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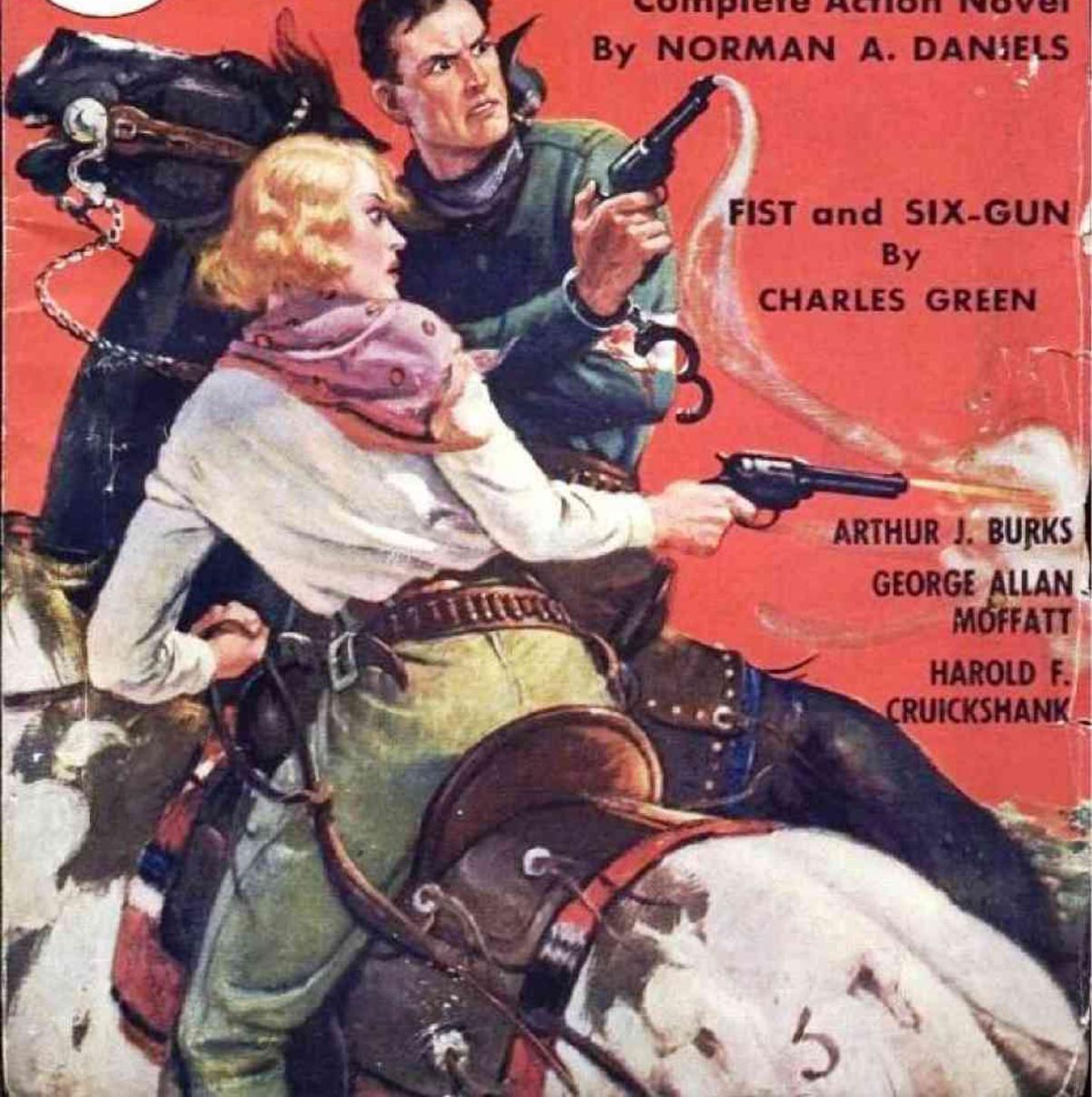
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THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. XIII, No. 1

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

March, 1935

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Where Readers, Writers and the Editor Meet

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175

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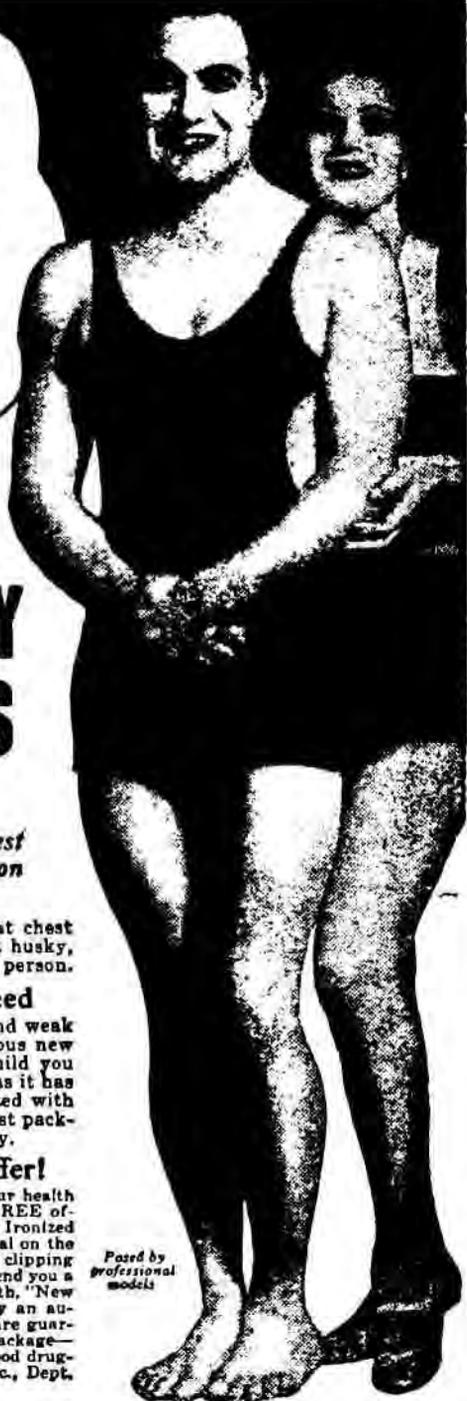
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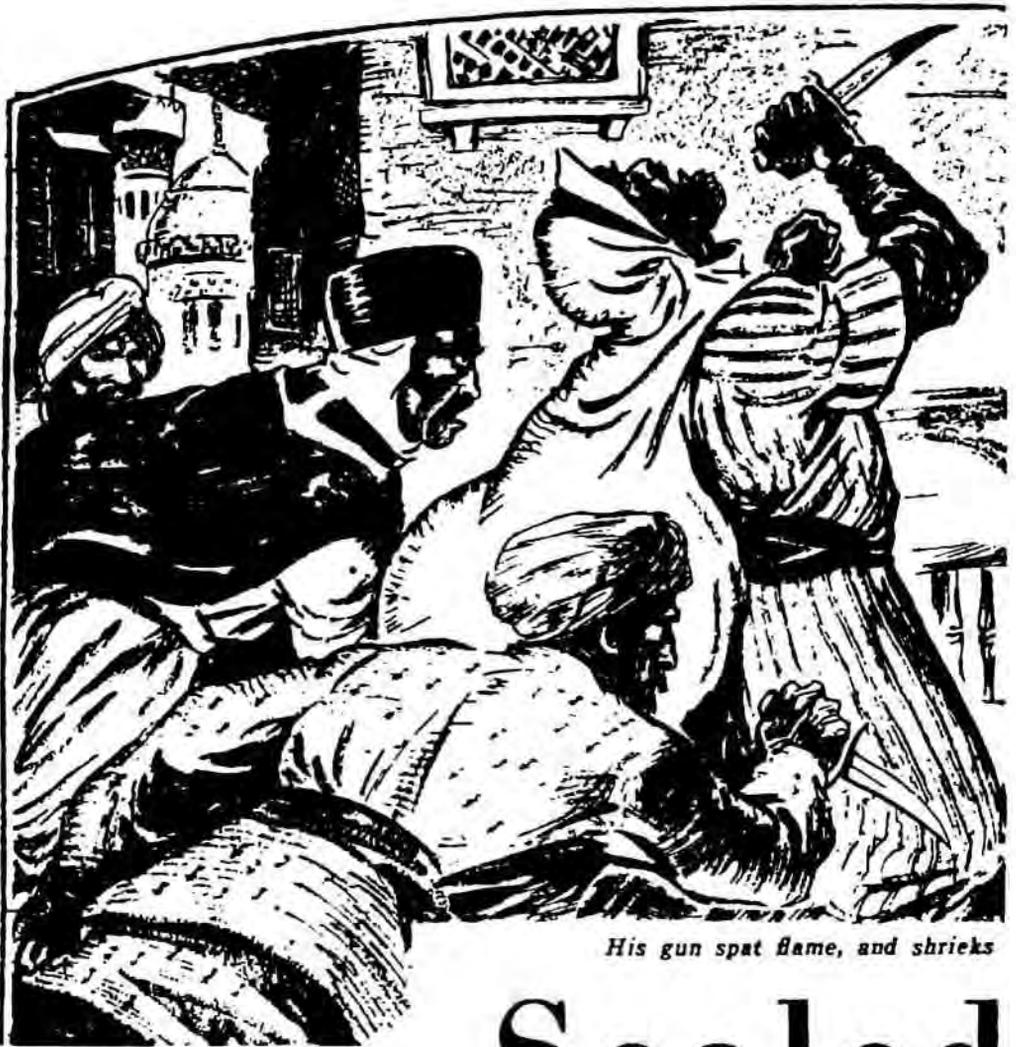
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His gun spat flame, and shrieks

CHAPTER I

Mission of Death

WHEN it did happen, it came so suddenly that Ken Linsey's brain didn't flash the order to his tensed muscles in time. The bar of the Plantation Club in Darjeeling was filled with the turmoil and stench that only the filthy bodies of the natives could bring.

Their object of attack was a short, powerfully built man. Ken had been watching him idly as he sipped his brandy and soda. The man had

Sealed

A Complete Book-

By NORMAN A.

Author of "Cold Steel," "The

appeared ill at ease. His eyes flickered about the almost empty room, and they had the fear of death in them.

He was changed now. The fear of death was swept aside by the fury and hate of his attackers. His right hand snaked out an automatic, and nine shots rang swiftly through

Ken Linsey Matches Wits and Weapons with



and curses answered its bark

Orders

Length Novel

DANIELS

Killer of Souls," etc.

the silence of the hot afternoon. Screams of pain, mingled with those of hatred, blended with the shots. The automatic was empty, and the short man wielded it, muzzle inverted. It was an effective weapon, but he was hopelessly outnumbered.

"You devils!" he cried in wrath.

Linsey stiffened. He thought, on

first glance, that the man was an American, although there was something foreign about him too. But the curses that followed were undiluted American. Ken went into action. He leaned over the bar, wound a huge hand about the neck of a bottle and began to swing it. Skulls crunched as he deployed from the rear of the angry mob. A knife whizzed by his head, and Ken saw the dirty hand that threw it.

Sudden rage possessed him, and he became as one mad. The bottle flew like the Hammer of Thor. The natives began to close in on him. Ken

Fiendish Killers in Far-Off Tibet and Nepal!



Ken Linsey

heard a grunt of intense pain and then another. The stranger was going down and a score of howling savages stood over him, knives ready for the final thrust.

Ken lunged unexpectedly, and the weight of his attack sent those about him sprawling. He reached the white man, lifted him swiftly and slung him over his shoulder. He backed steadily toward the door that led to the rooms above the bar. His right hand lashed out, and the natives began to back away slowly.

Ken turned suddenly and raced up the stairs. He knew that the shots and screams had by this time aroused the native constabulary and, perhaps, the Indian soldiers. Help would be coming in a moment.

"Room eleven," came in a hoarse, painful whisper from the man over his shoulder.

"Right," Ken snapped.

He found the room. Like every other door in the hotel, the lock was never turned. He slammed it shut after him, gently deposited his blood-streaked burden on the bed and shoved a heavy bureau in front of the door. Then he turned his

complete attention to the stranger.

"Thanks," the man whispered.

Ken saw why his voice refused to function properly. A blade had ripped away part of his vocal cords. There was a knife handle stuck in his side and a dozen wounds decorated his body. The man was dying.

"I'm going—out," the stranger whispered. "Got to confide in you—look okay—important as—hell."

"Go ahead," Ken bent low to distinguish better.

"In my pocket—sealed envelope—reach Nepal border. Slim is there—Dopey too—get envelope to them—important as—"

There was nothing more. A gurgle, a final struggle, and a brave man died. For a moment Ken stood with bowed head. But there was little time to lose. Indian police acted strangely sometimes. Often as not they tried and convicted anyone to solve a murder. He had to get away fast.

Deftly he searched the body, and in an inner pocket he found an envelope. It was a long, manila, legal shaped packet. It was thin and its contents apparently flimsy. He turned it over and stared with widened eyes. The flap was sealed in purple wax, and impressed on the hardened substance was the seal of the King of England.

IMPORTANT, the stranger had said. Ken knew he was right. He fingered the envelope. Meet Slim and Dopey on the Nepal border. That was what the dying man had confided in him. But—who the devil were Slim and Dopey? At what border of Nepal were they waiting the man who would never come? The Indian border, the Burma side, or eastern China. The fourth border was that of Tibet—the Forbidden Land. He disregarded that.

Quickly Ken searched the room. He found a worn map and a port-

folio jammed with Indian currency. For a moment he thought of leaving the money, but he knew the dead man would have no use for it and the native police would grab every cent. Ken visualized his own poverty, grinned happily and tucked the portfolio under his arm. He would deliver the sealed orders if it took him until Doomsday—and consider the money his pay.

He heard steps outside the door and yammering voices. The populace was aroused at last from their afternoon siesta. He looked out the window, noted the drop of about a dozen feet, and promptly climbed out. He hung for a moment, portfolio gripped between his teeth. Then he dropped.

He was at the rear of the hotel. One or two heavy-lidded natives saw him idly and made no attempt to interfere. Only a threat of sudden death could arouse them from their daily lethargy.

Ken trotted leisurely away from the hotel. Running was out of the question. The heat of the blinding sun prevented that. A mile away, in a semi-jungle, he squatted on his haunches and pulled the worn map from his pocket. It was penciled in a dotted line that led from Darjeeling to Rampur. A circle marked that point, and then the line went on northward past Mt. Everest, through Shigatse and into Lhasa, the Forbidden City.

NO white man, except a single armed expedition, had ever reached this pinnacle of the journey. The Tibetan monks, mad with anti-foreign hatred, prevented any entry to the land. Only the devout Tibetan, with his whirling prayer wheel, made the long trek through frozen wastes and heat-scorched lands to reach the great city. Ken wondered what the outlined route meant. Was an attempt to be made to enter Tibet?



Shatan, the Peasant

He shook his head slowly. It was an impossible task.

But impossible tasks were what made Ken Linsey what he was—an intrepid, fearless adventurer. For half a dozen years he had slaved at a desk in the foreign office of a great importing concern in New York. His knowledge of languages, particularly the little known ones of India, Bhutan and Mongolia, had made him invaluable.

But slowly in his mind he had seen these places. Letters from Rangoon and Calcutta, Nanking and Bancoek became more than mere words under his eyes. He had become dreamy, his mind filled with the wanderlust. Tibet had especially captured his fancy. The language was difficult, but he had mastered it after hard work. Now it was as a second nature to him.

It had taken him months to break away. For five years he had roamed the world, his linguistic abilities giving him a comparatively easy living. It was only in northern India that his funds had given out. It had been two days since he had eaten. His last coin had gone for



Tibetan Potentate

the brandy and soda at the Plantation bar—a gesture of flippancy toward fate.

Now his pockets bulged with currency. But he had a mission to perform. A duty by which he could earn this money. There was a promise to a dead man.

Undoubtedly, he knew, the Singhalese who had attacked the white man, would recognize him instantly if he showed his face in the city. But show himself he must. It took a caravan to make the great trek to Rampur, and caravans had to be assembled in the city. He sighed, turned about and walked back.

From a dirty Hindu he purchased an efficient looking .45 and two hundred cartridges. He haggled only a moment with the man and then dropped the money on the counter. As he turned into the street he saw the merchant eyeing the paper currency. He didn't see the man suddenly lock up his shop and vanish through the rear door.

Ken dickered for hours to secure camels and equipment. He was tired as he turned his steps toward the British Hotel. It was dark and

somehow the festering alleys of the city became furtive with creeping shadows. Idly Ken fingered the butt of his automatic and thanked his lucky gods that he had purchased it.

A brown-skinned boy appeared in his path and held out a beseeching hand. Ken flung a coin at him and the boy grinned. He reached out and grasped Ken by the sleeve.

"Sahib Linsey, come—please."

"What?" Ken's jaw dropped. How did this boy know his name?

"Sahib go!" a gruff voice came from behind him, and a keen blade went through his thin clothing and pricked the skin of his spine.

Ken gasped. Already the enemies of the dead man were on his trail. He was sorry he hadn't left the sealed envelope hidden at some safe place. It was reposing in a safety belt next to the flesh of his waist.

He turned his head and looked into hasheesh-ridden eyes of two natives. He shrugged his shoulders and followed the boy. His journey was short and ended at a squalid shack in the native section. He was rudely shoved inside the door and the knife at his back bit deeply as he began to whirl about for an attack.

IT was hopeless, he knew. That blade could be driven into his bowels with a flick of a wrist. He contented himself with a lusty oath.

The boy motioned to him to follow up a narrow staircase. He went, slowly, watching every shadow. There was no telling when a death-freighted knife would come winging.

A closed door opened softly and, wafted from the room behind it to mingle with the stench of the hallway, came the perfume and incense of wealth. Ken grunted in astonishment. His gasp turned to one of bewilderment as he entered a richly furnished room.

It was draped in heavy satin, and thick carpets smothered every sound of his steps. The knife was taken from his back, but he scarcely noticed it. His eyes were fastened on an exotic being who sat cross-legged on a pile of cushions.

It was a prince of some sort, but slanting eyes, the fattened face, were not those of India. They were of a land and race that Ken had never seen before. It came to him slowly that he looked upon a potentate of Tibet. Perhaps one of the Living Gods!

"You will be so kind as to hand over that brown envelope," said the prince in stilted, Oxford English.

Ken grinned a little. At least he could talk here—find out something of this mystery he had undertaken.

"I haven't the slightest idea of what you're talking about," he said.

"You are young, Kenneth Linsey. Long life lies before you. Unless you give me that envelope within the moment, you will not enjoy the fruits of that life."

There was no further use to bluff. Whoever, whatever, this being was, he possessed knowledge that Ken hadn't suspected. He began to bargain to gain time.

"What's there in it for me?" he asked.

THE prince drew a deep sigh, as of relief.

"A thousand pounds, English," he said, "and your life."

"If I don't produce it—"

"I shall take it from your dead body," came the steady answer.

"Just like that!" Ken thought rapidly.

He was in a jam that had no evident outlet. There was only one visible door to the room, and he knew that was heavily guarded. From behind the thick drapes, he knew, savage men would pour with drawn knives. There wouldn't even be a



Slim

fight. Ken fumbled under his clothing and drew out the envelope. Involuntarily the hand of the prince went out for it, but Ken grinned, held it back.

"The money," he said harshly.

"You shall have it."

The prince arose from his position, went to a carved desk deep in a corner and then beckoned Ken to approach. Ken walked warily, eyes scanning the drapes. He wondered if sudden death would erupt from these hangings the moment the envelope left his hands.

"You must consent to leave India at once," the prince went on. Ken took the money, tucked it in a pocket and planted his feet far apart. He had one chance in a million to get out of this city alive. The hand that held the sealed envelope suddenly reached forward and grasped the astounded potentate around the neck. The other arm went about his waist, and a .45 prodded into his stomach.

