the papers up triumphantly. Elation flooded him. Five more minutes— Scrambling up the ladder, he dashed to the brass cannon, fumbled with the flashlight—

At that instant the door of the great cabin burst open. Half a dozen figures spilled into the bright moonlight. Jimmy glimpsed the gaunt form of the man with the withered hand pointing— He placed a hand on the muzzle of the cannon to leap over the side. But before he had time to clear the deck, they were upon him in a rush.

With desperate fury, he flung yellow figures from him; smashed others down with mighty blows. His clothing was torn to ribbons. Someone got him from behind. Yellow, talon-like fingers encircled his throat! He struggled furiously, weakly, futilely. Of a sudden all became dark.

Consciousness returned to the confused murmur of voices. His tongue felt twice its normal size. His throat ached. He tried to move and realized that he was bound hand and foot.

As his head cleared, the voices became louder, one rising sharply above the others. Jimmy's every nerve tautened. With a tremendous effort he lay immobile, controlling an impulse to open his eyes. The voice was Blackie Regan's!

"If he's got those papers, he's wise to this deal! He knows I threw those coffins over the side!"

"If he does know," cut in H'sin Tung in an icy, deliberate tone, "it is because of your fumbling. You were instructed to keep him away

from the poop deck. If we are apprehended—you will be held responsible! We do not countenance fumbling!"

Jimmy's mind flashed back to Kobe. Things were beginning to clear up. Regan had doped him, expecting him to be broken in rank, but the unforeseen illness of the fourth mate had blocked his little game by leaving a shortage in the crew.

That San Francisco coffin was the one they were after. This junk had been standing by at Fairway to pick it up. Both coffins had been jettisoned because Regan had had no time to identify the proper one. For some reason, Regan had never known until now of the missing papers. Jimmy opened his eyes.

A SMOKY, oil lamp on the far side of the room, hanging from the low deckhead, cast a narrow circle of yellow light upon the speakers. Looming behind a teakwood table, like a carven idol against a background of paneling polished black with age, H'sin Tung faced Regan.

Jimmy was but vaguely conscious of the rest of his surroundings. Moldy, Oriental smells. Bulky blobs of furnishings, indistinct in the shadows. Incredible, unreal. The man with the withered hand stood in an entrance to an adjoining room. Evidently, this was the great cabin of the junk.

The full import of H'sin Tung's words, slowly sinking into Blackie Regan's consciousness, drained the color from his face. His bold eyes became agate beads of fear. He stepped back, whispered: "I—I—" half raising a hand, dropping it again slowly. Jimmy stirred. H'sin Tung made a warning gesture.

Huge, indistinct, he crossed to where Jimmy lay, stretched upon a low blackwood couch. For a moment, through slitted eyes, he studied

Jimmy's face, then said: "Why you came on board here, we do not know. But—!" He paused, eyes glittering evilly. "It will be well for you to return those papers!"

A HOARSE voice answered from Jimmy's bruised throat: "Yeah?" He eyed H'sin Tung coolly. "I don't know what you're talking about!"

Bribery, cajolery, threats followed. H'sin Tung's face hardened. Malignancy tinged his softly hissed words:

"Possibly you would prefer the 'Two Bamboo Sticks'—lips slowly tapped to a jellied mass—? Or—perhaps *Ling Chi'ih* 'The Death of Ten Thousand Slices'—?"

"You yellow devil!" breathed Jimmy. He struggled futilely with his bonds.

Regan suddenly broke. His voice crashed hoarsely into the charged atmosphere: "He hasn't got any damn papers—he'd have used them before this! He can't have—! do y' hear!" He snarled like a frightened animal.

Impassively, H'sin Tung turned smoldering eyes upon him. "It will be well for you to keep silent!" He spat the last word.

"Silent, hell!" babbled Regan. "Put him away—he'll squeal! He'll spill his guts to the Old Man, I'll do time! We'll all do time! He's a thieving spy, I tell you!"

"Silence!" hissed H'sin Tung. Regan fell back. He ran the tip of his tongue over dry lips. A furtive, cunning gleam entered his eyes.

H'sin Tung turned again to Jimmy: "You—!"

The man with the withered hand interrupted with a staccato burst of excited chattering. He gestured toward Jimmy, hissed the word *ling chiu*. With H'sin Tung, he hurriedly left the cabin.

Jimmy wondered. Of the few Chinese words in his vocabulary, *ling*

chiu was outstanding. Literally, it meant "coffin of the spirit". They had just become aware then that the papers might have been concealed in one of the coffins.

Waiting until they were well clear, Blackie Regan crept stealthily to Jimmy's side. Infinite cunning shone from his eyes. "I'm your friend!" he whispered hoarsely. I had to pull that stuff so they wouldn't get wise. That yellow rat will get both of us—kill us!" He shuddered.

HE glanced slyly about. "I've got a gun. When I get the light—make for that door!" He pointed to a door near the couch, opening on deck. Then, stooping, with a pocket knife he swiftly cut Jimmy's bonds.

Every faculty on edge, Jimmy's mind functioned with exquisite clarity. Blackie Regan was yellow, desperate—the typical cornered rat fighting for his life. Jimmy's eyes flashed about the murky cabin. They rested for a moment on a small chair near the couch.

H'sin Tung and the man with the withered hand re-entered, crossed to the table. Regan, with a swift glance at Jimmy, turned after them. There was a crash of broken glass, brutish cries—the room was plunged into darkness!

With a lightning-like move, Jimmy grabbed the chair. He clattered it against the door Regan had pointed out to him. Instantly two wicked tongues of flame belched toward the sound in quick succession! Two staccato reports ripped and tore through the small cabin! Jimmy dove silently, blindly, at Regan, located by the gun fire. He got him low with his full weight, smashing him breathless against the bulkhead. At the same time he grabbed for the gun, got it by the muzzle. With a swift jerk it was his. He brought it down on Regan's skull. There was a dull thud,

a moan—a heavy fall. The light came on. Jimmy stood with Regan's gun leveled at H'sin Tung!

"PUT 'em up!" he snapped. "High!" All hands stretched toward the deckhand. "One move out of any of these rats and you're going to get it!" rasped Jimmy to H'sin Tung. H'sin Tung was impassive. A smoldering, red glow fired his eyes. Jimmy started slowly backward toward the door.

The slightest of sounds came from behind him. For an instant, his horrified eyes caught the gleam of a knife blade reflected in the polished paneling behind H'sin Tung! Whirling, jerking to one side, he crashed a bullet into the body of a coolie whose knife grazed Jimmy's shoulder as he fell!

Even as he turned, the rest leaped upon him! A heavy blow on the wrist of his gun arm paralyzed his fingers. He dropped the gun. He drove a smashing left into an evil, yellow face. A heavy weapon struck a glancing blow on the side of his head. His knees bent—he felt himself slipping—the pack closed in, a writhing, snarling mass—

A sudden thunder of heavily shod feet pounded across the deck outside! The doors burst open. Gleaming turbans, rifles, flashing teeth—the stalwart forms of fiercely bearded Sikh police filled the murky cabin. Above the bedlam that followed, Captain McHeltie's sharp commands rang out. Jimmy struggled painfully to his feet. He did not seem to be seriously damaged. A firm arm was about his shoulders; the unsteady voice of Wong Koo spoke in his ear: "Slowly—the Gods have smiled, you have escaped the place of death."

Jimmy's throat tightened. He gripped Wong Koo's hand in silent thanks. Wong Koo's eyes glowed; his debt had been paid.

Suddenly Jimmy remembered. "Wait here—!" he whispered. Captain McHeltie and the police were lining up the prisoners. Slipping unnoticed through the door, Jimmy silently crossed the deck to the ancient brass cannon.

Reaching into its black muzzle, where he had dropped them just as he was attacked, Jimmy drew from it the folded papers. He was beginning to have an attachment for the brass cannon. Thrice it had served him.

THE Old Man was going through the papers found in the drawer of H'sin Tung's table when his J. O. returned. Jimmy threw the packet upon the table. The Old Man looked up at him, then picked the batch up and called for Wong Koo. Explanations could come later.

When the smoke had cleared away, Captain McHeltie, a look of grim satisfaction on his face, said to Jimmy:

"Good work, Mr. Farquhar! We have evidence here that one of those coffins was stolen as part of a plot to defraud the company of a huge sum by suit for its disappearance. They'd have paid, too. Too much revenue involved. Those two steerage crewmen confessed that this beauty—"

He paused for an instant, gestured toward the abject figure of Blackie Regan.

"This beauty paid them to stage that fight. But they hadn't bargained to be locked up. We found incriminating evidence in Regan's room that cleared you completely. But by that time, you both had disappeared!

"When Wong came with the information that you had located the coffins and were in danger of your life, I began to have some idea of what was going on!"

Turning to the Number One policeman, the Old Man barked: "Well, round them up and let's get going!"

DEVIL'S BREW

Jim Ballard Bucks a Tribal Tabu on the Dangerous Trail of a White Panther in the Depths of the Jungle

By HAL FIELD LESLIE

Author of "Jungle Justice," "The Ten-Year Bullet," etc.

THE moon-drenched jungles surrounding the 'Ndorobo village were aquiver to the sinister throbbing of great skin drums. A savage, rhythmic pulsation in the night, which by the sheer force of endless repetition, had become an integral part of the quickened hammering of Jim Ballard's pounding heartbeats.

Under different circumstances, Ballard might have thrilled—as he had thrilled on countless lonely African nights before—to the compelling savagery of the sound. But on this night, those wildly throbbing drums had for Jim Ballard a blood chilling significance. For he was lying naked on the floor of one of those 'Ndorobo huts, a helpless prisoner, bound securely with cutting ropes of twisted fiber. Those throbbing drums were the sinister heralds of his own doom!

Wrenching desperately at his bonds, his ears tortured by the ceaseless, ominous promise of those drums, Jim Ballard's mind drove sharply back to the moment of his fateful trail-side meeting with big Ben Clymer—

It was the day before yesterday, and mid-afternoon. Ballard, leading his safari with a sweat-pulling length of stride, that had the naked torsos of his twelve Swahili porters glistening like drenched ebony, was making on toward the 'Ndorobo village that was his objective. Rounding a bend of the trail, he came

abruptly face to face with Ben Clymer.

Clymer was just emerging from the jungle, by way of a narrow game path that joined with the broader trail which Ballard and his blacks were following. Clymer was carrying a double-barreled shotgun in the crook of his arm; and behind him were two of his black boys, bearing a score of brightly plumaged birds which he had shot. Clymer, among other things, was something of a naturalist.

Clymer's red-bearded countenance darkened when he saw Ballard, tall and lean and tanned mahogany brown, swing toward him. And Ballard's muscular hand hovered a bit closer to the holstered automatic on his thigh. Ballard was taking no chances with a man's known hatred.

BEN CLYMER did hate Ballard—hated him with all the bitterness that can be distilled from the dregs of what once was friendship.

Until a year ago, these two had been partners in the dangerous game of taking rare and savage specimens of jungle beasts alive. And Ballard had trusted Clymer; trusted him so implicitly, that he had left practically all the business end in Clymer's hands. Their partnership had lasted until the day of Ballard's chance discovery, that Clymer had been consistently double-crossing him in the sale of their hard-won trophies.



Ballard came panting to the rim of the pitfall

Ballard, with a directness that was characteristic of him in all matters, had promptly gone to the mat with Clymer; and he had managed, despite Ben Clymer's greater bulk, to administer a righteous manhandling that Clymer never would forget.

Since that explosive day, the two had gone their separate ways. Although they were engaged in the same profession, their paths had never chanced to cross—until now. And the lure that had drawn them here, was a *white* black panther—a rare albino of that most savage beast, pounds and size considered, of any that roam the jungles. The brute, alive and in good condition, would bring at least five thousand dollars in any market.

Ballard's feelings toward Ben Clymer, was the contempt of a square man for a crooked one. And Clymer's regard for Ballard, was the characteristic hatred of a dishonest man for the one who has unmasked him. Given these ingredients, and a sinister pot like the African jungles to stew them in, and almost any sort of devil's brew is likely to result.

However, Clymer seemed disposed to make no hostile move. With an inscrutable expression in the depths of the pale green eyes shadowed by his sun helmet, he quietly waited Ballard's approach. Quietly—but there was no concealing the annoyance that twitched at his heavy upper lip.

Ballard was the first to break the

silence that lay heavily between the two.

"I rather expected to run into you, Clymer. They told me, back in Nimule, that you'd had the rumor concerning the existence of a white panther hereabouts. Have you got your traps out yet?"

Clymer's red brows lifted. "White panther?" he repeated softly. "I don't know what you're talking about, Ballard."

"Come, come," said Ballard impatiently. "No use beating around the bush with me. You're here after that albino."

"So you say," retorted Clymer. "But I'm not hunting any albino panther—if there is such a thing. I'm merely getting together a collection of birds, and expecting to do a little trading for ivory on the side."

"YOU can't throw me off with that chaff, so why bother trying," said Ballard evenly. "It's an open game, Clymer—and if you can take the beast first, that's your good fortune. But my traps are going out."

"I'm wishing you luck," said Clymer—and there was a ghost of a grim smile behind his red beard. "Go to it."

"I intend to," declared Ballard crisply "I'm—"

He was interrupted by an urgent tugging at the sleeve of his khaki shirt. It was the hand of his wiry little headman, Juma, seeking his attention. The blacks, with no quarrel between them, had been fraternizing unnoticed while their masters talked.

And from Clymer's boys, Juma had learned something that had set his eyes to rolling whitely.

"*Bwana Makuba!* Great Master—listen! White panther is *tabu!*"

Clymer's face went livid with sud-

den fury. Three great strides brought him within reach of his tale-bearing blacks. With two sweeps of his big arm, he sent them spinning away from Ballard's porters. And the stinging lash of his tongue drove them cowering back into the narrow trail.

"So that's the game," observed Ballard quietly. "A tribal *tabu*, and you wanted me to walk into it with my eyes shut. Thanks."

"It was up to you to find it out for yourself," retorted Clymer surlily. "I had to."

"And now that the beans are spilled," said Ballard thinly, "I suppose you'd advise me to take a leaf out of your book—masquerade as a trader and watch my chance to take the panther and get away with it."

Clymer growled in his throat. "I'm advising you to face about and forget that white cat. And if you're too pig-headed to see it that way—well, a word to the village chief, as to what you're after, should do the trick. Tribal vengeance isn't a pretty thing."

"You're tossing a fuse that's lighted at both ends," said Ballard steadily. "What's to prevent me from passing the same word about *your* real purpose here?"

CLYMER lipped a tailored cigarette, set it going with a flip of his silver pocket lighter, and blew an insolent cloud in Ballard's direction.

"Try it," he sneered, "and see how far it gets you. The chief is convinced I'm a trader."

"You needn't lose any sleep over it," said Ballard rockily. "I don't play your sort of game, Clymer—not either way. I'm a hunter, straight out, and I don't care who knows it."

So declaring, Ballard swung and issued a crisp order to Juma. The wiry little headman snapped to; and

a moment later Ballard's porters were following his determined stride along the trail to the native village.

Had Ballard troubled to glance back across his swinging shoulder, he would have seen big Ben Clymer standing spread-legged in the path, with ominous flames of hatred flickering in his pale green eyes.

It was near sundown when Jim Ballard emerged from the thickening shadows of the trail, and saw before him the native village that was its end. Beyond the thatched huts under the mahogos, the two tents of Ben Clymer's outfit were twin gray splotches against the far jungle wall.

As Ballard entered the clearing, he became aware of a stir of activity among the mahogos. His lifted hand halted the safari; and to his ears came the sound of small drums beaten in quick tempo. "Someone die," said Juma quickly at his elbow. "That is funeral dance."

BALLARD nodded. "I'll wait here with the boys. You go find out what it's all about."

Juma trotted on toward the mahogos. At Ballard's quiet word, the porters thankfully put down their burdens to rest. Ballard rolled himself a cigarette.

The little headman was quickly back with the information he had sought. And his eyes were rolling whitely, as they had rolled back there on the trail.

"The white panther, *Bwana!* In the quiet of today's high sun, the beast came like a white spirit from the jungle. The first born son of Mel-ell-ek, the chief, was asleep under a tree. The son of Mel-ell-ek is no more."

Ballard whistled with soft concern. "Did they trail the killer?"

Juma shook his head vehemently. "The white panther is *tabu*, *Bwana*. Very bad things happen if—"

"Oh, hold your old woman's tongue," interrupted Ballard good-naturedly. "Get the tents pitched and a tea-fire going—we've got to be ready to receive His Royal Nibs. And if I can't convince him he's a fool to hold a killer in *tabu*—well, we'll go ahead with a try for the beast, anyway."

Darkness was beginning to enfold the clearing, when at last Ballard saw the 'Ndorobo chief and half a dozen of his followers coming toward his fire, whereon a small pail of tea was simmering. More for its possible effect on the savage mind, than from any particular feeling of superiority, Ballard remained seated beside the fire. He lifted his right hand in silent jungle greeting.

Mel-ell-ek was a stalwart black, with a corporation that would have done credit to a bank director. His badge of authority was a scepter of short thorn-wood, tipped with a curiously carved ball of solid ivory. And he wore, quite proudly, an ancient Sam Browne belt, from which depended a long-bladed knife in a skin sheath.

Five of his followers were husky, naked spearmen—splendid specimens of the deep jungle, elephant hunting 'Ndorobo. The sixth was a wrinkled old black with a hideously painted face, who wore a monkey-skin bag suspended from his skinny neck by a crimson cord of twisted fiber. Ballard's alert eye marked this old one down as the tribal witch doctor with his bag of heathen tricks.

GRAVELY returning Ballard's wordless salutation, the chief squatted down beside the fire. Ballard spoke quietly across his shoulder to Juma, ordered a dipper and sugar brought from the tent. Then he addressed the 'Ndorobo chief in his own tongue.

"I sorrow with a strong man over

the death of his first born son."

"Aye. The heart of the white man is good," responded the chief.

"And the heart of the white man's friend, Mel-ell-ek, shall be warmed by the white man's hospitality," said Ballard promptly.

Lit by fire-glow, the eyes of the 'Ndorobo gleamed with anticipation, as Ballard dumped a generous handful of sugar into the dipper, and poured atop it the golden tea. It would have been a sickening draught for a white man's palate—but Ballard knew his 'Ndorobo. He gravely stomached three swallows, to show the chief that it was good, then handed over the dipper.

WHILE the black chief was gustily enjoying the mess, Ballard rolled himself a cigarette. And as he mechanically struck a safety match to light the smoke, he became aware of the old witch doctor's eyes fixed upon him from the shadows. Or, rather, they were fixed upon the little box from which the magic fire-stick had come. And those eyes were filled with cupidity.

The chief finished his tea, stirred the dregs with his fingers, licked them clean, and put down the dipper.

"What brings the white man to the village of Mel-ell-ek? Does he come, like his brother of the red beard, to hunt for little birds and to make trade with Mel-ell-ek for the tusks of the elephant?"

"No," said Ballard steadily. "I come to capture the white panther."

If Ballard had struck the 'Ndorobo a blow in their collective faces, the result could not have been a quicker flare of hostility in savage eyes.

"The white panther is of the Gods," declared Mel-ell-ek heavily. "The white panther is *tabu*."

"The white panther," said Ballard calmly, "is a beast no different from his black brothers, except that his

hair happened to be white when he was born. And once the taste of 'Ndorobo blood is hot in his throat, he will thirst again. Does Mel-ell-ek sire his children to feed the killer of the jungles?"

For a moment the 'Ndorobo chief stared fixedly at Ballard; then he threw across his shoulder at the old witch doctor, a look of mingled perplexity and appeal. The response was immediate. The old fellow strode to the fire, leaned over Ballard and thumped his skinny chest.

"The white panther is of the Gods!" he croaked harshly. "The Gods have spoken to Mali. By the word of Mali, the white panther is *tabu*!"

"Then by the word of Mali," countered Ballard firmly, "the *tabu* shall be lifted. It is not good that the white panther be allowed to roam the jungles and feast upon the blood of the 'Ndorobo."

"Nor is it good to molest a creature of the Gods," cut in a heavy voice from the darkness beyond the nimbus of the fire—Ben Clymer's voice. "The wrath of the Gods will fall swiftly upon the 'Ndorobo, if they permit the white panther to be harmed."

THE blacks stirred uneasily. Ballard came swiftly to his feet, boiling with repressed anger. No doubt Clymer had been eavesdropping for several minutes, watching, waiting his chance to throw that word of warning to the superstitious blacks. Ballard itched to knuckle that word back between Clymer's teeth; but he was not foolhardy enough to disregard a shotgun in the hands of a man concealed by darkness. "The red-bearded one speaks with the tongue of a child," he said severely. "The 'Ndorobo are not children. The word of Mali shall lift the *tabu*."

For perhaps ten seconds the old witch doctor endured Ballard's commanding gray gaze. Then his eyes dropped and he began to fumble at his bag of charms.

"Tonight, when the moon looks upon the jungle," he mumbled, "Mali makes talk with the Gods."

So saying, the old witch doctor turned and stalked away toward the village. And after a brief moment, Mel-ell-ek rose—a bit reluctantly, Ballard fancied. However, the pull of tribal superstition was at the moment stronger than the growth of the seed Ballard had planted in his mind. Without further talk, the 'Ndorobo chief and his five spearmen followed old Mali into the darkness.

AND out of its velvet thickness came Ben Clymer's voice again, speaking softly.

"I noticed the way old devil-face looked at your match box, Ballard. And I'm wondering if he wouldn't just about give his right eye to possess my silver lighter. I think I'll make him a present of it."

"Bribe him, and be damned!" said Ballard curtly.

A malicious chuckle drifted back above the heaviness of Clymer's arrogant departing tread. It dispelled any doubt in Ballard's mind, as to just how the Gods were going to talk this night to Mali.

Ballard slept with the certainty that his pursuit of the white panther would have to be carried on in open defiance of the *tabu*.

* * * * *

Jim Ballard and his Swahilis were breaking out the gear when Mel-ell-ek, his spearmen and the old witch doctor appeared on the scene. Also came Ben Clymer, shotgun cradled on his arm, to view the proceedings.

The 'Ndorobo chief set the ball rolling, by asking Ballard the mean-

ing of his early morning activities. Very directly, Ballard told him that he was preparing to take the white panther.

"But the Gods have spoken again to Mali. The white panther must not be taken."

Ballard didn't miss the gleam of satisfaction in Ben Clymer's green eyes at these words of Mel-ell-ek. Ballard started to speak, thought better of it, turned his lean back upon his visitors, and by a sharp word gave added snap to the lagging moves of his Swahilis. As far as he was concerned, the matter of the *tabu* was closed. He was going ahead.

Quivering with anger at Ballard's disregard of his word, the old witch doctor confronted Mel-ell-ek, voicing dire prophecies of evil to come, if the white man be not restrained from his sacreligious purpose. And the spearmen, catching the spirit of the old man's frenzy, began to edge menacingly toward Ballard.

But Mel-ell-ek restrained them with a word of command. The 'Ndorobo chief had given much thought during the dark hours to the loss of his first born—and perhaps he secretly hoped that the white man would succeed in snaring the white panther. At any rate, he issued a decree that was not entirely without a certain cunning logic.

"The white man shall do as he wills. The white panther is of the Gods. Surely the Gods will take care of their own."

THE old witch doctor all but screamed his anger. But the chief had spoken, and there was nothing Mali could do about it. He stalked away toward his hut, muttering vengefully.

Ballard threw something like a grin at Ben Clymer. And the big man moved away, cursing.

Throughout that steaming day,

Ballard worked industriously in the jungles surrounding the 'Ndorobo village. With the practiced aid of his black boys, he constructed five traps for the white panther. Two of them were deep, cleverly covered pitfalls in narrow game trails; and three were cages of strong poles, with drop-slide doors, each baited enticingly with fresh meat.

At sundown Ballard returned wearily from his labors. And at the clearing's edge he was met by the 'Ndorobo chief and at least a score of spearmen. In the background hovered old Mali, an unholy gleam of triumph in his eyes.

BALLARD had a flashing hunch that all was not as it should be. It was confirmed by the ominous silence with which Mel-ell-ek confronted him, and with which the spearmen closed around him and his blacks.

"The words of Mali and the red-bearded one were true words," said Mel-ell-ek gravely. "The wrath of the Gods has fallen swiftly upon us. Not an hour ago, the mightiest of my hunters was stricken with sudden and painful death."

"Every man must die," said Ballard quietly, "when the time has come."

"Aye. But Kasuma was strong with youth," said Mel-ell-ek heavily. "He fell to the ground and died like a sick dog. That was surely the wrath of the Gods. The Gods must be appeased."

Ballard felt the short hairs at the back of his neck begin to crawl. Within the circle of gleaming spear-points, his Swahili boys were cowering in abject terror. The eyes of the 'Ndorobo chief took them in, and he spoke reassuringly.

"You are but tools of the white one's will. Tonight you lie guarded, but with the coming of the sun, your

feet shall be set upon the homeward trail. Be without fear, for only the white one shall be given to the Gods."

Ballard saw death riding in the eyes of the 'Ndorobo. And of a sudden he resolved to put as dear a price upon his life as he could. His hand darted toward his holstered automatic. But before his fingers could touch his weapon, the thorn-wood scepter of the 'Ndorobo chief swept out and upward; a vicious forehand swing that drove the heavy ivory ball smashing wickedly against his jaw. With it, came the blackness of utter insensibility.