"You and I," Ken said softly, "are leaving here. This gun will go off at the slightest show of resistance. Your men can't kill me fast enough

to prevent me from shooting you, and I'll kill you like a rat. Better tell 'em that."

"Fool!" his prisoner grated.

He raised his voice and gave curt orders in a language that was as familiar to Ken as English. The orders were definite.

"Let the pig of a foreigner get outside. When he allows me to go, kill him at once, but not before. He is mad and will shoot to kill."

Ken grinned happily. As long as he held his prisoner tight, no harm would come to him, but if he carried the man to farthest India, unseen assassins would follow.

The prince led the way and the two men lock-stepped it down the stairs. As they came into the street, Ken shifted his position. He placed his prisoner to his right and shoved the gun into his side. They walked steadily.

"For this you shall die," the prince said curtly. "You have only one chance. Give me that envelope and I shall grant you your life. The money you falsely took from me you may have."

Ken laughed. Danger was on every side. Death leered over both his shoulders, and Ken Linsey was happy. His blood tingled with the thrill of peril. He wondered what he was going to do with his prisoner.

SUDDENLY the prince swerved to one side. For a bare instant he was out of range of the automatic. As if by magic, the street poured turbaned natives. Ken reached out a brawny arm, grasped the prince by the throat and dragged him against a wall. His gun began to spit flame, and shrieks and curses answered its bark.

It would be over in a moment. The natives had him now. Slowly they would swarm closer. If he killed the prince, he knew a lingering, hideous death would be his reward. If he

fought it out and saved the prince for the last, he would die fighting anyway.

He clung to his prisoner like a leech. In his mind he knew his last bullet would be for this arrogant potentate. Death was certain anyway!

THEN something unexpected happened. Ken's gun was empty. He tried to reload, but the operation was a clumsy one with a struggling prisoner in his left hand. The natives were close now. Ken could see the hate in their gleaming eyes. Long knives were raised or held ready for a sudden swift thrust.

Then, without warning, lead began to fly. From somewhere in front of him at least two guns were belching flame and lead. The natives went down like flies. There came a staccato burst and the slaughter increased. That was a machine-gun!

Ken grabbed his prisoner and knocked him to the ground. He fell beside him and planted one long leg over his body to prevent escape. He had two hands now and he quickly reloaded. His own gun began to deal death. The attack that had seemed too certain to the natives before, now became a pandemonium of flight. The street cleared in an instant.

"Hang on to that guy!" an American voice yelled. "He's worth plenty."

"Where the devil are you?" Ken rose, jerked his prisoner to his feet and dragged him along.

There was no answer to his hail, but a moment later two men ran from a hut across the street. One held an automatic rifle in his hands, the other two smoking automatics.

"This way," one of them yelled.

Ken grabbed his squirming, cursing prisoner and began to yank him forward. Suddenly the prince made



The two priests went down

a break, tore away from Ken's grasp and went hurtling down the street. Ken drew down on the gun he had reloaded, but it wasn't in his make-up to shoot a man in the back.

As it happened, a bullet didn't stop the fugitive. As he sped by the two men with the smoking guns, the taller of the pair reached out a foot lazily. The potentate went sprawling in the filth of the gutter.

With quick efficiency the short man grabbed him by the collar, yanked him to his feet and began to trundle him forward. Ken was grinning widely.

"Carrion," the prince shrieked.

"For this all three of you will die. You will be torn to pieces—slowly—in Tibet."

"Tibet?" The taller man looked curiously at his companion. "So that's where we're goin'!"

"Come on," the short man said. "We'd better get away from here before half of India is on our necks."

"Okay, Slim—or is it Dopey?" Ken smiled.

"I'm Slim," the shorter man replied. "That lazy galoot is Dopey."

Slim, in the lead, kept the automatic rifle ready, but there was no need for it. The whole native section of the city seemed to be hushed

as by a spell of death. Hardly a breeze stirred. Ken wiped the back of his neck and scowled.

Slim led them to a tiny house half hidden amidst the larger buildings. They passed through a short hallway toward a closed door. Slim opened it wide and went in. The other three followed him into a neat bedroom.

CHAPTER II

Rescue a Living God



KEN put his back against the door and closed it tightly. Slim was eyeing the begrimed prince speculatively. Dopey heaved himself into a chair and closed his eyes. It was an incongruous group.

The prince put a sudden end to the picture. He snaked a short knife from somewhere out of the voluminous robes that he wore, and dove headlong for Slim.

The upraised knife glittered wickedly in the sunlight that streamed into the room.

Ken tensed a fraction of a second and then dove for the legs of the prince. They went down on the floor in a tangled mass of flesh and robes. Ken had his back down, squarely. The dagger was still firmly gripped by the prince, and he tried to bring it into play. Slim hovered over the two of them, and Dopey, aroused from his trance, had drawn a gun.

A knee came up in a violent blow and caught Ken in the pit of his stomach. He groaned, and perspiration broke out on his forehead. He drew back his left hand and jabbed the prince a blow behind the ear. The potentate went down, groggy. As he came up again, Ken's right fist traveled in a mighty arc. It

connected squarely. There was a sound of crushing bone.

The prince sighed once, and then his eyes glazed. Ken got to his feet slowly.

"Wow!" Dopey cried with an enthusiasm he seldom showed. "What a scrap! You can fight, Linsey."

Slim said nothing, only smiled his appreciation. They heaved the inert body of the prince to the bed. Then Slim turned to Ken, and his face was serious.

"You have the sealed packet Tully gave you?"

"And if I have?" Ken replied cautiously.

"I don't blame you for being careful," Slim smiled. "Not after all this trouble. We know all about the fight that finished Tully. In fact, we just saw to his burial. You knew our names when you first saw us, so I imagine he lived long enough to tell them to you. No one else in all India knows those monikers."

"Can you identify that—that something which the man you call Tully left?" Ken asked.

HE had no way of knowing whether these two whites were those to whom the dead man had referred.

"Sure we can," Dopey drawled. "It's a brown envelope, not very thick. On the back of it is a seal—a pretty big shot in London stuck that on there."

"Okay." Ken was relieved. "I guess there's no question about it. I was pretty sure you two were the right ones anyway. You saved my life in that alley—I'd help you all I could for that one thing, if for nothing else."

"You and I are square," Slim told him quietly. "That yellow prince would have stuck me pretty if you hadn't dived for his legs. He was a little too sudden for me. I wasn't ready for him."

"My name's Neil," Dopey offered. "They call me Dopey on account of I'm so fast. That guy"—he nodded toward Slim—"you can call him Slim until you get sore at him. Then you can call him by his real name. It's—"

Slim leaped for him. They went down on the bed, crushing under their weight the still unconscious prince. Dopey roared in mirth while Slim silently tried to throttle him. When they got up, Dopey was grinning hugely, but he said nothing at all.

"Don't pay any attention to that sap," Slim laughed, half-heartedly. "My right name's Charlie Platt, but I've been called Slim so long I hardly know any other."

Ken was fondling the sealed envelope that he dug from under his shirt.

"How come you birds are working for John Bull?" he asked. "You talk and act like Americans."

"I'm English," Slim admitted. "Born in London, but I spent most of my life in the good old U. S. A. Dopey—he's a cattle rustler—or used to be."

"Rustler, am I?" Dopey howled back. "Listen, you mug—"

Slim waved a hand toward him in a gesture of disdain and took the envelope from Ken.

He swiftly inserted a finger under the flap.

"WE shouldn't open this until we are at the Tibetan border," he said. "But Tully will never deliver it to us there, so I guess we'll just see what Johnny Bull wants."

He shook out the letter and unfolded it. Dopey looked over his right shoulder.

Ken stood aside. After all, the contents of that letter were none of his business.

"Well, I'll be an ornery sheep herder," Dopey gasped. "Look at

that! How the devil do we get into Tibet. There's nary a white man allowed in that fool country."

Slim looked squarely at Ken.

"It's more important than we thought," he said. "It means the life of someone, and if you hadn't helped Tully get away from that mob of Singhalese, we'd never have read these instructions. Are you doing anything just now? I mean, would you like to join—"

"Sure," Ken said eagerly. "I've been looking for excitement for six months. What in the world is it all about?"

"DOPEY and me were trying our hand at a little bandit-fighting in China when we got an offer to go to the Nepal-Tibet border and wait for a man named Tully. He would have orders and there would be plenty of money and excitement in it for us.

"We grabbed at the chance, went to Nepal and hung around a few days. The natives began to look at us suspicious like and we sniffed around a little. Something big was up, and we did not have the least idea what. Tully was a week overdue when we got a letter by special messenger. Tully told us he was hemmed in at the Plantation Hotel. The minute he stuck his nose out of the door, he'd be killed. He wanted us to come there and help him get away."

"Too bad," Ken sympathized, "you were an hour late."

"Tough on Tully," Slim agreed. "And it's going to be tougher on us. We've got to proceed to Nepal, establish ourselves there a few days and then start back toward Darjeeling to avert suspicion. Soon as we get away from Nepal, we turn back and sneak into Tibet. How we're going to do it, I dunno. They say the monks of Tibet have guards posted all over the border. Tully

knew Tibetan, and we were going to disguise ourselves and slip through. Now we got to think up a new scheme."

"No!" Ken said, and even Dopey opened his eyes wide. "I can speak Tibetan well. Studied it for years and never thought I'd have much of a chance to use it. I'm pretty sure that I could pass as a native if my face was muffled up enough."

"Hooray!" Dopey cheered.

Then he sank back in the chair again.

But his eyes remained open.

"Good," Slim said. "Now here's the dope. Nineteen years ago in a little town near Lhasa—that's the Sacred City of Tibet—there was a child born to an English woman who had gone into the country as a missionary. No white woman could stand that country. Her husband died a few days after he had started the hopeless job of building a Christian church in a land that had worshipped a Living God. Maybe despair killed him, maybe disease.

"Anyway, a couple of hours after the child was born, it was stolen by some of the monks of Tibet. The woman was dragged out of the country and flung over the border. That was nineteen years ago. Old Johnny Bull didn't have so much power in India or Nepal then as he has now. She couldn't do a thing.

"SHE went back to England and married again. This time she married one of London's biggest men. From dope that spies have brought back to India, the monks had swiped the kid for a good reason. The Living God of Tibet is never supposed to die. He just leaves one body and enters another. Anyway, the young Living God that died when this white child was born, said he would be reincarnated as the first child born in the house the missionary had thrown up as his home."

"And that white kid is a Living God now?" Ken frowned.

It wasn't so serious after all. He knew about those Living Gods. They possessed powers far beyond the ken of any other ruler. Millions of natives traveled thousands of miles to kiss a chair in which the Living God had been seated. The water in which he bathed was sold for thousands of rupees. And the Great God never died! He simply passed from one being into another. It was a soft life.

"A LIVING God now—yes," Slim said. "But that kid will be twenty years old in another month. Listen to this! The priests that rule the child god never let him reach his maturity. To do so would be to hand their ruling powers over to him.

"They let him reach almost twenty and then they poison him. The people think he is simply being reincarnated into another child, and they wait for his successor to be announced. That's why we haven't much time to lose. They'll murder that white boy within the next few weeks. We've got to get him out of there."

"Well," Ken eyed Slim squarely, "let's go!"

"What are we gonna do with His Majesty?" Dopey poked his fist into the prince's side inquisitively.

The prince grunted, but his eyes remained closed.

"He was sent here from Tibet to stop us. His name is Singe Ripa," said Slim. "Somehow those powerful in Lhasa have heard of our little plan and they're moving to defeat it before we get started. But this is India, and English rule is strong here. We'll turn this bozo over to the military detachment with orders to lock him up and keep him locked up until we get back."

"Yeah," Dopey agreed, "if we do!"

CHAPTER III

The Hand of Singe Ripa

MOUNTAINS that seemed to rise to eternity loomed before them. For days they had climbed them, only to be confronted with higher and more difficult ranges. The temperature was

twenty below, and they shivered with every stitch of clothes they owned on their bodies. Wind swept the fine snow in cascades of shimmering white, but the flakes were fast frozen, and they stung like the bite of a wasp.

"Huh," Dopey snorted when Slim complained of the cold. "This is nothing. You oughta be in Montana when the wind howls!"

"I'd rather be in South America," Slim retorted. "And I passed up a good chance to horn in on a revolution down there. How far is it to this Sacred City anyway?"

"Three days fast marching," Ken told him.

He had the only map, and he studied it at every opportunity until he knew each trail to the great city. They were pitifully few and there was no leaving them. Two hours of wandering about the ravines would mean the sudden finish of the little party.

They found a rest house made of yak-dung and they crawled inside. They were sheltered from the wind, but the cold bit through every bone. They hugged one another for warmth.

Two hours before daybreak they hit the trail again. They were well within enemy country now. Bandits infested the hills and lived on the plunder they secured by murdering travelers.

"Dopey," Ken said, "I'm going ahead a quarter of a mile. You fol-

low and Slim can cover the rear, a quarter of a mile in back of you. If we meet any opposition or an ambush, they won't be able to get the three of us—not at once, anyway. Soon as it's daylight, we'll put on our disguise. That may help us a little."

"Okay," Slim said, "but we're taking turns being in the lead. That's the most dangerous position."

Daylight found them in the shadow of Everest, highest mountain in the world. Beyond its broad ranges lay Lhasa, the city of mystery. They circled the foot of the mountain. In the recesses of a deep ravine they made tea and ate sparingly of their limited food supply. There was no hunting or fishing in this land. Ken broke open the little kit of equipment for disguise. The three white men rubbed a yellow stain over their faces and necks and up their arms.

"Open your shirt," Ken told them, "and smear the stuff on your chest. They'll look to see if the skin is white there."

FROM the kit he took a bottle of glue. Carefully he dabbed under their eyes with it. When the cold air dried it, all three seemed to have suffered recently from snow-blindness. The stuff concealed the true appearance of their eyes and gave them a slight slant to resemble the Mongolian features of Tibetans. Dark snow glasses finished the picture.

The clothes they donned were smelly, dirty rags. No Tibetan ever washed either his clothes or himself. To do so would mean death in this land of extreme temperatures.

A quick survey and Ken gave the word to march. He went ahead and when he was out of sight, Dopey started. Slim came last. Ken walked briskly to keep up the circulation in his limbs. His keen eyes darted

from side to side. There were no bushes or trees, but the ravines were deep and could hide half an army.

Suddenly he stopped and listened. To his ears came the sound of horses' hoofs. At least a dozen he estimated. He peered ahead of him—saw nothing. Turning, he looked back and saw the head of a rider appear a hundred yards to his rear. Behind him came others. Ken then gripped his rifle and hurled himself over the edge of a small cliff.

He fell into a hard snowbank, and it took the wind out of him for a moment. Then he began to creep upward to peer over the trail again. The horsemen were armed with modern rifles, and the sun glinted on the steel of them. They were a motley crew, dressed in the heavy, dirt-soaked robes of the country. Faces, heavily bearded to protect the skin from the biting wind, were cruel. There was no mercy in these men.

They suddenly deployed about the trail. Ken knew what that meant. Dopey was walking unconsciously into a trap. If Ken gave him warning, they would all be captured. He could do nothing. He didn't dare bring his rifle into position, for the sun would gleam on it to reveal his presence.

HE could see Dopey crawling up the trail. The automatic rifle was slung over his shoulder. If those Tibetan bandits ever got that weapon and the heavy supply of cartridges that Dopey carried, they could withstand any attack in these hills.

As Dopey came over the crest of the hill, the horsemen suddenly went into action. Efficiently they surrounded him. Dopey spotted them. Ken watched him closely. Dopey didn't even hesitate. He dove to one side, and from Ken's position he could see him digging

swiftly in the snow. The automatic rifle came over his head and was buried in the snow. Cartridges followed. Dopey was taking no chances on his pet weapon being stolen from him.

Then he snaked out an automatic. It spat viciously, and one rider went tumbling to earth. His horse galloped madly for a hundred yards and then suddenly stopped to nuzzle the snow where a tiny bit of coarse grass protruded.

SLIM had heard the shots, and his rifle added to the fusillade that began. The bandits quickly took to cover. For a moment Ken thought of adding his own lead to the battle, but he saw the hopelessness of it. They were outnumbered, and the enemy was well mounted. Had they been on foot, there would have been a chance.

The bandits held their fire a moment, and a hoarse voice gave them orders. Ken understood. They were to surround the white men and take them alive. Ken sighed in relief.

Had the order been to kill, he would have entered the fray, but now his best bet was to keep out of sight and to follow the bandits. Ghastly death would follow the capture of Slim and Dopey, but the bandits would take their time about it. Probably bring their prisoners to a larger encampment where others of their ilk might watch the torture.

They began to deploy. Dopey's gun crashed, and another man went down. Slim's rifle barked too. One man slid over in his saddle, but he didn't fall. That left eleven. They were in a circle about the two trapped whites now, and they began to close in. So far none of them had suspected Ken's presence.

Slim and Dopey must have suspected Ken's plan. Suddenly the two white men appeared over the top of the ravine behind which they

had crouched. They extended their hands high in the air. Slim was yelling something, and Ken strained his ears. "We're banking on you, old-timer," Slim cried.

The bandits paid no attention to his yelling, thought it was merely a gesture of surrender. They closed in, and one huge man stalked up to Slim and drew back a fist to send it crashing squarely into his face. Dopey made a leap, and the Tibetan bandit went down.

Ken saw Dopey's foot come up. Even from where he lay hidden, he could hear the crunch of bone as the heavy boot connected. One of the bandits reversed his rifle and swung down on Dopey. The ex-cowboy went down in a heap, blood staining the whiteness of the snow.

Ken swore. He was within rifle range, but there was nothing he could do. If all three of them were captured, it would be all over. Free, Ken could act. If he couldn't rescue his two companions, he resolved to take as many of the bandits with him in death, as he could.

The bandits quickly tied Slim and Dopey and heaved them over the saddles of two horses. Three of their men were dead. The pony that had raced madly away when Dopey's gun blasted off its rider, was still making futile attempts to munch the grass. The bandits paid no attention to the animal. They started off directly toward Ken.

HE flattened himself in the snow. His feet were numb and his hands were fast approaching the same state. Soon he would have to move or he would sink into the lethargy that preceded freezing.

Slim was conscious. He knew that Ken was hidden somewhere just off the trail, and he began to sing in a stertorian tone meant to reach Ken. The bandits paid him little attention, believing that the blow he had

received was responsible for his condition. Whoever heard of a sane man singing as he rode, belly against the hard wooden saddle of a Tibetan pony?

"Get the auto-rifle," he singsonged. "We'll be waiting for you, old-timer. Don't slip on the ice."

KEN grinned. Slim had nerve, but Ken shivered inwardly at thought of the hideous torture in store for the prisoners unless he could free them.

The little band was soon out of sight. Ken rose carefully, to be sure no rear guard had been left to watch. He trotted briskly along the trail, making as little noise as possible. Soon feeling returned to his benumbed limbs. The little Tibetan pony raised its head and regarded the strange figure with mild eyes. Ken moved closer to the animal.

In his pack he had a little sugar. He got it out as he walked, cupped a little of it in the palm of his hand and edged closer to the pony. For a moment the animal stiffened, snorted and tensed for a run, but the outstretched hand tempted it.

Ken was within reach of it, and the animal stretched out its neck to nuzzle his hand. It lapped up the sugar in one gulp. Ken gently caressed the wiry neck. In a moment they were friends. He went into the saddle slowly and gracefully. Startled, the pony might become unmanageable.

As he rode, he tried to make out the trail of those he followed, but the hard-packed ice and snow gave no sign. He had to trust to luck. Then he turned back for the automatic rifle. He found the spot, quickly uncovered the weapon and stowed the ammunition in his pockets, draping some of the bandoliers about his neck. Mounted again, he spurred his mount back over the trail.