When Jim Ballard regained consciousness, he was lying naked and bound on the dirt floor of one of those 'Ndorobo huts. The moon was up, and across the threshold lay the sinister shadows of spears. And those hellish drums were talking in the night.

Ballard could only guess at the exact manner of his ultimate end; but he had been long enough in contact with jungle savagery to be certain of its extreme unpleasantness. Skin crawling with the horror of it, he fought furiously against his bonds. But they held fast against the mightiest of his struggles, and the twisted fibers cut cruelly into his flesh.

Exhausted and beaten, he lay still. He had been in many a tight squeeze before, but this one topped them all. And he knew that he could not hope for any help from Ben Clymer. Clymer would be only too glad to see him die!

LYING there in the moon-shot darkness of the hut, panting like a trapped animal, Ballard became aware of a sudden, ominous pause in the hollow thudding of the drums. A moment later two brawn 'Ndorobo burst into the hut, seized him and

dragged him roughly out into the open.

A wild cry of triumph from a hundred savage throats greeted his appearance, and the drums began again their devilish song of doom. It was a sound to curdle the blood of any man; and Jim Ballard was no more than human. However, by a mustering of sheer grit, he battled down the horror that was in him; resolved to meet his end as a white man should, without visible flinching.

ON a clear space among the mahogos, a leaping fire was ablaze. It illumined redly the tree trunks, sent their shadows dancing weirdly into the night. In its ruddy light, the white eyeballs of the frenzied blacks gleamed wickedly. And the quivering spears that hemmed Ballard in were tipped with glistening death.

Some twenty yards away from the fire, two stout green stakes had been firmly planted in the ground. They were hardly two feet apart, and each was taller than a man. Swiftly the blacks stood Ballard against one of these stakes and bound him tightly there, facing the other.

Then, to the quickened beat of drums, came four men bearing the body of Kasuma, the hunter who had died by the wrath of the Gods. They lashed him upright to the second stake, face to face with Ballard. And with small twigs they propped the dead man's eyelids wide, so that his sightless orbs might silently accuse the white man, to the end.

Nor was Ballard left long in suspense as to what that end was going to be. For swiftly came the bearers of wood, heaping dry sticks and brittle fronds of sun-bleached palm around his legs.

Burned alive! No sane man could have withstood that certainty without cracking. Ballard did crack. His

agonized eyes swept the ring of savages surrounding him. He saw the hideous face of old Mali, the witch doctor; he saw Mel-ell-ek, the chief; and at the rear he saw the red-bearded countenance of Ben Clymer. Clymer, with his shotgun on his arm.

"Ben!" he screamed. "For God's sake, let me have it! Both barrels!"

For a moment Ben Clymer looked over the heads of the savages with an inscrutable expression in his pale green eyes. Then his lip twisted in a sneer and he deliberately turned his back.

That gesture of utter abandonment was enough to snap Jim Ballard back to himself. He hurled a bitter curse at Clymer, and began to wrench desperately at his bonds. Great beads of sweat stippled his forehead, and the straining muscles of his lean, hard body stood out in knots. But it was no use; the bonds that held him for the sacrifice were unyielding.

There came then to Jim Ballard that terrible calm which often comes to men who know they are about to die. Beaten, helpless, doomed, he stood quietly at the stake, watching—almost as if this thing were happening to an effigy instead of himself.

Around him now the naked savages began to whirl and leap and shake their gleaming spears. And over all was the beat of drums.

ALTHOUGH Jim Ballard didn't realize it, those drums were doing queer things to his brain; when of a sudden old Mali uttered a wild cry and plucked a blazing brand from the big fire and started toward him at a crab-like run, Ballard laughed aloud. The whole thing was a ghastly joke. He tore his eyes from the old witch doctor's deadly advance, and took his first fair look

at the face of his grim companion of the stakes—just to see how the poor devil might be taking it.

Jim Ballard had one steady look at that rigidly contorted countenance so close to his own; one deep look into the muddy balls of those wide and staring eyes. Then sanity swept back upon him like the rush of a clean wind. For he had seen enough to convince him that the death of Kasuma had been no mere gesture of fate, happening in coincidence with the breaking of the *tabu*!

BALLARD'S head snapped sharp around, and he saw old Mali standing before him on spread legs. The look of a fiend was the old witch doctor's painted face. With a savage cry, he swung the flaming brand in a hissing arc past Ballard's face—so close that Ballard's sharp intake of breath drew deeply of its trail of acrid smoke.

Ballard expected to see the flaming brand plunge into the rubble at his feet. Instead, old Mali sent it hurtling end over end back to the big fire. Then his claw-like hand darted into his monkey-skin bag, came out with a bright glint of metal—Ben Clymer's silver pocket lighter. A small click, and the old witch doctor had magic flame in his hand—a small flame, but potent enough to unleash for Jim Ballard the tortures of hell!

Through straining eyeballs, Jim Ballard saw old Mali stoop to touch his small flame to the fire-stuff. The tendons of his throat seemed on the point of bursting with his frantic effort to cry out. Then, just as the silver lighter was about to make contact, speech did break through. A single, almost inarticulate cry, but so commanding and so surprising, that the old witch doctor recoiled.

Ballard could talk now; and he seized upon the moment of reprieve with a voice that cut sharp and clear

above the thudding of the drums.

"I speak for the ears of Mel-ell-ek! Kasuma did not die by the anger of the Gods! *He died by the hand of a man!*"

Snarling, the old witch doctor lunged forward with his flame. But Mel-ell-ek leaped and shouldered him away. With upraised hand the 'Ndorobo chief commanded the drums to silence. To Ballard's sharpened senses, the bearing of Mel-ell-ek revealed no great unwillingness to believe that astounding assertion he had made. At least, he was to be given the opportunity to speak.

"In the face of death, I speak to Mel-ell-ek with a straight tongue. Mali's *tabu* of the white panther is not good. Nor have the Gods angered at the 'Ndorobo for allowing me to violate it.

"Kasuma died as did the countless animals of the jungle struck by his poisoned arrows—only Kasuma died from being given, in food or drink, the kind of poison used by white men to preserve the skins of birds!"

THE countenance of the 'Ndorobo chief betrayed his quickened interest. And old Mali—perhaps sensing the turn events might take, and wishing above all things to save his reputation by disclosing a knowledge that was already his by virtue of an observant eye—began suddenly to roll his head and beat upon his skinny breast.

"The Gods are whispering to Mali!" he cried. "They tell Mali that Kasuma drank much sweet tea, a little while before he died, in the camp of the *Bwana* who hunts the little birds!"

"And that tea was poisoned by a man who hates me as the 'Ndorobo hate the vipers of the jungle!" declared Ballard vigorously. "If Mel-ell-ek will search the belongings of the red-bearded one—"

"Damn you, Ballard!" That was the voice of Clymer; Ben Clymer, betrayed by the rage that was in him. The click of twin gun hammers was sharp in the night. Up came the weapon, gleaming dull in firelight.

BUT before Clymer could trigger the weapon, a wiry, head-down figure catapulted from the outer shadows and rammed him squarely in the short ribs. The breath left his body in an explosive grunt, and the shotgun flew from his grasp as he and his tackler went down.

Little Juma—for it was he who had seized upon the moment when all the 'Ndorobo were intent upon the sacrifice, to steal from the hut and linger fearfully among the tree-shadows—was knocked senseless by the vigor of his butting charge. Clymer, however, struggled dazedly to hands and knees and began to grope for his fallen gun.

Mel-ell-ek moved with the wisdom and decisiveness that becomes a chief. Out flashed his knife and the blade bit viciously at the twisted fibers that bound Ballard to the stake. And as Ballard struggled free, the 'Ndorobo chief pressed the haft of the knife into his hand.

Ballard, fired with grim fury by the treachery that had brought him so close to a horrible death, needed no urging. The startled blacks gave way before his plunging rush.

Out of the tail of his eye, Clymer caught Ballard's naked charge of fury. Terror filled him. And with no thought except escape from the vengeance of that gleaming steel, he lunged to his feet and fled blindly for the sanctuary of the jungles.

And Ballard, left alone to his chase of retribution by Mel-ell-ek's sharp command, plunged wildly after Clymer. However, because of those wings of terror that were lifting Clymer's legs across the moonlit

clearing, he failed to overtake the man before the jungle wall received him. Here the odds were heavily with Clymer; for he was clothed, and there were shoes upon his feet. But Ballard, almost heedless of the rip of thorns and the scourge of rasping vines, hung grimly to the crashing sounds of his quarry's headlong flight.

Clymer twisted, turned and gained considerable headway. Then all at once his crashing ceased. Listening, breathing heavily, Ballard suspected Clymer might be lying low, in hopes he'd be passed by. So Ballard thought—until his ears caught the faint, receding thud of leathered footfalls. He knew, then, that Clymer had crashed through to some jungle trail, and was making desperate haste along the clear path it afforded.

FIGHTING vine and thorn and creeper, Ballard himself drove to the trail. And with redoubled speed he plunged along in hot pursuit. He was making time, gaining leap by leap as fallen tree trunks here and there obstructed the way, when of a sudden the night ahead was rent by the squall of a jungle cat, and the scream of a man in mortal terror.

Ballard drove his flying legs. And shortly he came panting to the ragged rim of one of those deep pitfalls that he and his blacks had dug for the white panther. A shaft of high moonlight, lancing down through an opening in the laced branches overhead, illumined the bottom of the pit. And it disclosed to Jim Ballard a surprising sight.

The white panther had been taken. And in his headlong flight, Ben Clymer had blundered in upon the savage beast. Now Clymer was lying on his back, big arms feebly flailing at the white devil that was atop him, worrying him with fang and claw.

That first hurried glance filled

Ballard with such exultation as might have been felt, in like circumstance, by any savage of the jungles. But a quick revulsion shook him. Although Ben Clymer deserved no other fate than death, it went against Ballard's grain to see him lying helpless at the mercy of the killer cat.

WITHOUT thought of the risk that he himself was running, Ballard tightened his grip on the haft of Mel-ell-ek's knife and slid down across the lip of the pitfall.

As he struck the bottom, crouching, the big white killer of the jungles whirled in swift attack. Ballard met the creature's snarling leap with an upward lunge of the blade. The big cat screamed fiendishly as the steel ripped home.

Ballard, knocked violently against the wall of the pit by the creature's flying weight, instinctively threw up his left arm to protect his throat, and lunged again with the knife. The big cat twisted like a snake, and under the flash of a streaking paw the knife went spinning. Perhaps sensing that this bright thing was the instrument of its hurts, the white panther whirled and fell upon it, tooth and claw.

Ballard knew that another moment would see renewal of the big cat's attack upon himself. Desperately he threw his weight upon the snarling creature's back. His long legs twisted in a crushing scissors hold around the panther's loins. With his left hand he got an iron grip on one foreleg. And the sinewy fingers of his right hand dug mercilessly into the furry throat for a strangle hold.

He got it. But had the big cat not been fast weakening from those two thrusts of the knife, the threshing struggle that followed would have ended disastrously for Jim Ballard. As it was, he was nearly spent when at last the snaky muscles of the

big white panther ceased to ripple.

With his lean ribs heaving like a bellows, Ballard got slowly to his feet and looked down at Ben Clymer. Clymer, with his bearded throat half torn away, was dead.

Leaning against the wall of the pit, looking grimly down upon the man whom he probably would have killed had he come upon him fairly, Jim Ballard was suddenly struck by the twisted irony of the situation. In his effort to save the life of the man who had so nearly cost him the loss of his own, he had destroyed the creature for which he had hazarded so greatly!

HOWEVER, there was no use regretting spilled milk—or dead albino panthers, either. Ballard shrugged away the thought of five thousand dollars lost, and considered how he was going to get himself out of the deep pitfall. Looking upward, he was surprised to see a ring of awed 'Ndorobo faces surrounding the rim. Mel-ell-ek and his spearmen, guided by the screams of the panther, had arrived in time to witness the end of Ballard's hand-to-claw encounter with the beast. Willing arms reached down and pulled him from the pit.

"It is true that the Gods take care of their own," said the 'Ndorobo chief gravely. "The *Bwana Makuba* is a brave man. He has delivered the people of Mel-ell-ek from the fangs of the white devil. And that he may not go unrewarded, he shall return from the village of Mel-ell-ek with as many tusks of the elephant as his Swahili men can carry on their shoulders. Mel-ell-ek has spoken."

And hearing him, Jim Ballard thought no more upon his loss of the white panther. For, with the single exception of loyal little Juma, the shoulders of his black boys were broad and strong.

House of Lost Faces



Rusty felt himself being forced through the window

Follow "Rusty" Cameron on His Exciting Pursuit of a Wanted Man in the Mountainous Regions of Tibet

By WILLIAM E. POINDEXTER

Author of "Murder Ship," "No Risk," etc.

"RUSTY" CAMERON, hunter of men in the far places of the earth, toiled sturdily up the narrow trail that had been worn deep and smooth by generations of plodding feet. He paused for a moment to fill his short brier pipe, and stood, hands in the pockets of his leather coat, to gaze out across the chaos of snow-capped mountain

peaks of the Himalayas. Bleak and menacing, they seemed to crowd about him as if warning him to turn back while there was yet time.

He stood utterly at ease, puffing placidly at his pipe, apparently unmindful of the fact that one step would send him hurtling to a crashing death upon the rocks below. Men who knew him best had said that

Cameron did not know the meaning of fear, but then—no one ever knew just what went on behind that smiling, rugged mask which was his face; behind him his burro grunted and groaned her pleasure at resting.

SOMEWHERE in that vast upheaval of nature, was the cunning and desperate murderer whom the police of more than one country had sought without success. But Cameron felt that he was now nearing the end of the trail.

Two months before, in Rangoon, he had sat at the bedside of Jean de Fouchette, who was dying.

"I've trailed that devil half around the world," de Fouchette had said weakly, "but now I'm finished. The Home Office wants you to take my place, as you are the only one of our men now in India. I have reliable information that Alexis Criel has taken refuge in the monastery of St. Sebastian up yonder in the mountains of Tibet. I've drawn you a map indicating how to reach it after you get into the mountains. You will carry on?"

"Of course," Rusty Cameron had responded simply.

"You have heard of the man," de Fouchette had gone on in a voice growing steadily weaker, "but you will find a photograph among my papers. In any event he will probably be the only visitor at St. Sebastian within the last two months, so you can make no mistake.

"I need not warn you to be careful. Criel is a vicious and desperate man. He has killed several times, but he kills without bloodshed whenever possible. He has an uncontrollable horror of the sight of blood—a complex shared by many men."

Rusty nodded. He had heard that peculiarity of Criel's discussed on more than one occasion, and had often wondered at the nature of a

man who could kill without a tremor, yet who shrank in horror from the sight of a little blood.

"Father Anselm is the head of the religious order at St. Sebastian," de Fouchette continued. "Most of those monasteries are devoted to Lamaism, but I have heard strange tales concerning this one. The natives have a term for the place which means, roughly translated, 'The House of Lost Faces'. You will find Father Anselm a very kind and gentle old man. He may not help you to get Criel, but neither will he put any obstacles in your way."

Upon the death of de Fouchette, Rusty Cameron had immediately set out from Rangoon, crossing the Upper Burma country until he came to the Brahmaputra River. There he had outfitted, and guided by the rough map, pushed his way deeper and deeper into the mountains.

IT was not until a week later that he looked among du Fouchette's papers and found to his dismay that the photograph of Alexis Criel was missing. He had but a general description of the man, a description that would fit thousands of others, but then, as de Fouchette had said, he could hardly make a mistake. Visitors in that far land would be few.

With a final glance at the white mountain tops which were being painted blood-red by the setting sun, Cameron turned on his heel. The trail grew steadily steeper, and a half hour later Cameron paused in bewilderment. The trail seemed to end squarely against the face of the cliff, but peering through the gloom he saw that it was merely the black walls of a massive stone building.

He had no doubt but what he had reached his destination. The monastery was built on the very edge of the precipice which fell sheer for a thousand feet. It stood black and

forbidding, and Rusty felt a momentary sense of dread. There was no reason for it and he shook the feeling from him impatiently and strode briskly forward, loosening the revolver in his holster.

He raised the brass knocker and sent a clatter echoing back from the face of the mountain. After a wait of several minutes, the door swung slowly open, and a monk stood before him, garbed in a black hood and robe made from some coarse material.

GLANCING at the man's face, Rusty was conscious of a shock of surprise. The monk's countenance was like old, yellow parchment, but there was not a line upon it, and not a trace of emotion crossed its serene smoothness.

"Enter, my son," said the monk quietly. "You are quite welcome."

"That is kind of you, Father," Rusty replied, and stepped through the door. He had noted that the man seemed to speak without a movement of the lips. Only the eyes seemed alive. He entered a long, bare room, lighted by candles, the lofty ceiling of which was lost in the darkness above. The walls were of bare stone, as was the floor, and the room was furnished only with a few rough benches. At the far end was a small blaze in a fire-place, made necessary by the extreme cold of the nights.

A group of five monks standing by the fire turned as Rusty entered. All of them were clad in the disguising black hoods and robes, and as Rusty glanced indifferently at their faces, he almost gasped aloud. Each one of those faces seemed made of yellow parchment and without a line of expression on any of them. Feature by feature they were exactly the same. Not a trace of difference could he discover in them.

Then suddenly he laughed within himself. The reason was obvious.

Each of the men wore skin masks, all made from the same cast, which effectually hid their identities. As he turned back to the monk who had bade him welcome, he thought he saw a trace of amusement in the man's eyes. "You observe," he said quietly, "that all of the brothers who take the vow, lose their own identities and merge themselves with our Holy Order."

Rusty nodded. He understood now why the natives called it "The House of Lost Faces." They had drawn near the fire and Rusty seated himself on one of the benches. "I am Father Anselm," volunteered the monk.

"I have heard of you," returned Rusty. "My name is Cameron. Now, I'm going to tell you my business here without delay. I am in search of a man who came here sometime within the last two months. This man is a black murderer and I have authority to take him back with me."

He thought that he felt Father Anselm start suddenly, but he was not sure. "There are three men who have come here within the last two months," the monk said after a moment.

RUSTY looked at him thoughtfully. "The man I want is named Alexis Criel," he pursued.

Father Anselm made a slight gesture with his hand. "Names that the world outside knows are never mentioned here."

Rusty raised a quizzical eyebrow. "This man," he went on determinedly, "has dark hair and eyes, is about five feet ten, and weighs something like a hundred and seventy pounds. Recognize him now?"

Rusty was watching the man's eyes closely without appearing to do so, and thought he caught a gleam of mingled amusement and malice in them.

"Probably a dozen of the brothers

would answer to that general description," he said dryly. "And odd as it may seem, the three newcomers who have identified themselves with us, likewise answer the description in a general way.

"Do you realize that you have just described what would be called the 'average man'?"

"Would you mind letting me interview these three men at once?" Cameron asked quietly.

FATHER ANSELM bowed and left the room. A few minutes later he returned, three of the black-robed brethren with him. There was not a trace of difference in any of them, and the skin masks effectively hid any expression of their faces. Rusty surveyed them with an inward sense of dismay as he arose to his feet.

"Alexis Criel," he said slowly and impressively, "I want you for murder. I have the authority to take you back to America with me, and I intend to do so at once." None of the three moved or replied.

"I suppose none of you are Alexis Criel?" he said sharply.

They shook their heads in denial, and Rusty shrugged his shoulders. "I know that Criel came here during the last ten weeks. One of you is the man I want. Now, I'm going to lay my cards on the table," he said with an air of complete candor. He did not say that he was laying all of his cards on the table. He still had one up his sleeve, but he wasn't quite sure whether it was an ace of trumps, or a deuce.

"I have only a general description of Alexis Criel, and Father Anselm tells me that all three of you answer to that description. Apparently that places me in rather a hole, eh? I can't take you all back. Well, I'm going to drop it for the moment, but let me tell you this. I'm leaving here

inside of two days, and when I leave, Criel is going with me. Get it?"

He watched the three men closely for any betraying glance or gesture, but there was none. He knew he could strip those masks from their faces, but that would help him little. He determined to wait his chance, and play his hidden card at the proper moment.

"Criel," he spoke again, "you're a cunning devil, and you think you've got me stumped. All right, but remember, I'm going to take you back with me. There's no use trying to escape from here either," he added as an afterthought. "The only trail out is through the pass, and my men are guarding it night and day. That's all."

THIS was untrue but a lie more or less in the line of duty meant little to Rusty. He dismissed the men with a short gesture and turned to Father Anselm.

Although his glance had appeared casual, he would know those three men when he saw them again, by a curiously frayed place on the sleeve of one, a broken finger-nail of another, and a tiny scar on the back of the third's hand. He could identify Father Anselm by a mole on his throat which the mask did not quite cover.

"Father," he said, "if you'll give me something to eat now, and a place to sleep, I'll appreciate it. Climbing these mountains all day gives one an appetite."

The monk turned and led the way from the room. He went down a long stairs, lighting the way with a candle, and hesitated in front of a door.

"While we are here, my son," he said, "there is a room that might interest you. It is something that few have seen." He pushed open the door and held the candle high above his head.

Rusty stepped through the door and looked about the room uncomprehendingly, then swore softly to himself at what he saw. The place was fitted up as a torture chamber, and would have done credit to any used during the Spanish Inquisition. There were wheel and rack, the thumb screw and a devilish machine that, placed over the victim's head, would slowly crush out his brains.

Cameron had seen such things before in various parts of the world, but there was a difference about these that for a moment escaped him.

THEN he remembered. Those other torture machines he had seen were rusted almost beyond use, while these seemed to have been oiled recently.

"Good God, man," he said harshly, "you don't mean to tell me these damnable things are used now?"

"To be sure not," Father Anselm replied composedly. "These are merely interesting relics of a medieval age, and are never used. They—"

"What's that?" Cameron cut in sharply, holding up his hand for silence. From beyond a closed door there came the faint sound of moaning. It was steady, continuous, terrible, and it sent a sudden chill of horror over Cameron.

"Ah, that!" said Father Anselm, and Rusty would have sworn that the man was smiling behind his yellow mask. "That is one of the brothers whom we have found necessary to punish for breaking certain of our regulations. But the brother is not in physical pain. We punish only by solitary confinement, and he moans because his sins lie heavily upon his soul."

"Father Anselm, you're a ruddy old liar!" said Cameron, but he said it to himself and no trace of the thought appeared on his smiling face. Rusty had observed too many injured men

not to know that that moan was one of extreme physical suffering, but he said nothing further concerning it.

As the monk turned about to leave the room, Rusty stuck close to his side. He was not minded to take the risk of being locked in that room of horrors. He was aware of a growing distrust of Father Anselm, although the man had been represented to him as a model of gentleness.

"As gentle as a mad dog, and I'll gamble my soul on it," he muttered grimly to himself. The monk led him first to a room where he was served with black bread, a hot, savory soup, and what he thought was goat's milk. He ate hungrily, and was then led up the stairs to a dark, cold room in which was nothing but a rough wooden bench and a cot.

WHEN the monk had departed on noiseless feet, Rusty caught up the candle and examined the room and the door carefully. There was no key in the lock. He took a cartridge from his belt, twisted the bullet from its case with his teeth, and deliberately hammered the lead into the key-hole.

He was taking no chances of being locked in while he was asleep. He pushed the bench against the door so that it could not be opened without making a noise. Then he blew out the candle, lay down on the cot, and drew the blankets over him.

But tired as he was, he could not sleep. A subtle air of danger and treachery seemed to pervade the grim old monastery, and for some reason which he could not quite fathom, he distrusted Father Anselm more than any of the rest.

He was not certain how he was going to identify Alexis Criel, but he was confident that the matter would work itself out in time. He was equally sure that Criel would make an attempt to kill him, if the chance

presented itself, rather than risk possible detection and capture.

But what troubled him more than anything else was that low piteous moaning he had heard while he was in the torture chamber. The more he thought about it, the more uneasy he grew.

"Agony of soul, my eye!" he muttered wrathfully. "That old buzzard was lying to me, and I know it. Whoever was doing that moaning was suffering agony of the body, and I'll bet it was caused by torture. They wouldn't oil those devices just to make 'em look pretty."

AFTER a long time during which he could not sleep, Rusty sat up in sudden determination. He felt that he had to find out about that moaning he had heard. Perhaps it was no affair of his, and then again perhaps it was.

He slipped off his boots, made sure that his Colt was ready in the holster, and thrust his candle into his pocket. Noiselessly he moved the bench from in front of his door and stepped out into the corridor. The darkness was intense and for several minutes he stood listening but he could hear no sound.

With his hand on the wall he crept quietly along until he reached the stairs. He stole down them and proceeded carefully until he found the door of the torture chamber. To his intense relief he found it unlocked and went in. Closing the door behind him he paused to listen.

Again he heard the low, monotonous moaning and he made his way around the room until he came to the door on the other side.

Quietly he opened it, but found another door of bars on the other side of it, which was locked. The moaning came to him clearer now.

"Hello there," he said softly.

Instantly the moaning ceased. "Ah,

you have come to torture me again," said a gentle, patient voice.

Rusty's mouth tightened grimly. "I'm not going to torture you, pardner," he said gently. "I rather think I'm a friend of yours."