It took him the better part of two

hours to come within sight of the bandits and their prisoners. They were jogging along at a brisk rate. Nothing moved slowly in Tibet. To do so was to court death. Ken remained far behind the group, and he went cautiously.

With darkness they stopped and made camp. They slung up a dirty old tent, staked their horses close together outside, and carried their prisoners into the tent. Ken watched with bated breath. They were in a small hollow, and from his position he could command their every movement. But if he began the battle, their first step would be to murder his friends. He had to get them out first.

The tiny fires slowly died; the camp settled down for the night. Ken kept his arm and legs moving to keep from freezing, and every moment seemed like an hour to him as he waited in the intense dry cold.

He gave them an extra hour, and then he began to steal downward toward the camp. A single guard sat hunched before the one remaining fire. He was muffled in blankets and his breath whistled as he nodded. Ken stole quietly toward him. He drew out his automatic, reversed it and, when he was within range, brought the weapon down hard. It made little noise, for the guard's head was thickly padded by his fur cap.

Purposely, Ken gave the blow every ounce of strength he had. Tibetan headgear is heavy.

THE guard grunted once and slumped to one side. Carefully Ken crept toward the tent. From within came snores as tired men slept. Someone spoke softly, too. It was in English, and Ken breathed deeply in relief.

"When do you suppose Ken will show up?" It was Dopey who spoke.

"He'll be here," Slim whispered.

"I hope to hell he didn't forget that gun," Dopey went on. "How's your face, Slim?"

"Dunno," Slim replied glumly. "It didn't bleed much. Froze too fast, I guess. I wish they'd let us get up and walk around. I'm getting numb. This ground is cold."

"Yeah?" Dopey laughed shortly. "Glad you're able to feel it. I lost that sensation long ago. I wish Ken would hurry up!"

"S-s-st," Ken hissed between his teeth.

THE whispering stopped at once. "I'll try to scratch the tent where I'm lying," Slim said in the same tone of voice.

The bandits slept on. Their prisoners were securely tied. What if they talked and sang? Soon they would harmonize in a song of agony.

Ken circled the tent, pausing every moment or two as he listened. There came a soft scratching, and he made toward the sound. The tent bulged just a little where Slim had squirmed his way close to it.

Ken unsheathed the great knife he always carried in his belt. Very slowly and carefully he began to slice the canvas. It was old, and the cold had long ago rotted the substance. His steel bit through it quietly. Ken reached under the flap he had made, gripped Slim's shoulders and began to pull very slowly.

That made a little noise, but it was unavoidable. Soon Slim's face came under the tent. He grinned up at Ken.

"I'm going to cut the ropes," Ken said. "When you're free, try to crawl out. Dopey alongside of you?"

"He's on the opposite side," Slim whispered. "Get him the same as you did me. Just cut the ropes and I'll be okay."

Ken worked swiftly. Any moment one of the bandits might awaken. It was only the fatigue of

the mountain trail that made them sleep so deeply. He circled the tent once more, almost fell over the guard he had socked. The body was stiff as a board. The bandit had frozen into a rigidity that nothing would ever thaw out again.

The tent bulged a little, and Ken repeated the operation. Soon Dopey emerged from beneath the canvas. Ken slit the ropes that bound him. He helped Dopey to his feet and led the partially frozen man away. Slim dragged himself after them. His feet moved like those of an automaton.

The knees refused to bend.

They paused, out of earshot of the tent.

"Thanks, Ken," Slim said. "I'd have been frozen solid in another hour."

"I'm froze up now," Dopey horned in, "but as soon as I get thawed out, I'm going back and smash one of those galoots in the nose."

"They've got horses," Slim pondered. "How are we going to get away?"

"I've got an extra knife in my kit," Ken said. "You take it, Slim; you're less frozen than Dopey. We'll cut the ropes that hold up the tent. When she comes down, we'll have the whole bunch of 'em in a bag. Dopey, your rifle is right in back of you. I had to put it there when I crawled up to the tent. Take it, and if any of those guys get out, cover us."

"WILL I?" Dopey grated. "Just let one of 'em show his mug, that's all I'm asking. The snow didn't hurt the gun any, did it?"

"I haven't tested it," Ken replied, "but she looked okay. You'll have a chance to find out mighty soon."

Ken in the lead, the two men stole again toward the sleeping camp. Dopey waited impatiently, gun resting against the crook of his arm.

His eyes were narrowed, and his finger curled lovingly around the trigger.

Ken motioned to Slim, and they separated. They found the ropes and slit them quickly. There were only two more, and the tent shivered and shook as the wind struck its weakened structure.

Ken rested his blade against the rope on his side.

"Okay, Slim," he shouted.

THE tent collapsed. Instantly the sleepers jumped out of their crouched positions, to find themselves enveloped in the folds of the thick canvas.

Ken and Slim moved away and stood waiting, automatic ready.

A yellow face peered from beneath the tent. One man had squirmed his way to freedom. A rifle came up, but it never fired. Dopey's automatic rifle spoke shortly, and the yellow face became red. Another head protruded; the gun spat again, and a second bandit fell to death.

Ken and Slim moved rapidly away from the tent, which now tossed in the struggles of the men it covered. Someone inside began to bark muffled orders. A part of the tent lifted suddenly, and four men crawled out. They held rifles, and as they spotted Slim and Ken, the weapons came up. Dopey swept the four of them to oblivion.

Then half a dozen rifles were heaved from beneath the canvas. It was a gesture of surrender. In the brilliant moonlight, four men crawled into the open and stood quietly as Ken and Slim reversed their steps.

"Don't let 'em know I understand their lingo," Ken warned. "They might spill something. I've got a hunch this isn't just a bunch of wandering bandits."

"Say," Slim said, "I've had the same hunch. They fed us a little

before they went to bed. Looks like they wanted us alive for something."

One of the four prisoners was the leader. He scowled fiercely as Ken began to search him, but he made no move to resist. He turned his huge head toward his three remaining men.

"Let the fools take us," he said in Tibetan. "They go straight to Lhasa. There we can find friends who will overpower these white devils. We shall pretend we are friends and lead them into a trap. Then I, Tang La, shall personally slit their noses from their faces. Do not resist. The one with the gun that speaks first can kill us all easily. That gun I shall have soon."

"So," Ken grunted. He quickly told Slim what he had heard. "Our hunch is right. These birds were sent out to capture us or stop us anyway. You know, I'd bet my right eye that Indian prince we captured in Darjeeling isn't in jail any longer."

"Well," Slim answered slowly, "all I hope is that we meet his nibs again. This time he won't need bars to keep him quiet. He'll have a wooden box to do that."

DOPEY came down the incline and joined them. Ken told him of the trap that had been set for them.

"Lemme have a crack at the dirty Chink," Dopey begged. He was eyeing the big leader malevolently. "He's the guy that socked Slim, and he took a crack at me, too—when my hands were tied."

"No can do," Ken grunted. "He's our passport to Lhasa. He'll get us by every official."

"That'll be swell," Dopey commented, "but how about when we do get there. What then?"

"Then we'll fight," Ken said simply.

Dopey grinned broadly and patted his weapon.

CHAPTER IV

The Pass of Sleeping Giants



BY means of signs and gestures the bandit chieftain conveyed to the white men the fact that he was their friend and that his men were their servants.

Ken pretended to fall into the trap, but when they trekked, the bandits walked ahead. At night Dopey and Slim tied them up while Ken stood guard with the automatic rifle. They stood tricks of two hours each at night, too. Tibetan nights are not long, but travelers arise before daybreak to begin their journey. The wind dies down at night.

On the second day, two peasants joined them. They were mounted on mules, but the little animals kept pace with the ponies. Ken remained close to Tang La. The two strangers who had joined their party appeared to be animal-like in their stupidity, but Ken wanted no message to go forth to announce their coming. He and his companions had resumed the sun-glasses they had laid aside during the excitement, and they resembled Tibetan peasants also.

They left the mountain ranges to enter the Pass of the Sleeping Giants. There each pool of water was unfrozen. No matter how cold the temperature, minerals in the water prevent the formation of ice. Each pool was deadly poisonous. At places spots in the earth boiled and bubbled—molten lava in a land cold enough to freeze man and beast into petrified statues.

Wind howled on all sides of them, tearing through their thick clothing and sending icy blasts into their bones. They decided to camp for tea. As usual, the Tibetans drew

away from the whites and ate by themselves.

But first they prepared strong tea, flavored with rancid butter, for the party—making this act their payment for being allowed to accompany the expedition.

Tang La and his three men sat apart like monarchs. Tang La lashed the peasants with his tongue and once struck one of them cruelly across the face, but Ken didn't interfere. He wanted Tang La to believe he was still all-powerful, that while he allowed the foolish white spies freedom, he was still their master and could take the upper hand at any time.

One of the two peasants leaned over the tiny yak-dung fire they had started. He stirred the butter into his tea with his finger. Finally he raised the cup and drained it. For a moment he seemed bewildered. Then he groaned loudly, rose and clutched his stomach.

Finally he slumped forward in the snow.

"Don't drink that stuff!" Ken cried. Dopey had his up halfway to his lips. "It's poisoned!"

DOPEY hurled the cup and contents from him. The second peasant watched his dead companion without expression. Finally he picked up his belongings, carefully searched and without emotion stripped his dead comrade of every valuable thing he desired. Then he joined Ken and the white men. He indicated by signs that he feared Tang La and his men and that he wished to join the whites.

He had been with the party for two days, and Ken was certain he had penetrated their disguise. But the peasant gave no sign that he had.

Ken decided to trust him. They needed advice as to Lhasa anyway, and Ken had overheard this man

telling his dead companion of the delights of the great city.

"Do not talk aloud," he said in Tibetan.

The peasant was staggered by this, but he held himself in check, his eyes gleaming in fear. What manner of men were these who came from afar and yet spoke his language?

"Did Tang La kill your friend?" Ken went on.

"**YES**, master," the peasant replied in soft tones. "He desired that we murder you and your friends. We would not agree. Had I taken of that tea, I should be dead also. Tang La changed the water with which we made the tea. It was not made from snow-water—but from the water of the pools of the Sleeping Giants."

The poisonous water from the little pools that dotted the landscape! Ken drew his lips tight. He told Slim and Dopey.

"Let's finish that bird right now," Dopey suggested. "I've been craving a sock at him for days and days, anyway."

"No," Ken objected. "He's got to lead us to Lhasa. With him we can pass every official. We can't afford to lose any time either. They must have word of our coming, or else why did they send these men to stop us? They'll murder that white god any day now, and we've got to save him."

Dopey grunted in disgust, but saw the wisdom of the move. Ken turned again to the peasant.

"Do not tell Tang La that we speak his language," he ordered. "To do so will mean your death, and you will be reborn a louse. Go to Tang La, find out his plans. Pretend to fall in with him and tell us."

"Yes, master," the peasant was obviously cowed. The mention of reincarnation, of which every Tibetan is a firm believer, in the lowly form

Ken suggested, made him the slave of the white men. He was certain they possessed magic powers.

"What is your name?" Ken demanded.

"Shatan, master."

"Go then, Shatan! Your reward for faithfulness shall be great."

Shatan nodded eagerly, and Ken knew he had a staunch friend in this native. Ken saw Tang La watching him narrowly. He shoved Shatan away and shook his head as if to indicate that he had learned nothing. Tang La looked obviously relieved.

Before daybreak they were on their way again, climbing the mighty Himalayas to their twenty thousand foot levels.

What had seemed deathly cold below, now seemed to have been comparatively warm.

Here the wind was unleashed in all its fury. The trail was eaten away by ravines that seemed bottomless, and clouds began to obscure it.

The bandits went on slowly, Shatan keeping well at their rear. At times they trudged through snow over their hips. Going was slow, tortuous.

Shatan lagged a little and fell. Tang La handed the reins of his pony to one of his men, went back to the fallen peasant and kicked him cruelly in the ribs. His foot went back again, but it didn't complete its swing.

Ken suddenly leaped forward, and his fist connected squarely with Tang La's jaw.

THE Tibetan shook the cobwebs from his brain and grunted. Then he spread both arms wide and came toward Ken.

Those huge, powerful arms, encircling Ken's body, would have made short work of the battle: a crack and Ken's back would have been broken. But Tang La knew little of scientific

fighting. Each time that he came within range, Ken let him have a swift right to the chin.

Once he connected over Tang La's right eye, and blood coursed its way down the whiskered face, where it quickly froze.

Tang La was screaming curses in Tibetan, and he called upon his men for help to kill the white devil. But they had eyes only for the rifle cradled in Dopey's arm; they knew the death-dealing powers of that weapon.

"Come, Ken," Slim cried, "let him have it! Finish the big bum! We gotta get going!"

KEN grinned, but kept his gaze on the bandit chief. The big man closed in with a bear-like rush. Ken let him have both fists full on the chin. The first blow rocked the giant; the second lifted him from his feet. He went backward and almost vanished in the snow. Ken dusted his knuckles and replaced the gloves he had removed.

Shatan rose and bowed in eloquent silence at Ken's feet. Tang La's men sprang to his assistance. The bandit chief glowered in silent rage at the white man, but he made no further attempts to cause trouble. Ken kept Shatan close by.

Halfway down the gigantic mountain, they were forced to pass through a village. Instantly, when they appeared on the trail leading to the tiny town, mongrel dogs began to yap and growl at their heels. Two men, dressed in the purple robes that denote authority in Tibet, came toward them.

Ken moved forward to overhear the conversation.

"I am Tang La," the bandit chief told them. "These fools"—he indicated Ken and the other two white men—"are on their way to murder the Serene Being in Lhasa. I have tricked them. Soon we shall be in

the Sacred City, and there they shall be my prisoners. They shall die like all spies and traitors. Molest us not, but allow us to go on through. Lead me inside your hut. I shall show you papers from the ministers at Lhasa."

The two men entered the hut and Ken waited impatiently for them to reappear.

There was no telling what plot Tang La would hatch, and Ken wanted to know if the bandit chief was changing his plans.

"If he tries to pull any funny stuff," Dopey said quietly, "I'm taking a poke at him that he won't ever forget."

Tang La emerged from the hut. He gesticulated to Ken that everything was all right, and the little party started out again. It was late afternoon when Shatan, who had been riding close to the Tibetan bandits, dropped back.

"Tang La has weapons, master," he said. "He secured guns from the officials of the last town we passed. Tomorrow he plans to use them on you. Each one of his men has a gun."

"Good, Shatan," Ken answered softly. "Remain with us. Tonight we shall take their guns away from them."

"Say," Slim remarked after Ken had informed his companions of Tang La's cupidity. "I always thought there weren't any guns in Tibet. It's about a million years behind the times in everything else, how come they've got those modern rifles and this up-to-date automatic we took from our whiskered friend, Tang La?"

"I'VE got an idea Singe Ripa, our Indian prince, could answer that," Ken said. "I noticed those guns myself. They're English made—mighty good rifles. Dopey, in your pack is a bottle of white pills. They are

supposed to be a relief for toothache, frostbite and what not. They are nothing but mild dope, and we'll see what they'll do to Tang La and his three cutthroats."

Shatan made the little fire that night.

He boiled the water for the tea, but Tang La or his men did not see the peasant add the contents of the little bottle that Dopey had given him.

The smelly, rancid butter hid the taste of the pills. Shatan boiled a second kettle of water for himself and the white men.

"THEY'LL be asleep in a little while," Ken told his companions. "Soon as they are well under, we'll do a little work. Tang La will be some surprised when he wakes up tomorrow. Shatan tells me that he plans to hold us up and then cave in a snow bank so that we'll be hemmed in. Then he'll come back when we're almost frozen and pack us on his horses."

"Nice guy," Dopey snorted. "I'm telling you to hurry up and get to Lhasa. I can't hold that sock much longer. My arm aches every time I look at his dirty mug."

Tang La and his men fell into a drugged stupor within the hour. Ken worked swiftly. First he searched each snoring Tibetan, stripped the hidden automatics of bullets and replaced them.

Then he returned to the tent Dopey had erected. They slept peacefully. Under Ken's blanket was a little heap of bullets.

Any shooting done with the dawn would be from the guns of white men alone.

Their rest was short. Ken was eager to be on his way, and Tang La, too, wanted to start. He stalked about like a miniature puppet. Several times he scowled meaningly at Ken. There was pleasant anticipa-

tion in his every move. His men awoke with vicious tempers.

CHAPTER V

The Roof of the World



THE little caravan started. Tang La led his horse. Behind him came the bandits, and in the rear the white men. They had automatics beneath their robes, and slung over their shoulders they carried their rifles. Dopey was a walking

arsenal. In the crook of his arm he also held the automatic rifle, and bandoliers of cartridges were slung about his middle. Tang La had eyed these preparations wonderingly.

It came just before noon! They were almost topping the mountain range. Shatan was ahead, at the rear of the bearers. One hulking bandit hesitated and motioned for Shatan to approach. The party was skirting a precipice, and the narrow path was smooth as a skating rink. A single false step for any of them and sudden death would reach up from the ravine below to grasp them.

Shatan seemed frightened, and Ken saw the two men arguing. Shatan shook his head vigorously. Suddenly the huge Tibetan lurched forward. Shatan lost his footing. He grabbed for the garments of the murderer and clung to them. The big man tried to shake him loose. Finally he bent over, picked up the unfortunate and screeching Shatan and raised him above his head.

Ken's gun came up and spoke with a roar that started a score of snow slides from the mountains. The big Tibetan stiffened, sagged forward and, with Shatan still hugged in his arms, went hurtling to his doom.

Instantly hell broke loose. The remaining bandits began to yell as

they broke into a run. Tang La spurred his horse forward, and Ken caught one look at his evil, grinning face before he vanished around the bend. Slim and Dopey started after them. Ken held out a restraining hand. "Wait," he said. "I think he'd like to have us follow."

The others disappeared behind a sharp turn in the trail. One bandit lagged behind, and his actions made Ken gasp. He dropped an object in the middle of the trail, bent over it and then tried to run. He tried to hurry, but his legs refused to function as fast as his brain demanded. Ken raised his rifle.

"That guy has a box with our whiskey supply and some of the food," he said. "Shatan saw him steal it yesterday. I've got to wing him."

His rifle spoke once. The Tibetan grasped at his leg and plunged headlong on the trail. He began to groan and cry in ghastly anguish.

Then the trail suddenly seemed to lift from the earth. Hard on the face of this came the explosion. The three white men threw themselves against the cliff and hugged it. Snow began to pile down near them, but most of it went over the narrow path and into the ravine. For ten minutes the slides continued. When they stopped, Slim looked dismally at the spot where the bomb had been placed.

Part of the protecting cliff had been blown away. The trail was piled twenty feet high with snow. It would take them a day to dig their way out.

"Well," Dopey rolled a cigarette, "guess we'll stay a while, huh?"

"Not for long," Ken replied. "We can dig through that drift."

"And when we do," Slim said, "there'll be a fine reception waiting for us on the other side."

"I don't think so," Ken answered. "I think Tang La will believe we'll be frozen to death by morning. He'll

try to come down on us from above. That's when he'll get one of the grandest surprises of his life. But first we've got to see if we can get to that bandit. With the pack he's got, we can live here for a week if necessary."

They hurried as fast as they dared to the immense pile of snow and ice, and began to dig furiously. They had to work fast, for the bitter cold of the late afternoon was getting under their skins. They shivered as they worked. They had only their hands, but within an hour Dopey yelled. He had uncovered a foot of the Tibetan.

He was dead when they uncovered the rest of him and took the precious pack from his already stiffly frozen body. They opened it at once and knocked off the head of a bottle of Scotch. The bottle drained as if by magic, and three men grinned at one another as they wiped their lips.

"How about one on the house?" Dopey said.

"Let's get back to a camp site first," Ken said. "Lucky we carried our own tent. I've got matches, and this pack box will make a good fire. There's concentrated soup packed inside, chocolate too. We'll get along."