"Who are you? How came you here?" There was a faint note of hope in the other's voice.

"Cameron's my name, and I arrived this evening. Who are you and what have they been doing to you?"

"My name is Father Anselm," came the surprising answer. "At intervals during the past two months, three men have come here. As is our custom, we gave them welcome, and they have woefully abused it. I am sure they are all criminals and they are in league with each other. You are sure you are not one of them?"

C"CERTAINLY not, I'm your friend and an officer of the law," Cameron answered. "Then this bird who calls himself Father Anselm is an imposter, eh?"

"If there is one such who calls himself by that name, he is. He may be one of the members of our order whom they have forced to enact the role. I have been imprisoned for more than ten days, I think, and I do not know what may have taken place during that time. You see, they had heard the rumor that we have great treasures of gold and jewels hidden here, and they think I know where it is hidden. That is not true, of course. We dwell always in holy poverty.

"But they have imprisoned me and each day they torture me to make me tell. They have terrorized the brothers and they dare not aid me under threat of death. In fact I have told them that they must not interfere with these wicked men, and they obey me. But—feel my hands and arms if you do not believe how I have been tortured."

The sweet, patient voice stopped and there was a shuffling sound in the darkness. An instant later bony hands were thrust into his and he repressed a savage curse as he felt how the joints had been wracked and twisted and crushed.

A FURY of passionate rage shook him and left him hard and cold. For a moment he said nothing as he stood there in the darkness holding the mangled hands of the old man.

"Father," he said at last, "do you know which one of these men is named Alexis Criel?"

"I do not know," replied the other.

"All right—I'll find out. Now listen, Father, they won't torture you tonight, and I promise that I'll have you out of here some time tomorrow."

"My son," quavered the other, "God's blessing on you, but you must do nothing rash. These be desperate men and you are one against three."

"Now don't worry, Father. Just leave everything to me, and I'll have you out of here in the morning."

Cameron slipped quietly away. In the dark corridors outside he met no one and a few minutes later he had reached his room. He crawled immediately beneath the blankets, fully dressed, as he was chilled with cold. He realized now that he had three, perhaps four, enemies to contend with instead of one, and he could expect little or no help from the brethren.

He grinned faintly to himself in the darkness. He had a full day's work cut out for him on the morrow. He had to release Father Anselm from the dungeon, destroy those engines of torture, which he vowed should never be used again, and to discover which of the men was Alexis Criel.

As the oblivion of sleep crept upon him, he was muttering to himself. "Funny that a hard-boiled guy like

that should have a horror of a little blood. Now I wonder—"

He started wide awake as he fancied he heard a faint sound at the door. He remembered then that he had forgotten to push the bench against it when he came in. With a premonition of danger ringing clear within him, he arose on noiseless feet, a revolver in his hand.

CROUCHING there, tense and deadly, he waited with his finger on the trigger. Suddenly he was aware of a presence at his side and he ducked instinctively. As he did so a heavy object swished past his ear and crashed upon his left shoulder. If he had been less quick it would have crushed his head. With a gasp of pain he dropped his weapon from his nerveless hand, but before his assailant could strike again he had grappled with him, although his arm was almost useless.

As they stood locked for an instant in a straining grasp, Rusty realized at once that this was a powerful man, and not a monk who had spent his life within doors in religious study and sedentary pursuits. It was Alexis Criel without a doubt, and Rusty put forth all his strength in an effort to throw the man.

Panting, silent and deadly, they struggled there in the darkness, and each knew that life and death hung in the balance. They whirled about and Rusty's shoulder struck the heavy wooden shutter that barred the only window in the room. The shutter crashed from its hinges and he felt himself bent backward over the wide stone ledge.

He remembered then that the monastery was set on the edge of a precipice and he knew that Criel was attempting to throw him into the awful depths below. It was characteristic of Cameron that in the face of deadly peril he should become cool

and calculating. One moment of panic and indecision now, and it would be his last.

FOR an instant the two men rested, clutching each other tightly, their breath rasping in their throats. Then without warning, Criel shifted his grip, caught Rusty by the legs and attempted to lift him bodily. Cameron struggled violently, released his own grip and crashed both fists into the other man's face.

Bone-crushing blows they were, but he felt himself being forced further and further through the window. In imagination he could visualize the brief, hurtling descent, then the smashing impact on the rocks more than a thousand feet below that would blot him out forever. And Father Anselm would be left for these devils to torture.

In sudden blinding fury, Rusty risked everything in one last convulsive effort. Throwing his arms wide, he caught the window on either side, jerked one of his legs free and kicked mightily. His foot landed against Criel's chest and the man staggered back and crashed against the opposite wall. Rusty barely saved himself from falling by a writhing twist of his body, and dropped to the floor.

The other was upon him instantly, but Cameron met him with a smashing blow that landed high on the head and almost broke his hand. For a moment they stood toe to toe, swinging wildly, sometimes missing, sometimes landing with crushing impacts.

With a rising sense of elation, Rusty realized that he was slowly driving Criel back, breaking down his defense. He hurled himself forward, determined to end the struggle at once, when his foot struck the wooden bench and he fell headlong to the stone floor.

He was up instantly, but Criel had had enough. The man had vanished. With his breath coming in sobbing gasps, Rusty felt about for the door, but by the time he found it the corridor was silent and deserted. Criel had escaped him, after all. So great was his rage that for a moment Rusty was tempted to go in search of Criel, but reason prevailed and he turned back reluctantly. It would be suicide to prowling about those dark corridors now. He closed the door and tipped the bench against it.

"Well, she was a good fight," he murmured philosophically as he crawled beneath the blankets, "but there's going to be a better one in the morning!" And ten minutes later, despite the throb of his wounded shoulder, he was sleeping as peacefully as a baby.

When he awoke the sun was streaming in through the broken shutters, and he arose to peer out curiously. As far as he could see, the tumbled, snow-capped summits of the Himalayas stretched in awe-inspiring grandeur. As if to accentuate the loneliness, an eagle rode the wind on motionless wings. He looked below and drew back with an involuntary gasp. Then he laughed wryly. The death he had missed by inches last night was not a pleasant thing to contemplate.

HE drew on his boots, then kneaded the muscles of his arm and shoulder anxiously. There was a great black bruise where Criel's heavy club had descended, but fortunately the bone had not been broken. Making sure that his revolver was loose in the holster, he passed down the corridor without seeing any of the inmates of the monastery, and descended the stairs.

He came abruptly upon the man who called himself Father Anselm, who was on the point of entering the

torture chamber, and the two men faced each other for a moment in silence.

"I hope you slept well, my son?" said the man, his eyes gleaming oddly.

"Like a baby, Father!" Rusty lied cheerfully. "Never woke up after I hit the bed until a moment ago. Now listen, Father," he went on with sudden decision, "I want to talk with those three new-comers again. Bring them here to the torture room if you'll be so kind." He pushed open the door and went in. The monk hesitated almost imperceptibly, then vanished with a gesture of his hand.

INSTANTLY Rusty stepped across the room, jerked open the other door and peered through the bars. He gritted his teeth in fury as he saw the old man's inflamed and twisted joints, but forgot them in the sweet serenity of Father Anselm's face.

"Father, this is a showdown," he whispered quickly. "I'm out for blood now, and we'll wind this business up in a few minutes." With a reassuring nod to the old man, he closed the door, crossed the room and seated himself on a bench. "Out for blood is right!" he muttered to himself, and laughed grimly.

Ten minutes later the four men returned and he was struck afresh by the similarity produced by the skin masks, the black robes and hoods, but he identified them without difficulty. "The House of Lost Faces—it's the proper name," he murmured.

"I have decided to start the trek back to Rangoon this morning," he stated without preamble.

"Then you have given up the idea of discovering which one of these men is—ah—Alexis Criel?" inquired the monk who called himself Father Anselm.

"Oh, not at all!" Rusty's face reg-

istered surprise. "You see, I'm going to take Criel back with me," he finished blandly.

"But first, before we get down to business, I want to show you a little trick I learned some years ago." As he spoke, he drew a sharp skinning knife from beneath his leather coat and held it out on the palm of his hand. The four black-robed figures drew back a little at the sight of the gleaming steel, and Rusty laughed.

"This is a good trick—if I do it," he assured them gravely. Then he drove the knife into the bench and rolled up his sleeve. "I can do it better with my sleeve up," he explained. "Now then, watch this closely." They watched him, obviously bewildered.

"I take my knife in my left hand like this. Then I—" He broke off with a sharp exclamation as the knife appeared to slip. The point entered his forearm, cutting a deep gash from which the blood spurted in a crimson stream and trickled down upon the floor.

Tense and expectant, he watched those three men before him with the eyes of an eagle, and a sudden dread clutched at his heart and seemed to choke him, as none of them showed any signs of emotion. He had been wrong, then, after all, and his last card had failed him.

Either none of the men before him was Alexis Criel, or the report of the man's uncontrollable horror of blood was false.

WITH a muttered exclamation of disappointment, he turned about and stared blankly as he saw "Father Anselm" crouched back against the wall, his eyes seeming to bulge from the holes in his mask. The man recovered almost instantly, but it was enough.

"Alexis Criel, I want you!" Cam-

eron shouted triumphantly, and leaped forward.

Before Criel could move, Rusty had snapped the handcuffs upon his wrists and the man was helpless. One of the other men sprang forward. The butt of Rusty's revolver was sticking out of the holster invitingly, and the man snatched it forth and jerked it up, his finger on the trigger.

There was a deafening report, but it came from a small automatic in Cameron's left hand. He crouched tensely, a wisp of blue smoke curling from the weapon. The revolver dropped from the other's nerveless fingers, his eyes went blank and he slumped to the floor with a gaping

hole in the center of his forehead.

Rusty menaced the others with the pistol, but they stood quietly with their hands above their heads.

"DIDN'T know I was left-handed, did you?" he queried in a matter-of-fact voice. "I unloaded that revolver I carry in the holster before I came down, anyway. Sometimes it's safer. Just another little trick that you birds haven't learned yet!"

He glanced at Alexis Criel who slumped against the wall, completely dejected and beaten. Then he looked at his still bleeding arm and grinned.

"I told you it was a good trick—if it worked!" he said simply.

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Winged Victory



Down he came in a slanting line, spinning

*You'll Thrill to Jimmy Hazlitt's Daring Race for Fame
and Honor Against Fearful Odds*

A Complete Novelette

By **KENT SAGENDORPH**

Author of "Hell-Bent for Heaven," etc.

JIMMY HAZLITT, clinging to a streamlined metal strut at the outer end of the plane's wing, looked downward and felt his heart pounding wildly.

A mile below, Starcross Airport was twisting around beneath him as the plane circled over the line of hangars and packed grandstand. In

less than a minute he would have to jump.

He fingered his parachute ring as dozens of torturing doubts rose up before his eyes. Would the chute work? Would the wind carry him out to sea? Would that sarcastic opponent of his, Norbert Yardley, have had time to monkey with his para-

chute harness or its slender cord rigging? Nothing that Yardley had a hand in could be assumed to be safe. Now his life depended upon his chute, and his chute depended upon Yardly.

They were clinging to the outer bay struts; two men swathed in bulky khaki flying suits and further trammled by wide webbing straps of their parachute harnesses. Their fur-lined helmets were securely buckled tight under their chins.

They wore no goggles—a bad landing would hammer splinters of glass into their eyes and faces. A parachute race is a reckless thing to attempt, even with all the odds favorable. Ahead of the first slight error lay a horrible, mangled death.

IT wouldn't have been so bad if that slinking, cunning Yardley hadn't been the parachute man at Starcross Airport. Yardley was his enemy, and Jimmy Hazlitt knew it.

How could Yardley pass up this perfect opportunity to eliminate Hazlitt at no risk to himself? It would be just another of those regrettable happenings. They would tell the coroner that the parachute failed to open.

Hazlitt's eyes took in the whirling scene below him with quick decisiveness. Starcross Airport was on the edge of a long Florida shore line. Beyond, the blue sea stretched away into limitless space.

The wind, he saw, was due north along the shore. He looked at the pilot, who was raising his arm for the signal. Beyond him, on the other wing-tip, Yardley nodded in calm assurance.

Jimmy Hazlitt gripped his parachute ring with one hand, hugged the strut with the other and nodded, too.

The pilot's arm flashed down. Both men yanked their harness rings. A rasp of cable, a brief crackle as the

pilot chute caught, and a dull boom as the great silk parachute snapped open. In a split second, Hazlitt found himself far out in space, feet swung up higher than his head, ribs aching from the jerk, and the plane vanishing into the distance.

The twenty-foot circle that was his goal was a mere dot on the distant airport. They were supposed to land inside that circle—if they could! If not, no prize money would be awarded. The man landing closest to the center won the fifty-dollar prize.

It was one of the events on the afternoon's race program, and that fifty dollars had lured Jimmy Hazlitt to take the breathless risk. He must have money—quickly!

His parachute, bobbing and spinning, fluttered strangely. It was falling fast—too fast! He passed Yardley like an express whistling past a slow local freight. His hands were clammy on his harness. Suppose—!

Something pulled his eyes up to the expanse of silk above his head. His heart burned with a convulsive gasp. He went limp with terror. It had happened! Yardley had doctored the chute!

THERE was a two-foot hole cut out of the very top, and air was shooting through it with nothing to hold it back. No wonder he was falling! The sandy airport beneath his feet seemed to leap upward, carrying sure death with it.

He could see Yardley's bright idea—it was almost fool-proof. Hazlitt would strike the sod at express-train speed; the chute would collapse around him, horrified observers would rush to his aid, and cut away the chute to release him.

It would be too late, then. Hazlitt would be just another of those sickening sights that every airman dreads to see.

But in the excitement the chute

would be cut up and no marks of the slashing would ever be found. Yardley would win twice—the small prize money, and the greater prize of getting Hazlitt out of the way. Hazlitt looked down at the onrushing earth, and groaned.

Blindly he gripped his shroud-lines and hauled in, spilling wind from a corner of his chute. He fell even faster, but in a different direction. He veered out toward the beach.

He held his grip on the cord lines, even while he could see the scene hurling its bulk up at him. He shut his eyes, then opened them.

HE had less than a thousand feet left. Still more of a pull, and he was out over water. He relaxed, looked downward again, and then braced himself.

Down he came in a slanting line, spinning somewhat, the chute hanging out stiffly behind him. He saw the deep solid mass of water, broken by a few lazy white combers close to the shore. He crossed his legs and drew them up beneath him. He unbuckled the chute, hanging to the harness with icy, clammy hands.

He took a deep breath—

SLAP! It dazed him, but the shock of cold water brought his arms and legs into action. Somehow he made his way to the surface. He shook his head to clear it, pulled off his helmet and grasped an edge of the floating circle of silk. Shore was a quarter of a mile away.

They had seen him. Already a speedboat was throwing up a high plume behind its square stern. Strangers pulled him up to the rounded foredeck and stripped off his soggy flying suit. Then he lay in the aft cubby, dripping water on the red-leather upholstery, while the boat roared toward the landing pier.

"Save the chute! Save the chute!"

he murmured, half drowsily to them.

"Sure . . . sure. It's right here," said one of the two men in the boat with him. "Want us to call an ambulance? Any bones broken?"

"Gosh, no," Hazlitt grunted. "Just a bellyful of water, that's all. I saw it coming and hit for the bay. Good thing I did—I'd have been smeared all over the field if I hadn't been able to steer out to sea."

The speedboat growled its way alongside the dock, where excited watchers mauled Hazlitt in frantic welcome. He fought his way free and limped out toward the line of hangars, dragging the chute behind him.

Yardley was standing in the middle of the white circle, receiving his prize money from the official judge sent down by the national association.

"Hey!" barked Hazlitt. "Just a moment, Judge. I want to show you—"

"What's the matter, Mister Hazlitt?" sneered Yardley. "Want to collect the prize money for takin' a bath? That was very clever of you, makin' a high-dive into the bay that way. Never saw anybody who could do tricks like that with a chute except—Brice Wagstaff. Know him?"

HAZLITT advanced toward Yardley, dragging the folds of the chute. He picked it up to show the judge the hole cut in the top. Yardley snickered again.

"Of course," he said, "Brice Wagstaff was the greatest speed pilot in the country until he took to hidin' out from the Department of Justice. He was the only pilot who ever mastered that trick of steering a parachute the way you did. But, since there's a price on Wagstaff's head, you couldn't possibly be him. Could you, now?"

"I don't know what you're trying

to put over," Hazlitt bit off, gripping Yardley's wrist and spinning him around, "but I got something here that maybe you can explain. How'd this hole get in my chute?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Yardley returned, easily. "I just took a couple off the pile when this spot-landing contest was announced. I can't see how a hole could have gotten in it."

"Let's see that," ordered the judge.

He examined the dripping silk.

"Cut out, all right," he pronounced.

"You're the man who takes care of the chutes on this field, aren't you? Nobody else could have had access to them.

"**T**HEY were each packed and sealed. I think you'd better make knots per hour getting away from here. I'll give you a half-hour's start, then announce my findings to the committee."

"What about the prize?" gulped Yardley.

"You've forfeited all claim to it. Hazlitt wins by default."

Yardley swung about and glanced at Hazlitt sourly. He stood there, glaring hard at Hazlitt's dripping figure. Then he spoke.

"Well, I'll be seein' y u h," he smirked. "Mister Brice Wagstaff!"

He strolled toward the hangar.

Another stranger, a rather bulky man in a soft gray hat, touched Hazlitt on the shoulder. The stranger had a hard, flat face and his eyes were two pieces of slate in the rock-like expanse of his expression. He gave Hazlitt a calm once-over and drawled a question. "What you got to say about that, kid?"

"About the chute? Can't you see the hole in it?"

"Don't stall," the stranger interrupted. "You know what I mean. What about this charge that you're Brice Wagstaff?"

"Don't be funny!" snapped Hazlitt. "Do I look like a speed pilot? Why, I'm just another mechanic working at this airport. I can't even fly. Go scare somebody else."

"Well, just thought I'd ask, that's all," remarked the man. "How'd you learn how to do tricks with a parachute? Is that part of a mechanic's job?"

"Feller," barked Hazlitt, "when you're up there comin' down with a no-good parachute, and the ground's comin' up, you can do lots of things you never knew about. Try it some time."

"Yeah," agreed the stranger. "I guess I will. Well, s'long."

As he walked through the mob surrounding the judge, Jimmy Hazlitt was seen to shudder. He was standing in the midst of a widening pool of water. Little trickles ran down his skin. He laid back his head, took a deep breath, and sneezed.

"Come inside, kid," commanded Hazlitt's boss, Taylor Jordan. "You ought not to hang around in that breeze with those wet clothes. Come in and change."

II

HE led Hazlitt into his new brick and steel hangar, and shut the wide panelled doors across the front. Over the doors there was a new sign:

"Starcross Flying Service. Charter Flights. Instruction. Sightseeing. Storage Space. Repair. Taylor Jordan, President."

Jordan leaned against the high sectional doors, listening to the milling mob outside. Hazlitt waddled across the dusty concrete floor to the locker room, leaving muddy tracks behind. He looked over his shoulder, half-fearing Jordan would follow him to the lockers and demand a show-down.

Jordan, however, watched Hazlitt peeling off his wet clothes in silence. He never asked questions. Hazlitt had come to him three months before, asking for a grease-monkey's job. He knew his business; his touch on a balky nine-cylinder radial had a positive genius about it.

There were five ships in the Jordan hangar; one huge Fokker F-XII trimotor, two small school biplanes, Taylor's private speedster and a cabin monoplane for charter flights. Hazlitt kept the whole fleet in top-notch trim, doing the work of three men and doing it perfectly.

BESIDE, Jordan meditated as he watched the ripple of muscle under Hazlitt's tanned skin, he had a deep fondness for the kid. Hazlitt's blue eyes always held a twinkle. His work was a pleasure to him.

He kept rather quiet, but the sight of his sun-bleached head and russet features always made Jordan feel more optimistic, somehow. Taylor Jordan liked Hazlitt—respected him; felt sorry for him.

He was not the man to ask Hazlitt any pointed questions, but he wanted to know just the same. He stalked about the dimness of the silent hangar, wondering—wondering how to break the news.

That detective was pestering him for a show-down. He had been there four days, now, haunting the hangar like a spook, saying nothing, but watching—watching, eyeing every move Hazlitt made.

Today the detective had come to Jordan and demanded that the airman provide some test which would prove whether Hazlitt was the renegade air smuggler Brice Wagstaff or not.

Jordan had refused, bluntly. But he couldn't hold out long. Some day the detective would find out. What would Jordan do then?

Suddenly Jordan stopped, inspired by an idea. It would only postpone matters, but it might relieve the tension. He invaded the locker room and sat down, as Hazlitt put the finishing touches on a dry outfit.

"Jimmy," he began, "understand I don't want you to talk to me if you'd rather not. But you know that detective is going to hang on until he finds out—one way or another. It's getting my goat. I'm going bugs. Let's get away from here for a few days. Let's enter the big race next month down at Miami. You know—the Conniston Cup race."

Hazlitt's blond head raised slowly. He grinned.

"Why, sure, if you want to, Taylor. Have you got a ship that'll make the speed? Have to do better'n two-fifty to win, you know."

"I've been thinking," Taylor Jordan gazed absently at the white wall. "I think we can get that *Comet III*, that won the Internationals at Los Angeles last year. It's up at Floyd Bennett Field now."

"Bascom say he'd lend it to you?" Hazlitt asked.

JORDAN'S eyes fell. His mechanic certainly knew who was who in the aviation world. Jordan decided to improve on this clue.

"Well, if you'd ask him, maybe he might—"

"Aw bugs!" grunted Hazlitt. "He doesn't know me from Adam. But I'll give you a hint. Don't ask him directly, understand. You've got to be diplomatic about approaching that guy. See Art Delehanty at Roosevelt Field. Art is Bascom's outside man. He can get in touch with him right away. I—er—used to work on motors for Art."

That was enough for Taylor Jordan. There were not a half-dozen pilots in the country who knew how to get through the welter of red tape

that surrounded Major Bob Bascom, king of all American pilots.

Bascom was such an international celebrity that he was harder to see than the President. He never gave interviews or attended flying club meetings.

Now here was a complete plan for getting the famous *Comet III*. Jordan really hadn't believed he could get near the ship. But thanks to Hazlitt's tip, he decided to take a chance. But now he knew Jimmy Hazlitt's secret. It would be safe enough with him.

"That's a good idea," he answered. "I'll do it. And if I get the ship, will you tune it up for the Conniston Cup race?"

"Boy," grinned Hazlitt, "if you get that old *Comet*, I'll show you a speed plane as is a speed plane."

"You're on!" agreed Jordan, impulsively.

THE following week saw the Jordan hangar nearly deserted. With the boss out of town to attempt the difficult job of promoting the fastest racing plane in the east, no instruction flights were made and no charter hops scheduled.

Hazlitt spent the weary hours giving the big Fokker's three *Wasps* a top overhaul apiece. Two mornings after Jordan's departure, the detective appeared for his usual shadow work.

The Fokker's nose motor was off, and hung suspended by a big chain-fall from a roof truss. Hazlitt was all but buried in a maze of wiring and copper tubing. He looked like a surgeon performing a delicate operation among muscles, organs, nerves and arteries.

He was perched atop a stepladder, head and shoulders inside the complicated cavity in the Fokker's nose.

"Can you fly me over to Miami?" inquired the detective. "I'll give you

a hundred bucks for the round trip, Hazlitt. Easy money."

"I'd like to, gum-shoe," responded Hazlitt. "But I'm not a pilot. I told you that. If I had a license I'd do it in a minute."

"Ummm. Well, all right. Sorry. When'll the boss be back?"

"Day after tomorrow."

"Thanks, kid. Well, another day gone, ain't it? Guess I'll go."

"Don't hurry back on my account," Hazlitt mumbled to himself.

"Oh, by the way," the detective erupted. "Did you know your old friend Norbert Yardley is going to enter the Conniston Cup race? Fact. Just heard this morning. He's got that Mystery Bullet—the hot job from the Airmaster shop.

"Paper says the winner of the Cup gets the chance to fly the new Super-X in the European Grand Prix. Going to break every speed record in the world. The pilot that flies that baby will have the most sensational career since Lindbergh. Yep, it's too bad you're not a pilot. S'long. See you soon."

He ambled out into the sunshine and disappeared. Hazlitt came down off the stepladder and sank into a limp attitude on the floor. He felt numb—sort of paralyzed. News like that was a bombshell.

NOT only was Yardley going to have a very fast ship in the Conniston Cup race to threaten Jordan, but the greatest speed freak ever built was waiting for the Conniston winner to fly it.

That was a plum that would inspire the best flying ever seen in Florida. It would excite the competing pilots to everything short of murder. It was a chance that would never come again.

Hazlitt couldn't remember how long he sat there, day-dreaming, but suddenly it was purple night and the

airport lay, a blank desert, sleeping beneath the stars. Stiffly he arose, closed the hangar doors and walked silently homeward, head bent.

Taylor Jordan appeared over Star-cross Airport like a screaming shell. His stubby-winged plane veered wide in a lazy curve, swooped down close over the hangar and zoomed skyward again. Jordan sent it spinning exultantly around on its tail, whip-stalled down and plunked into the field at better than eighty miles an hour.