THEY pitched their tent in a hidden crevice. Soon they had a tiny fire going. Melted snow, mixed with the soup concentrate, made a hot, stimulating drink. They sipped it slowly.

"How soon do you suppose he'll attack?" Slim asked.

"I don't know," Ken pondered. "It will take them a couple of hours to reach the summit of the range. From there I think they can look down into the trail. We'll fix up something to look like us, and when they start to come down to investigate, we'll show 'em some good old United States defense."

They slept in shifts. One man stood guard just inside the tent and away from the gales that swept the ravine.

Day comes suddenly in Tibet. There is no gradual rising of the sun, no grey of early dawn. The land is too high, the geography too abrupt. The sun comes over the horizon like a sudden apparition of dazzling light.

WHEN it came this morning, eyes high above the ravine over which the trail led, saw the snow-covered forms of three men. They lay prone in the middle of the trail. The tent, directly under the cliff, was hidden from any gaze above.

In the tent Ken and Slim were staring into the white wilderness. Dopey was puffing nonchalantly at one of his hand-mades. Leaning against his thigh was the automatic rifle. He reached over and patted the weapon from time to time.

There was a noise above them, and they knew the attack was coming. Ken slipped into the snow and gazed upward. The men were crawling down the perilous slope of the mountain. The sun glittered on their guns.

Ken saw one of the treacherous bandits lift his weapon, hold it into position and then lower it again. He could see the figure of Tang La stand up and gesticulate with his arms. The men on the mountainside were frantic. Not a gun held a bullet. They were weaponless.

Tang La pointed a long arm downward then. Ken knew he had been seen. The two men above went into a huddle for a moment; then they started to climb again. Ken didn't grasp the significance of this until he saw them rolling huge snowballs high above him. A half dozen of these, gathering snow and momentum, would create a mountain slide before they reached the spot where

Ken and his companions were hidden.

"Dopey," Ken yelled. "Step on it—bring that rifle!"

Dopey came out of the tent, long legs flailing. He followed Ken's finger and put the gun to his shoulder. He glanced at Slim.

"It's the only way," Slim said. "It's their lives or ours."

Dopey squeezed the trigger and sprayed the side of the mountain. Tang La ducked, but the remaining bandit collapsed. Even from where they stood, Ken and the other two white men could see the snow turning a darker hue where he fell.

A small weapon spat viciously and lead whistled by their heads. They ducked.

"Our friend must have had a pocket full of bullets for his automatic," Ken said. "See if you can get him, Dopey."

The ex-cowboy raised his head cautiously, saw the glimmer of the sun on the automatic rifle. He fired a short burst, and was rewarded with a scream of pain. Tang La wasn't badly wounded, but he decided that this mountainside was none too healthy. The other man rose weakly to his feet also. It was evident that he was badly wounded. They began to make their way upward.

ABOVE them one of the huge snowballs started to roll slowly. Ken saw it, shouted his warning. The bandits saw it too and shrieked in fear. It began to go faster, rolling downward at a speed that increased with every turn. The wounded Tibetan suddenly vanished from sight.

As Ken and the others clung to the safety of their overhanging cliff, they saw the body shoot out from beneath the mass of moving snow.

There was no sound. The man was dead long before he reached the edge of the ravine.

As quickly as it started, the miniature slide was over. Despite the intense cold, Slim wiped his forehead free of perspiration. Then he smiled weakly at Ken.

"Old Tang La is up there somewhere," he said. "What'll we do—let him lay?"

"I'll say we will." Dopey was rolling another cigarette. "He ain't no good to us nohow."

"**H**E'S a man," Ken countered. "We've got to do something for him. Anyway, he can still get us through to Lhasa. Let's see if we can get up there."

Slim was the lightest of the trio, and he elected himself the scout. He sought a hand hold on the cliff, pulled himself up and over and began an ascent. Dopey and Ken started to pack.

They used their blankets for knapsacks.

In twenty minutes snow began to fly over their heads. There came a scrambling, and the sodden form of Tang La dropped over the cliff. Then came Slim. His hands and face were torn from the rocks he had used for support.

The bandit chieftain was soon out of his faint; Dopey's wavering hail of lead had caught him through the shoulder.

He sat up, saw the three white men and paled.

By signs Ken conveyed the contempt he held for him. Tang La still held the hate in his eyes, but sullenly he began to help dig their way over the trail. In an hour they were going rapidly. They let Tang La lead the way.

The top of the range presented a sight that made Ken's heart stop a moment. Until the horizon swallowed it up, the rolling plains of Tibet spread below them for miles. In the distance they could see the Golden Patola of a Living God.

CHAPTER VI

The Tower of Silence

THE scene below made Tang La pause a moment and grunt, then he continued on down the slope. An hour later, with the warmth of the afternoon sun full upon them, the white men made drastic changes in their appearance. Their disguise had almost worn away under the biting winds of the trail.

Tang La watched noncommittally as Ken produced three strange looking objects from his kit. They were round and held at the end of a small stick of wood. He rotated one expertly, and the round part whirled about the wooden base gracefully.

"*Om mani padme hum,*" he muttered.

Over and over again, the words trickled from his lips. His companions stared.

"What the devil!" Dopey drawled.

Ken laughed.

"Heathen," he grinned, "these are prayer wheels. All of us will have to keep 'em going every minute from now on. No good Tibetan is without one. Turn it from left to right. Change the direction, and you'll commit a sin that's punishable by death. Every time this wheel turns, you gain merit in the eyes of the gods. Keep 'em turning!"

"What in the devil's the speech that goes with it?" Slim asked.

"*Om mani padme hum,*" Ken intoned slowly. "O jewel in the heart of the lotus. Amen," he translated for them. "It's the prayer of every man, woman and child in this country. We're getting close now; watch Tang La closely. If he is going to pull anything, it will be soon."

They came into a small town, and dozens of filthy children raced out

to greet them, begging for alms. Ken pushed them aside and the others followed. Two heavily built men, clad in gowns of purple with flat, broad hats on their heads, came toward them. Ken edged close to Tang La and poked him suggestively with his gun.

Tang La nodded, but there was an unholy light in his eyes. He had no suspicion that Ken knew Tibetan. The two officials roughly grabbed the bandit chief and began to question him. He replied slowly and made his every word impressive.

"I am Tang La," he told them. "From far India I come at the command of the Llama. These men with me are British spies. They are fools, but they have been lucky. They suspect nothing, and they are on their way to Lhasa to murder the Living God. They shall get to Lhasa, but never shall they leave. Pass us on!"

"Yes, master," one of the officials replied. "We have been warned that you were coming. The monks will welcome you at Lhasa — and your companions. You will be much rewarded, master, for this work. But do not fear for the safety of the Living God. Word of this plan reached Lhasa long before you started your trip. The monks have spies everywhere. To be certain that the plan would fail, the Living God has left Lhasa. He is now in the monastery at the Golden Patola. He is well hidden and no one knows of his presence. You will continue on to Lhasa?"

"Yes." Tang glanced nervously at Ken, but saw only Ken's broad back.

The American was spinning his prayer wheel slowly and mumbling his prayer. Other devout peasants passed, their lips moving in their everlasting, "*Om mani padme hum,*" and their wheels manufacturing vast merit as they turned them deftly.

Ken ambled slowly back to his two

friends. In a low whisper he passed on the information he had learned.

"We'll leave the town, he said, "but we'll return mighty fast. When we do, there's going to be one Living God minus in this country. But we'll have to be careful. Dopey—have you got your auto-rifle under your robes okay?"

"And how," Dopey whispered in answer. "Just let 'em start something."

Tang La returned and smiled confidently. By gestures he signified that he had smoothed the way for them.

"Let's go," Ken said, and they started their weary trek again.

Five miles out of the city Ken set his burden down and sat on the pack. Slim and Dopey followed the cue. Tang La stopped and looked curiously at them. He motioned for them to hurry.

"There's plenty of time," Ken said slowly. Then he suddenly changed from English to cultured Tibetan. "In fact, I don't think we'll bother to go on to Lhasa. We'll just see if the Living God isn't hidden in the Golden Patola back in town. You see, Tang La, we are not the fools you may take us to be."

TANG LA gasped, and his face drained of all blood. He began to quiver a little. His hand flew downward, toward where his gun should have been.

He had forgotten they had stripped him of his weapons.

"You're coming with us," Ken went on inexorably. "And if we die, you die too. There's no backing out for any of us, least of all for you. For the whole trip you thought us fools when we were wise to your every move. Keep that idea fastened under your skull, and remember we aren't fooling any more. We'll kill you as quick as look at you."

Tang La bowed his head. Dopey

strode to his side and snarled a warning that made the Tibetan cringe even though he understood none of the words. Slim looked at him through narrowed eyes. His chances of escaping these men were slim, and he knew it.

"Come on," Ken said. "We're going back."

FOR fifteen minutes they plodded their return. Peasants passed them steadily, but they paid scant attention to the travelers. Their minds were fastened on the Sacred City to the west and their course never deviated.

Ken was heaving a sigh of relief that changed to one of despair when he saw clouds of dust arising from all sides. Mounted men would be armed.

Resistance would result in instant death! There was but one thing to do!

"Dopey," he whispered, "it's all up to you. Turn around and join one of the bands of pilgrims. Keep that rifle ready. When it's night, turn around and come back to town. Try to find out what's happened to us. You'll know from how the peasants act. Don't try to question them. They won't understand a word you say. We'll surrender after a fight long enough to make it look genuine. You scam fast. Don't try to stick with us."

Dopey demurred a little, but saw the wisdom of the move. He grasped the hands of his friends, then turned to mingle with a band of Tibetans. His skin was stained to a proper hue, and the dark glasses effectively concealed his eyes. Only a search of every person along the route would reveal him.

Tang La tried to appear unconcerned, but his cruel little eyes shone in anticipation. He had understood nothing of the conversation between the white men; he hadn't even

noticed Dopey's disappearance until it was too late.

The horsemen were close now and the sun shone on their unlimbered rifles. Tang La turned suddenly on the two white men. He spoke in Tibetan to Ken.

"So you are wise men?" he snarled. "You are fools! In two minutes you will be captured—or dead. My reward will be watching you die slowly at the hands of these men. They know how to kill people properly. I am the wise man. You are the fo—"

Slim suddenly reversed the butt of his gun. He brought it down in a resounding smack on Tang La's head. The bandit collapsed. He would be out for hours. Ken sent a few slugs hurtling toward one flank of the horsemen. Instantly the peasantry forgot their devout purpose and scampered like mice for shelter.

Lead whistled around the white men. It was only the poor shooting of the Tibetan soldiers that saved them. Finally Ken threw down his gun and, with Slim, raised his hands in token of surrender.

THEY were instantly surrounded by fierce looking men. Violent hands were laid on them. Quickly they were bound and slung over the saddles of horses. Ken noted with satisfaction that the soldiers believed Tang La to be one of their party. He was similarly treated.

The journey back to the city was painful. The slender yakhide tore at his skin. Slim was almost unconscious on a horse just ahead of Ken. As they neared the city, men poured into the streets and shouted foul imprecations at the whites. Some sent stones whizzing toward them. Ken let his body sag in false unconsciousness.

A huge gate opened to admit them and closed swiftly behind. The peas-

antry were effectively shut out. But now a greater menace surrounded them. The fighting monks of Tibet!

They tore at the already tattered clothing of the white men. Stout sticks flayed them, and before Ken was yanked off the horse his unconsciousness was no longer faked.

HE awoke in a dismal, stinking cell. A little dung-infested straw was on the floor. By the tiny stream of light that reached them, Ken saw Slim weakly trying to lift himself from the floor. Tang La lay in a moaning heap in one corner.

"Slim," Ken whispered.

"Hello, pal," Slim called back. "How'd you enjoy the night's rest?"

"Rotten!" Ken got to his feet. Through the barred door he saw a yellow face peer in and then vanish. In a moment the priests would return. Then the real fireworks would begin.

They came sooner than he expected. Ken was quickly bound. Then Slim. Tang was lifted roughly from the floor and shaken into a state of consciousness. He began to protest feebly. They paid no attention.

Into a huge room and before immense statues of incarnate gods, they were brought. On a dais sat an ancient, wrinkled man. His legs were crossed, and he sat upon them. There was malicious hate in his watery eyes. Ken shook himself free of the monks, went up to the man and bowed.

"Your Serenity," he mumbled.

The priest lifted a hand in astonishment.

"You speak the language of the gods?" he queried, uncertain that his ears had heard aright.

"Only one blessed of the gods speak it," Ken replied with all the dignity he could muster. "We cast ourselves on your kindness, O Serene Being."

"You are the British spies sent

here to murder our Supreme God?" the deity asked.

He was beginning to enjoy himself. He hadn't expected these white men could speak Tibetan. It would make the torture he had in store for them so much the more amusing.

"We are British," Ken answered, "but not spies. We seek not to harm your Living God. We seek to honor him. From a great king in a far-off land we bring you greeting."

"He lies!" Tang La suddenly obtained control of his tongue. "They are spies sent here to kill the Living God. I am Tang La, of the Llama's foreign service. It was I who brought these men to you. Let me go free that I may help you in the torture of the infidels."

"He speaks not the truth," Ken interrupted and never lifted his voice. "Your very able spy continued on to Lhasa, to be greeted by the Llama there. This man is one of our confederates, but he is not one of us any longer. He is a coward—afraid of death. Let him go, and he will bring countless hordes of British soldiers upon you."

THE priest gasped. He knew only too well the force behind the British Lion. He started to reply, but stopped suddenly at the sound of an immense gong. Instantly everyone in the room prostrated themselves. Ken gaped as purple curtains parted and on the dais beside the old priest appeared the goal of their desires.

The Living God stood among them!

Slim moved to Ken's side.

"Man," he whispered, "if that isn't a white boy, I'm a monkey!"

"Yes," Ken agreed softly, "look at the skin. It's white, not yellow like a native's. That's a white boy. We've got to get him out of here. If I could only get to him, make him understand."

The Living God raised a hand and

pressed thumb against forefinger in a gesture of blessing the thronged room. He stood impassive as the priests raised their eyes. Then he turned and walked as if on air, back through the curtains. Instantly the room buzzed again. The old priest leveled his eyes on Ken again and spoke.

"**P**IGS," he said softly. "Liars! All of you die with the sun. Holy men cannot kill you. Believers would not soil their hands on your persons. In the Tower of Silence you shall die!"

Tang La emitted a cry of anguish. He tried to yell words to convince the priest of his faithfulness, but hands yanked him backward. Ken stood silently by Slim's side.

"It's up to Dopey," he said in English. "With that rifle he could clean out these birds in no time. I hope he finds us."

"Yeah," Slim tried to smile, "so do I. Say—what's this Tower of Silence business anyway?"

"I don't know," Ken admitted. "It sounds familiar, but I can't place it. Must be some kind of fancy torture."

They were led from the room abruptly and thrown into the cell again. Tang La lay flat on his face in the filthy straw. His shoulders heaved in great sobs.

The two white men drew off in a corner. Slim found a few particles of tobacco in the lining of a pocket. He rolled it into a ball and shoved it under his tongue. There was nothing to be said. Words sounded so ineffectual. They could only wait.

"I'll go first," Ken said.

"Huh?" Slim looked at his companion in the darkness. "What the devil do you mean?"

"At the Tower of Silence," Ken told him. "Dopey may get back in time to save one of us. Maybe they'll drag it out."

CHAPTER VII

The Living God!

Then he grinned and thumped Slim's back.

Good-naturedly they tossed about the cell, laughing and cursing one another. Faces with slanted eyes peered in at them. Tang La hastily moved to the farthest corner. They all thought the two white men mad.

The cell filled with monks then. Ken was jerked upright, and Slim followed.

"Well," Ken grunted, "looks like the parade starts. Wonder what it is, this Tower of Silence."

They were led into the grim night. For perhaps two minutes they were alternately pushed and pulled along. Then they saw before them silent, grey walls. There was a tower above the west wall, and from it came a weird squawking and fluttering. Ken stared upward, but could see nothing.

Tang La was shoved ahead of the other two. A monk began to speak, and Ken listened.

"For his lies the dark-skinned one shall die first. Pin him to the top of the tower and allow the other ones to see his death. Those are the orders of His Serenity."

Tang La went up the narrow staircase first, two monks followed. Then came Ken and Slim. There wasn't the slightest chance of escape. At the top of the stairs they were led into the night air again.



THE dawn came quickly, and the moment the sun came over the horizon the wings that Ken had heard in the darkness, increased their flapping. They were giant wings, too. He

looked about wonderingly, and then he saw and knew.

The Tower of Silence was the burial place of the Tibetan dead. The monks refused to soil their hands with an unclean corpse, and they placed it on the table where Tang La was struggling and screaming hideously. Then the vultures came! Immense, beady-eyed birds.

Ken shuddered. Was Tang La to be fed to the vultures while he still lived? He knew from experience that their work was swift, that only whitened bones would remain after half an hour.

The birds settled on the walls and regarded the struggling victim contemplatively. But Tang La screamed and tugged at his bonds. The birds were used to victims that were cold in death.

They dared not approach too close to the living man.

Then a squat, misshapen being came from the entrance to the tower. Following him, half a dozen monks trailed their robes across the dust of the floor while they settled themselves in comfortable lounging positions against the wall.

The deformed man swung a short-bladed sword from his hand, and he went directly to the table where Tang La lay. The Tibetan knew what was coming, and his cries grew louder.

"Cripes," Ken heard Slim gasp in despair. Then he called aloud to

TANG LA struggled futilely while manacles were locked about his wrists. Then he was placed, back down, on a long table. The cuffs were secured by chains from the table and Tang La lay there, helplessly screaming. Ken was pretty sure the bandit chieftain knew this manner of death. The monks then tied Ken and Slim to tiny cubby-holes twenty feet away from the table. They were protected for the time being anyway. But—from what manner of grisly death?

Ken. "If Dopey doesn't find us pretty quick, it's going to be too bad."

Ken started to reply, but Tang La's screams suddenly became a crescendo of terror. The deformed native stood over him, sword ready. A single swoop, and it was over. The odor of warm blood began to permeate the air. The huge vultures began to stir restlessly, but they were not yet ready for their grim feast. The priests eyed the scene idly. It appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary to them.

The hunchback stepped away from the body, bowed low to the priests and waited. For a moment he had watched Ken with his pig-like, blood-shot eyes. He hefted the short weapon suggestively.

Ken saw Slim close his eyes involuntarily. The vultures were drawing closer to their banquet now. In a moment the scene would become unbearable. And either Ken or Slim would be the next to grace that table. In spite of himself, Ken shivered and wet dry lips. If only Dopey had been able to find them. If only he could—

THERE was a movement opposite Ken, and he glanced up. His eyes widened in wonder. There, swinging from the high wall, sat Dopey. But such a man. He was dressed in the filthiest clothing imaginable, but it was Dopey all right. There was no mistaking the gleam of even white teeth beneath the sun-glasses.

"Good morning, merry sunshine," he half sang. "Was I a little late?"

As he spoke, the automatic rifle went to his shoulder. He sprayed the grisly table a moment, and screeching vultures floundered in their own blood. The monks jabbered in terror as the spitting gun swung their way. The dozen of them went down like toy soldiers.

Dopey dropped to the top of the

tower. The gun was held ready, but there was little need for it. Only three men lived on that roof top: Dopey, Slim and Ken. It took a few moments to free Ken and Slim.

"Glad to see me?" Dopey inquired.

HIS hand dove beneath the soggy robes and drew forth a pair of automatics. Another dive with the same hand, and half a dozen boxes of cartridges fell into their hands. They went to the side of the roof and looked down. A motley crowd of priests and peasants stood outside, trying to figure out what had happened in that Tower of the Dead. Dopey let them know. He fired a short burst into the midst of them.

"That's for luck!" he shouted. "Come on up and get a real sample."

"Wait," Ken cried. "Save the bullets! We've got a job to do before we get out of here. The Living God! He is somewhere inside that temple. We've got to get him out."

"I'll go," Slim said, and started for the stairway.

"No," Ken held him back. "You can't do it. That boy can only speak Tibetan. You won't be able to make him understand. Let me go. I can talk to him, explain everything. With his help we may be able to get clear of here yet. I'll go down the stairs to the first landing—the one that leads directly into the temple. Dopey, you cover me with that gat of yours. I've got lead enough to shoot my way out of there, but when I come back with the boy, be ready with all you've got."

He went down the stone steps three at a time, slowing up as he neared the narrow door. He saw a shadow lurking there. With a deft twist of his wrist he hurled his fur cap through the doorway. The shadow moved, became real—and then crumpled as Ken's gun spoke. There were no more shadows.

He went into the landing and to-

ward the temple. Outside he could hear the roar of the assembled humanity. If Dopey's gun could hold them in check ten minutes longer—

Two burly priests tried to block his way. They were armed with wicked looking knives, but Ken's gun reached farther than the steel. The two men went down. Another popped a head around a corner, but he didn't draw it back. His entire body came into sight as it went floorward.

There came the popping of the auto-rifle from the parapet above. Dopey was trying a little leaden influence on the crowd below.

Ken found himself in the same richly decorated room where he had been sentenced to death. Through the curtains he went, and instantly two strong arms hugged him close. He raised a knee, sent it hard into the stomach of the priest who had waylaid him.

There was a grunt, and the priest went backward.

When he came forward again in a mad lunge, Ken was ready. His gun came down and cracked smartly through tissue and scalp. He heard a little scream ahead of him and knew his quest was almost over.

THE figure of the Living God suddenly appeared before him. It was a white boy all right. A blind man could see the color and texture of his skin. His features too were finely cut, his manner regal.

He stood, hands folded across his breast. It seemed that he expected death to strike at any moment and that he stood simply waiting.

"Come," Ken said in Tibetan and motioned for him.

He shook his head.

"No," he replied in the same language. "You have come from afar to slay me. I am at the mercy of your will."

"Oh, hell!" Ken grated in English. Then he changed to Tibetan again.

"Listen, Serenity, I'm not going to kill you. I'm trying to save you. Protect you! Do you understand?"

"Protect me?" he whispered, half in doubt.

"You are white," Ken went on. "White like me and—and Slim and Dopey. You belong to our race of people; and not to these yellow monsters."

"But—but I am the god," he said with dignity. "The Living God! When I die, I return in the form of another child. There is nothing to protect me from."

KEN had little time to spare, but this boy had to be convinced.

"Your mother and father were Christians," he told him heatedly. "You are not a Living God! You are nothing more than a living emblem of a god. Soon the priests will kill you and retain their power. You have been educated well, you are white and your brain doesn't function as does a Tibetan brain. You know something is wrong somewhere. We were sent here by your mother to save you. Your mother—do you understand?"

The white boy shook his head in assent, and Ken sighed in relief.

"We've got to work fast," he said. "There's a howling crowd of maniacs outside, and they'll tear us apart. Is there any secret passage out of here?"

"No," the Living God answered and then thought rapidly. "There is no need for a secret passage. The people are mine. They will not harm me. Come—we shall go down to the streets."

"Wait." Ken got the idea and gloated over it. "My friends are on the roof. We'll go up there first."

The youth walked softly by his side, his slippered feet making no noise. From about his neck he had taken a red tassel, and this he swung before him, such the same as the

peasants and priests swung their prayer wheels.

On the roof Dopey turned and gasped. "For the lovamike!" he said. "Was it as easy as that?"

"This is His Serenity," Ken bowed. Automatically the two white men bowed in return. "This is the Living God!"

The boy smiled at them and walked confidently to the parapet. The moment his face showed above the top, the howling ceased as if cut off by some remote control. The crowd went down on their faces in the dust. He raised the red tassel and swung it gently in the breeze. His lips moved in the monotonous, "*Om mani padme hum.*" The crowd mumbled an answer.

Leading the way, he went down the stairs and directly to the street. Priests eyed him with cold fury, but they dared not move a hand. The peasants outnumbered them a thousand to one. Any hand laid on this deity would result in instant death for the offender. The crowd crawled aside to make room for him.

Dopey grinned, bowed to the priests and shouldered his gun. He marched triumphantly between the crouched bodies of thousands. Ken followed, and Slim was last. None tried to stop them.

THE Living God stopped so suddenly that Dopey almost crashed into him. With a short wave of his hand he commanded several of the men to arise. They stood before him with folded hands and bowed heads. Gently he touched the tops of their bared heads with the tassel, and to those fortunate men came a blessing for which many would have given their lives. With a gesture of his wrist and a low word, he ordered horses and an escort. They were promptly produced.

Within fifteen minutes of the time they had descended from the Tower

of Silence, the whites were on their way. Not as fugitives, in disguise, but as conquerors.

DOPEY was hugely pleased, but the automatic rifle remained across the saddle. A score of monks barred their path for a moment, but the Living God brushed them aside with a wave of his hand. Had the populace not been there, Ken knew they would have thrown the boy aside while they slaughtered the whites. But he was all-powerful as long as the peasants were about him.

The long trek for India began. The Living God gave no explanation to his subjects. There was no need for one; he was omnipotent. Nothing he could do was wrong. The single telegraph line had flung news of the Illustrious One far and wide, and peasants by the thousands lined the trail. He dipped his little red tassel up and down and murmured the short prayer. Wheels spun at a tremendous rate, while their owners consigned the merit their rotations made to the Living God who deigned to bless them.

The trip that had taken the white men almost two weeks to make, they went back over in a little more than that number of days. Everywhere things were smoothed out for them. Half a thousand troops clustered about the group. While they rode in the less settled districts, Ken explained in low tones to the boy.

"I have known for many years," he confided to Ken, "that I was not as—as those who were my subjects. I was never permitted to go out, and I was guarded jealously. Of course I had everything. Life seemed so complete—and yet so incomplete. There was something lacking, something that I longed for. I'm sure it was mother love I desired. Is my mother a great woman as you say?"

"Not as great as you, Serenity." Ken couldn't stop addressing him

with the title that was a part of him.

Sometimes he longed to lean over in his saddle and thump the lad resoundingly on the back. Such an action would have been foolish; the troops would have cut him down. There were suspicions of the whites as it was, but the word of the Living God was law. If the whites were his friends, no harm should come to them.

CHAPTER VIII

Capture!



A DOZEN miles from the Indian border Ken detected faces staring at them with hate. Those were not Tibetans; they were Hindus. They wore uniforms, Ken tried to make them out. There had been something fishy about the whole expedition when they started. Spies had been everywhere. The plans of the little group had been known even before they knew themselves what they were going after or where their journey was to lead them.

The border almost reached, the Living God turned to Ken.

"I shall send the soldiers back," he said. "If they believe I am to leave my country, they may grow suspicious."

Ken nodded, and he summoned one of the officers of the troop. He gave him curt orders and he brought the soldiers to a halt. They remained fixed in position as the Living God turned and blessed them with his red tassel. They would wait his return for days after he had vanished.

Across the border Ken began to grow careful. They were out of the protection of Tibet now. The Living God meant little to a Hindu,

and Ken had a hunch that trouble was brewing.

It came suddenly and in a horde of howling men. They seemed to rain down on the party from every side. Dopey's gun went into action, and dozens of the men went down to stay. Ken and Slim emptied their automatics as fast as they could reload them. The boy, in the midst of the fight, took the hot gun from Ken's hands and calmly reloaded it for him.

But the odds were too great, and the munitions of the whites too meager. Hand to hand fighting lasted but a moment or two. Ken went down with a dozen men on top of him. He saw the boy yanked to a place of safety. Evidently the Hindus had been given their orders regarding him.

Dragged to his feet, Ken's arms were tied behind him in a twinkling. Slim was bound, and Dopey, too. Blood streamed from a wound in Dopey's forehead, but his grin was there. Ken smiled back at him.

They were tied to horses and forced to run at breakneck speed toward a desert encampment. They left the Indian border and within half a mile were in Nepal.

That was what Ken had dreaded. In India he had a glimmer of hope. After all, they were working under cover for the British Crown. British troops would be forced to help them. But here they were, prisoners in Nepal. Something had gone wrong.

Before a large tent they were brought to a stop and untied from the horses. All three men sank weakly to their knees in the sand. Dopey's grin was sickly. He had lost much blood, and the race behind a galloping horse hadn't helped him.

Soldiers prodded them to their feet with bayoneted rifles. A sergeant-major motioned for them to enter the tent. They lined up before a low platform. From behind the

curtain partition of the tent came a familiar figure.

Singe Ripa, the prince whom they had captured in Darjeeling, squatted down on the pillowed platform. He smiled and bowed toward Ken.

"The great Mr. Linsey and myself meet again. And you, gentlemen," he bowed toward Slim and Dopey. "It is a welcome that I give you in my humble tent. Food you shall have and drink, too. For the brave there is great reward."

"What is it?" Ken snapped. "Don't try those high hat methods on us. We know you too well, you slimy—" "Snake!" Slim spat forth.

THE words had a strange effect on the prince. He rose, face pale in a passion of hate. He calmly selected a thin-bladed sword from one of the men. He walked directly to Slim and raised the weapon. Slim grinned in his face. The sword came down in a swishing arc. Slim's cheek was laid open to the bone.

Silently he went down in the dust. One of the soldiers kicked him and spat upon him. The prince dropped the sword as if it were red-hot. Then he walked back to the dais.

"As I was saying," he went on as though he had never been interrupted, "for the brave there is a fitting reward. A death that will show just how brave you really are. But first the food and drink."

He clapped his hands. At once a table was spread and bowls of steaming food were placed on it. There were places set for four, but one remained unoccupied: Slim was still unconscious. The prince moved down to the table and smiled pleasantly.

"Where's the boy?" Ken asked brusquely.

"The Living God of Tibet?" He rubbed his hands and his manner became greasy. "He will never return to Tibet, my friend. To the ignorant ones of that land he will

have died, for so have the priests willed. But does he really die? Ah, no! He will be reincarnated again. A child will be found by the priests to rule. That child will be the future Living God and will be a true reincarnation of the god you so kindly brought me."

"You mean?" Ken doubted his ears.

"Exactly," the prince got Ken's thoughts. "The Living God you brought me will be my slave. With him in my possession, I have untold powers over the high priests of Lhasa. But do not fear, I treat my servants with all due courtesy, especially if they are Living Gods, incapable of dying. Perhaps I shall allow him the privilege of witnessing your very brave death. It would be unfortunate if he missed that pleasure, I am sure, and it might be a lesson to him."

"For that," Ken's voice was deathly cold, "I'll kill you—you ratty spy."

The prince looked up, smiled, and helped himself to a bowl of steaming rice.

"Spy?" he raised his eyebrow. "Just what do you mean?"

YOU'VE been working hand in glove with the priests and monasteries of Tibet. You've been supplying them with modern weapons that you stole from British munitions houses. You've been encouraging them to fight the Nepalese so that you could assure yourself of a kingdom here.

"I've heard rumors that something of that kind has been going on. What has happened here proves it. The Tibetan monks telegraphed you that we were coming. You remained well within your own borders so that if anything happened you hadn't planned for, your own dirty hide would have been safe. You used Tang La as your agent in Tibet.

"Now you've got the Living God

of Tibet, you plan to keep him your prisoner. By doing that you will hold a weapon over the monks of Tibet. You can threaten to return him to the throne that has been his. They will do anything for you to prevent that. You've got the plans of a Napoleon, but the brains and makeup of a snake."

"Yes?" The prince smiled smoothly. "And you are going to do what about it?"

"I'm going to kill you," Ken hissed between set teeth.

But his words were futile and he knew it. Surrounding him were hundreds of traitor Hindus who had followed the prince to do his bidding that they might profit from him. Dopey couldn't help. Slim—Ken cast his eyes to the spot where Slim had fallen.

ONLY bare earth met his eyes, and he quickly averted them. When the feast had started, the soldiers had withdrawn. Ken knew that some stood ready behind the curtains that separated the tent. The slightest move on his part and they would go into action.

But Slim! He had fallen unconscious—or had he really been out? He could have wriggled carefully under the tent. There were horses directly outside, Ken knew. He could hear them. If Slim had mounted one and slipped away in the gloom, they still had a chance—provided they could stall the prince long enough. Ken began to bargain.

"Supposing we promise not to say anything," he said. "We could be of great help to you in your kingdom. You know very well that the British will hold you up as a traitor no matter how high a potentate you become. Give us the boy; let us take him to the British legation. He will never return to Tibet—I can promise you that. In return we shall use our influence with the English

governors of India. Perhaps we can get them to look upon you with favor."

Dopey glanced at Ken, and curled his lower lip.

"What's the idea of snitching?" he growled. "Let's take it and get it over with. We gotta die sometime."

"Yes," Ken answered slowly, "but not as our friend, the prince, has it planned. I have an idea as to what variety of death he has in mind. It's not pleasant."

"TRUE," sighed the prince as if the words hurt him. "It is a slow death. In the desert grows a short plant. It is a fast growing weed with a thick, powerful shoot. I have seen men stretched over a tiny plant, and before the sun left the heavens he was impaled with the growth of the plant. One man, made such a part of a living tree, breathed for two days. Of course he was not given food or water. The sun is powerful, and if I'm not mistaken one of my men very carefully tied back his eyelids so that they could receive the full benefit of the sun.

"That is what I have planned for you. It is a death for brave men only. Cowards cannot stand it, but brave men—ah, they die slowly, gracefully. Within the hour we shall place your bodies over two such plants that are already on their way to reach the sun. They grow remarkably well in the night air also. Perhaps by dawn we may see them protruding just a little from your stomachs."

"Damn you!" Ken cried. "I was wrong when I said you had the makeup of a snake. A reptile is a saint compared to you."

"Thank you," the prince bowed a little. "The compliment is supreme. I shall entrust it to my new servant tonight. While you suffer the agonies of death, I shall try in my humble way to amuse His Serenity.

Possibly he needs a little persuasion to learn he must obey my commands."

He clapped his hands. The tent filled instantly. Men bound Ken and Dopey again. Then they sought Slim and paused in sudden fear and consternation.

The prince sprang to his feet.

"He has escaped!" he cried. "Fools! Pigs! Take these men outside. Place them as I ordered today and leave them there. Pick up the tents at once! Two of you remain to guard these two whites. The rest make preparations for immediate travel. We shall go deeper into Nepal. The British will not arrive for hours yet and we shall be safe by then. Leave the carcasses of these two for their enterprising friend to find. It is sad that I didn't slit his head open with that sword."

Ken and Dopey were hurried to a tiny oasis in the sand. There were two small twigs growing five feet apart. Stakes had been driven into the ground and Ken and Dopey were expertly pinioned to these. Ken could feel the hard stump of the bush beneath his back. It had grown slightly during the day.

By morning it would have impaled his body.

THE thongs that tied his hands and feet to the stakes were of hide, and the soldiers poured water on them in copious quantities. With the heat of the morning sun they would constrict and bring the body down harder on the growing plant. It was an agonizing death planned by a crafty mind.

Sprawled out, arms and legs pulled tight, Ken looked up to the sky. He could twist his head only a little, for sand had been banked on either side of his cheeks. With the dawn a blazing sun would drive him mad in two hours. He hoped the sun would be early.

CHAPTER IX

The End of a Living God



FEET stood over Ken, and a faint cry caused him to open his eyes. He looked into the fear-stricken eyes of the Living God. The boy tried to bend down close to him, only to be jerked roughly to his feet by the smiling prince.

"It is too bad," he looked down at Ken, "that you cannot be with me tonight. There is to be a mighty banquet to celebrate my success. The Living God shall amuse us. I have been thinking that he may try to escape, but with only one leg he may not be so successful."

The boy screamed. He didn't understand the prince, but he caught the significance of his words at the look of horror which spread over Ken's face. The prince dragged him toward his horse.

The gallop of a thousand hoofs, dust that settled down over the faces of the two white men, announced the departure of the troops. Above the bound men stood two soldiers. They grinned unpleasantly down into the captives' faces. "How much to finish it—quick?" Ken asked.

"But the *sahib* has no money," one of them retorted, "and the Prince Singe Ripa is all-powerful. He would give me your bed to lie on if I did not let you suffer as he has planned."

Ken closed his eyes wearily. Was it all to end like this?

"Hey, Ken," Dopey called weakly. "There's a pricker in my back. How's yours?"

"Like a down mattress," Ken replied and tried to laugh, but it was a distinct flop.

A shot shattered the stillness.

Then another. Something fell on Ken's face, smothered him. A moment and it was yanked off. He looked up at the bloody face of Slim. "Got here in time, huh?" Slim said.

HE whipped a sharp knife from his belt and slashed the bonds. Then he went to Dopey, and in a moment the two men stood, chafing their wrists and stamping their feet to restore the circulation. Ken looked behind him and saw the shadowy figures of a great group of mounted men who had come up with the silence of ghosts.

"Where the devil did you dig up the army?" Ken asked.

"Them?" Slim grinned, but his face contorted in pain at the attempt. "That's the army we left in Tibet. I faked being unconscious in that tent, slipped out and corraled a mighty fine horse. He came nice and quiet. We slipped out of the camp, and in an hour I found our Tibetan army. It took a lot of arm swinging to make 'em understand that their Living God was in danger, but once they got the idea, how they did come."

"Thank God for cowboys who know horses!" Dopey said fervently.

"And for cowboys who can show up in the nick of time," Ken added.

He thought rapidly for a moment.

"Those Tibetans can wipe out that Hindu gang in five minutes if we can surprise 'em," he said. "Dopey and I will go ahead. We'll try to grab the prince. Without him the rest of his men won't know what to do or how to do it. Wait ten minutes and then follow. Got a couple of horses?"

Slim had. Ken and Dopey trotted briskly after the horde of men who had left them to die. In Ken's heart was a bitter longing for revenge.

They found the army of the prince encamped an hour's ride away. The

trail had been simple to follow, and Singe Ripa had never figured on the Tibetan army coming to the rescue of their god. They dismounted and left their horses to graze in one of the many small oases that dotted the land.

Quietly as the ghosts they had almost been, they slipped toward the huge tent which had been the prince's. There were sounds of merriment coming from it. The banquet was already in progress. Ken motioned for Dopey to go down on all fours.

They circled the tent and lifted a rear flap. A cook sat there, half drunk from a goblet of wine. Dopey put him to sleep with a single stroke of a gun with which Slim had provided him.

Kent went ahead, peered into the tent, and his lower lip came down in a scowl that bespoke no good for Prince Singe Ripa. He lunged into the main part of the tent.

THERE the prince was instructing his new servant roughly. The boy's cries, as he struggled bravely but futilely, only amused the prince the more. Ken saw that the robes he wore in Tibet had been taken from him and he had been clothed in the scanty garments of a servant.

At the interruption, the prince turned a furious face toward Ken, but his expression changed to one of mingled fear and disbelief. Ken lunged forward. There were guards pouring into the tent, but he paid them no attention. Vaguely he heard Dopey's gun bark, and men went down.

Outside bedlam had broken loose. Rifles were in action, and the screams of dying men reached Ken's ears. He had the prince on the ground. One knee plunged into the potentate's stomach, and he began to send his fist in mighty crashes to the face. Two minutes of this, and

the suave countenance of the prince was changed to gore and open flesh.

But Singe Ripa was no weakling. His two hands came slowly and steadily upward, blindly seeking Ken's eyes. Hindus were adept at the art of gouging. If those thumbs ever reached his eyes, Ken would never see again.