He braked fast, and the wings tipped dangerously. His momentum carried him right to the doors of the Jordan hangar, and with a snort from the motor he coasted the ship inside. Immediately he jumped out and closed the doors.

"IT worked, Jimmie!" he roared.

"Boy, what a fixer you are! Look her over. The major gave in without a struggle. Wants it to win the Conniston. Know why? So the pilot who flies her will be the one to carry the Stars and Stripes on the new Super-X. And we're going to do it? We're going to win!"

"Where do you get that 'we' stuff, Lindbergh?" scowled Hazlitt. "You're gonna win. I'm just a—a dumb mechanic."

"Is that so?" blurted Jordan, watching Hazlitt's drawn face. "Well, listen. Major Bascom doesn't think so. He doesn't think you're either dumb or a mechanic. How soon can we hop for Miami?"

"Right now," Hazlitt reported. "Load all the stuff in the big baby, fly down there, unload, fly back, and then fly the Comet down alone. Hey, what did Bascom say about me?"

"He says you'd better lay off parachute spot-landing contests," Jordan giggled. "He got a kick out of that. Load 'er up. We'll hop this afternoon."

It was a picnic for Jordan, but Hazlitt suddenly hated every move he made. Delicate propellers, carburetors, twin magnetoes, motor supplies, cans of oil and various other things were carefully stowed into the trimotor's giant fuselage. Hazlitt coupled on the tractor and towed the trimotor outside. Jordan closed the doors.

Hazlitt sat in the co-pilot's seat while Jordan held the wheel.

"Ready?" Jordan yelled over the motors' roar.

Hazlitt nodded, his eyes roaming the maze of instruments. The three motors rumbled into full power. The great ship fled along the runway and lifted into the air. Jordan eased the wheel back, banked over for a turn and then set the nose toward Miami a hundred miles down the coast.

"She's tail-heavy!" he barked, suddenly alert. "Take the wheel. I'll go back and take a look."

III

HE got up and opened the door leading to the piled-up cabin. Hazlitt's oil-stained hands closed fondly around the light wheel. His feet fitted into the rudder stirrups. Instinctively his eyes flew from one instrument to the next, checking every detail.

She was tail-heavy. Very much so. He kept the wheel well forward, but when he took his hands off, the whole control column sagged back into his lap. He swung around and looked through the window.

Suddenly he felt something in that wheel that every pilot knows by instinct. Impossible to describe, but it can be felt! Something or somebody had changed position back there, moving farther aft.

Jordan was pawing over cans of oil and moving aside some crates. Hazlitt gave the wheel a sharp

wrench, back and forth. Jordan looked up questioningly.

Hazlitt pointed at the rear cabin wall, making motions to indicate the inspection panel. Jordan's eyebrows raised. He walked back to the wall, yanked open the panel and reached inside. The ship's balance changed gradually to normal. Out of the dark space behind the cabin, jammed with framework tubing and control cables, came a heavy-set figure.

HAZLITT heaved a sigh of annoyance. His friend the detective was taking up the stowaway profession. He grinned sheepishly at Jordan, and then caught sight of Hazlitt at the controls. Then he stalked up the passage and into the control compartment. "Oh, yeah?" he barked. "Can't fly, eh? It sure looks it."

Out of his pocket came a fat palm, enclosing a small gold badge. On it were the government seal and the words "United States of America. Department of Justice."

"Set her down, Wagstaff!" he belted. "You'll have to go back with me!"

"Let me see your warrant!" Taylor Jordan demanded.

The detective produced a folded paper, but Jordan interrupted before he could say anything.

"That's made out for Brice Wagstaff!" he pointed out. "You'll have to prove that Hazlitt is Wagstaff, first. How're you gonna do it?"

"Oh, that's easy," the detective barked. With surprising suddenness he yanked out a pair of handcuffs and snapped one over Jordan's wrist. The other cuff was locked around the framework tubing beside the cabin door. Jordan was hooked, but Hazlitt was free.

"Now you're flyin', see?" he yelled at Hazlitt. "If you're Wagstaff, you'll set this crate down right-side up. If you're not, you'll sure let

me know it in a hurry. I can fly enough to grab the wheel and put her down on the beach. Now let's see you do your stuff."

"You crazy flatfoot!" Hazlitt belted. "That's not true. I can fly enough to make a landing. Watch me. I'll show you!"

The detective eased his body warily into the opposite pilot's seat. Hazlitt threw his weight on the wheel and the nose dropped sickeningly.

"Anybody can hold a ship level in the air!" he said. The ship yawed with a jerk, nosed down again, banked into a tight turn almost flat and skidded broadside about fifty feet.

"I'll show you I can land a plane!" he yelled, grimly.

JORDAN, locked to the heavy steel tube, braced himself for the crash. It's risky enough for a novice to hold the stick on his first student landing, but a trimotor's wheel is a different thing.

For a mechanic to try to land a seven-ton airliner on a narrow beach without flying training is certain suicide. Yet deep in his heart, Jordan knew Hazlitt could do it. Whether or not he was the missing Wagstaff, he knew Hazlitt would come through.

"That landing will tell me once and for all whether or not you're Wagstaff!" barked the detective. "If you are, okay. If not, there's a government hospital down there at Miami. Heh! Heh!"

"I think you're goofy!" Jordan growled. "Unlock these cuffs!"

Hazlitt, tight-lipped, was wrenching the wheel this way and that, pulling and tugging, kicking the rudder pedals furiously. Opposite, the detective stretched out his hands to take the wheel any instant.

The great plane bucked, jerked and trembled. It dove, pulled up, skidded off on one wing, lurched drunkenly downward again. Below them,

the beach was now on one side, now on the other. It leaped nearer—

"Hey, Jordan!" Hazlitt yelled. "How do you get the tail down? She won't level off! She's falling!"

"Shut your throttles, idiot!" howled Jordan. "You're diving her nose-first into the beach! Holy suffering mackerel! Gimme that handcuff key!"

"Oh, that's it. Thanks," Hazlitt breathed.

He grabbed a handful of throttles and pushed them far ahead, opening the motors full out, then quickly pulled them to the closed position, blushing.

Cold sweat was running down the detective's face. Kicking back and forth on the rudder, Hazlitt threw the tail around in an awkward zig-zag.

The detective half-rose in his seat. Just at the last split-second the tail-wheel settled neatly and the Fokker's big front tires bit into the sand. The trimotor rolled up the beach, and stopped.

"Told you I could do it!" Hazlitt exulted, turning to the detective.

BUT the limb of the law was up a stump. He was leaning half-out of the pilot window, heaving spasmodically. His hands hung limp, then suddenly clenched. Presently his white-lipped face came inside again.

"Get the key and unlock this," Jordan yelled. "It's gone far enough."

As the detective was bending over the lock, Jordan leaned forward to place his lips against Hazlitt's ear.

"Not bad for a cross-wind landing, kid," he whispered, "but you didn't have to put all that circus stuff in."

"Grab the brass ring for a free ride," Hazlitt said.

A snap and the handcuffs fell free. Jordan replaced Hazlitt at the controls and the huge monoplane soared into the air again. The detective

had only partially recovered when Jordan set the wheels down on the broad runways of Pan-American Field, Miami.

The grandstands were being erected for the forthcoming race. All the arched-roof hangars showed furious activity. The finish pylon for the race was being erected in front of the grandstand. Workmen were painting huge black-and-white checks on its forty-foot sides.

Queer ships stood lazily before the sun-drenched hangars, surrounded by groups of busy mechanics. The race atmosphere was in their blood already, with the big day still a week away. Jordan's big Fokker nestled up between two smaller ships. He cut his motors and prodded the detective with his elbows.

"This is as far as we go, mister," he pointed out.

"Far enough for me," breathed the officer, lurching to his feet. "I'm going back. He couldn't be Wagstaff. No pilot could make a landing like that on purpose."

"Maybe you're right," Jordan agreed.

"But I'd better stay around a while," added the detective. "My man may show up. Beside, I like to watch air races."

HE stumbled out of the cabin door and fell into the sand. Jordan helped him up. As they staggered toward the yawning cavern of the hangar, Jordan winked at Hazlitt.

"He's here again," he said, inclining his head.

Facing them, feet spread wide apart and eyes half-closed in scorn, stood Norbert Yardley.

Three days of intensive work thinned out the mob of strangers into recognizable faces. Famous pilots, most of them, from all corners of the country. Wetzell, from Los Angeles; Teddy Blair, from the Curtiss experi-

mental field on Long Island; Paul Anderson from Boston with his slow drawl and his lightning-quick brain.

Names that were blazoned across newspaper front pages; faces that smiled modestly from newsreels after thrilling speed flights. Some of them stared unbelievably at Hazlitt and then dropped their eyes. None of them gave him a word or a second glance.

The only pilot who talked much was Yardley.

"What'd you come down here for?" he demanded while Hazlitt was watching Jordan give the *Comet III* a fast workout. "You know if you enter this race you'll be arrested instantly. You run an awful risk of having somebody turn you over to that cop. He'll find you out."

Hazlitt walked out to catch Jordan's wing-tip as he came in.

"Worries you, doesn't it?" his quiet voice asked Yardley.

Yardley stalked away. Hazlitt went through the motions of his job on the racing plane's motor, reflecting on Yardley's hatred of him. Or was it fear? Yardley either hated him or feared him. Why?

HE took off the distributor head and massaged the breaker points with a soft rubber. He drained the oil pump and refilled it. He pulled the knife-edged prop over slowly, watching the carburetor butterfly valves fill the manifold evenly for each cylinder. But all the time he was thinking about Yardley.

Time was getting short, and all the eight contestants had run through their qualifying laps with wide margins to spare. It looked as if the land-plane record of 258 miles an hour, made in Cleveland, was going glimmering in the Conniston Cup grind.

Teddy Blair had a green baby biplane with short stub wings that

clocked well over 250 in the time trials. Wetzel's craft was a center-wing job with a slim inverted V-type engine, streamlined like a shark. It landed fast, but in the air it shot ahead with an easy rumble of power.

Yardley's *Mystery Bullet* was a gigantic radial motor streamlined into the smallest possible all-metal biplane. He always went through his workouts several miles from the field, in order to keep his performance secret. But the borrowed *Comet III* entered by Jordan was still around the cellar position, according to the averages turned in.

The newspaper scribes gave it no chance at all with Yardley and Ted Blair, although writing long sob-stories about its glorious performance in the past under the masterly hand of Major Bascom.

JORDAN read these accounts with worried eyes. He pointed them out to Hazlitt.

"Just as a favor," he asked, "will you watch me take that pylon and tell me how it looks to you?"

"Why ask me?" Hazlitt sighed. "But I'll watch it if you say so."

He sat on the grandstand fence as Jordan's plane shot out of the sky and drummed downward toward the pylon. The pylon was just a forty-foot steel tower covered with painted airplane fabric, marking the corner of the rectangular race course. Taking the turns, as in automobile racing, was the secret of the whole business. It looked easy.

Jordan aimed his ship at the pylon and shot down in a gentle dive. A few hundred feet ahead of it he began to pull the ship up into a vertical bank. He skidded wide—a hundred yards; then righted and pulled up in an easy climb. He rounded the pylon five times this way as Hazlitt clocked him with a stopwatch.

Hazlitt's heart was missing beats. He bit his under-lip, punched the stop-watch and scowled at its dial.

As he walked out to meet the landing plane he was shaking his head sadly. There was a conference between the two that afternoon in the back recesses of the hangar. The ship was tuned up like a fiddle, but they had no further time for practice. The race was to start the next day. It must have been six hours that the pair stayed there, talking in low tones. When they came out, they were smiling.

IV

THAT night, Hazlitt's mind deserted the details of the ship and centered on Yardley again.

Jimmy Hazlitt tossed fitfully all night, unable to sleep or to puzzle out Yardley's hostility.

Yardley had tried to kill him once, and almost succeeded. Men don't attempt murder except under the stress of a powerful emotion, such as fear of their own lives, for instance.

He was still thinking about it when the eight ships were lined up on the field for the start. It was noon, and the race was scheduled for one-thirty p. m. Pilots and mechanics were drawn up along the fence next the grandstand, which was slowly absorbing a flood of crowd.

"I'd give ten years of my life to be in this race," remarked a mechanic at Hazlitt's elbow. "It means the greatest chance of these pilot's lives. The Mystery Bullet's got a good chance. So's Wetzels. Who's going to fly the Super-X? That's what we want to know."

Hazlitt nodded.

"Boy, they'll kill each other to win this thing," the mechanic went on. "Anything goes. It's five hundred miles—that's twenty-five laps around

this course. They go so fast you can hardly see 'em.

"If one of 'em noses another into the ground, who can accuse him? There won't be enough left of the guy to tell what happened. And from what I hear, Yardley's got it all fixed to win."

"Better pipe down," Hazlitt suggested. "Here he comes."

Yardley, helmeted and goggled, with his parachute harness buckled in place, strode toward Hazlitt.

"Going to try to beat me, are you, Jordan?" he asked. "If you know what I know, you'd back out now. I'm going to win this race, see? Neither you nor your jailbird mechanic can stop me."

"That's powerful language, Yardley," snapped Jordan.

"Let him talk," grunted Hazlitt.

"Don't think I can prove it, do you?" Yardley shouted angrily. "Well, I can. This bird Hazlitt has been bluffing you. He's really Brice Wagstaff, the dope-smuggling ex-speed pilot. After the race I'm gonna spill what I know. He came here to spy on me and he's gonna regret it. It's back to Atlanta for you, you outlaw!"

"There's the detective," suggested Hazlitt. "Tell it to him."

I HEARD it," nodded the officer. "Go on. I'm listening."

"Well, get this!" Yardley yelled. "Wagstaff's picture was in a locket he gave his girl. I saw it. It's Hazlitt all right."

Hazlitt stiffened. His eyes flashed. He lunged toward Yardley.

"Places!" roared the officials. "Snap into it!"

"It's all right, Jordan," snarled Hazlitt. "I'll fly."

Snatching Jordan's helmet and parachute, Hazlitt vaulted the rail and ran to the *Comet III's* cockpit. Yardley, still calling on the law fol-

lowed. They climbed into their ships and faced the starting flag.

"Go!"

The eight ships rolled away and lifted into the air. Around the course, then a flying start at full speed! Yardley and Hazlitt were wing to wing as the squadron flashed across the starting line.

Five hundred miles is a long distance on the ground, but in the air it's a mere jump. The eight planes roared toward the horizon at better than five miles a minute.

Hazlitt peered cautiously through the windshield that ran parallel to his cheek. It was framed in steel. It had to be. That horrible moan of air past his face meant a man-made gale of better than two hundred and fifty miles an hour.

To stretch out a hand into that inferno meant crushed bones. To take a blow like that on the head would mean instant death.

The twenty-mile course was divided into five-mile "legs", roughly square. Hazlitt saw Wetzel, in the lead, whip around the first pylon and zoom upward, followed by Teddy Blair. Yardley's black biplane shot in front, cutting him off. Hazlitt grunted. "Not so fast! This isn't a horse race!"

He had smacked top rudder, lifting his nose out of danger. He was in a vertical bank three miles ahead of the pylon, allowing plenty of room. He shot in close, yanked back his stick and kicked bottom rudder. That hurled him around the pylon like a boomerang.

EVERYTHING went black before his eyes—that was blood being drained out of his head by centrifugal force. He knew from experience what to do. He had taken a bearing as he came out of the turn. Now he opened his mouth, closed his eyes and hung on. In less than

a minute he could see again, and before him was another pylon.

Within five laps, his heart had accepted the challenge. In the turns he put his head hard against the head-rest back of him, and held his breath. There would be a hard slam. That was all.

Yardley swept past Wetzel in the eighth lap, winging ahead with a wide lead. Hazlitt, in the *Comet III*, kept plenty of space between it and the other ships that flitted near, prepared for anything.

He began overhauling Teddy Blair and rushed past him. Wetzel hung between himself and Yardley. With the race now in its tenth lap, the five hundred miles looked like a trip around the block.

HE kept increasing his distance from the others. No crowded turns for him. Not in a speed-mad gang like this. Yardley must have about a mile lead, he estimated. Shaving the pylons closer, he battled to cut down that lead.

Hazlitt knew, and most race pilots also know, that the human body can adjust itself to almost any form of torture, provided it is taken gradually. Five miles a minute and quick, whipping turns means torture, and plenty of it. Hazlitt saved his stunt stuff until his body had become acclimated to the job.

His brain was clearing. His eyes were beginning to focus once more. Before this, he had had to listen to his motor. Now he could read his dials. He knew that motor the way a surgeon knows his anatomy.

He had given it all he had—now the motor was doing the same for him. At nineteen hundred on the tachometer the air-speed dial showed two-seventy; fuel was whistling into the carburetor at an appalling rate.

He eyed this air-speed meter all through the lightning turns. On the

straightaways the needle swung around to the unbelievable figure of 280 — then reluctantly screwed back again as he swung over for a pylon.

His dial gave him courage to attempt a stunt he had always dreamed of doing. He'd never had the power to work with, before. It might work! It would have to, if he were going to whittle down that lead of Yardley's.

"All or nothin'," he told himself. "Here goes!"

He held his breath, swung over for a turn and felt the seat ram his spine up into his helmet. But he didn't right the ship. He held her in a forty-degree bank, flying half on its side.

Now he could dive for the pylon without feeling that twinge of nausea—that clawing stab against his chest as his blood-stream reversed its direction. Would the ship hold its speed? He blinked his eyes until he could make out the figures on the dial. He saw 255-260-265. Then back to 250.

TAKING a turn at two hundred and fifty miles an hour has always been a favorite dream of race pilots. The ships would do it, but the pilot always fainted. This forty-degree bank might reduce the strain on his heart just enough to make the stunt possible.

He saw the checked pylon three miles away. He dove, still in the bank, and held his head flat back against the padded headrest. No slipping back now. He was in for it! Back came the control stick.

Whack! His body slammed against the side of the cockpit; his head seemed numb, but he had done it! Wetzels' monoplane slid backward as he swept past it. Up ahead was Yardley, and the race half-over.

Yardley's ship was newer, more powerful and cleaner-lined than the old *Comet III*. But Yardley lacked

one thing Hazlitt gloried in—six years of high-speed flying. Race-pilots are not made overnight.

Hazlitt and the *Comet III* were gradually cutting down the lead. Yardley was forcing and straining his ship to the utmost, but Hazlitt kept coming. At five miles a minute, a battle for the lead is likely to be a hair-raising affair.

THE massed thousands in the stands sensed it. They saw the two hurtling racers for just a few seconds at a time, but when they did, it was the thrill of a lifetime. Just a far-off roar, two flashes of color, a howl, and they were gone. Vanished!

"Look at him!" yelled Jordan to the detective. "That guy's got guts! Watch him plow into that turn! Wow! I know what it means to take a turn like that. His face must be purple, but he's stickin'."

"Almost up on Yardley now," was the rejoinder. "Probably take him next time around."

"Why did he do it?" barked Jordan. "He knows he's going to get pinched. He knows it's Atlanta for him. Yet he's risking his neck to win. Even if he wins, he loses, seems like."

"Would seem that way," commented the detective.

"He told me last night he could see I was no race pilot," Jordan said. "Told me I didn't have a chance. He is doing it for me! I told him he'd be exposed if he flew this race. What do you suppose he said?"

"Said it was worth going to jail to find out why Yardley hated him."

"I reckon he's found out by now," remarked the detective.

Both men leaped to their feet. Yardley and Hazlitt were side by side, roaring out of the distant sky like two angry eagles. Jordan, with a cry, grabbed the detective's arm.

"Look!" he croaked. "Yardley's go-

ing to pocket him! Going to smash him against the pylon! Yeow-w-w!"

Hazlitt saw it at the same time. Yardley was on the outside, diving down for a sharp turn. He had timed it so that he could dart in close, and flatten Hazlitt against the big steel tower. It took a lightning-like brain and reckless determination. Hazlitt was quicker.

"Kid stuff!" he thought. "That's his way of rubbing me out, is it?"

Gripping the stick tighter, he gave bottom rudder a steady shove. Then the topmost side. His racer's nose gave a sudden lurch downward, then zoomed skyward. He was in the lead.

HAZLITT had ducked underneath Yardley's craft, almost scraping his wing-tip in the sand. While Yardley was taking the turn, Hazlitt whipped around him and climbed, well in the lead.

Yardley flattened out close to the ground and shot away in pursuit. But Hazlitt, still in that queer lop-sided position, had a hundred-yard lead. On the next pylon he jumped it to a quarter-mile. Rounding the final turn into the last straightaway, Hazlitt had nearly half a lap.

All alone he zipped across the line while thousands of parked cars blared applause. He slipped over into a vertical bank, did a beautiful slow-roll over the stand by way of acknowledgement, and came in for a landing upside down.

Fifty feet off the ground he flung the ship upright and slid in for a neat three-point in front of the stand. The stands thundered a welcome as he arose stiffly from his cockpit.

Yardley landed right behind, and was abreast by the time he had

reached the ground with his feet. Yardley beckoned to the officer.

"Now will you believe me?" he roared. "That's Wagstaff, I say!"

"Guess you're right," the detective admitted, "how about it?"

"Sure I am!" Hazlitt agreed. "I'm Wagstaff all right. I don't care who knows it now. This pup just spilled the works before we started the race. Go on and serve your warrant. I'm innocent."

"Why, this ain't no warrant, son," protested the detective. "It's a summons. You've got to appear in Federal Court as a witness in that smuggling case. What about your proof?"

"That double-crossing lummo," roared Hazlitt, shaking a fist at Yardley, "convicted himself. He told you that he had seen a picture of me in a locket belonging to my girl. Now, listen to this!

THAT locket was in my plane when it was stolen from me in Los Angeles. Nobody but the thief, who ferried that stuff across the border *could* have known about it! Yardley's the thief!"

"Kinda thought something like that would turn up," grinned the detective, "so I brung along a John Doe warrant. I knew that if you ever admitted you were Wagstaff, you'd be able to tell us who the real crook was. That winds up this case, I gather. Put out your hands, Yardley."

"And you put out your hands, too, kid," laughed Jordan. "The judge wants to put a nice thin green check into your mitt. When you fly the great Super-X next year and get to be a hero, don't forget me!"

"How could I?" demanded Hazlitt. "Why, you're the guy who taught me how to land a Fokker trimotor!"

The DEATH TRAP



His fist caught Hon Loy on the tip of the chin

Flailing Fists and Flashing Knives as Two Daring Americans Face Desperate Foes on a Chinese Junk

By **GEORGE ALLAN MOFFATT**

Author of "The Devil From Devil's Island," "Pirate Gold," etc.

INSIDE the cabin of the Chinese junk the air was stifling and hot; the fetid smell of the jungle seeped through a port hole, a sickening, humid stench that made the little room insufferable.

A silver lamp hung from the ceiling, swaying back and forth slowly as the junk rose and fell on the gentle swell of the China Sea. The light from the lamp was flickering

and yellow. In this light the face of Hon Loy looked like a malicious, grinning, ugly god. The skin over the high cheek bones was yellow and dry; small eyes glowed darkly, beadlike; the mouth, a thin slit in the yellow face, added a brutality and cunning that bespoke power.

He looked at the two Americans in front of him, his black eyes flashing a mocking, dangerous smile. A

black silk robe covered his heavy body; on his head was the usual Chinese skull cap of black.

Bill Hallard returned the mocking look, with eyes narrowed and lanky body slumped easily in the bamboo chair. Jack Tully, his friend and partner, sat at his right and fingered idly the butt of the automatic in his pocket.

"A hundred dollars in American gold," Hallard said to Hon Loy in an easy drawl, "if you'll let us be passengers on this lawless old junk until the police at Hongkong get tired looking for us."

HON LOY smiled a lifeless, humorless little smile that twisted the end of his thin mouth queerly.

"A wise man," he said softly, in perfect English, "of my race, chooses better than the white man when—"

"My poor brain," Hallard interrupted wearily, "can't dig deep enough in the yellow soil of China to understand your chatter about wisdom. Talk plain English and I'll understand."

"Very well," Hon Loy said with a shrug. "You and your friend are very poor liars."

The knots of muscles rising and falling on Hallard's jaw twitched a little; there was a hardly perceptible hardening of the muscles around his eyes.

Jack Tully's fingers closed around the butt of the automatic and his lean face contracted.

"Sa-ay," Hallard drawled, "you get some funny ideas in that yellow head of yours, Hon Loy. What are you getting at?"

Hon Loy smiled coldly.

"I have heard," he answered quietly, "that the young son of Sir Preston Mowrey, of the English Secret Service, is being held as a hostage. There is, I believe, a reward of ten thousand pounds for his recovery. It

is possible that you are endeavoring to collect that reward and that you wrongly suspect the boy is on board my boat."

Bill Hallard laughed loudly and good naturedly.

"You got imagination, Hon Loy," he said. "I have to hand it to you Chinks for figuring things out in fine detail. Sir Mowrey's son is being held because the Hon. Sir Preston is pushing an opium ring pretty close. That ring has been shipping high explosive shells—via China—into India, to give the natives there a chance to blow dear old England somewhere in the direction of hell—"

"You are correct in those details," Hon Loy agreed in his soft, deadly voice. "For some strange reason I have heard it said that I, a poor humble merchant, am behind that ring."