BUT he didn't care! Only cold rage possessed him; his fist went backward and forward like a trip-hammer. The creeping thumbs paused. Nails tore at Ken's cheeks and laid them open. Ken drew back a little. He grunted once as the prince got his leg up and kicked him cruelly in the stomach.

The blow paralyzed his muscles for a moment, and in that precious instant Singe Ripa took his advantage. His thumbs pressed against Ken's eyeballs. The pain made Ken scream aloud. He tried to get his head out of the grasp of the prince's knees, but the prince had the advantage now. Ken felt limp.

Suddenly the form of Singe Ripa swayed drunkenly. There came a thud, and the prince rolled to one side. Ken arose and looked stupidly at the Living God.

The boy, face crimson in excitement, blue eyes shining with the sensation of danger he had experienced, was swinging a chair upward for another blow. He looked at Ken and smiled thinly. The chair came down as Singe Ripa tried to struggle to his feet again. This time the prince went down again and stayed there. "Good boy!" Ken patted him on the shoulder. "You saved my life that time."

"That is nothing," the boy answered in his slow Tibetan, "you have saved mine also. This lowly person was to have amputated my leg tonight so that I might not escape from him. He planned it as

an amusement for his men and for his harem."

"Louse!" Ken yanked the sodden form of the Hindu into a sitting position. "We'll cart him back to Darjeeling. There'll be some people mighty glad to see him again—and a few that'll be mighty sorry. He sure wasn't locked up too tightly."

The screams and shots outside grew faint. Ken listened.

"You'd better go out and dismiss your soldiers," he told the Living God. They saved us and you too, but they'll expect you to return with them."

"Never," the boy replied and looked at Ken with glistening eyes. "I shall remain with you. Soon I shall learn the language of your two friends. I have been almost a prisoner in Lhasa. There is much for me to see—much for me to do."

He walked with regal air, into the open. The multitude of Tibetan soldiers raised a great cheer. Slowly he raised his hands and blessed them. Then, with a careful speech, he told them to return to Tibet. That he, too, would return before many months in the form of a child. The troops mounted silently and moved away.

Ken stood watching him. At his side, Dopey furrowed his brow. Slim was doctoring his slashed face.

"He wants to come with us," Ken said softly. "He's got the same blood we have. But it's not for him. He'll be a lord or something in England. For us it's the long trail again."

"Say," Slim paused with the roll of bandage in his hand, "I never did like those bandits of Tibet. How about going back and cleaning up a few of 'em?"

Ken was startled. He regarded Slim for a moment and then stroked his chin gently. Dopey was grinning broadly.

It was an idea!

WHITE GOLD



Pierre's hand was poised for a knife throw

Al Crane, Trekker of the Snow Wastes, Comes to Grips with a Murderous Fur Thief in this Breath-Taking Story of Northland Vengeance!

By HAROLD F. CRUICKSHANK

Author of "Night Eagle," "Von Satan's Lair," etc.

STORM fiends screamed down across the sub-Arctic Barrenlands, whipping hard, powdered snow in stinging sheets before the blow.

Behind a wind-swept boulder, huddled with his back to the wind, sat Al Crane, young trapper, trekker of the far-flung snow wastes.

For two days this merciless nor'easter had howled its death dirge, making trapping a physical impos-

sibility. In such a gale as this, no game ventured; not even the sleek-bellied grey wolf. The North was dead, and the storm fiends shrieked a requiem.

Alan Crane enjoyed a good blistering nor'easter. He liked to pit his iron young frame against the North elements.

For his twenty years, he was tall, a shade over six feet tall and well-muscled. He could take the

Barrens' jolts and like them. He was a true son of the North.

But this two days' gale had begun to sap at his every ounce of reserve fortitude. He was hungry; and you can't go hungry and expect red blood to combat sub-zero weather on the trap lines. Nature had shut in the caribou, ptarmigan and every source of food.

It was an effort to grin, but Al forced his lips apart as he began to flail his arms, compelling his blood to circulate. There was a clean, determined light in his steel-grey eyes, a light which told of optimism. Sooner or later this blow would cease.

Then from beneath this vast mantle of snow would emerge the gold he sought. Not yellow gold, but white—the sterling white fur pelts of Barrenlands foxes.

He jerked off a set of bearskin mittens and blew hard on his numbed hands.

"You—got to stick it," he told himself.

Now his eyes narrowed to mere slits. He seemed to stare out to a void of nothingness beyond the heartless snow wastes and, as he continued to gaze thus, his teeth gritted hard.

D**DAN CRANE**, Al's dad, had for seventeen years been post factor in the North. Suddenly he had been advised that his services were no longer required. At fifty-five he was forced out on to the snowplains to seek a living on the traplines. There had been a shortage in the company's books.

As he reflected, Al's eyes become fogged by a lachrymose mist. No one could convince him that his dad had ever had a dishonest streak in him. The post assistant—Larue, a much younger man—looked after the books. Dan Crane had trusted him. Actually those books were Crane's

responsibility; but you learned to trust men in the North country.

Dan hadn't squealed. He had taken his dismissal like the big Northman he was.

"We'll make a fresh start an' dig our gold up out of the snow, son," he had said to Al. "You an' me'll be pardners—fifty-fifty. We got young Harry to care for. Don't let on anything about this book shortage. We'll move him back to the Ptarmigan Lake cabin. He can dress the pelts. Reckon his mother would be glad if she knew we was takin' good care of Harry."

H**HARRY CRANE** was Al's young brother, from whom the bitter North had stolen the proper use of his legs. Though not completely helpless, Harry Crane was not able to get about. He was confined, more or less, to the warmth of the cabin.

Cheerfully he dressed the pelts his dad and brother brought in. He cooked for them while they were at the base camp. They cut his wood and saw that he was well supplied with grub.

Occasionally, Al snowshoed over to the Police Post for reading matter—old magazines and an odd book to keep Harry company.

There were clean, dry socks for the trappers when they came in. Furs were properly dressed, graded and baled. Every fourth night there was a lamp in the window. For on this night either Al or his dad toted in a sled load of pelts or fresh meat.

Suddenly a dull, blurred object moved out into the open. Instantly Al's Winchester jerked up. He hooked his finger round the trigger, and took in the first pull. But the swirling wind blasted sleeting snow powder into his eyes.

Right now, a caribou was worth a lot of fox pelts. Fresh meat was wanted. The big snows had housed

up all game, and Al knew that Harry, back at the Ptarmigan Lake cabin would be going hungry.

The young trapper moved out to the right. He jerked his rifle up quickly. He had his sights lined on that object some two hundred yards ahead. His finger hooked over the trigger. But—the dark object suddenly staggered, and pitched to the snow.

A WAVE of nausea surged through young Crane's body. For a moment he could only stand and stare. That moving creature had been a man, not a caribou; and Al had almost pulled his trigger.

With a sharp cry, Al hurled himself into the teeth of the storm, his rackets kicking up clouds of dry powdered snow; and then— He stopped dead in his tracks. Lying face down in the snow, was Dan Crane.

Al rolled his dad over, and slipped an arm beneath the older man's lolling head.

"It's you—Al. I'm done. You'll trek him down, son. Got me, an' the pelts. You'd better mush back to Ptarmigan cabin. Young—Harry—he's alone."

"Who, Dad—who got you? Speak," gulped Al, holding the drooping head up closer to his face.

"Couldn't—say—sure, Al. Heard him at my cache. Dark—I was about to shoot. He swung—got me. Harry—Al. You'll see him through, huh?"

Al Crane made no reply. His dad's body had dropped limp in his arms; and now the storm devils of the Northland screamed their mockery.

Then Al's composure suddenly broke. He pulled himself erect and stripped his teeth bare as he snarled like some animal at bay.

Young Harry, the cripple, was alone at Ptarmigan Lake. The cabin was a storehouse for hundreds of dollars' worth of white fox pelts.

The man who had shot down Dan Crane would be looking for those pelts—for that white gold. Al swung on his snowshoes and shot back to his hand sled.

Back at his father's dead body he paused. To tote in the body over miles of unbroken trail would be slow going; too slow, and hazardous. Al was hungry too, and not in shape for such a haul. But, to leave his father's body out on the drear barrens would be to invite wolves and carrion.

The youngster gulped. His predicament now called on all his resourcefulness. He must get to Ptarmigan Lake as quickly as possible. Harry had been Dan Crane's last thought.

Al began to tear into the snow with a snowshoe for shovel. Wheezing, as the biting cold bore down to his lungs, half blinded with sentiment and the slap of driven wind, he battled hard to scrape a trench in which to place his father's remains. Then he kicked his feet back into the rackets and trotted his sled back for a load of rocks.

In an hour, he looked mistily back on a small cairn. He gulped hard, as he struggled to regain a hold on his nerve fibers.

"I'll be—back for you—Dad," he gritted. Then, head down into the storm, he began to trot, his heart pounding madly in a maelstrom of thoughts.

AT the small log cabin close to the shores of Ptarmigan Lake, a slender youngster dragged his body up to the wood box. His eyes slitted as he looked down at the small supply of split, dry tamarack.

"Wonder what held Dad up?" he breathed. "It'll be colder when this blow dies down. Somethin' must have happened."

He let a block of wood drop back into the woodbox, and dragged his

form over to a bunk, where he pulled down a fur-lined parka.

Harry was wisely conserving his wood supply. He knew that with the dying of the nor'easter, the weather would settle into a steady period of well below zero cold. Maybe forty below, or more, for days. He preferred to dress more heavily in the cabin, and hang on to those few remaining blocks of tamarack.

He had placed the lamp in the window, as was customary on the early eve of every fourth night. It had been burning now for upward of three hours; and as those hours dragged on, Harry Crane's spirits had begun to droop.

He shuddered with the cold now, and began to whale his body with flailing arms. But his efforts became more and more feeble. Reluctantly he dragged himself to the woodbox, and drew out a block for the small heater.

He thrust this on to the dying embers of the fire, and left the draughts closed. He couldn't afford to let the bitter wind whip all the heat up the chimney pipe. He'd have to hunch himself over the stove, squeezing out what heat he could.

SUDDENLY he cocked up his head. Above the hissing of powdered snow against the cabin walls, he had caught a new sound. There was no mistaking it—it was the long drawn hissing whine of sled runners close in. At once, the cripple opened the heater draughts and tossed in a couple more blocks of wood.

"You'll be most nigh froze, Dad," he gulped, as he shoved a coffee pot on to a spot on the heater top which always got red first.

And then he heard a long drawn "Whoa!" from outdoors. His heart seemed to miss a beat. Neither Dan nor Al Crane had ever used dogs on the trapline. Here was somebody with a dog outfit.

The cabin door opened. Harry Crane shrank back as his large, frightened eyes stared into the bearded face of Pierre Larue, the French assistant to Dan Crane when Crane was factor at Fort Reliance Post. Harry Crane had never liked or trusted this man. Once, Larue had kicked him hard.

"Ah, so—ze leetle cripple is all alone, *non?*" Pierre advanced toward the stove.

HE reached out a hand and swept Harry's frail body to the floor, away from the gathering tamarack heat.

Harry picked himself up, and began to crawl slowly toward his bunk, but a snarl from the Frenchman arrested him.

"Keep 'way from zat bunk. Where ze grub—ze bacon? I'm mos' froze up, an' on'gry—*nom de Dieu!*"

"There's no bacon left, Pierre," Harry replied. "We're most out of grub of any kind. Dad'll be in to-night with some caribou, I reckon."

"Aha—so he will, eh?"

A coarse chuckle escaped the newcomer, as he slouched over to a grub box. The coffee was bubbling out of the spout now, and Pierre Larue grabbed up a tin cup and poured himself a drink. He wolfed a hunk of bannock, washing it down with mouthfuls of scorching hot liquid.

"Now you bettaire get ze white gol' 'Aree," he growled, as he lit a cigarette. "Those nice white fox pelt you dress so *chic*. 'Urry, I mus' leave at once."

"But, Pierre, you can't take the fur. You don't mean you intend to steal our fur!"

"Steal! *Tonnerre!* Keep track on your tongue, or I stop 'im for long time. Get out ze pelts, an' mak' it queek, or I give you taste of ze dog wheep."

"Pierre, I can't. Al and Dad have left them in my charge. They're the

best fox pelts in the North, and we intended to make a sale inside of a month. You shan't touch a single pelt."

"Oh-h, *non*." A foul oath escaped Larue's thick lips.

He hurled himself on the boy and shook him with the ease with which a dog might shake a small rat. Then he flung the helpless shape from him. Harry Crane dropped hard to the split log floor and lay still, blood oozing from a nasty cut over his left eyebrow.

Now Pierre moved swiftly. He found the fur cache beneath the floor, under one of the bunks. He drew out pelt bale after pelt bale, and ran his hands gloatingly through the rich fox fur.

"Over one t'ousen' dollar," he chuckled. "I mak' for ze outside, an' have one big tam'. I—"

He had been so occupied with his stolen goods that he had failed to notice Harry Crane.

The crippled boy had come around, and was now stealthily dragging his bruised shape to a corner. His hand reached out and closed over the handle of an axe.

WITH a half-scream of rage, the cripple struck, but his cry had given Pierre that split second's warning which often saves a man's life.

The Frenchman hurled himself to one side, then turned, as the axe clattered to the floor. With a snarl that showed up his brutality at its animal-like worst, Larue sprang in. And when he had finished with Harry Crane, there was scarcely a beat left in that feeble pulse.

With a coarse chuckle, as he filled a small sack with bannock and beans, Pierre Larue gloated over his work.

He swiftly loaded his sled with his stolen pelts, and cracked his caribou-hide lash over the lead dog's head. In a flurry of powdered snow, he vanished from sight.

"Harry—Harry!

Al Crane stood at the open doorway of the Ptarmigan Lake cabin. He stared into the dark interior, gulping back a lump which threatened to clog his throat. He even dreaded to hear the sound of his own voice.

Long ago, the lantern had burned itself out in the window. The cabin was cold, and starkly desolate.

A low moan brought Al Crane back to full sensibility. He sprang to a second lantern hanging on the wall, and with half-frozen fingers struck a light.

AS the first beams shot through the frosty night fog which filled the cabin, Al saw his young crippled brother. His first act was to dash outdoors for snow. Harry's cheeks and hands were frost-bitten.

For upward of twenty minutes Al applied snow and massage gently to the frosted members, then he laid the limp shape on a bunk and covered it with blankets.

Al realized that action would count, if he were to restore Harry to consciousness. He forgot for the moment his own frost-bites and that clinging, gnawing feeling in the pit of the stomach which denoted intense hunger and fatigue. He needed wood, and hot water.

Stifling a groan, he picked up the axe, and hurled himself outdoors.

The steady chopping for fifteen minutes sent the red blood coursing through his veins again. But it also weakened him. He found difficulty in breathing against that terribly cold atmosphere.

Indoors, Al dumped a big armload of wood. He jerked open the heater top, and began to pile wood on the started fire.

Then he stripped back the blankets. His lips tightened as he glimpsed his brother's pain-wracked features.

"Somebody's manhandled you bad, kid," he murmured. "But lie still;

soon's I get hot water, I'll wash them cuts an' get you all smeared with salve."

Al's voice seemed to echo hollowly in the cabin. He moved over to the grub box, biting back a pent-up desire to give way to his inner feelings.

At the grub box he started back. It was pitifully empty. A few beans, frozen solid, and some equally solid bannock chunks were all that remained.

The young trapper fished around and found a partly used package of black tea. Water was beginning to sputter in a pot on the stove.

"Al—Al—" The voice was scarcely audible, but Al heard.

He darted to the bunkside, and gathered the wasted, battered form of the cripple into his strong arms.

"It's you—Al— I was expecting—Dad—Pierre Larue—stole pelts—tried to stop him—and he knocked—me around."

His head fell back limply. Al dropped his ear to Harry's chest, and then slowly lowered the body back into the bunk. There was a strange color in his brother's face, and a grim stillness in the supine figure.

"Dead! My God!" he gasped.

Then even his stout Northern spirit weakened. The double shock of two deaths, and the strain he had undergone in the past several hours, was too much. He sagged down across his brother's still form.

AL CRANE raised his throbbing head from the bunk. He stared blankly into space. All the kin he had in the world had been snatched quickly from him—brutally from him. His whole being ached with an oppressive, smothering sense of complete loneliness.

But, another force was percolating within him. The picture of Pierre Larue loomed up before him. His

virile body began to straighten. That force which becomes a part of all he-men on the frontiers, or elsewhere in similar circumstances, began to take possession of his mind.

Vengeance! Al Crane began to map out a swift plan. He must take the vengeance trail at once, or at least with the coming of dawn. He would leave a note on the table, in case the Mounted Police Corporal from Reliance Post should happen along with reading matter for Harry.

"**P**IERRE LARUE, I'm coming for you," Al hissed. "You won't get far in this blizzard; not without dog feed, and grub for yourself. You'll be forced to den up some place on the out trail.

"If I can scrape up enough flour and beans for one or two days' run, I'll get you. God! I hate to think of killing, but—Dad—Harry!"

Al reached over and jerked the teapot to him. He had squared his shoulders. Sentiment had taken possession of his will for a time, but now that spirit inbred in him—the heritage of Northern forebears, had begun to revolt, to surge through him with the force of a spring freshet.

With the first drear greys of early dawn he would kick his moccasined feet into his snowshoes and take the killer's trail.

Out in the night all had not gone well with Pierre Larue. In the first seven hours out from Ptarmigan Lake, his dogs had commenced to falter. An ordinary musher of the long white trails would have called a halt, fed his team and let them dig in beneath the snow until the storm abated.

But Pierre Larue was no ordinary musher. He had killed, and he had beaten. He was a thief, fleeing the country.

It was one thing to think of fleeing the Northland; another thing to

make flight in a storm of the proportions of the present one.

Dogs knew the ways of good drivers. This stolen team of Larue's knew that they should not, by rights, be expected to leap into the collar and pull, in such a storm as this. As well, they had not been fed. Their fur was cut by much application of the long caribou-hide lash.

So it was that the leader sank down in the snow and refused to budge. Larue flailed with the double lash; he hammered with the stock until the poor husky moaned with pain. But the team was stalled.

Larue was forced to make camp. He dragged the limp leader to the cover of a scrub spruce, and whipped the harness off all dogs. With a few odd twigs he made fire, and began to brew a pot of coffee.

The dogs, instead of bedding down beneath the snow, sat on their haunches, shivering brutes, whimpering, begging, and threatening.

But, not until he had washed down bannock with steaming coffee, did Pierre Larue begin to understand the ways of the dogs.

Dog food! He had forgotten that such a thing was as necessary as food for himself. *Tonnerre!* He dragged himself through the storm to the sled.

A SNARL broke from his lips as he glimpsed a grey dog leap away, the part of a torn fox pelt bale in his fangs. Almost at once the team entered into a free-for-all fight for possession of the torn pelts, ravenously snatching and tearing at the thin hides which they gulped into their starving bellies.

Pierre Larue saw at least a fifth of his stolen white gold disappear in such fashion before he had clubbed the snarling dog pack off.

Then he lashed a tarp securely about the sled and, picking up his rifle, he moved into the small patch

of indifferent timber, in a search for firewood.

He was rewarded with a scant armful of dry willow knobs; and the deadly storm shrieked its further mockery as the killer sat hunched above his meager fire.

But Pierre Larue was the warped son of those early Northland voyagers who plied their paddles against the white waters on the fur brigades in the early days. He was strong of body, and filled with a grim determination to make the Outside with his ill-gotten cargo of furs.

HE stared greedily into the firelight, seeing in the diminishing flames the future he had planned for himself.

It was the sudden long, resonant wail of a wolf pack leader which brought Larue back to his normal state with a start. A husky whimpered nearby.