"Well, I'll be damned," Hallard said. "Takin' poor old Hon Loy for a dishonest man. That's the bloomin' English for you. Always getting suspicious of honest men."

Hallard's body had leaned forward a little as he spoke. Behind the squint, his eyes were cold and hard. Jack Tully had twisted his body around so that his right arm was free to use the automatic.

NONE of these moves missed the eyes of Hon Loy, but he remained with his arms folded under the robe in front of him and his yellow face expressionless—save for the queer little smile that played on his thin lips.

"I think I can speak frankly to you and your friend, Mr. Hallard," Hon Loy said. "It is very improbable that either of you will ever have a chance to disclose any information I might give you.

"My system extends to the Secret Service office of the English Government in Hongkong, and I was in-

formed when you and Mr. Tully went to the Secret Service with the proposition of trying to recover Philip Mowrey, the son of Sir Preston. Both you and Mr. Tully have been in China five years. Those five years were not profitable to you. Many times you have been hungry.

"You are both brave men. Your exploits have been known to me. Naturally, it did not surprise me greatly when I heard that you had conceived the brilliant plan of getting yourself thrown into jail for one night, and then escaping. You planned to have it appear that you were fugitives from the police. The plan had several good points, but my spy system gave me all that information and I was accordingly prepared to receive you.

"**YOU** escaped the prison, and I looked for someone who could give you information as to my whereabouts. I saw to it that this information was easily obtained, knowing that the English would not interfere with your work and follow you to my junk. I arranged for you to get here so quickly that you had no chance to get information to them."

Every muscle in Hallard's body had gone taut and hard during this recital. Jack Tully had the gun half out of his coat pocket.

"And I thought I could be smarter than you," Hallard groaned.

The arms of Hon Loy moved under the robe, moved with the speed of a cobra striking. But Bill Hallard moved a split second more swiftly.

His body went up as if standing up, and his right came up with it. He lunged forward, his fist catching Hon Loy on the tip of the chin, sending him sprawling backward off the chair.

The heavy body of Hon Loy jerked and then lay still. Hallard was over him, tearing the black robe

into strips, tying the Chinaman's wrists and ankles and gagging his mouth. Then he threw him into a corner of the little cabin and stood up.

Tully was standing near the center of the room, the automatic in his right hand. He shook his head slowly and disgustedly.

"What a bright idea that was about fooling Hon Loy," he said to Hallard, "and collecting the ten thousand pounds. You said Hon Loy wouldn't suspect that our night in jail in Hongkong was faked. He'd be glad to have two outlaw Americans on his junk. He got us aboard, and cracking him in the jaw won't save our lives now."

Hallard's bony face was puzzled. He looked at his friend with a helpless smile on his lips.

"It's fifty grand in our money," he protested, "and the kid's on board somewhere—"

"Yeah, he's on board," Tully broke in angrily, "and so are fifty evil-faced coolies who have spent their lives practicing knife throwing. They are just waiting for that supreme moment when they can slit a white man's throat. We're only two—and in case you haven't noticed, we're going out to sea with the tide too fast for comfort."

HALLARD jumped across the cabin and looked out of the port hole. A moon high in the skies cast a soft light over the sea. The boat had been moving rapidly, and land was no longer in sight; all Hallard saw was the sea bathed in the bluish light of the moon.

"Two palookas who thought they could outwit a Chinaman," Tully said bitterly. "On Hon Loy's junk out in the China Sea. That's melodrama that ought to bring tears to your grandmother's eyes."

From somewhere behind the walls

of the cabin came a low, muffled groan. It rose into a shrill scream and the two Americans jumped as the voice of a young boy wailed, in English: "Help—*help!*"

"The kid," Hallard muttered. "They've got him locked in the room next to the stern."

A sharp pounding on the door of the cabin caused Hallard to swerve quickly. A voice in Chinese called out something. Hon Loy rolled over on his back. He had regained consciousness and his little black eyes were leering at the Americans.

II

THE pounding on the door was resumed with increased violence. Bodies were banging against the wooden panel.

"Let 'em have it," Hallard said grimly, pulling his automatic. "We walked into a trap, but we won't be the only rats to die."

The guns of the two Americans roared simultaneously. The bullets crashed through the door. There was a piercing scream outside. The pounding stopped abruptly.

Tully was on his feet, looking around the room.

"They'll be back in a second," Hallard said. "And there isn't any place to run. We can't crawl through portholes. We can kill a bunch of Chinamen before a knife gets us—that's all, but it's something."

"It was the Chinese guard in the prison," Tully suggested venomously, "that tipped Hon Loy off we were coming."

"What difference who—"

Hallard's words were drowned out by a renewed thumping on the door to the cabin. It had a hollow sound and the door creaked and cracked with every blow.

"Save your ammunition," Hallard said. "They are at the end of a

battering ram and our bullets might miss them."

The door splintered and broke. The battering ram went back for a final blow. Hallard rushed to the far side of the cabin and picked up a belaying pin.

"We'll save our ammunition for the finishing touches," he said. "I'll crown the first ambitious killers before they get through the door."

With a leap, he was at the left of the door. There was a terrific crash and the panel fell in. The first two half-naked coolies into the room crashed to the floor with muffled groans as the belaying pin in Hallard's hand descended unerringly on their heads.

The third ducked the pin and came under Hallard with a long knife aimed at his throat. A bullet from Tully's gun sent the coolie to the floor with blood trickling from his temple. The fourth attacker came lunging into the room, tripped over the bodies in the doorway and fell. A blow from the belaying pin crushed his skull.

And then suddenly the little cabin was filled with howling, yellow demons. Knives flashed in the shadowy lights. Heavy, brutal faces, covered with perspiration, leered at the two Americans. Shrill Chinese curses filled the room.

HALLARD and Tully had backed, in crouching positions, to the farther corners of the room. Their automatics belched a deadly, careful fire, the darting, leaping flames cutting the thick air in flashes of orange-red.

Yellow bodies crashed to the floor and others fell over them. The coolies were a milling, screaming mob. Then Hallard's gun clicked on an empty chamber. He had no chance to reload. He grabbed the barrel, and hammered and battered and

blashed out at the half-naked bodies like an insane man. Tully was doing the same.

It was a hopeless fight. Ballard realized that as he fought and hammered away with his revolver. He had known the utter futility of it the moment Hon Loy had smiled at his and Tully's story of escaping from an English prison and wanting to hide.

FROM the start it had been a daring, desperate plan to rescue the twelve-year-old son of Sir Preston Mowrey. Hallard and Tully had offered to take the chance for the reward. Fifty thousand dollars! Enough to start them in some kind of business; the end of five years of beachcombing and starving.

The irony of their fate flashed on Hallard as he fought like an enraged animal cornered. It had been worth it, even if they had failed. He lashed out with his left at a yellow body near him. It connected with the man's groin and he went to the floor howling with pain. Hallard's mouth was dry. The small room was thick with the acrid gun powder smoke. It burned his eyes and parched his throat. He had no idea what had happened to Tully. A film had formed over his eyes.

Then through the mist he saw two coolies closing in on him. One carried a large automatic; the other a knife. The gun roared. Hallard lunged forward desperately and felt as if someone had struck him against the cheek with a red hot iron. He heard the bullet crash into the wooden wall after it had creased his face.

His lunge sent him through the air, shoulders crashing against the chest of the man with the gun. They went to the floor in a heap, Hallard's fingers going for the automatic. He touched it and then rolled over quickly, knowing that the Chinaman

behind him would be striking for his back with the knife.

The coolie had done just that, but Hallard's body moved out of the way of the knife. It went plunging instead, hilt-deep, into the chest of the Chinaman who had carried the automatic. In Hallard's hand the automatic roared. The half-naked body of the knife man slanted forward and then crumpled in death over the man he had stabbed.

Hallard rolled backward to the wall just in time to escape the point of a knife that had come through the air at him from another direction. Yellow faces were relentlessly closing in on him now. The gun in his hand roared twice. Two of them fell, but there were still others who came on. Hallard raised the gun to fire again. He could get one or two more and after that—

A SHRILL voice rose over the din of curses and yells. The noise stopped with a suddenness that was uncanny. Hallard sat up weakly, stared around the room. He saw Hon Loy standing with his back to the wall, his wrists and ankles released from the tattered silken cords torn from his black robe.

He stood there, his little black eyes flashing a murderous hatred; his yellow face distorted hideously. Hallard's eyes dropped from him to the floor, searching for Tully. He lay in the far corner, his body covered with blood. In his right hand was a bloody knife. Even as Hallard watched, he crawled to one knee and stood staring in amazement at Hon Loy.

In that small room were crowded at least twenty coolies; on the floor lay the bodies of six or seven more. Hallard started to raise the automatic. His eyes went to Hon Loy. One well directed shot would bring the yellow leader down. It was the

last decent thing on this earth Hallard figured he could do—and his finger started to close on the trigger.

But it stopped suddenly. His body stiffened and his eyes opened wide—in a wild, helpless fear. Standing in the doorway was a tall, powerfully built Chinaman and in his arms was a small twelve-year-old boy, who was kicking weakly against the yellow arms.

Hallard saw the flaxen hair of an English boy, the clear blue eyes and well featured face. The automatic dropped at his side. He knew too well what a shot at Hon Loy would mean to that boy's life. The face of the boy turned and the blue eyes looked at him pleadingly, helplessly. Hallard felt a tightening of the muscles over his heart, and a muffled oath escaped his lips.

Sharp, shrill words of command came from Hon Loy. Hallard understood them and his muscles bunched under him for the final struggle. But that struggle was short-lived. Something crashed against the side of his head. He knew it had come through the air, but consciousness slipped away from him too rapidly to figure out what it had been. He was falling face forward to the floor. Everything was going black, and slowly the sound of voices faded indistinctly in the distance.

III

ATIGHT pulling on his right leg brought Hallard back to consciousness. His eyes snapped open. He was looking up at the sky, at countless stars and a full moon.

He blinked his eyes and tried to collect his thoughts. They were irrational and scattered. All he knew was that something powerful was pulling on his right leg.

He twisted his head around. He

was in the forepart of the old junk and near him lay Tully.

"Hon Loy doesn't believe in letting an enemy die a peaceful death," Tully said dryly. "I thought you'd be out forever, listening to the birds."

The pulling on Hallard's legs continued. He moved his arms, but around the wrists were leather bands. His eyes followed the leather cords attached to the bands. Their ends were tied to a ring fastened on the deck. He looked at his legs. Leather bands were around the ankles and leather cords fastened to rungs were attached to the bands.

A GRIM, bitter smile came to Hallard's lips. The Bending Death! One of the oldest forms of Chinese torture. The leather cords had been soaked in water until they had stretched three times their length. Out in the air they would dry in a matter of several hours, and would in the process revert back to their original length. The posts were located far enough from Hallard's body to insure his legs and arms being pulled out of their sockets.

A specially treated leather was used for this death, a leather that would shrink to its original length yet retain power enough to pull a human body apart. Already the strap on Hallard's right leg was shrinking and his leg was being pulled back.

"When you sock a yellow guy in the jaw," Hallard said to Tully, "you can figure you're not going to die very pleasantly. The old snake was afraid his coolies would kill us before he could inflict the proper torture for our disrespect to his person."

"It's a beautiful moon," Tully said dryly.

"Exquisite, sweetheart," Hallard answered. "Say, where did the kid come from?"

"He came through the door during

the fight," Tully explained. "Guess he busted out of his prison to see what the excitement was about."

"A nice lookin' little shaver to be in the clutches of a devil like Hon Loy," Hallard said regretfully.

"He's got his old man to blame," Tully retorted. "And his old man has something to do with our being out here staring at the beautiful moon and wondering how it's going to feel having our legs and arms torn out by the sockets."

"It'll hurt like hell at first and then I guess we'll pass out," Hallard suggested.

"You make it so easy."

HALLARD had twisted his body around. The leather thongs holding his arms to the rings in the deck had not shrunk a great deal and he could still move his hands.

"Listen, you half-witted idiot," he whispered. "There's a coolie guarding us over there and don't talk so loud. In the sleeve of my coat is a small knife I brought along for an emergency. If I can get my fingers on that, we'll be free."

"Won't that be nice," Tully snapped back in a whisper. "Free on Hon Loy's junk with fifty coolies to cut our throats. We're well out at sea now and I'm too tired to swim forty miles or more to shore."

"We can die without having our arms and legs pulled out," Hallard replied. "And that's something."

His head twisted over to his wrist, his teeth tearing at the cloth of his coat. Something flashed in his teeth and then his head was going back and forth. The Chinese guard, sitting several yards from them, turned around and looked at the two victims. Hallard stopped moving his head at a whispered warning from Tully.

The guard got up and walked over to Hallard and Tully. He stared

down at them, his yellow face leering and animal-like in the soft moonlight. Hallard lay on the side of his face, the knife resting under his cheek on the deck. The guard gave a low, guttural laugh, muttered something in Chinese, and then walked back and sat down beside the mast.

Hallard's head, with the small creese knife between his teeth, went back to his wrist. He sawed frantically. Slowly the leather ripped and then fell to the deck. With his free hand he ripped the tightening straps from his ankles and then freed his other hand. After that he made quick work of Tully's leather thongs, and the two sat on their haunches, staring at the guard near the mast.

Slowly, like a great black snake, Hallard crawled forward. He got within a foot of the guard, who was squatting with his back to them. Then his foot slipped on the deck.

The guard swerved, but quick as a flash Hallard leaped forward, his right arm closing around the yellow neck. The head was bent backward. A muffled groan died in the coolie's throat and then something snapped in his neck. Hallard tossed the limp body to the foot of the mast.

TULLY was at Hallard's side. The two lay on their stomachs and stared at the cabin of the junk. Behind it was the man at the wheel; in their position they were invisible to him. The junk rose and fell with the waves as it plowed through the China Sea, the square sails half filled with the light breeze.

"We're free," Tully whispered. "Shall we start on those coolies below deck and get this damned nightmare over?" Hallard had pulled a revolver from the dead guard's belt. A long rifle lay at the man's side and Tully had grabbed this.

Then out from behind the fore-

hatch a dark, slithering form moved. It came across the deck on hands and knees, a small black object in the night, that came directly for Hallard and Tully with the speed of a scurrying cat.

Hallard raised his body to a kneeling position. The automatic went up in his right hand, but before he could press the trigger Tully knocked it to one side.

THE twelve-year-old son of Sir Preston Mowrey lay in front of the two Americans, his face pale and every part of his body trembling.

"I—I—sneaked out of my room below the cabin," he gasped. "They had a guard at the door, but he was sleeping. I knew they had you tied up here and I knew you were going to die—and—and—I—wanted to—save you—or anyway be with you."

Bill Hallard picked the little body up tenderly and threw his arms across the boy's shoulders. The blue eyes looked up at him and tried to smile bravely.

"Thanks, Philip," Hallard said in a low whisper. "We managed to cut those straps, but tell me—how many guards are on deck and what are the men doing below."

"They—they have three guards on deck," Philip stammered, his eyes opening with a new horror as he stared down at the dead form of the guard near the mast. "The other two are behind the cabin and they'll come up here soon. Hon Loy is in his quarters and the rest of the men are sleeping below, except the man left to guard me.

"You see, they didn't lock me in the room when we were out at sea. I was allowed to go on deck in the daytime because they knew I could not escape. I heard you talking to Hon Loy when you first came and I knew you came to save me. I wanted to run to you, but the guard

threw me back in my room and I called for help. Then I heard shooting and the guard left the door and I ran into the cabin and saw them capture you.

"After that I heard them talking about how they were going to kill you. I understand Chinese. Hon Loy was terribly angry at you for striking him and that is the reason he had you tied out here to die the most terrible of all deaths. Hon Loy ordered the guard to throw your bodies in the ocean when you were dead. I—I—wanted—to help you."

Hallard patted the boy affectionately and a broad grin came to his lean, bony face.

"We came here to save you," he said, "and if you do what I tell you, we have a remote chance. You are to go with Mr. Tully in that boat on the side of the junk. If we can get that in the water before those guards see us, we may make it."

"Another bright idea," Tully groaned. "We'll last about five seconds out there in that boat. They'll see us and then they can do any number of things. Shoot us like rats, run us down with the junk, or let us float out in the ocean to our death. No, thanks! I prefer my fadeout in a tussle with these Chinks."

NO one is worrying about your fadeout," Hallard growled. "I'm thinking about this kid here. If you get the boat in the water and get away from this junk, we have a chance."

"And what about you?" Tully asked.

"Me?" Hallard replied. "Well, I'm staying on this junk to perform a certain duty. When that is done, I'll jump overboard and try to swim out to you.

"Don't worry about me, Tully. Worry about the kid. I'm not letting him do any fadeout if I can help it."

IV

ON each side of the junk, near the prow, a small lifeboat hung. As the junk dipped into the swell of the calm sea, the bottom of the boats would hit the water.

Crawling and squirming across the deck, keeping their bodies hidden behind old boxes and coils of rope, Hallard and Tully and the boy reached the life boat. Hallard lifted Philip into it and then placed the rifle alongside him.

Tully loosened the rope at the front of the life boat and Hallard the ropes at the rear. The boat lowered easily and Tully let himself over the side of the junk into it.

"Row away from the junk as fast as you can," Hallard ordered. "You're got to be a hundred yards away when I jump in and swim to you. These Chinks are the world's worst shots, and in the darkness we can get away from them."

"You damn fool," Tully growled, "They'll kill you before you're five feet from the junk."

"That's my worry," Hallard replied. "Get going."

The life boat slipped away from the junk. From the rear of the cabin came a cry of alarm. The cry was taken up by someone below and the next moment the old junk came to life. Yellow men poured out of the aft hatch and the cabin, knives and guns waving in their hands.

But none of them came quick enough to see the body of Hallard disappear down the forehatch. He slid down an old ladder and landed on the floor of a room dark as a dungeon. He crawled to his hands and knees, his hands groping.

His fingers touched a large box. Frantically he tried to tear one of the boards loose, but none came. He

moved on through the darkness until his hands touched another smaller box. One of the boards on the top was loose. His fingers dove inside, touched a small round package covered with a thin paper.

His hand came out and he stood up, lifting the box on his shoulder. He staggered through the dark pit until he came to the ladder. Overhead, on deck, a bedlam of noise had broken loose. Men ran across the deck. Shots cracked on the night air with a monotonous regularity.

Up the ladder Bill Hallard went, with the heavy box on his right shoulder. The din on deck increased to a deafening roar as he neared the opening of the hatch. His head and shoulders came out. The deck was a milling mass of half-naked coolies, and above the roar of curses and yells and shots, the voice of Hon Loy came shrill and piercing.

Hallard grinned as he slid the box off his shoulder to the deck alongside the hatch, one end of it resting on the side of the hatch. In the excitement no one had seen him.

THEN he was out of the hatch, his right hand gripping the automatic. Two coolies near the front of the junk saw him. With a snarling yell they leaped for him, knives over their shoulders, fingers ready to send their weapons through the air.

Hallard's gun roared twice. One of the coolies slumped to the deck. The other clutched his arm and yelled with pain.

Their yells brought the mass of yellow faces after Hallard, but with a long springing leap, he was at the side of the junk, his body balancing there for a second as he started to dive into the water.

His eyes searched the sea for Tully and the boy, but a low mist hung over the water now and he saw nothing. And then in that second as

he stood balancing himself for a dive that would carry his body far below the surface, a gun roared behind him.

A searing, burning pain shot through his shoulder and he fell face forward in a crumpled heap toward the water. Bullets cut the water around him.

HE dove down under the surface, but his side was numb. Nausea spread over him. He struck out with his right hand, but despite his efforts his body slowly rose to the top. He forced his numbed left arm out in front of him. It moved, but he felt nothing in it. His right was working overtime.

His lungs were bursting for air. Hallard struggled to keep under the water, but his body rose and he rolled over on his back, letting his face go above the water. He breathed in the fresh air avidly. His senses were reeling and a feeling of unconsciousness was coming over him. He let his body sink and then he rolled over on his stomach and started to swim again.

How long he swam under the water, he had no way of knowing. It was all a blank to him. Bullets cutting around him was the next thing he remembered and he was swimming on the surface, frantically and hopelessly, not knowing in what direction he was going, or where.

In the mist that had settled over the sea, he could see nothing. But the fogginess protected his swimming body from the bullets, and, finally, they ceased clipping the water around him.

On and on he swam, blindly. Everything was turning crazily in his head. His whole body was numb now, and he felt himself sinking slowly. He struggled to keep to the top. His face felt the cool night air. And then someone near him

cried: "Here, Hallard—over here."

He swam for the voice. Two powerful arms reached out and grabbed him. He was being pulled over the side of the life boat and Tully was talking to him.

"They've spotted us," Tully said. "They're sending the junk down on our boat and they have a flashlight on us."

Hallard raised himself and shook his head violently. His senses cleared suddenly, something dazzlingly bright was in his face. He opened his eyes.

A hundred yards away, the junk was bearing down on them. A powerful flashlight shone from the boat and the auxiliary motor Hon Loy had for emergencies was chugging loudly. "It's all over but the burials now," Tully said. "But, you fool, you're wounded."

Hallard's head was swimming again. He looked down and saw the pale, frightened face of the boy.

"Please — please — don't let them capture us," the boy sobbed. "Tomorrow or the next day, they're going to torture me. I know they will. They'll kill me like they tried to kill you and send my body to father."

"LIKE hell they will," Hallard growled.

He grabbed the rifle and stood up. For a moment he swayed in the little life boat. The junk was chugging steadily toward them and Hallard could see the yellow bodies on the deck. They were staring at the life-boat, making no attempt to fire now. Their reason was obvious. The son of Preston Mowrey was too important to Hon Loy to be sent to the bottom of the sea.

A harsh, dry laugh came from the fevered lips of Hallard. Slowly he raised the rifle to his right shoulder. He took careful, accurate aim. The

rifle jumped in his arms as it roared. The flash of orange red darted toward the oncoming junk.

Hallard crumpled to the bottom of the life boat. From the junk a great leaping flame of red shot upward, followed by an explosion that shook the sea and made the little life boat tremble as if it were paper. Another leaping flash of red spewed skyward from the junk. Another deafening roar.

And when Tully and the boy opened their eyes, the junk of Hon Loy was nowhere to be seen. Wreckage filled the water, and limp, lifeless, yellow bodies were floating around. The two stared at the wreckage in amazement, not knowing what had happened; but Hallard saw nothing. He had fainted, from pain and loss of blood.

THE next morning an English cutter picked up the life boat along the China coast, not far from where Hon Loy's junk had been moored when Hallard and Tully had boarded it. During the night Tully, taking his directions from the stars, had doggedly, grimly rowed for shore.

Sir Preston Mowrey was on the cutter, and the first thing he did was to see that Hallard's wound was dressed and that he was made comfortable. On the side of the American's white iron bed, Philip Mowrey sat and looked at Hallard with eyes opened wide with admiration.

"We did it, kid," Hallard said weakly. "I told Tully I would get back safe." The boy nodded.

"But what happened?" Tully demanded. "You've been crazy as a loon since you fired that rifle, and when you weren't raving, you were unconscious."

Hallard grinned at his partner and patted Philip's hand.

"Don't ever let that palooka there tell you I'm not smart. Philip," Hal-

lard laughed. "I blew Mr. Hon Loy and his gang of cut-throats to the land of their ancestors with Hon Loy's own explosives. I figured he was carrying some ammunition to be smuggled into India, and I got a box of high explosive and sat it up in the hatch so I could send a steel jacket bullet through it. I did, and you both witnessed the fireworks. I missed them."

Sir Preston entered the room with several high ranking English naval officers.

"Mr. Hallard," Sir Preston said with a smile, "you earned the ten thousand pound reward for saving my son, but there is another reward you're not aware of. There's ten thousand for the capture of Hon Loy, as the head of the ring that was smuggling ammunition into India. They carried it to a port in Siam, then had it carted overland from there.

"You didn't capture Hon Loy, but you did a better job than that. You blew him and his gang off the face of the earth, and the English government is very glad to pay you the reward. It will be a nice sum to start you and Mr. Tully off in some good business here."

HALLARD looked at Tully and shook his head.

"There's only one place my share is going to be invested," he said, "and that is back in the good old U. S. A. I'm buying a ranch in some nice peaceful valley, where the birds sing and there won't be any shooting."

"You—you're going to be a cowboy?" young Philip cried. "You're going to have a ranch?"

"That's it, Philip," Hallard replied. "And you're coming to visit me as soon as I get the ranch house built."

"Okay," Philip said with a laugh. "I'll be there."

SHACK-SORE



He waved his six-shooter menacingly at Whitey

A Tense Man-to-Man Fight of Two Partners in the Desolate Reaches of the North Woods

By CLEE WOODS

Author of "Cowboy's Lance," etc.

“WHITEY” MONROE brought his well-knit young body to a halt over the sluice box and opened his mouth to make a protest.

But he caught himself before he gave his thought utterance.

His pard, Newt Kincaid, happened to glance up and see the effort of restraint.

“What’s the matter,” Newt demanded belligerently, “don’t yuh like the way I’m a-doin’ it?”

Whitey knew trouble was on hand

again. That is, another quarrel. He and Newt had been like this for many weeks. Nothing one did pleased the other. Whitey had hoped that this February thaw would let them get so busy with shovels and pans that they would not have time to dispute and disagree. The sight of new flakes and nuggets would dispel grudges mighty quick, too.

Newt was all right. He'd been a mighty square pard, and a hard-working one. Snow and sub-zero weather had kept them cooped up together too long, here in their one-room log hut on the headwaters of Goodbye River. "Bawley" Flynn, a fur trapper had been the only other man in the river-head basin, but he had developed rheumatism and gone out in the late fall.

"I was only thinkin'," Whitey replied to the warlike challenge, "that we already had decided not to put in boulder riffles. Hungarian riffles would do all the way up to the block riffles."

"Listen, kid," Newt snapped at him, "when a twenty-year-old up-start tells me how to lay a sluice box, it'll be one a heap smarter than you, see!"

"Good enough." Whitey gave in, turning off for the pick.

WHILE Newt glowered after him, Whitey drove the pick deep into the gravel which they had thawed out with a log fire. This "overburden" lay above the bedrock of what had been the channel once of Larkspur Creek. They had wintered here together. Their claim beside the creek was too promising to leave, even when winter stopped all placer work and shut them off from the outside world. It seemed more than ironical that they at first had christened their mine the "Pard to Pard," as a symbol of their regard for each other.

Whitey had not been faultless by any means. But he had taken a good deal from Newt. His pard was ten years older than he. In other gold fields, Newt Kincaid was known for two things especially. One was that he would tell the truth no matter whom it hurt. The other was that he was a mighty good man to let alone. He gave ground to no man, and held tenaciously to quickly formed opinions. Stubbornness and pugnacity were written all over his blocky, seamed face. A shock of sandy hair showed in front, for he usually wore his woolen cap well back on his head.

WHITEY took his nickname from the color of his thin, curly hair. He was inches taller than Newt, but both would have weighed around a hundred and seventy pounds. His face was good-natured and well-filled, though quite weather-worn for one so young.

Newt had taken a fancy to him as a mere kid five years before, up in the Klondike. He had made himself more than a brother to Whitey. Together they had drifted from Dawson to Nome, from Nome to Mexico. More than once Newt had fought fist and skull for Whitey. Only once had they been separated. That was the previous summer. During that time, Whitey had killed a rich Philadelphian's son in a gun fight in Tonopah, Nevada. The fight had been fair enough. But Whitey had no proof that his fast triggering was justified. The rich man had turned heaven and earth almost to find Whitey and bring him to trial.

The law had been closing in on the penniless Whitey, when Newt heard about it and came to the youth's rescue. He had slipped Whitey out of the south country and hid him away up here for the winter. But nothing of this devo-

tion was in Newt's stare at the moment they faced each other again there across the sluice box.

"Anybody with any gumption a-tall," Newt growled on, "knows that boulders are nature's riffles, and that they're the best for heavy nuggets like ourn."

For a moment Whitey returned Newt's quarrelsome glare. Then he dropped the pick and stepped over to face Newt at close quarters.

"Pard," he began slowly, in the soothing voice he so often had resorted to of late to restore peace, "the trouble with me and you is we are shack-sore. Been four-walled up together too long. Yuh've heard how unreasonable that makes men git sometimes, ain't yuh, Newt? They cain't be reasonable. Even go loco. Why, right now yuh've purty nigh got cabin fever and—"

"Yeah, blame it all on me," Newt flared back. "You got brain fever, see? And me, I'll maul that punkin o' yourn into a state o' good health if yuh don't quit givin' me so much o' that lip. Hereafter, when I say boulder riffles, why, it's boulder rifles, see, and if I say a patch o' ground don't carry enough color to fool with, we let it alone!"

WHITEY cast a practiced eye at the clouds beginning to scud close down to the jagged mountain rims which lined their retreat on three sides. The fourth side had no such sky-raking mountains. But Goodbye River cut through such a deep, rough gorge it was easier to cross one of the high passes than try to come up the river.

"The warm spell's over; we're gettin' another big snow," Whitey commented.

"Too bad," Newt returned sarcastically, "that yuh'll have to stand my company in the shack another few weeks."

"Newt, I'm not standin' it," Whitey declared regretfully. "We're through. I'm hittin' out through Doehide Pass before this new snow makes the goin' any worse."

"More bluff!" Newt scoffed. "You know you'd never make it through that drifted pass, even if no more snow falls. But this new storm will ketch yuh, fool, before yuh're half way up."

"**I**'M aimin' to see how near yuh're right, anyhow," Whitey told him.

"Don't think," Newt hastened to say, "that I'll work this claim and send you yore share. You got to have the guts to stick here and work if yuh git any gold."

"I don't want gold that comes this-away," Whitey replied. "Take the Pard to Pard, name and all, and welcome!"

That made Newt Kincaid angry indeed. To him, such an offer was an attack upon his honesty. He feared it suggested that he wanted to run Whitey off and steal his half of the claim. He flew into a rage at Whitey for the mere indirect suggestion of such a thing.

"You'll stay here and shovel pay dirt," he roared, "and not go rushin' off into no mountain to freeze yore-self to death! Not that I'd give a damn, only some durn sheriff would claim I tricked you to yore death jist to git yore claim."

Whitey refused to hurl vain words back at his aroused pard. Instead, he strode silently toward the cabin. Newt came growling up the snow trail after him. Whitey went inside and began throwing a few things into a gunny sack. While he took his "bearpaw" snowshoes from the wall and looked to their condition, Newt stamped into the room. The offended partner made straight for a buckskin bag which stood on a shelf in the corner.

The bag held the gold which they had taken before winter froze up their first small sluice box. There was not less than twelve thousand dollars in the bag, making it weigh between thirty-five and forty pounds avoirdupois. Yet the powerful Newt raised it up in both hands and hurled it at the younger man with savage intensity.

"Don't you accuse me of wantin' to steal yore yellor filth!" he cried. "Take this and make much of it. The color is liable to play out any day and leave me little, but I'll call it good riddance!"

Whitey stepped aside and let the bag fall heavily on the floor behind him. He could see that Newt was in too great a rage for the slightest reasoning. Even then Whitey was inclined to take more of the blame on himself than was his due. Newt's nerves had been tried all winter, he reasoned, because Newt had kept fearing to see some deputy sheriff come "webbing" it in after Whitey himself.

No officer would have been so foolish as to have tried either of the passes before April, no matter if Bawley Flynn, the trapper, had told a sheriff that a white-haired young man was over on the head of Good-bye River. But Newt had been overly concerned about keeping his pard safe from the legal wrath he did not deserve. At this moment Whitey remembered all Newt's past affection. He had to remember it to keep from flying at the furious Newt.

"TAKE half of everything we got in partnership," Newt snarled. "Half the grub, half the dishes, half of everything—even half the cabin. I give you my word to share fifty-fifty and that still goes, hear?"

"All right, Newt," Whitey replied in conciliatory voice, "that's okay all around, except I reckon I'll leave

my half of the cabin stand with yours."

"Don't try to joke at me!" Newt raved, altogether beside himself. Suddenly he squared off and flung his Mackinaw aside.

"Why don't you fight me, anyway?" he cried. "Come on, if yuh've got the guts!"

"If I thought it'd take the poison out of our skins," Whitey replied, "I'd plough into you, hombre. But yuh've been too good a pard, Newt, for us to go at it like dogs."

"Like men then—with guns!" Newt cried.

He jerked Whitey's Colt from the wall and tossed it at him. Then he grabbed his own six-shooter. But Whitey ignored the challenge and ignored, too, Newt's harsh invectives that branded him a coward. Swallowing it all, he went on collecting the few things he meant to take with him.

BITTERLY he regretted this disgraceful end to his friendship with Newt. He would have given anything in the world to redeem the lost comradeship. For he still did not blame Newt so much. He was wise enough to understand that this shack-soreness comes on a man like a disease, especially if he has nerves. The disease might be checked by their getting out in other company. But that would not have restored the old bond that had meant more to Whitey than anything else he had ever known.

Suddenly a startling thought struck Whitey. It was almost madness itself. But Whitey was desperate enough to try anything. They would have to suffer together to heal the old wounds. Nothing else would do it. And it must be the bitterest of suffering to set Newt's once loyal heart right again. Further life here under present conditions was unen-

durable. To leave Newt snug in the cabin would be only for him to nurse his hatred. But there was one other way.

Whitey waited until Newt stamped angry feet out to the woodpile. Then he snatched a glowing coal from the fireplace and tossed it over into the corner woodbox. Onto this he dropped a crumpled piece of paper.

Newt returned and threw his armful of wood into the box without discovering the slight smoke wisp beginning to curl up from the box. Whitey left his gunny sack and bear-paws on his bunk and moved out to the sluice box. He had a panicky feeling sweep over him as he left the rounded snowshoes and the few provisions behind. But to have taken them would have lessened the peril of death by starvation or freezing that he was voluntarily bringing on himself and Newt. Nothing but the bitterest experience together would purge their hearts of this shack-sore malady.

Newt followed him outside, evidently in the belief that Whitey meant to repent and stay with him. Whitey stopped by the sluice box, to strengthen that belief.

Newt hurried, as though to start the quarrel all over again if Whitey tried to substitute Hungarian ruffles for boulder ruffles up next to the blocks.

WHITEY moved on up the creek, however, much to Newt's puzzlement. He even trailed after Whitey a short distance, though he was careful to keep behind trees and rocks.

But all at once he broke back toward the cabin. Whitey had to come back around a bend before he saw smoke boiling up from the cabin. Newt was racing for the cabin. He shouted back frantically to Whitey. Whitey broke into a run, as though

the fire caused him as much consternation as it gave Newt. It did, in fact.

The roof was made of "shakes," or split pine boards. Before Newt reached the place, the fire was boiling out from all sides of this roof. Nevertheless, the desperate Newt rushed inside. Whitey shouted at him to stay back, but Newt apparently realized the extreme desperateness of being trapped in this basin without food, bedding or shelter.

WHITEY hoped every second to see Newt come back out of the burning cabin. But the seconds dragged out without the partner's coming into view. Whitey still running, stumbled over a rock and fell. But he scrambled up without ever taking his eyes off the one door of the cabin.

A quick, terrible fear was gripping at his heart. It was the fear that his trick had caused Newt to rush in there and be burned alive. He yelled again for Newt, and his voice went to a pitch of frenzy.

Just then Newt came staggering from the cabin. Whitey gave forth a shout of joy. Newt fell over, gasping for fresh air. He had got out with his life, but nothing more. At sight of Whitey, he sat up. The frown on his face went as dark as the angry roll of smoke belching from all sides of the cabin.

"You done it—on purpose!" he cried.

His voice seemed broken as much from rage as it was by efforts to get back his breath. He jerked his six-shooter from his breeches waistband and waved it menacingly at Whitey. Whitey kept running toward him. Newt sprang up. The gun came down to a deadly level.

"Yuh thought," Newt shouted in new rage, "that yuh'd burn me out and leave me to die like a sick cow, huh? Well, I'll git you first!"

Whitey saw that the man was going to shoot him. He had no gun himself, nor would he have fired on Newt if he had had one. He was too far away to hope to rush in and clinch Newt before the latter could riddle him with bullets. Newt was thumbing back the hammer. His eyes blazed with the resolve to kill.

Whitey had only one chance. He whirled his back onto Newt and started walking away. Newt would have to be crazed beyond all control to shoot him in the back.

"Turn around," Newt cried, "and take it—if yuh're half a man!"

Whitey kept going. He expected Newt to pour after him a volley of bitter epithets. But not a single ugly word did Newt utter. Long seconds of silence marked Whitey's deliberate retreat. He thought any instant the gun would bark and mow him down. But he dared not look around.

"Whitey," Newt called hoarsely, "I said turn around and take it in the belly. For I'm shootin' at the count of three! One—"

Whitey knew Newt meant this. He could hardly keep from breaking into panicky flight. But he forced his feet to hold their even tread.

"Two—" came Newt's count.

WHITEY felt a cold chill run down his spine. But he still did not run nor look around.

"Three!"

The count ended in the hoarsest word of all. Whitey could almost feel the sting of the bullet. But no bullet came. He kept going. He knew without looking around just what sort of disgust and thwarted rage were still on Newt's blocky face. Suddenly he did turn around and walk back toward Newt.

"Yuh didn't have the guts to pull the trigger, did yuh?" he clipped out.

Newt looked startled at the daring taunt. Whitey went on, "All

right, with that settled, let's think up some way to get out of here alive—together! I can't lose time with no arguments, though. I'm headin' hard for Doehide Pass. But I'll be lookin' for yuh to overtake me most any time, Newt."

AGAIN Whitey was the first to give ground. Newt retained his dark looks and sat down to run a forefinger through the colt trigger guard and twist the weapon around and around his hand. Whitey bore on toward Doehide Pass. He kept glancing back, in the hope of seeing Newt accept the inevitable and follow after him.

But snow shut off his view before he had gone a mile. It began with big flakes that ballooned along on a light wind. Soon, however, the wind grew stronger and the snow thicker. Whitey wanted to hasten his steps and try to fight his way through Doehide Pass before the fresh snow made such an attempt even more unthinkable than it now was. But he would not hurry on until Newt came too. If Newt did not come, Whitey feared his pard would die of starvation and exposure. Newt had his six-shooter, it was true. But the game had gone to lower country with the first big snows the previous fall. He could get neither food nor bedding from the deer and elk. The bear were in hibernation.

Whitey climbed slower and slower up the tortuous trail. The air became bitterly cold. Snow was whipping about him in more ominous warning. He was wading through old snow now more than a foot deep. He still thought, though, that he might make the pass and get out. But Newt could not make it if he were not at this point very soon. Whitey went back to meet him, to hurry him along.

Newt was only a short distance behind. Whitey said not a word

in greeting. But he held out his hand in token of peacemaking. Newt ignored it and pushed around him, stubborn as ever. Whitey let him break trail for a short time, then shoved around him and started breaking the way himself.

But this task became more and more arduous. At last they came to drifts that no man could negotiate without snowshoes. Even with snowshoes, they would have found the mountainside too precipitous for safe going.

"Newt," Whitey said, facing his pard squarely, "we're not goin' to get out, that's certain. I know where a big grizzly is holed up. Let's take yore Colt and go spoil his winter nap if we can dig 'im out."

Newt looked him coldly in the eye. "My gun, huh?" he laughed mockingly. "I smashed it up with an axe—to keep from killin' you with it when I caught up with you!"

WHITEY knew that his pard spoke the absolute truth. The glare in Newt's eyes told him, also, that Newt had no intention of ever forgiving him.

"Even if it is my fault, Newt," he said regretfully, "we're trapped now and 've got to make the best of it. Rank as he'll be, that old grizzly is the only critter between us and starvation. His hide'll make a bed, too. His den is over on the north side of the mountain, not half a mile from our claim.

Newt made no answer. He was staring stubbornly up the trail, as though he meant to push on in the face of almost certain death. Whitey hastened to change his mind.

"I left my huntin' knife stickin' in the red fir out by the cabin spring," he went on. "The fire didn't get that nor the axe that yuh used. The pick is out by the sluice box, too. We can dig the grizzly out and

work on 'im with the axe and knife before he comes clean awake."

NEWT gave him a disdainful look, as much as to say that a green kid didn't know enough about grizzlies to talk of them intelligently. Whitey, though, would not be hushed by mere hard looks. "Of course," he added with a little sarcasm of his own, "It'll take guts aplenty."

"Such gall—from a coward like you!" Newt returned scornfully. "Kid, it's you that ain't got the guts. We're doomed anyway, and I'd jest as lief die fightin' a grizzly as freeze to death. Especially when it'll show you up. Yuh cain't turn yore back on a grizzly bear and git mercy, yuh know!"

Whitey let the conversation rest there, and turned back down the mountain. With the trail already broken, the downward trudge proved hard enough. Neither uttered another word. They reached the ashes of their cabin, secured the axe, pick and knife, and set out up the mountain. The fresh snow was inches deep, but they took turns at breaking trail up the mountain to the slight bench where the grizzly had holed in below a big spruce log.

Whitey had found this den before hibernation time in the fall. This was not the bear's first winter in the cozy place. If there was even a slight opening, the snow had covered it over. But earth was piled out plentifully. Whitey drove the pick into the frozen ground.

"No," Newt ruled, in the first words he had spoken, "it'll be easier to thaw 'im out. Besides, we can be ready for 'im with axe and knife when he wakes up and bolts it."

They dragged in dead spruce, fir and aspen, to build a rousing big fire a few feet away from the indented spot that betrayed the closed opening. Whitey supposed that it

would take hours to thaw the hard earth enough to arouse the grizzly. But Newt picked up the axe and walked over to the point where frost crystals marked a slight rift through the snow in the indentation of earth. Here he rammed his feet down through the snow to get them well set on solid earth.

As he did so, there came a dull, metallic click. A slight expression of pain crossed Newt's face. Whitey saw him bend down and brush snow away from his right leg hastily. This revealed the jagged jaws of a huge bear trap biting into Newt's leg from both sides. Probably only the snow and frozen bits of earth had prevented the heavy jaws from breaking his leg. Whitey knew at once that the trap had been left by Bawley Flynn when the trapper got sick and went out in the fall.

"Quick, git a pry," Newt called to Whitey. "I don't want to be caught like this when that grizzly comes tearin' out."

Whitey hastened to chop down an aspen for a green pry. Grabbing this up, he started to Newt's rescue.

"Keep that axe with yuh!" Newt warned.

WHITEY fetched the axe with the pole and tried to set the larger end under the lower edge of the spruce log, to make a pry. He needed scotches, though, and stepped out for a dead pole. While his back was turned, he heard a loud snarl. Whirling, he saw the grizzly come rushing from his lair.

The bear was a monster of his kind, though he was gaunted by his long fast. He sprang up onto his hind feet and opened his terrible red mouth. This was only bluff, though, for the grizzly was trying to make a quick getaway. Because of the fire, however, he had to rush close by the spot where Newt was

held by the trap set for the animal. Whitey's heart froze until he saw that the bear was not going to rush upon Newt.

HARDLY had a feeling of relief shot through him when he was gripped with horror again. Instead of allowing the bear to continue its flight, Newt Kincaid took a step toward it and swung the axe in a vicious circle over his head. Newt was showing the fighting stuff he was made of. He had come out here to get this bear to save his life and Whitey's too. No increased peril to himself was going to make him turn aside from his task. He brought the axe down hard for the bear's skull.

The utter daring of the thing flamed Whitey's heart with admiration. But the horror of a face to face fight with that great, gaunt beast still froze him in his tracks. That horror was intensified when Newt's reach proved so short that the axe only wounded the bear in the shoulder. For the grizzly whirled about and charged at Newt.

Again Newt swung the axe. This time, though, the bear slapped the axe aside and bore in upon the trapped man. Newt's terrible peril fairly petrified Whitey's every nerve. But by sheer will power alone his muscles moved like machine-driven things. His right hand flashed to the knife handle in his belt. His feet took hard jabs into the snow, bearing toward where the bear was closing in on Newt with a horrible roar coming from his awful red mouth. One great paw was flying out, to clutch Newt about the neck. The mouth was closing down upon Newt.

Whitey's cold body lunged out for the blood-chilling sight. His knife blade gleamed swiftly upward, then cut a lightning-like half circle through the air. Whitey forgot the awful snarl and the still more awful

red mouth with its yellow fangs. He saw only a woolly black spot which he thought marked the beast's heart. The point of his knife dug straight for that spot. He put every ounce of his strength into that one desperate blow.

The knife drove deep into its target. But there was so much animal intensity in the grizzly that even after the knife dug home the grizzly brought a huge forepaw crashing into the side of Whitey's head.

A doctor later called it concussion of the brain. Not until weeks later did Whitey know what was going on around him. He awoke from a long, restful sleep, with a faint recollection of having seen Newt moving about him.

But now Newt was gone. Whitey sat up and found himself in a little dugout where their cabin had stood. For a bed he had pine boughs and a big grizzly bearhide. He ran his finger through a two-inch hole that the knife had made into the bear's heart.

THERE was a crude fireplace in one corner of the dugout but the fire was only dead embers. He hardly needed a fire, though, for a warm Chinook wind was blowing. The wind had carried most of the snow away. Whitey could only guess the torture Newt had suffered while he pried his own foot out of the trap, then carried him down here and cared for him during his long recovery.

Whitey had only begun to get his legs back and move around a little, when Bawley Flynn came trekking in. Bawley bore on his back a packboard laden with supplies that he could not quite bring through the north side of Doehide Pass on the mule that he had left staked there. The trapper seemed amazed to find Whitey alive.

"Newt told me to hurry in, as they

was lots of good trappin' yet," he explained.

"Did yuh tell the sheriff about me bein' here?" Whitey inquired. "I had to," Flynn admitted. "When the sheriff cornered me and said he good as knowed you was over here. But Newt Kincaid fixed that. He just come out yesterday and told the sheriff how a grizzly had put you to sleep for good. Why, he even shed tears when he related how he had put you away in a hole in the ground, with no preacher to say anything and him too wicked even to whisper a prayer. The sheriff knowed Newt's rep for tellin' the truth and sent word to Tonopah you was dead."

OF course Newt had had a good foundation for saying the bear put Whitey to sleep and also that he himself had put the wanted young man away in a hole in the ground. But Whitey knew that it had wrenched his pard's loyal soul to come that near to telling a lie. Newt would have done that only for a man he still believed innocent.

Whitey's next surprise was to find a buckskin bag of gold beside him. There was a folded note on top of the flakes and nuggets. It said:

"Whitey, you're about O. K. and I'm senden Flynn in. The Pard to Pard played out and here's your half. I'm hitten for the Peace River in Canady. They're finden plenty color up there. But I reckon it'll be lonesome up that-away. Newt.

P. S. Don't mess around too close to the sheriff on your way to wherever you're aimin' to go to & I understand about the cabben aketchen fire."

Whitey's thin hand trembled a little. "Yuh old stubborn cuss," he said to himself, "yuh won't come out and say yuh're cured of shack-soreness and all that. But darned if yuh ain't worth a whole cabinful of most guys. We'll know better how to take Peace River lonesomeness together anyhow."

Jungle Diamonds



A knife came through the air—Mallon's gun roared

Bill Mallon Gets into Action to Avenge the Death of His Buddy—Coming to Grips With the River Bandit, El Feurtao

By JACKSON COLE

Author of "Valley of Giants," "Pyramid of Gold," etc.

THE white man lay dead, body twisted grotesquely on the grass of the jungle clearing, showing that he had died slowly. A knife had ripped through the back, below the right shoulder blade, leaving a gaping wound; with morning, the pool of blood under him had caked a black purple, and was covered with a dark swarm of mosquitoes and *piume* flies.

While dying, the man had crawled

forward a few feet. A trail of blood lay behind him, and the grass was broken in a narrow swath where he had dragged himself toward the old shack. His right arm was outstretched, fingers reaching in a small opening of the wall, near the ground.

Death had then struck suddenly. The fingers had removed a small board at the bottom of the wall and had started through the opening. An inch inside, they had fallen to the

earth as the last spasm of life had passed through the body.

When dawn broke, the body still lay there, twisted and stiff, right hand in the opening under the floor. Near it lay one shining, glittering stone. In the first rays of the rising sun, this stone gleamed ominously and mockingly, the sole thing of life and animation in that dreary solitude of death.

All this had happened two hundred miles south of Ciudad Bolivai, along a small tributary of the Orinoco River, with Venezuela to the north and the jagged peaks of the Sierra Pacaraima Mountains to the south.

LATER the same day, when the sun had passed over the clearing and was sinking below the matted green of the jungle to the west, Bill Mallon rounded the sharp turn in the narrow river flowing in front of the clearing. He ran his canoe up on the bank, jumped out, and walked hurriedly for the old shack.

Halfway to it, he stopped. His tall body stiffened. The muscles in his lean face contracted, tightening around the mouth in thin ridges. Into his eyes came a look of pain, slowly changing to anger that smoldered like dark fires.

He was staring at the side of the shack, not twenty feet away, where the dead body of his partner, Phil Richards, lay on the grass.

Mallon's right hand slipped down to the butt of the automatic in his belt. It rested there for a moment, and then fell away weakly. From where he stood, he could see that Richards had been dead many hours; the hand in the hole under the shack told Mallon that the murderer had gotten what he wanted.

With long, nervous strides, Mallon walked up to the shack. He stood over his partner, eyes riveted on the gaping knife wound in his back. The

steel gray of Mallon's eyes softened; he wet his lips, as if trying to stifle an emotion that was surging upward to his eyes and throat.

For three years, he and Richards had fought and struggled together in the vast, desolate wilderness of the jungle in Venezuela; had searched for the elusive fortune that always seemed at their finger tips, along the shallow jungle streams where placer diamonds could be found.

At this jungle clearing they had struck a find that meant wealth to both of them. During the past four months they had worked the river bed, tearing up every inch of it and working it over and over again. In the rock and the gravel and the dirt, they had found a fortune of the rare stones.

BUT now, Richards was dead! Richards was dead and the work of four months gone! Mallon's eyes went to the hole where the dead man's hand lay. He saw the lone glittering diamond, lying in the dirt. His mouth twisted strangely in grim, humorless smile.

It wasn't hard for Mallon to picture what had happened. Stabbed in the back, Richards had crawled, while dying, to the secret hiding place of the diamonds under the shack, hoping to get them before the murderer did. His fingers had torn the board away, his hand had darted for the leather bag; but life had left him before he could touch the diamonds.