The dogs had partially dug themselves in, their hungry bellies less uncomfortable now since they had wolfed part of the fox pelt bale. Still, they were restless, uneasy; and they could tell by that wail of the grey wolf that the marauder of the wild trails and his pack would be starving in this storm.

There was no game abroad; not even a single snowshoe rabbit apiece. They thirsted for blood; and the scent of blood had reached them.

O-O-O-O-OW-w-w-w-o-o-o-o!

Pierre sat bolt upright and fingered his pack. An answering call, long and piercing, had come down wind. The pack was collecting.

Larue was wise enough in the ways of the wild north creatures to know that they had picked up his scent, and the scent of the blood of the lead dog he had beaten so badly.

An icy finger traced up and down the man killer's spine. He clutched his rifle hard in fingers which had become suddenly numbed, and in his

bearded throat he made a soft clucking noise.

Pierre Larue had killed a man, and possibly a boy. He knew this, and had gloated. Many deaths now stared him in the face, and he cringed, shrinking within himself. He feared the grey wolf pack.

Pierre Larue struck hard at one of the dogs which had bellied up to his elbow, a whimpering cross-bred cur, who in other circumstances would have taken keen delight in ripping the jugular of this man who drove but never fed his team.

Stealthy shapes now began to make an appearance out on the snow-plain. The huskies were now up, the hair on their backs bristling. They moved stiff-legged, whimpering, fearful of the grey menace which hovered in a half circle about the camp.

Silently the wolf pack closed in. They had bellied down, to creep nearer and nearer the camp site, sneaking in like wraiths, their fangs bared and dripping slime.

Suddenly Larue's Winchester jerked up. He fired. A chuckle escaped him as he heard his bullet sog into the flesh and bone.

At once the grey pack leaped to action.

BEDLAM shattered the night, as they rushed a she-wolf whose back had been broken. Between them, they dragged the half-dead form clear of Larue's vision, and soon the night became hideous with their blood-chilling snarls, as they ripped the wounded she to bits.

"Devils!" growled Larue. "*Mon Dieu!* I mus' be ver' careful."

He got up and moved back to the sled. It was the one spot which offered partial cover. His fire was almost dead, and there was no more wood in the immediate vicinity.

A husky suddenly snarled and leaped forward. Half-wolf itself, the sled dog had smelled blood. The pack

had circled to the southeast and once more had commenced to belly in on the camp from the rear.

A lean grey form, powerful and wiry, hurled upward from the snow, striking with terrible fangs as the husky attacked.

The big grey-black dog went down, ripped fore and aft. But the wolf blood in him brought him back into action. With a throaty snarl he side-swiped the wolf leader, tearing out the flesh at the wolf's shoulder.

THEY rolled, kicking up a cloud of powderlike snow. The wolf leader came clear and struck upward with massive head. His enemy was bowled over, and in a flash a lean she-wolf leaped in to sink her fangs into the dog's throat. And then a mass of grey hurled itself into the fray.

Pierre Larue watched through slitted, red-rimmed eyes. He brought the Winchester to his shoulder time and again, but the blurred, milling bodies offered no target.

His dog was done, now nothing more than a skeleton. Fate was beginning to play the cards against Larue.

Larue whimpered half-hysterically. Clutching his rifle hard, he moved away from his sled and began to throw lead. But his fire was random, useless.

Their appetite whetted with red blood, warm and tantalizing, the grey wolf pack began now to hunt in earnest, with all the wily stratagem of their kind.

Another dog, half crazed, leaped out to attack. It fell before it could make a single stroke.

Pierre Larue stamped his feet and flailed his body, exciting circulation. The keen lash of the wind was biting hard into his flesh now, and that great bluster which had held to him in the past had suddenly seemed to flit away.

He moved fitfully, nervously from

spot to spot, firing as he caught a blurred shape in his vision.

With another dog devoured, the wolf pack slunk back to lick their bloody chops. They played their game with patience. Cowards at heart, they never rushed boldly into danger, but preferred to belly in like snakes, then make a swift dash and out again.

Suddenly the wind died. It fell away so swiftly that the silence it left was awesome. The sky was clearing, bringing one of those open starlit nights which attend a period of terrible sub-zero weather.

A faint lemon streamer hung down from the sky, to flutter like some soft piece of lace; and then, as the clouds disappeared, other phantom-like shapes began to writhe in the sky. Yellows, oranges, purples, a sweeping, gliding, fluttering phantasmagoria. The Northern Lights had swept in to light the grim scene.

And now the wolf pack was plainly revealed in the sweeping train of the Aurora. To Pierre Larue, whose mind was half-crazed with fear, the scene resembled some picture from a weird tale. He was amidst death—encircled by killers whose bodies seemed phosphorescent in the glow of the multi-colored sky lights.

THE faintest hiss of snow at his back brought him round with a yell. He had no time to fire. A grey shape was in on him, and the man struck hard with the barrel of his Winchester. A dog leaped past him and struck with fangs that thirsted for blood.

As he rocked back, Larue breathed hard. One of the dogs he had clubbed had saved his life. But that dog paid with its own.

Larue grabbed an axe from the sled, and posted himself with his back against the fur bales. He felt in his pocket for more shells, and swore bitterly as his fingers closed

on but three. He had two still in the rifle magazine—five in all.

His dogs were gone. He had little or no food, save some coffee and a small piece of frozen bannock. At his back were several hundred dollars in white gold. That, too, seemed a mockery now.

The grim wolf cordon was bellying in once more. Pierre Larue licked his dried lips. An animal-like snarl broke from those lips now. He picked out a wolf and fired.

BUT the pack was thirsty for blood. Dawn was creeping in. Soon they would be forced to disperse. They must kill and feast while there was a half hour of night left.

Crack! Crack! It was lucky for Pierre that three wolves leaping in pack formation offered a target. He dropped one, and this was dragged away.

He had but two shells left. He swung at a swishing of the snow. The wolves were getting bolder and bolder. It was now the dead body of the lead dog Larue had previously beaten that attracted them.

The man sprang clear, and seized his axe as he leaped. He struck hard at a she-wolf, who continued the leap with the axe buried in her skull.

At bay, Pierre emptied his rifle, then flailed the air, yelling frantically. Half his parka was torn away on one side. He stared right into the jaws of death.

But with a suddenness that was awe-inspiring the wolf pack leaped back. At a whimper from their leader they broke into a hard run.

As he watched the blurred line melt into the haze beyond, Larue shook his fist. He bulged his chest and roared a throaty laugh.

"By gor! So you got beat, eh?" he boasted. "'Cre nom! Pierre is a great strong man—a fighter. I shall 'ave gran' story for—" He broke off;

he had turned to gloat at the pile of baled furs. He blinked, and his lower jaw dropped. He was staring into the cold round muzzle of Al Crane's Winchester.

For a long moment the young trapper gazed into the bearded face of his father's and brother's killer. He had made a forced run down from Ptarmigan Lake, finding the going comparatively easy, as he followed Larue's trail.

He had known right along that Pierre couldn't get far in that storm with a loaded sled. There is a limit to the endurance of unfed dogs.

But not until the Northern lights had begun to dance in the clear sky had Al known how close he was to the killer's camp. He had glimpsed the bellying shapes of the wolves, and then caught the roar of Pierre's rifle. In the next half hour or so Al Crane had rested—rested and watched.

Then slowly he had edged in. The time had come to cheat the wolves of their man kill. Al wanted Pierre alive. The rifle had ceased to bark, and as the young trapper crested a rise in the snow plain, he saw Larue slashing with the axe.

“OUT of shells!” The thought set the youngster's heart pounding madly. With a loaded rifle, Pierre Larue was a real hazard. Even with his bare hands, the killer had the advantage. He had the advantage of weight, and that brutal instinct which had prompted him to make two killings in a few hours.

And now he faced his father's killer.

“Drop zat rifle, Crane,” rasped Larue. “I shoot from ze hip, an' kill queek.”

For a brief second Al was nonplussed. Was there a chance after all that Pierre wasn't bluffing? Had he hung on to a single live shell? The young trapper wanted no kill-

ing on his own hands. His lone urge was to fight, to beat this Frenchman to unconsciousness, then lash him to the sled and tote him on to Reliance Post and hand him over for trial.

It took guts, real guts, to make Crane's next move. He leaned his Winchester against the fur bales and jerked his hands high.

ACHUCKLE escaped Larue. His bluff had worked! Again, he told himself that Pierre Larue was one smart man, that he had achieved the *coup de grace*.

He moved in now, thick-set body hunched, rifle extended. Not for a single second did Al take his eyes off the killer's hands. He stood poised, at full height, not moving a muscle. A cold thin smile toyed with the corners of his mouth, a smile whose meaning Pierre Larue had failed to fathom.

With a snarl, the killer stepped between Al and the youngster's rifle. Crane never moved an eyelash. Suddenly, Pierre flung his own rifle down, and grabbed at Al's. He swung, the rifle jerking up.

“An' now I fineesh ze Crane family,” Larue growled. “Smart man, Pierre, eh? By gor! I fling you out to ze wolves, an' zen I go on my way wit' ze white gol'. So—you t'ought Pierre one damn fool! You not want to speak, *non?* Too scaire. Well, you won't speak no more, Crane. I'm goin' keel queek. One big joke, *non?*—wit' your own rifle.”

Al Crane heard the cock of the trigger. But he made no move. A hard light shot from his eyes, and the smile had left his face.

Click! Pierre pulled. There was no reverberating roar, however. The hammer had fallen on a dead nothingness.

With a snarl the killer jerked the lever, fearful lest Al might leap while he worked the ejector.

But Al stood like a statue. Pierre snatched the rifle to his shoulder again and pulled.

It was then that Al Crane leaped. He leaped to Larue's fallen rifle, then in, with barrel clubbed. His own rifle had been emptied before he arrived at the camp site, and the shells cached away. He wanted no shooting on his head. He had had guts enough to play his bigger bluff against Larue's.

Pierre rocked back. Utterly dumbfounded at the turn of events, for a moment he was at a loose end. His big play had gone out, uncompleted. This young son of the North had outsmarted him, and now—Al Crane was sweeping in to attack.

He had kicked his feet out of his snowshoes and now danced lightly in moccasined feet in the sled area which was more firmly packed.

Larue lumbered away on his rackets, hoping to kick them off and defend himself, but Al was quicker. Like a grey wolf the trapper rushed.

Larue ducked, and the rifle butt caught him a glancing blow across the shoulders. It dropped him, but like a flash Pierre rolled and, flinging his rifle clear, he grabbed at Al's.

THEY were deadlocked. Suddenly the killer heaved his muscular frame and jerked upward. Al Crane spun over his head to drop face down in the snow. Larue attempted to rise swiftly, but his snowshoes tripped him.

This was a lucky break for Al. It gave him time to recover. He came in again, as Pierre snatched up the Winchester by the barrel. He lunged but Al sidestepped, and as he coasted by his right arm shot up in a savage hook.

Again Larue was rocked back on his heels. The footing was none too good now.

"*Nom d'un chien!*" he growled.

"I'll keel, Crane. By gosh! You can't match Pierre Larue in a fight close in."

But Al had a lot of support—support in the thought of his crippled brother's battered dead form back at the cabin, and in that cold rugged frame of Dan Crane out beneath its rocky cairn.

TO Al's surprise, Pierre dropped the rifle. Quickly the youngster saw a hand flash to the inside of a parka. At once the move registered on a fertile mind: Larue was going after a knife.

Al Crane leaped in, ducked, then stepped to one side. A long knife blade struck down, but Al had lithely rolled off.

He fainted again, working on the guess that Pierre would not use the knife save at close quarters. This time Al darted around the killer's back.

Pierre swung. He overshot and almost pitched to his face. Al was quick to seize an opportunity. He ducked and picked up one of Larue's discarded rackets.

As he swerved to meet an attack by the Frenchman, he gasped. Pierre's hand was poised for a knife throw.

Quick as a flash the young trapper shot the racket before his face and body.

Swish! The heavy stiff blade struck. It cut through the rawhide lacing on the snowshoe—through to Crane's cheek. Blood gushed from the slash.

Pierre spotted this and yelled excitedly as he drove in. But Al Crane was ready, determined. He sidestepped with the racket, then drove over with a hard right fist in a terrific rabbit punch as Larue rocked back. Tossing the snowshoe from him, Crane leaped.

Larue was down—face down, with Crane fastening a body scissors on

him. The heavier man was fighting for his breath, hunching his back, hoping that his last spark of reserve strength would return, so that he could whip round, and then jerk his thumbs into Crane's eye-sockets.

Al could feel a sudden tensing of the body beneath him. He socked a savage right fist into the back of Pierre's neck.

The killer grunted, sagged, but like a flash he rolled, and struck up with moccasined foot. It caught Al squarely in the middle, rocking him off, almost winding him.

Through bleared vision he saw the thick-set frame of the killer rise before him. Pierre Larue was smeared with blood; his face a hideously distorted mask, as his head came down for the rush.

Al Crane knew that he must act decisively in the next few seconds. He didn't want to kill, but now—it was hopeless to think of the fight in any other terms than of a fight to the death.

Pierre Larue could not afford to lose; it would mean, if he did, that his neck would stretch at the Police Post, or in the Outside.

With a roar of rage, he rushed, hurled his heavy frame full on Al before the trapper could sidestep. They went down together.

INSTANTLY Larue's hands flew to the youngster's eye-sockets. The heavy nailed thumbs began to gouge. His thighs were astride Al's stomach, putting pressure against the trapper's breathing.

But Pierre had ignored Al's arms. He hadn't, in his impulsive attack, thought to trap those arms.

Al Crane balled both his hands, and struck up with doubled fists. Pierre's head jolted back. He lost his hold. His thumbs were no longer menacing Crane's eyes.

For a second or so, the killer hung in half-dazed crouch, while a million

lights danced before his vision. As he shook his head to clear it of the fog, those doubled fists socked up again. Pierre went over on his side.

Like a streak of unleashed lightning, Al jerked himself over, then to his knees. As Pierre's body sagged over, he shot two pile driver blows in behind the killer's ear.

Pierre Larue grunted, and thudded face down on the snow, to lie still.

AL CRANE tottered back on his heels. His eyes pained him. He was still losing blood from the gash in his cheek. But he held on to his will.

He struggled back to the sled, and procured lashings. With these raw-hide cords he returned, and lashed Larue's hands behind his back, covering them both with the killer's own mittens.

With but half his vision gone, Al made shift with the dressing of his face wound. Then, seizing the axe, he moved on into the timber. The grey dawn was coming in from the east, a fierce dawn on the tide of a frost fog.

But that fog didn't obscure entirely a band of moving objects which moved like ghosts in the small belt of scrub timber. Al Crane froze in his tracks.

He tightened his eyes, and gently massaged the eyeballs. Opening them he found that his treatment had improved his vision. He repeated the treatment, stooping to gather up snow for a swift, cold compress. Those objects moving in the rolling dawn fog! They sent a surge of hope through Al's body.

"Caribou!" He jerked the exclamation from him, and turned. The slowly flitting deer hadn't seen him. Now he trotted back and picked up his cache of shells, then the rifle.

For a time he dreaded to attempt a sight on that lead buck. His eyes were swimming, smarting, and at

first all was a blur. But he recovered, steadied himself. His rifle rose.

Crack! Crack! Two shots split the quiet of the Northern morning. Pierre Larue awakened at their bellows. He squirmed, cursed, then rolled over on his back, helpless. He had played out his game.

IN less than an hour Al Crane moved up to the killer, who stamped about to keep the circulation up in his chilled limbs. Al carried a rifle now.

"Mush," he jerked, beckoning to the fire, on which bubbled the coffee pot Pierre had stolen.

Pierre Larue squatted at the fire, and humbly accepted strips of hot caribou which Al fed him. There was no coffee for them this morning; Al had used the pot to broil up some caribou tenderloins. These were more nourishing, and both of them needed nourishment — Pierre particularly, for, when they had fed, Al Crane beckoned to the sled.

"Get into harness, Larue," he ordered. "Make a single bad play and I'll shoot you down."

"But, *mon Dieu!* For what is thees harness talk, Crane? Are you craze?"

"Stand up here, and stay put," snarled the youngster.

He dropped a loop of towing thong over Pierre's shoulders, then stepped back to the rear of the sled.

With a flourish he paid out the long caribou-hide dog lash. It cracked threateningly.

"Mush—ya-ah! Mush!" bellowed the trapper. "Get goin', Larue, or I'll cut an ear off'n you. Now you'll get a taste of what you gave those stolen dogs. I'll drive you till you drop dead. And you might as well drop dead in this way as drop through the trap of a gallows. Mush — Ya-ah!"

Pierre Larue snarling, weeping with rage, bent his head and heaved his big shoulders. At the back, Al Crane heaved on a gee pole and set the sled in motion.

It was more than ten hours later that the killer tottered up to the cabin wall at Ptarmigan Lake. The cabin door opened, and a police corporal stepped out to stare, incredulously.

"Well, I'll be the cock-eyed son of a—huh! You got him, Al—got him all by yourself. I just got here, and was about to leave, and pick up your trail. Boy, oh, man! Say—do you want to join the Mounted? I'll put in a pretty hefty recommendation, son. I'm serious. Do you?"

"Naw, Corporal," Al grunted. "I'm not cut out for this job of man-trackin'. Besides, it's too hard on the eyes, an' the knuckles. Cripes! That guy's chin's hard. Better take him over. I got to—got to bury Dad and young Harry."

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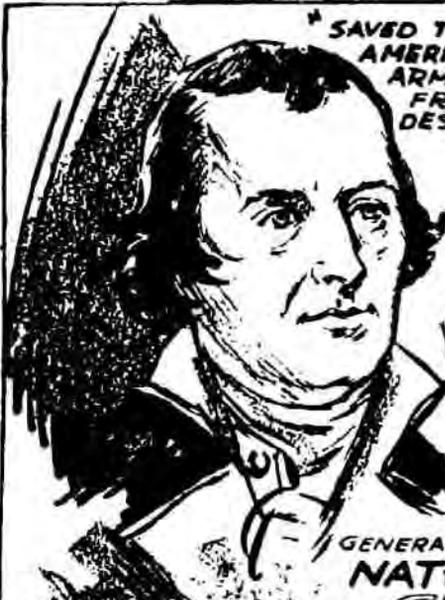
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"AFRICA"

IS THE SINGLE WORD EPITAPH ON THE GRAVE STONE OF

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JEAN

BOROTRA

-FAMOUS FRENCH TENNIS STAR WON A CROIX DE GUERRE IN THE WORLD WAR WHEN HE WAS BUT SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD

**"HERO OF A DOZEN
REVOLUTIONS"**



**COLONEL
DEAN LAMB**

- VETERAN OF MANY WARS, WAS A MAJOR COMMANDING MACHINE GUNNERS IN A CENTRAL AMERICAN REBELLION WHEN HE WAS ONLY 21 YEARS OF AGE.

AS A SAILOR, SOLDIER, POLICEMAN, WAR-ACE PILOT AND COWBOY, COLONEL LAMB'S QUEST FOR ADVENTURE HAS LED HIM TO THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE WORLD.

DURING ONE SOUTH AMERICAN REVOLUTION FIVE ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO ASSASSINATE COLONEL LAMB.

**SAHARA, THE VAST
DESERT REGION OF NORTH
AFRICA, HAS THE SURPRISING
POPULATION NUMBERING
OVER A MILLION PEOPLE
LIVING WITHIN ITS
SUN-BAKED
TERRITORY!**



**DURING
THE PAST THIRTY
CENTURIES SICILY,
THE MEDITERRANEAN
ISLAND, HAS BEEN INVADIED,
CONQUERED AND GOVERNED
BY 15 DIFFERENT NATIONS!**



**CAPT.
DIDIER LE
COUR-
GRANDMAISON**

- DURING THE WORLD WAR,
- WAS THE ONLY ACE OF THE THREE
SEATERS. THIS DARING FRENCH SKY-
FIGHTER, FLYING LUMBERING BI-
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"FOUGHT-IT-OUT" WITH FAST
PURSUIT PLANES AND SHOT
DOWN FIFTEEN ENEMY
ONE SEATERS

*A Complete Novelette
of Breathless Peril
In a Forbidden City!*

The BLUE



CHAPTER I

"Le Roi est Mort—Vive le Roi!"