The murderer had followed, had seen the dying man take the board away. After that, it had been a simple matter for this person to steal the sack of diamonds—the fortune Mallon and Richards had finally found after their three years of searching.

Mallon's eyes went to the side of the shack and then to the bushes

behind it. Suddenly his body stiffened and his jaws locked with a snap. Hanging on a bush that bordered the green of the jungle was a piece of white cloth, a thin strip torn from the clothes of someone fleeing through the underbrush.

He walked over to it, pulled it off the bush and examined it carefully. A piece of soft white silk, heavy enough to have come from a coat of a suit of whites.

MALLON'S eyes flashed and the cold, lifeless smile continued to play at the corners of his mouth. He walked back to the body of Richards and said, grimly: "We were fools, Phil, simple fools who couldn't see our hands before us."

The words were lost in the deadly silence of the jungle around him. He looked down at the river. The dredging platform was there—everything was as he had left it, two days before, when he had gone down the river for more help.

Two days before, their crew of Indian workers had disappeared without warning; slipping away into the jungles, they had been absent when morning came. Mallon knew even then that, behind this disappearance, there was something sinister. When he had gone down the river, he had stopped at the camp of El Feurtao, a half-caste Portuguese who made a pretense of hunting diamonds.

A strange man was this half-caste, tall and thin of body, with a dark face that had the pointed features of an Indian and the heavy, cruel lips of a white man. In dress and manner, he was utterly removed from the jungles. He wore, always, clean and immaculate whites of a heavy silk.

Mallon stared now at the piece of white silk. It could have come from no one save the fastidious Portuguese. Eyes hard, face tense, Mallon folded the shred and slipped it into

his pocket. Slowly he walked into the shack that had been his and Richards' home. He brought out a sheet and wrapped the body of his dead friend in it.

He worked slowly, carefully. From the platform he got a spade. His first duty was to bury his friend.

The second duty would come after that. As Mallon dug into the soft earth to make a grave for his partner, his mind worked clearly and logically on that second problem.

And when he had thrown the last spade-full of dirt over the body of his friend, and the grave had been piled high with rocks to protect it from roving animals, Mallon dropped the spade, gathered a few supplies and walked down to his canoe.

Night had fallen as he pushed it away from the bank and started down the river.

II

EL FEURTAO'S camp lay back in the dense jungle, a quarter of a mile from the river. A hastily constructed shack had been thrown up to serve as his personal quarters. His British Guiana negroes, numbering about twenty, lived in two tents a little to the right of the shack.

Inside his house, El Feurtao sat at a table and sipped from a glass of native liquor. His sharply featured face was hard and cold, but his black eyes looked greedily at the leather bag of diamonds in front of him.

A soft footstep sounded behind him. He swerved, his right hand going for his automatic, but shrugged and smiled as he saw the large, burly negro who had entered the room.

"He is coming," the big negro said. "The men stationed down the river report his canoe passed them a few minutes ago."

El Feurtao smiled coldly. He

picked up the bag of diamonds and slipped them into his pocket.

"And you have made all arrangements for his reception, Toto?" he asked the negro. "We are leaving tomorrow and we would not want him trailing behind us. We have had enough trouble with the Indian River Police. Dead men neither suspect nor tell anything."

"He will die, Señor," Toto replied in his low, guttural voice, "when he comes up the trail. We have men who are waiting at different points for him."

DOWN near the river, Mallon crawled over the jungle path, squirming along the ground like a great snake. His hand went out, pushed a *liana* vine back; suddenly he stopped, hugged the ground tightly, ears strained to detect any unnatural sound that might come out of the jungle.

Around him, the insect life of the jungle roared drowsily. In the distance could be heard the mournful cry of a jaguar; from the river came the splash of alligators as they churned the sluggish water. Overhead a *macaw* flew among the limbs of the trees, sending out its weird nightly call.

Where he lay was only darkness, black and impenetrable; along the path, moonlight broke through the trees, casting splotches of streaked light on the ground.

He moved forward again, groping out with his hands to push the vines and brush away. A dark, crouching figure darted across a spot of moonlight.

Mallon stopped, pulling his knees up under him, muscles tensed and bunched for a spring.

A low, guttural human voice broke through the ceaseless chatter of the jungle. From another part of the path came an answering voice. There

was a rustle of brush; then, only the noise of the jungle life.

Mallon's automatic was in his belt, but he did not reach for it. A shot would bring the half-caste's gang down on him; he would be killed before he even got near El Feurtao and the diamonds.

Instead, he fell on his stomach. Inch by inch, he squirmed up the path toward the spot of moonlight where El Feurtao's men were waiting for him. Noiselessly, like a great snake sliding forward, he advanced up the path. If he could get by these two or three men, there might be a chance.

He smiled at the thought of that lone chance. Surrounded by his gang of killers, El Feurtao had little to fear from one hostile man.

The dense jungle growth along each side of the path prevented Mallon from circling the men guarding the path. In that undergrowth he would flounder aimlessly, losing his way; the narrow trail was his only hope to get to the shack where, he knew, he would find El Feurtao.

Mallon was near enough to see the crouching forms of two negroes, one on each side of the path. He rolled over on his back. Slowly and noiselessly he slipped his coat off, taking a long time for each movement.

WHEN he finally had it off, he rolled back on his stomach. Under the coat he stuck a stick; then he rose on his knees, his right hand slipping the revolver from his belt. In his left hand was the stick that held the coat far in front of him.

He moved forward quickly, pushing the coat ahead of him, with no great attempt at silence. When the coat came to the edge of the moonlight part of the path, he stopped. His foot kicked at a vine. It rustled the trees. He coughed twice.

There was no sound from the

negroes, but their shining bodies rose up with the swiftness of animals. Two knives cut the air with sharp zips, burying themselves in the coat and pinning it to the earth.

Mallon's body lunged forward, falling over it. He groaned weakly, his voice dying away in a guttural moan of death. Three tall, blacks walked up to him. In the darkness they could see only the dim outlines of his inert, limp body. One of them kicked him.

His body received the kick in the same manner as would a sack of sand. No groan came from him; no sign of life. The negroes grunted something to each other, turned quickly and disappeared up the path.

For many minutes Mallon lay there, soundless as if in death. The departing footsteps died away. Only the jungle roared about him.

Five minutes longer Mallon lay there; then slowly he raised himself up. The automatic was still gripped in his right hand, as it had been when the negroes stood over him.

HE SLIPPED his coat on and picked up the two knives, studying them for a moment. They would only be in the way; he tossed them aside as he started up the path for the camp of El Feurtao.

He came to the edge of the small clearing of the camp. Lights were burning from the two windows of El Feurtao's house. The twin tents of the British Guiana Negroes loomed up, phantom-like in the pale moonlight.

Three Negroes, led by a tall, gorilla-like one, were crossing the clearing. They went up on the little porch along the front of the house, followed the leader inside the door.

Mallon darted around the edge of the clearing, hugging the wall of green foliage closely. At the rear of the shack, he fell to his hands and

knees and crawled up to the nearest window.

He saw El Feurtao sitting at a table, drinking native whisky. Standing near him was the tall black.

"You are sure, Toto?" Mallon heard El Feurtao ask.

"His body, Señor," Toto answered, "is lying in the path. Shall we get it?"

Mallon saw El Feurtao shake his head. "The jungle will take care of the body. Get things ready to leave tomorrow."

Mallon dropped down from the window. Moving on his hands and knees, he reached the corner of the house as Toto and the three Negroes walked down from the porch and across the clearing.

Hugging the wall tightly, he moved along the front of the building, ducking under the two windows. At the steps, he slipped his automatic out. He was smiling grimly as he kicked open the door and entered the room.

"You left something at our camp, El Feurtao," he said coldly. "I brought it back to you—but keep your hands off your gun! I'll send a bullet through your head, the first move you make in that direction."

III

MALLON'S foot kicked the door shut as he spoke. El Feurtao had turned slowly, keeping his hands away from his gun.

For a passing second, something like terror, the terror of seeing a ghost, passed across the man's face. But that look was gone in a flash and a cold, deadly smile narrowed his dark eyes.

Mallon walked up to the table. He placed the piece of silk cloth in front of El Feurtao, and said: "You left that on a bush after you mur-

dered Richards. I thought you might want it back."

El Feurtao looked at the silk cloth and shrugged.

"That was kind of you, Mallon," he said softly. "It really has put you to a lot of trouble, returning this, because you will never leave from this camp alive."

"I rather figured you would think that way," Mallon replied dryly. "In fact, you took some precautions to see that I didn't even get here alive."

"You seem to have been lucky," El Feurtao said quietly.

THE half-caste's eyes were riveted on the automatic that was now less than a foot from his face. His body had tensed, like the body of an animal ready for a death spring.

"I'll play my luck," Mallon answered, "and it will be as good as yours. The minute I hear the footsteps coming up on that porch, you will die with me."

El Feurtao smiled coldly.

"I see," he said softly, "you are brave enough to be a first class fool."

"I have returned your property," Mallon answered. "Now, you are going to return mine."

"Your property?"

"The diamonds you stole from Richards," Mallon said.

El Feurtao laughed aloud.

"You are a fool, Mallon," he sneered. "I have twenty men here, and you couldn't get a foot from this house alive."

Mallon's eyes flashed. His body shot forward.

"We'll take care of that with this," he said.

His left came up in a short, jabbing uppercut, carrying the weight of his body behind the blow. It caught El Feurtao flush on the jaw, sending him backward off his chair, an unconscious heap on the floor.

Mallon was over him, his hands going through the pockets. He pulled a folded paper from inside the coat. With the fingers of his left hand, he unfolded the paper. There was the picture of a man on it, and large type underneath the photograph.

Without looking at it closely, he stuffed it into his coat pocket. His right hand continued to grip the automatic, while his left went through the pockets of El Feurtao's clothes. He found the leather bag of diamonds, slipped it into his waterproof money belt. He had hardly completed this when his body stiffened and he whirled around.

Behind him, a window creaked in rising. Mallon ducked, spinning around on his heels. A knife came through the air, cutting over his head. It hit the far wall of the room with a loud ring. Mallon's gun roared. A black face dropped away from the window with a piercing scream.

MALLON leaped to his feet. Outside, the camp became a bedlam of yells and running men. Mallon dashed through the door, landing on the porch as two of El Feurtao's men came dashing up the steps. Mallon's gun jumped in his hand as he fired from the hip.

One of the Negroes crumpled to the floor of the porch in a quivering heap; the other howled with pain as he grabbed his stomach. Others were coming toward Mallon from the opposite direction. With a leap he was off the porch, rolling over on the ground.

Knives cut the air around him as he zigzagged across the clearing, his body twisting and turning, moving forward on hands and knees. From the house, long, leaping flames of orange red came from rifles, but the bullets went wild, hitting the earth several feet around him.

Then he heard a shrill voice giving commands. He recognized it as El Feurtao's voice. An automatic cracked on the porch. A bullet clipped the air within an inch of Mallon's head.

He was now only a few feet from the edge of the jungle, a little to the right of the path that led to the river. He had no time to try for the path. He was making for the matted green foliage in front of him.

From his right came a charging man. Mallon had only a chance to get a sideway view of him. It was Toto. The huge Negro was leaping through the air, trying to beat Mallon to the edge of the clearing. In his raised right hand was a knife.

Fingers twisted hard against the blade. Mallon ducked. He knew Toto would never miss at that distance. Behind him, a horde of Negroes were racing toward the edge of the clearing from the porch. El Feurtao's shrill voice rose above the bedlam.

Mallon fell over on his back. He fired from that position, fired upward at the face of Toto. Mallon saw the bullet crash above the nose of the huge Negro; he saw Toto's body crumple to the ground.

And in the next second, Mallon had made a frantic headlong dive into the sea of green foliage in front of him.

IV

HE LANDED in a mass of vines and grass and underbrush. The grass cut his face; the vines tore his coat from his shoulders. He rolled over on his back, bringing his body up to a sitting position as three Negroes came crashing through the foliage.

Mallon fired carefully, making each bullet take its toll. Two of the Negroes fell. The other, in the face of lead, retreated back to the clear-

ing. There torches were appearing, and El Feurtao was yelling orders. But no more men attempted to face Mallon's automatic.

He threw himself to the right, plunging and wading and fighting desperately to get to the path that led to the river.

When he finally came out on it, few of his clothes remained on his back. His skin was covered with blood, raw from the lacing which the grass and underbrush had given him.

HE LOOKED back. The tall form of El Feurtao was visible, himself leading his men to the path. A smile came to Mallon's lips. He sprang forward, dashing for the river with every ounce of speed he could put in his legs.

Twice he tripped, falling head first to the ground; but each time he bounced up like a rubber ball and dashed onward. When he got to the river, he was far ahead of his pursuers. He turned to the right, running up the shore.

On the other side of a small sand bar, his canoe was moored. He reached the sand bar as El Feurtao and his men came out on the river bank. Mallon untied the canoe and gave it a shove out into the river.

A gray fog was rising off the water, hiding it from view. The boat floated lazily away, losing itself in the mist.

Then Mallon jumped into the brush. He remained there in a crouching position, every muscle in his body tense and taut. El Feurtao was dividing his men into small searching parties. Some went down the river; other spread out along the shore, searching in the underbrush.

The Portuguese himself, with three men, came up the river for Mallon's boat. One of the Negroes led the way, as if he knew the exact

location of the canoe. Back in the bush, a grin came to the bloody face of Mallon.

He raised himself higher on his toes. El Feurtao and his men were close now. They would pass within two feet of him, the distance from the brush to the edge of the river was not more than four feet.

The Negro leading the way passed Mallon. Then came El Feurtao, automatic in his right hand, his dark face brutal in the red light that came from the torch carried by the man in the rear.

AND in the next split second, Mallon leaped. His body came out of the brush, a long, slithering flash of brown. His shoulders hit El Feurtao above the knees, and the two men went crashing over the bank into the river.

It happened so quickly, with such phantom-like speed, that the Negroes, for the moment, stood on the bank dazed and bewildered. Mallon knew that the success of his plan depended on two things. First was the matter of speed, getting El Feurtao to the boat before the Negroes could come to his assistance; the second thing was to get to the boat.

But hardly had Mallon hit the water, with El Feurtao held firmly in his arms, than he realized that the first part of his plan was not going to work out with precision.

He and El Feurtao sank under the muddy water, but under the surface El Feurtao came to life with snarling vengeance. His body lashed around, breaking Mallon's hold on his legs; then, with the ease and speed of a fish swimming under water, his arms went around Mallon's neck in a death grip.

Down and down Mallon sank, with El Feurtao's arms holding him like a powerful steel vise. His lungs expanded until it seemed that they

would burst. He struggled desperately against the killing hold. Then, suddenly, his body went limp.

El Feurtao's arms released their grip. He rose quickly to the surface, leaving the limp, almost lifeless body of Mallon at the bottom, in the belief that Mallon was too far gone to rise to the top.

But Mallon came to, with a threshing movement of his legs and arms. It seemed that every part of his body was bursting. Up and up he went. He struggled frantically to keep from opening his mouth.

His head went above the surface. He drank in air hungrily, greedily. The dizziness left his head. Then, suddenly, he heard splashes behind him. He turned, swimming on his right side.

Out of the darkness came dark bodies, closing in on him in a tightening circle. Black and brutal the Negroes looked; in the misty gray darkness he saw the gleam of their white teeth. He heard a sharp command from El Feurtao, who was still nearby in the water.

NEAR the bank Mallon saw a large *mounterais* being boarded by other Negroes. He looked around wildly, trying to locate his canoe. It was nowhere in sight.

The circle of swimming Negroes was on him. Long, black hands reached out for his body. He dove, turning his body around and swimming for the middle of the river.

He realized the move to be futile. If he could find his boat, there might be a remote chance. But now he had little time to do that.

He came to the surface, his lungs screaming for air. He had evaded the first circle, but the Negroes, with the uncanny ability of cats to see at night, spotted him rapidly.

He dove again, but this time they
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went down with him, surrounding him in a circle. The water held a churning, snarling mass of human flesh—black flesh that closed in on the lone white man, like beasts in the jungle.

Mallon kicked and fought frantically. He shot to the top, bringing his right around with all the strength and weight of his body behind it. His fist cracked against a Negro's head, knocking it back.

The fury of his attack gave him one valuable second; and in this second, he struck out for the far shore, realizing now that his only hope of escape lay in speed, swimming on the surface.

THE Negroes followed after him. Mallon threw every ounce of his remaining strength into his overhand strokes. Once he had held a swimming record. He swam now as he had swam in races long ago—head partly submerged, body on the right side, arms flying out in vicious, swift overhand strokes.

He fairly flew through the water. Behind him the Negroes came, but their swimming was awkward, lacking the speed of their victim.

Yet Mallon realized that the far shore offered him little hope of escape. In the jungle, the Negroes could trace him with ease. His gun was somewhere in the bottom of the river.

He wondered what had happened to El Feurtao.

He came to the bank, pulled himself up into the jungle foliage as the first Negro hit the shore and went up the bank after him. The others were only a few feet behind.

Mallon lay flat on his stomach, near the edge of the bank. He knew that running would do no good now. There was a chance of hiding from the first onrush of the Negroes.

Later, they would find him, but he was letting future events take care of themselves.

The Negroes plunged by him, their feet missing his face and body by inches, and disappeared in the forest. Mallon crawled to his hands and knees. His heart gave a wild leap.

Not fifteen yards down the river bank, snagged on a piece of driftwood, was his canoe. He started to crawl down the bank; but as he did, a body pulled itself out of the water and came up on the bank.

It was El Feurtao, following up the Negroes to see that his orders were properly executed.

Mallon was on his feet; then his body hurled through the air, striking El Feurtao before the half-caste realized what had happened. The force of Mallon's lunge sent them both to the ground.

Bringing himself up, Mallon let loose with a vicious short, jabbing uppercut. It caught El Feurtao flush on the chin.

Behind them came the crash of the jungle underbrush as the Negroes returned. Mallon moved swiftly. He grabbed El Feurtao's legs and dragged the man down the river bank, to the canoe.

THE Negroes came out of the jungle a few yards away from Mallon. He fell flat on his stomach. The blacks scattered, and two of them advanced in his direction.

Mallon wasted no time. He and the inert form of El Feurtao went into the river. They landed within three yards of the canoe. A Negro on the bank gave a cry of alarm.

The others bunched around him. They argued for a moment; and in that time Mallon had pulled the limp body of El Feurtao over the side of the canoe and jumped in after him.

He grabbed the paddle, pushed the

(Concluded on page 146)

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(Concluded from page 144)

canoe off the drift-wood and, with the last remaining strength in his arms, sent the craft down the river.

He heard the splash of bodies as the Negroes leaped into the water after him. On the far shore, he saw the great *mounterais*, a grim, ghostly outline in the dark, pull away from shore.

EL FEURTAO stirred in the bottom of the canoe. Mallon paid no attention to him. He threw his weight behind the paddle. The light canoe fairly flew over the water. He came to a sharp turn in the river, went around at fast speed and hit a long stretch of still water.

He brought the canoe close to the bank in the veil of darkness that hung there, sending it down the river as fast as he could paddle. A mile from the bend in the river, he gave his attention to El Feurtao. With some *pissaba* rope, he tied the half breed's hands and legs.

Then he looked back. There was no sign of the big *mounterais* or the Negroes.

When dawn broke several hours later, El Feurtao was lying in the bottom of Mallon's canoe, hands and feet tied. Mallon's face was pale from exhaustion and his clothes hung over his body in tatters, but he had the leather bag of diamonds in his belt.

He sent the boat down the river easily. He had little fear now of being followed. With Toto dead and El Feurtao in the bottom of the boat, the gang of British Guiana Negroes were leaderless; and in this condition they would wander around in the forest aimlessly, their slow brains unable to grasp just what had happened.

El Feurtao lay on his back, his dark face twisted with hatred and his

eyes flashing the light of murder.

"And now, El Feurtao," Mallon said grimly, "you are on your way to Ciudad Bolivai, where the authorities will take proper care of you."

"You swine," El Feurtao sneered, "I will make a fool out of you. You have no proof that I murdered Richards. I will swear that the diamonds are mine and that you attacked my camp and stole them."

Mallon grinned and reached in his pocket. He slowly pulled out the paper he had found on the body of El Feurtao.

"The authorities at Ciudad Bolivai," he said with a dry laugh, "are so anxious to get their hands on you that they have offered a reward of five thousand pesos for anyone that can bring you to them. It was very kind of you to carry this notice of a reward for El Feurtao, the river pirate. Without it, I might have been willing simply to get my diamonds back, realizing I would have difficulty in proving murder."

Mallon unfolded the paper. The greater part of it was taken up with a picture of El Feurtao. Under the picture was the notice of a reward, printed in Spanish.

I SUPPOSE they have enough murders on you to put your head in a noose," Mallon said. "If they haven't, they will be only too willing to believe my story of your murdering Richards. Either way, that neck of yours will land in the noose that has been waiting for it a good many years."

The color left El Feurtao's face. His eyes went dead. He wet his lips and pulled against the ropes on his hands and feet.

"The reward," Mallon explained, "will be my pay for the trouble of capturing you alive. And don't kid yourself that I didn't earn it."



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GET AN ARM of might with the power and grip to obey your physical desires. I have taken weaklings whose arms were scrawny pieces of skin and bone and in a very short time developed them into men of powerful proportions with bulging biceps and brawny forearms. He-men with strong, solid arms of power that are respected by men and admired by women! I don't mean just a 16-inch bicep but a 15-inch forearm and a powerful 8-inch wrist.

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This course is specially planned to build every muscle in your arm! It has been scientifically worked out for that purpose. Many of my pupils have developed a pair of triceps shaped like a horseshoe, and just as strong, and a pair of biceps that show their double head formation. The sinewy cables between the biceps and elbow are deep and thick with wire cable-like ligaments. The forearm bellies with bulk, the great supinator lifting muscles become a column of power, and their wrists are alive and writhe with cordy sinew. Why not start now to build a he-man's arm? Send 25c for this course today.

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I will not limit you to the arm. Try any one of my test courses listed below at 25c. Or, try all of them for only \$1.00.

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Mail your order now and I will include a **FREE COPY** of "NERVES OF STEEL, MUSCLES LIKE IRON". It is a priceless book to the strength fan and muscle builder. Full of pictures of marvelous bodied men who tell you decisively how you can build symmetry and strength the Jowett Way! Reach Out... Grasp This Special Offer!

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The GLOBE-TROTTER



“**W**HAT a stunt it would be if we could get this gang of ours all together in one place for a giant round table meeting,” writes Larry Regan, of old Santa Fe, New Mexico. “That would be a pow-wow worth trotting halfway around the globe to attend!”

Right you are, Larry. That crowd would make the Yale Bowl look like an egg-cup. And let me tell you, it would be one of the snappiest live-wire, he-man outfits that ever rubbed elbows and swapped yarns.

Well, even if we can't quite manage that, we can gather round here and have our pow-wow. That's what this department is for—to give you adventurers from all corners of the globe a chance to have your say.

This month I'm betting that some of our gang are doing their gathering round in strange and unfamiliar places.

The call of adventure is in all of us! When it starts to bubble and gets out of hand we kick over the traces and then—well, then you get the sort of red-blooded action that provides the basis for the swell yarns in this magazine.

The call of adventure is dying? Bunk! That stirring call has lured man irresistibly since time began.

Treasure Trove

Buried treasure! There's a magnet that always calls to the true adventurer. Buried treasure—the very words smack of adventure and romance!

Buried treasure! Locked in sunken holds at the bottom of the sea—hidden away in lost caves—buried

deep in the ground on barren islets! Rich treasure worth a king's ransom! Treasure stained red with blood!

To hunt in far-off places, to brave unknown dangers, to unearth gold and jewels that were hidden away by stalwart adventurers of another day—who doesn't get a kick out of that prospect?

Cocos Island

THE trouble with treasure hunting is that those pirate gents picked out such distant and inaccessible places to stow away swag.

Probably the most famous of these is Cocos Island, the legendary hiding place of fabulous amounts of pirate loot and golden treasure. Located in Lat. 5° 32' 57" N. and Long. 86° 59' 17" W., this little dot in the Pacific Ocean has attracted more than thirty treasure-hunting expeditions.

Have they all failed? Who can say? Buried treasure seekers, if they're lucky enough to uncover what they're after, aren't likely to go broadcasting the news. Too many people ready to muscle in. Perhaps some of these expeditions found more than they admitted, but, so far as is known, the bulk of the treasure still lies somewhere on Cocos.

It's a cinch that most of the treasure hunters went away empty-handed, and some never returned at all. At least once, rival expeditions fought it out on the island, and there are black tales of mutiny and murder in other outfits.

Maps and Directions

Some of the ambitious treasure seekers who swarmed over Cocos
(Continued on page 150)

If DEATH Should Strike YOU Suddenly...

Will YOUR FAMILY Suffer THIS FATE?



THIS AMAZING NEW CERTIFICATE PROVIDES DEATH .. ACCIDENT AND OLD AGE BENEFITS Up to \$1,000 and...

DO YOU want to GUARANTEE greater happiness and security to your loved ones? Do you want to spare them from an unkind fate in the event that ever-present death or possible maiming accident should strike unexpectedly, as it so often does? Every man owes it to his wife and children or mother, father, sisters and brothers to make certain of the future by protecting them NOW! Don't gamble with fate for another single day! For a cost of about 4c daily per each \$1000.00 protection you want, you can obtain an amazing new TBA Certificate that pays a benefit of up to \$1000.00, \$2000.00 or \$5000.00 in event you should meet with death, permanently disabling accident or, when you reach the old age specified, PAYS YOU as much as \$1000.00, \$2000.00 or \$5000.00 IN CASH!

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FREE COMPLETE INFORMATION

MAIL THE COUPON TODAY ... take advantage of this opportunity to obtain TBA Protection ... why put off until tomorrow an important thing you can do today? Or, if you wish Family Group Protection or information on other forms of TBA Protection for individuals, write for full facts on TBA Certificates paying benefits up to \$1,000.00 and up to \$5,000.00.

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MONEY BACK GUARANTEE No Agent Will Call

You act as your own agent and pocket the savings. Fill in the coupon below. Give us your name, age, address and the name of your beneficiary. Send the coupon with only \$1.00, \$2.00 or \$5.00, depending upon the amount of protection you want. There is nothing more for you to do to obtain the protection of this marvelous TBA Certificate. Then, each month, if you have the \$1,000.00 Certificate, you pay only \$1.25 to keep it in force or, if you have the \$2,000.00 Certificate, you pay but \$2.00 monthly and, on the \$5,000.00 Certificate, \$5.00 monthly. Look the future squarely in the face! YOU GET YOUR MONEY BACK PROMPTLY if, after receiving your TBA Certificate, you are not completely satisfied with it. YOU TAKE NO RISK. Do not hesitate—do not wait—one day lost may be disastrous. PLAY SAFE! Fill in and mail the coupon this very hour!

APPLICATION FOR TBA CERTIFICATE

TBA NATIONAL PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION, Dept. 201, Lafayette, Louisiana

I enclose one dollar (\$1.00) to pay the first month's premium on a TBA Certificate providing up to \$1,000.00 Life, Accident and Old Age protection for the undersigned. I hereby warrant that I am in good health, and free from chronic or constitutional disease. To keep it in force it is understood that I am to pay \$1.25 per month, each month thereafter. Unless I am perfectly satisfied with the provisions of my TBA Certificate, you agree to refund my \$1.00 promptly when I return my certificate to you.

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My Address..... Street

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

My Beneficiary's Name is.....

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Pay \$2 Each Month

If You Want Up To \$5,000.00 PROTECTION

Send \$5 With Coupon
Pay \$5 Each Month

(Check the Amount of Protection You Want)

(Continued from page 148)

came equipped with maps and detailed directions for unearthing the caches. They fell down as badly as those who just took a blind chance.

How come, if the treasure story isn't pure bunk?

Well, if you could get a look at Cocos you'd be able to savvy that. Picture a tropical island, with mountains and valleys, and almost every square foot of it covered with nearly impenetrable jungle vegetation. Talk about your needle in the haystack!

Besides, old Mother Nature has scant respect for man's carefully drawn maps. A tropical storm sweeps over Cocos, and the landmarks set down carefully are all changed or disappear. And where are you? In fact, the island itself is gradually disappearing. In 1874 it was nearly twenty miles in circumference. Now it's less than twelve.

So, you adventurers, if you're going to get that treasure off Cocos you'll have to do it soon. In another couple hundred years the island may not be there at all!

Fact or Fable

WHAT'S that? You fellows want to know whether there actually is a treasure there before you start out on a wild goose chase?

Well, authentic records say there is no question about its having been hidden away on the island. The yarn packed enough authenticity to cause men to spend millions of dollars on expeditions. It was convincing enough to make August Giessler, the "King of Cocos Island," spend more than twenty-five years of his life on the island in a vain hunt.

The amount of this treasure has been variously estimated at \$100,000,000 and more. Most of it is supposed to be stored in a cave.

Was In the Cave

Some years ago Ye Olde Globe Trotter talked to an old-timer who had no doubt whatever about the existence of the Cocos treasure. He had seen it!

According to his story, he was on

the island in 1874 and found the cave in which the treasure is hidden. Out of it he took a large, heavily loaded cash-box, a load of expensive gold watches, heavy gold chains and seals, jewels and other precious objects. These he hid in a new cache far up in the mountains half a mile or more above the cave.

They're Still Waiting

IN the cave were gold statuettes, gold in bars, in nuggets, in dust, in circlets studded with jewels. There was also more than 150 tons of gold, formerly the property of Peru. That gold was loaded on the *Mary Die*, of New Bedford, and taken to Cocos for safety at a time when the Peruvians feared that their capitol, Lima, would fall into the hands of the invading Chileans. The bones of the *Mary Die* still lie on the shore of Cocos.

"I can take \$5,000, leaving here with one man, and get that treasure all the costly expeditions have failed to find!" this old-timer swore. "I can locate that cache I made in the mountains and empty it in less than an hour's work."

But Ye Olde Globe Trotter didn't have \$5,000, so the cache and the treasure are probably still waiting there for someone to dig them up.

South American Adventurers

There's a thought for Harry Palmer and Lincoln Kersch and the rest of you fellows who are turning longing eyes toward South America. But maybe we'd better get a bit more expert testimony before we start loading up the schooner.

Any of you gents who have first, second or even fortieth hand information on the Cocos Island treasure, step up and let's have your spiel. We're all ears.

For that matter, we won't tie ourselves down to Cocos Island. Let's have the dope on buried treasure anywhere. Ye Olde Globe Trotter has chased enough rainbows in his day to know better, I suppose, but

(Continued on page 152)

How To Secure A Government Position

STOP WORRYING about business depressions and job hunting. Work for Uncle Sam. No special experience needed to get one of these attractive positions. It's my business to help you prepare for it and to help you get it! For eight years I was a Secretary Examiner. I have helped thousands into well-paid Government positions, and I can help you get the job you pick. I know how to train you to get high rating in Civil Service Examinations, which will qualify you for early appointment.

New Examinations to Be Held

Establishment of the N.R.A., A.A.A. and numerous other new government branches, plus the general improvement in business has made many good government jobs available. Word has been received that old registers over three years old are to be destroyed, and new examinations are to be held. This means that it is now possible to get the government job you want ahead of hundreds who have waited for months! Providing you can pass your examination with sufficiently high rating!

Good Pay — Short Hours — Steady Work

Get rid of the bugaboos of "hard times," strikes and layoffs that you must always worry about in ordinary jobs. Don't stick in the low-pay jobs that start you off in a rut and keep you there. Work for Uncle Sam in a fine position you can't lose for any religious, political or personal reasons. Get a Government position that's safe—that pays you from \$1,700 to \$3,300 a year—a "sure berth" where there are no strikes or lockouts, where you get vacation with pay, retirement pensions, 8-hour day, automatic yearly salary raises, opportunities for quick advancement and many other advantages you can't get anywhere else.

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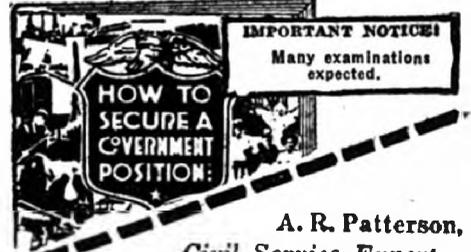
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NAME.....
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CITY..... STATE.....
(You must be 18 or over to be eligible for a position)

(Continued from page 150)

this lost treasure thing hits him where he lives.

A hundred and fifty tons of pure gold—Man!

The Globe Trotters Club

Applications continue to roll in at a merry clip for the *Globe Trotters Club*, but there's room for lots more. If you haven't gotten in line with the rest of the crowd clip the application blank on page 156 and send it along.

Remember, there are no dues or initiation fees. No charges of any kind. All you have to do is clip the coupon, fill it in with your name and address, enclose with it a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and shoot it in to the *Globe Trotter*. *Pronto* we'll enter your name on the club roll and send you a handsome membership card entitling you to all the rights and privileges of a charter member in this world-wide organization.

I am printing another batch of charter members in this issue. If you haven't joined yet, it's time you got moving and lined up with a peppy bunch of two-fisted gents who are going to do things.

We've got a fine gang of live-wires signed up already and suggestions for the organization and its activities are coming in thick and fast.

Fellow Members

AMONG the first-rate suggestions which have already come in is one from Harry A. Dashnir, of Mount Vernon, Washington:

Dear *Globe Trotter*:

Enclosed is my application blank for membership and here is a suggestion.

Most organizations of this sort have some kind of insignia so that members can recognize each other on the far flung trails of the world. Generally it is a small lapel button, but I want to suggest something different.

Suppose we adopt a flag or pennant—say one about four inches by six—to be attached to the equipment of a member while out on a trip; and a larger one—about three feet by five—to be flown over the camp of any group of members.

Harry A. Dashnir.

Mount Vernon, Washington.

There you are, fellow members of

the *Globe Trotters*. How does that idea hit you? Hop to it and let me know!

Sea Monsters (?)

A couple of months ago I went on record as doubting the existence of sea monsters, and I'm standing by that statement insofar as I never saw a sea monster myself and haven't met anyone who saw one. But here's a letter from a rolling stone we all know. When Jackson Cole gets het up this much over sea critters—well, read his letter:

Dear *Globe Trotter*:

Think I'd gone into retirement or something? Well, I didn't; I went into Scotland—though, I'll admit, the quiet little village from which I am writing this is as close to retirement as I ever hope to be!

No, I haven't gone back to the soil, and I'm not going in for Highland research. Wrong on both counts. I'm here on something a lot more fascinating.

A while ago when the papers were full of accounts of sea monsters I got interested. Where there is so much smoke there must be at least some fire, says I. So I started out to investigate.

The Scottish sea serpent was the first of these monsters reported and the story had all the earmarks of authenticity, so this is where I came—to Loch Ness. I've been here more than a month now and I've been squinting over the Loch, by day and by night, until I know every square foot of it by heart.

Have I seen the sea serpent? Well, I don't know. I saw something; I know that. It was on a moonlight night. I was looking out over the Loch from the shore when something started dipping out of the water near the opposite shore. The moon flashed on its shiny sides. It was more like a black streak skimming over the water than anything else.

Several of the townspeople were with me and we launched a boat. The thing was still flashing in the moonlight as we set out from shore, but by the time we reached the point at which it had appeared all sign of it was gone.

Was it a sea serpent? I don't know, but I'm inclined to think it was. I've talked with dozens of people here who saw the creature at other times—saw it clearly and distinctly. They claim it has an eel-like head, a long neck, and measures twenty-five feet or more.

The point about this thing that gets me is that these people are substantial citizens. They aren't dreamers, and they aren't liars. They saw something, and

(Continued on page 154)

A NEW LIFETIME BUSINESS

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NO HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CANVASSING
INCOME EQUAL TO REQUIREMENTS
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E. Lawson, of Tennessee, clears \$103 profit his first 3 days in this business. He tops off these earnings with \$118 profit on a single deal a few days later. J. C. May, Conn., cleared \$268.55 the first nine days he worked. J. E. Loomis, Oregon, earns \$215 his first nine days. A. W. Farnsworth, Utah, nets \$54.18 his first day, a Saturday. S. Clair, New York, writes he is clearing as high as \$70 a day. W. F. Main, Iowa, clears up \$291.50 in 9 days. B. Y. Becton, Kansas, starts out with \$530.35 net for 40 days work! These men are beginners. How could they enter a field totally new to them and earn such remarkable sums in these desperate times? Read the answer in this announcement. Read about a new business that does away with the need for high pressure selling. A rich field that is creating new money-making frontiers for wide-awake men. Those who enter now will pioneer—to them will go the choicest opportunities.

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P. O. Box 698 Dept. TA-23 Baltimore, Md.

(Continued from page 152)

from their description of it I have a hunch
it may have been a sea monster.

Maybe if I get a break I'll have a bet-
ter look at the creature myself, but
whether I do or not the time spent here
won't be wasted.

Jackson Cole.

Loch Ness, Scotland.

Speaking of Wolves

Whether or not wolves travel in
packs, Ye Olde Globe Trotter knows
now that wolf arguments bring in
letters by the packs! Here is the
latest contribution to the wolf dis-
cussion from an old animal trainer
and hunter:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Away back when I was a little fellow,
fifty-five years ago, I lived in what was
then a timber belt which was supposed to
extend in various degrees of density from
Canada to New Orleans.

I lived in Illinois near the Rock River
bottoms.

Among the settlers there was a man
who lived down the valley from us and
helped his neighbors with the butchering.
As he was passing our house at dusk one
evening, father asked him to stay for the
night as the wolves were howling and he
might be attacked, but he went on. To
this day, I can hear the wolves killing that
man, and we with no way to help him.

The next day we found only his boots
—and twenty-one dead wolves he had
killed with his knife!

Years later I hunted and killed several
wolves thereabouts, but I never saw more
than four or five together, generally only
one or two, unless they were pups.

Another time I went along with some
friends to hunt up near Duluth, Minnesota.
While my partner was fixing up camp I
went to gather wood. I soon ran into a
wolf, but having an axe was not alarmed.
Soon I saw several more, and, boy, did I
hunt a tree! I had to stay there until help
came.

Now, Globe Trotters, were these packs
or just individuals all on the same scent?
I leave it to you.

Tom Brown.

New York City, N. Y.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Question Box this month has
the tang of the outdoors to it!
First of all here's a letter from a
lad who is turning his eyes long-

ingly toward those islands where the palm trees grow.

Coconut Palms

Dear Globe Trotter:

I've been reading plenty in THRILLING ADVENTURES about coconut plantations. So far as I can make out, raising coconuts should be a pleasant and profitable occupation, if it does not take too much capital to get started.

Can you tell me where is the best place to start such a plantation, how the groves are set out, what sort of labor could be hired—and, generally, whether one can make a go of it?

Frank Wintano.

St. Charles, Missouri.

Answer:

Well, Frank, that's a pretty large sized order. First of all, the coconut palm grows almost everywhere in the South Sea Islands, but what you need for the best results is an island with plenty of sandy or coral land. Generally speaking, the trees do best near the water.

Plantations are seeded by setting out sprouted nuts in shallow holes, leaving them uncovered for about a year. Scrap iron is also placed in the holes as iron rust is beneficial for the young trees.

No, there isn't a great deal of work attached to the plantation, but what there is will give you plenty headaches. In the first place, the native South Sea Islanders are all confirmed I.W.W.'s. They can't see work at all. Some planters import Oriental labor, but this is costly.

In fact, capital is the toughest part of coconut raising. You can't swing it on a shoestring.

Once your trees are in production you can sell the copra, the oil, the glycerine, the fiber, and other by-products—but don't forget that it takes nearly seven years for a tree to begin to bear, and a grove would not be self-supporting until the eighth or ninth year.

Floating Treasure

Dear Globe Trotter:

The newspapers have been full of stories about the people of Bolinas Beach, California, who have been gathering fortunes in ambergris that washed up on their beach. What is this ambergris? Where can it be found regularly? If it is so val-

(Continued on page 156)



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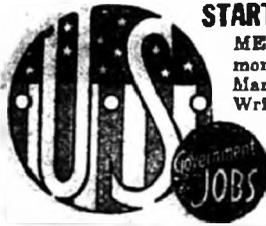
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NEW YORK CITY

(Continued from page 155)

uable why wouldn't an expedition to hunt for it be a good idea?

Herbert Macdonald.
Eastlake, Tennessee.

Answer:

You aren't the only one who is investigating ambergris these days, Herbert. It is a substance that very few people know anything about—which those Bolinas Beach hunters have learned to their sorrow. The stuff they were gathering up wasn't ambergris at all, but a hardened chemical used in cleaning San Francisco's sewers.

Ambergris is mighty valuable stuff. It is a dull gray, fatty secretion which forms inside of ailing sperm whales. It is found in lumps, sometimes small and sometimes large, inside dead whales, floating on the sea, or drifted onto beaches.

Although it is used in making perfumes, strange to say, it has a most unpleasant odor. A strong earthy smell, some mariners describe it. At that, whalers are always mighty glad to tolerate it. To locate a large lump of ambergris means a fortune.

Ambergris never was plentiful. At the height of the whaling industry the whole American fleet brought in less than forty pounds a year, on the average. Now, with sperm whales be-

Application for Membership

The Globe Trotter,
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I wish to be enrolled as a member of the *Globe Trotters Club*. I am interested in adventure and will endeavor to answer all questions asked me by other members regarding the places with which I am familiar.

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coming scarcer, you can see why the stuff brings \$27 an ounce.

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Leatherneck Prospectors

Dear Globe Trotter:

We are a couple of Marines serving with Marine Aviation here in San Diego and are to be discharged in September. We both have about four years tropical duty to our credit, most of which was served with the Marines in Nicaragua. After being discharged we intend returning to Nicaragua on a prospecting trip to be extended over a period of at least six months.

Could you give us some information about canoes? What size and type would be best for river use of three men and three hundred to four hundred pounds of supplies? What would be the approximate price and the best place to buy such a canoe? It doesn't have to be new; in fact, we'd rather have a good second-hand one. We are very much interested in the letters of Harry Palmer and Lincoln Kersch in regards to the proposed South American trip and would like to have more information about it.

Corporal N. H. Milstead,
Corporal J. L. Stone.

San Diego, California.

Answer:

Begins to look as if Palmer and Kersch will have a fully enlisted expedition of Globe Trotters for their South American jaunt!

Well, meanwhile, Leathernecks,
(Continued on page 158)

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—THE PUBLISHERS.

(Continued from page 157)

here is my advice on canoes that would suit your requirements in Nicaragua. If I were running the expedition I wouldn't fool with a canoe at all. It would have to be a pretty big baby to take three men and all that luggage. Why not get a motor sailer instead?

Yeah, the sort the Navy and the Marine Corps use. These boats are extremely light draught and are at the same time sturdy.

Where can you get one of them? Well, that's a problem. However, when the Marine Corps cleared out of Nicaragua they no doubt sold off a load of equipment. Unless I miss my bet it would not be difficult to pick up a good motor sailer along the banks of Lake Nicaragua.

The price? That all depends. If you fellows pile in there and try to buy one, you'll pay plenty for it. On the other hand, if you make friends with a native and let him engineer the deal for you it will be quite another matter.

Finally, of course, your best bet for first-hand information on local conditions is the American Consul at Managua.

Tax Sale Land

Dear Globe Trotter:

For a very small investment a fellow can get quite a chunk of land in Canada if he buys in one of those tax sale pieces. What do you think of them as an investment? I've heard that there are plenty to be had around the Parry Sound district and that muskrat farming goes well in that region. Can you give me any information on this?

Marshall LeTellier.

Plainfield, N. J.

Answer:

Tax sale land is one of those things that looks great from a distance, Marshall, but close up the story often changes considerably.

Understand, I'm not saying that you can't get good buys this way, but you're not likely to find rich plums ready to fall into your lap.

(Concluded on page 160)

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(Concluded from page 158)

Remember that tax sale land presupposes that someone else tried to make a living on the land and gave it up as a bad job.

In most cases land of this sort is too poor for farming and the worthwhile timber has been stripped from it. However, you have the right steer in considering muskrat farming. There is a real opportunity here for a fellow with little capital. The cost of setting up your establishment is small and your business gets under way rapidly. Under proper care muskrats will produce three to five litters a year, with six to ten in each litter. The increase of a pair may be as high as 1,200 percent in a year.

One acre of good marshy land will sustain from fifty to seventy-five rats and their offspring.

Tax sale on land is being used quite extensively for this industry in the Parry Sound district, and the Canadian governments encourage it. The Game Department of Ontario, House of Assembly, Ontario, Canada, will be glad to give you all the dope you need if you write to them.

Coming Up!

LAST month we told you that this issue was going to be a wow—but wait until you see what Ye Editor is dishing up in the next one! First of all, leading the parade of sure-fire, knock-out fiction, will be **CURSE OF THE PHAROHS**, by Jackson Cole.

It's a complete book-length novel of Egyptian adventure with a thrill in every line.

Then there'll be a novelette by Charles Green, packed with action—**HELL'S ISLAND**—that transports you to the South Seas. Also a Whirlwind yarn by Johnston McCulley—and other great stories. All in all, 160 pages of fast-moving fiction that takes you to every part of the world. Be on hand for next month's gala trip on the good ship **THRILLING ADVENTURES!**

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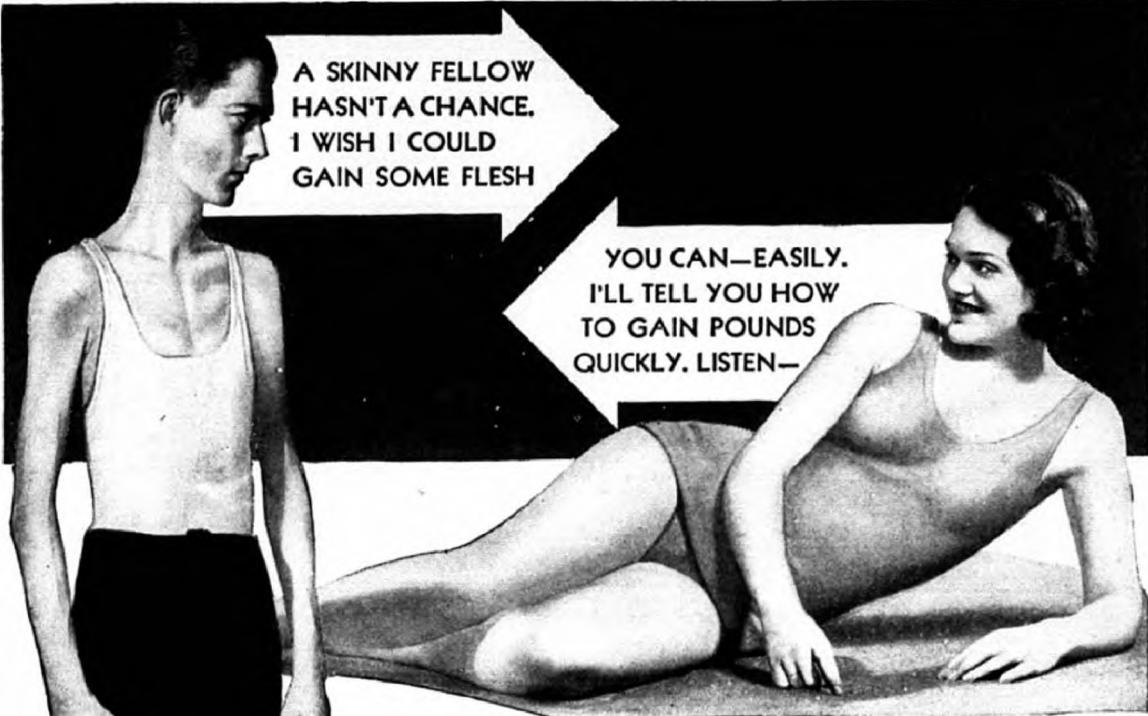
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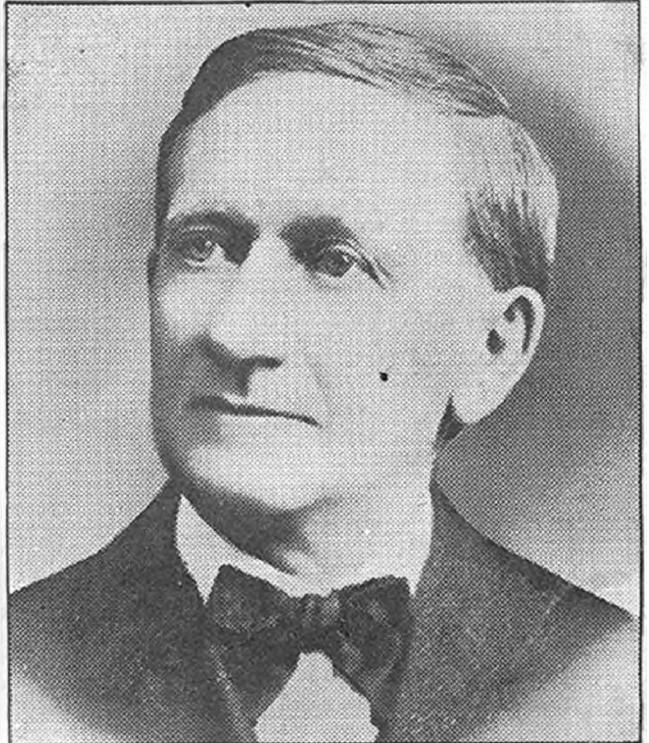
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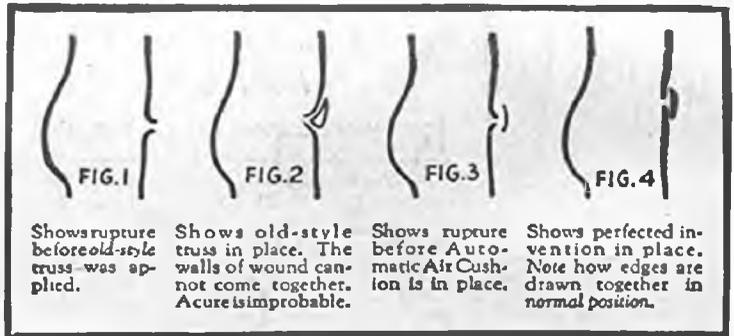
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