PETER LOGAN stood alone on the gate-tower of Tiznit. He looked out over the shimmering sand-waves of the desert to the south, all silvery beneath the splendid African moon. A peaceful, even a beautiful scene: yet, to Logan, one charged with hidden menace.

"Out of the south comes war!" It was a proverb in Morocco, and it was a true one. Out there in that

desert, the Blue Sultan, the dread Merebbi Rebo, gathered his warriors in his holy city of Kerdous and prepared to strike the mighty blow against the power of France which had been so long preparing.

And the renegade Prussian officer who called himself Friedrich Barbarossa, ever at the Sultan's side, organizing, waiting for the moment when his terrible plans might come to their fulfillment in blood and fire.

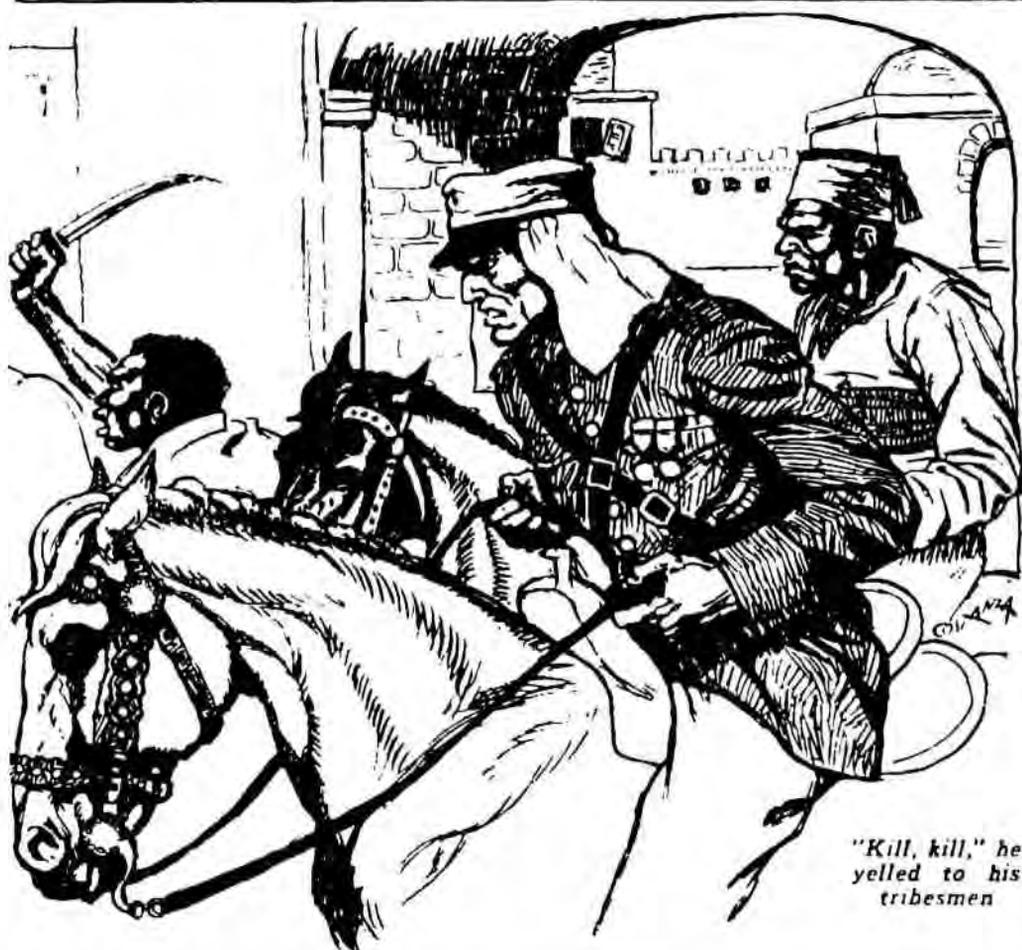
Friedrich Barbarossa—Frederick of the Red Beard—

Captain Logan of the Foreign Legion Challenges the

SULTAN

By MAJOR GEORGE
FIELDING ELIOT

Author of "Wings of Steel," etc.



"Kill, kill," he
yelled to his
tribesmen

For two years Captain Peter Logan of the Foreign Legion had been senior Intelligence Officer on this frontier. For two years he had matched his wits against those of the red-bearded renegade who was the heart and soul and brain of the Blue Sultan's gathering war-storm.

"God!" muttered Logan. "If I could meet him face to face, man to man--"

Behind him, a Tirailleur sentry paced up and down the gallery; below, a patrol of Spahis was just dis-

mounting outside the gate after their hourly circuit of the walls. Eternal vigilance was the price of life in this, the last outpost of France on the edge of the Blue Sultan's dominions. Beyond, the desert was nominally under the rule of Spain, actually under that of Merebbi Rebo, for the Spaniards cowered in their coast forts and never dared send man or horse into that vast unknown interior.

Logan swore rumblingly beneath his breath. He knew that the blow

Power of the Fiendish Prussian Renegade, Barbarossa!

was about to fall; he knew and was powerless to prevent it. It was maddening.

Suddenly he straightened. Out there in the shimmering moon-rays something moved—a horseman! A horseman who rode hell-for-leather down the moon's path across the sands, rode for Tiznit as though death snapped at his heels.

Behind him came another, who closed the gap between them relentlessly. Death rode indeed on the track of the leading man, for the silver light flickered on bared steel in the hands of the pursuer.

"*Alerte!*" yelled Logan, plunging down the narrow stone stairs two at a time and leaping out through the little postern, which stood open. "Guards turns out! Follow me, Spahis!"

He flung himself into the saddle of the nearest horse and drove home his spurs. The beast leaped forward. Logan's right hand loosed his holster-flap and drew the heavy automatic—but even as he did so, he saw that he would be too late.

The horse of the leading rider was faltering in its stride; now it stumbled, and with a deep shout of triumph the pursuer came up with his quarry. The steel blade whirled and struck—once, again. The victim rolled from his saddle and lay, a crumpled motionless black heap, on the sands where he had fallen.

HIS slayer wrenched round his horse's head. The spirited animal reared. The white burnous of the rider swirled out on the breeze like wings of a vengeful eagle. High he brandished his dripping scimitar. Loud rose his cry of victory:

"*Hoch! Barbarossa!*"

The moonlight glinted on a great red beard.

Fifty yards away Peter Logan, riding with busy spur, leaned forward and fired, once—twice. Behind

him he could hear the hoof-beats of the Spahis, the yell of their corporal.

"Stand and fight, Barbarossa!" roared Peter Logan, and fired again.

A great laugh boomed in answer.

"In my own good time, Captain Logan!"

THEN, swift and light as a shadow on the face of the sand, the horse flew up the gentle slope of the sand-ridge to the southward and was gone, the echo of a second mocking laugh ringing in Logan's ears.

He spurred in pursuit, but it was hopeless. His tired troop horse could never catch that blooded charger. When he reached the top of the ridge, horse and Barbarossa had already faded from sight into the treacherous shadows amongst the farther dunes.

Face to face—man to man—Logan had had his wish, and Barbarossa had mocked him and escaped.

Slowly Logan turned his horse and rode back to where a couple of dismounted Spahis were bending over the man Barbarossa had cut down. One of them straightened and saluted as Logan swung from his saddle.

"The man is dead, *mon capitaine.*"

The folds of the striped *kufiya* fell back from a lean, bearded face. The open eyes were already glazing.

"It is Yusuf," muttered Logan. Yusuf, his most trusted native agent, the one spy he had been able to get into the Blue Sultan's forbidden city of Kerdous. One more faithful servant of France had died in the execution of his duty. It was part of the price of Empire.

Logan's hand lifted to the visor of his kepi—and as it did so, the man Yusuf stirred a little in the Spahi's arms. His lips moved.

Down on his knees went Logan, his ear close to that trembling mouth.

"Yusuf! It is I, your captain—"

"Sidi!" the whisper was so faint that Logan barely caught it. "The Blue Sultan—is—dead!"

An electric shock seemed to run through Logan's body. "I—rode hard—to bring you—news—"

"You did well, Yusuf!"

Yusuf's head fell back, his limbs twitched and were still forever. Not in vain had he ridden out of the south; his message was delivered with his dying breath.

Logan sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing with sudden excitement. Merebbi Rebo was dead. His son, the young Emir Si Jibulla, educated in Spain and known to desire peace and the friendship of France, succeeded to the throne of his fathers. And that would suit Barbarossa not at all. The renegade had one remaining chance, one move—to which the loyalty of Yusuf might now enable Logan to cry "checkmate" at last.

"Gallop to the radio station and turn out the operator!" Logan snapped at the nearest Spahi. "You, Corporal, ride to the colonel's quarters and beg *Monsieur le Colonel* to meet me at the radio station at once, on urgent business that cannot wait."

He himself rode more leisurely toward the gate, his brow furrowed in thought.

At Ifni, a Spanish-African port, a shipload of rifles lay waiting for word from Kerdous. That Barbarossa was making for Ifni was a foregone conclusion. Those rifles in the hands of the fierce desert tribesmen would light a flame that all Si Jibulla's new authority might not be able to check.

PRESENTLY grim old Colonel Delacroix, Commandant of the Military Zone of Tiznit, was pacing up and down the narrow confines of the radio office listening to the swift words with which Captain Logan presented this angle of the matter:

"I tell you, he has no other chance, sir! D'you think Barbarossa is the man to see his work of two years wrecked on the eve of success, because Merebbi Rebo is dead? Not he! He's riding for Ifni at this moment, or I don't know the man!"

"For Ifni? For the rifles, then?"

"Of course! Why else did he follow poor Yusuf and cut him down with his own hand, trusting to no bullet? He wanted to make sure of him, deadly certain that Yusuf should not warn us of the Sultan's death. And there's our one advantage, Colonel, our trump card. Barbarossa will never guess that his sword-thrust was not quite deadly enough, that Yusuf had life enough left to tell us!"

"What do you propose, Captain Logan?"

"First to make sure the rifles do not leave Ifni—there the radio will serve us. Then when we are sure—when I can give definite assurance—I'll ride to Kerdous and forestall *Monsieur* Barbarossa by warning Si Jibulla!"

"Alone?" gasped Delacroix.

"Alone," retorted Logan grimly.

CHAPTER II

In the Presence

BUT it was not quite alone that Peter Logan rode, the following day, south into the territory of the Blue Sultan; into that land of savage and fanatical enemies of France, where no *Franzawi* had ever gone before save to meet death or slavery.

He rode in full uniform, his medals on his breast, his sword at his side, his scarlet *kepi* set at a rakish angle on his high-held head. Behind him, in the splendid red cloak of his Spahi regiment, came his faithful orderly, Achmet, who had refused utterly to hear of his master's riding to his death unattended.

Peter Logan was going to Kerdous

not as a spy, but boldly, as an emissary of France.

"They will cut your throat like a rabbit's!" the reluctant Colonel Delacroix had cried, attempting to dissuade him.

But Logan did not think so. Merebbi Rebo was dead; Si Jibulla ruled in his stead, and the views of Si Jibulla were well known. He wanted peace, wanted only a chance to weld his scattered, nomadic tribes into something resembling a nation, to develop agriculture and the caravan trade. He was a sensible young man, a young man who had no use for military adventurers of the type of Barbarossa.

Logan had made the colonel see that it was the clear duty of the French frontier authorities to warn the young Sultan that Barbarossa was "on the loose" and in actual possession—as the radio had proved—of the cargo of contraband rifles. Forewarned, Si Jibulla ought to be able to put an end to Barbarossa's activities before they had gone too far.

And only the arrival in Kerdous of a responsible French agent, would be certain of getting the young Sultan's attention, of commanding his credence.

"**T**HAT is, if you live to get into his presence," Delacroix had growled. "If the first wandering tribesmen you meet don't murder you, there'll be people in Kerdous who'll make blamed certain you never see Si Jibulla."

"Nevertheless, it's got to be tried," Logan had insisted; and in the end he had his way.

Now he rode the trackless waste of sand and red stone, the ancient caravan track from Kerdous to the north, marked by the whitening bones of men and camels and horses fallen by the wayside. He was almost to Kerdous now, and so far he had seen

not a single living soul. Even at the waterholes there had been no one.

"It's just as I expected," he said to Achmet. "The warriors of the desert are gathering in Kerdous. This is Barbarossa's work; they wait there only for word from him as to where to go to get their new weapons. We've got to get to Kerdous before Barbarossa does—and I'm not at all sure we're going to make it."

"*Insh-allah!*" muttered Achmet. "But I think we shall be in time, *sidi.*"

"What makes you think so?"

"**I** KNOW these people, *sidi.* Each petty sheik is jealous of his neighbor, afraid lest another should obtain some preferment over himself. The one authority they all recognize is that of the Veiled Sultan, the Blue Lord, he who alone has the right to wear the holy veil and to speak in the name of Allah.

"And I doubt, *sidi,* whether they will follow Barbarossa or anyone else to battle until the Blue Sultan, Si Jibulla, has with full ceremony, proclaimed formally the *jihad*, the Holy War against the infidel—saving your presence, *sidi.*"

"That Si Jibulla will never do!" exclaimed Logan.

Achmet shook a doubtful head.

"He is the son of Merebbi Rebo. We cannot know what pressure has been brought to bear upon him. And—most of the *imams* are said to be for war."

Logan knew that this was true. He knew also that the *imams*, the priests of the great Mosque of the Spears at Kerdous, wielded a tremendous influence amongst the tribesmen.

"Let us ride faster, then," he urged. "We must reach Kerdous before sundown."

An hour later they rode out from between two lofty dunes and found

themselves at the edge of a wide plain, dotted with palm trees and the high structures of Arab wells, checkered with garden patches and fields of grain.

In the center of this fertile expanse the blue walls of Kerdous rose, battlemented, grim. They were dominated by the great bulk of the Mosque of Spears with its four towering minarets, on whose slender shafts the last rays of the setting sun gleamed brightly, making them seem indeed spears—spears of sapphire, reaching up to a sapphire sky.

In the fields, as Logan rode steadily on toward the forbidden city of the Blue Sultan, no one seemed to be at work. They were empty, as empty as the desert had been. But from the city came a murmur—distant at first, but growing in volume with every yard as Logan neared the gate.

Growing in volume—and in menace. It was the hum and stir of a vast crowd, of teeming streets and peopled squares.

And in that sound was a savage, half-hysterical note that Logan knew. He had heard before this the rising clamor of a Moslem mob that thirsted for "infidel" blood.

"WE ride straight through for the palace," he told Achmet. "I know the way, having had a plan of the city for some time. Poor Yusuf made it last year."

"I ride with you to the end, *sidi*."

They rode unchallenged beneath the frowning blue-stone arch of the gateway, and saw ahead of them a blank wall. There was a passage within, commanded by loopholes, which turned to the left and so led to an inner gate, which also stood open. Where were the sentries? Surely they kept poor watch in Kerdous since the old Sultan was dead.

"Stand!"

Out of the small door dashed a

dozen men, armed with spears, swords, rifles. Tall woolly-headed blacks were these, the Sudanese *askari* whom Barbarossa had imported to fill the need for a steady body of infantry to serve as stiffening for his wild hordes of horsemen.

They seized the bridle-reins of the horses. Their officer, a stately negro in a gold-embroidered *haik*, stood squarely in front of Logan, hand upraised.

"DON'T let them take us alive, *sidi*. They will set us on pointed stakes," muttered Achmet.

The Sudanese officer spoke:

"What seek you here, *Franzawi*?"

"I come in peace," answered Logan. "I come upon a mission to His Highness the most noble Sultan, Si Jibulla, the Veiled One."

"May he reign long and prosper," said the officer with a deep salaam. "Follow me, *sidi*. I conduct you to the Presence."

Concealing his astonishment at the reply, and unable to shake off the idea that treachery lurked behind the courtesy, Logan rode slowly forward through the inner gate. Knee to knee with him rode Achmet; about them in serried ranks marched the soldiers of the gate-guard.

At the end of the street into which the inner gate opened, rose the blue walls of a building much smaller than the mosque, topped by a square cupola. This Logan was able to identify as the Sultan's palace.

The murmur of the crowd had risen almost to a roar. He could distinguish the high-pitched yells of fanatic dervishes, deeper shouts of "Allah akbar!", the clash of cymbals and the wailing of reed-pipes.

Yet this street was as empty and desolate as the desert had been.

"There is, perhaps, a festival in the city tonight?" he asked the officer.

"Nay, *sidi*," said the other in a

tone of mild reproof "This is no time for festival. The people gather before the great mosque to do honor to the dead, to the remains of the late Sultan, His Highness Merebbi Rebo.

He lies in state before his sacred *qubba*."

Logan found himself drawing in a deep breath of relief. He discovered that he had been harboring a slight but torturing doubt lest Yusuf might, after all, have been mistaken or misled; lest Merebbi Rebo might still live and reign—in which case the lives of Captain Peter Logan and of Achmet, his orderly were not worth a copper sou.

They reached the palace gate. A porter surveyed them through the wicket, then made haste to open at the stern order of the Sudanese officer.

As he was unbarring the heavy portal, a crowd of men, some mounted, some on foot, came pouring out of a side street. In the lead was a leaping, whirling, howling figure, an emaciated, half-naked, dirt-encrusted man whose eyes stared with the light of madness out of a forest of matted hair and unruly whiskers.

THE dervish's eyes fell on Logan's scarlet *kepi*.

"Death to the infidel!" he screamed instantly, and charged forward, his iron-ringed staff whirling about his head.

"Follow me, brothers! Kill! Kill!" He let out a yell with every bound, and the tribesmen behind him, brandishing their weapons, came on with a great rush, shrieking "Kill! Kill!"

The Sudanese officer snapped an order. His men faced about, forming a semi-circle of leveled spears. From the row of glittering points the mob recoiled.

"Back, dogs!" roared the officer as

they hesitated. "This infidel rides as the guest of the Veiled One! Back, I say! Would you writhe on stakes in the great square?"

The gate crashed open while the tribesmen still hesitated, though the dervish tried frantically to urge them on. Logan and Achmet rode in. The *askaris* followed, backing step by step without breaking their hedge of steel till they were safely inside.

"WHEW!" Logan wiped the sweat from his bronzed face, listening to the baying of the baffled tribesmen without.

If that were the temper of the Kerdous mob—

Still, the Sultan appeared to have different ideas.

The *askari* officer was browbeating a couple of palace servants.

"Take this *Franzawi* lord to His Highness. At once, O gutter-filth!"

Logan and Achmet dismounted, leaving their horses to the care of some of the slaves who swarmed in that narrow courtyard. Logan thanked the officer for his prompt and efficient defense, whereat the black grinned—after a fashion which Logan found somehow derisive—and murmured that it was as Allah had willed.

Then Logan and Achmet followed the insolently-staring servant into the blue-walled palace.

Through a maze of winding corridors, up and down stairways and across two little walled gardens they were led, seeing no one save hurrying slaves. At last they paused in a wide hallway, walled with the eternal blue stone, paved with a marvelous tiled mosaic representing one of the battles of the Almoravides, and closed at one end by a great crimson curtain.

A man in the black robe of a scribe came out through the curtain, as though he heard their footsteps on the tiles. To him the servant whis-

pered, with many a furtive glance at Logan.

The scribe shot Logan a look of mingled curiosity and suspicion, then turned without a word and went back through the curtain. Almost immediately he reappeared.

"Let the *Franzawi* enter," he said in a churlish voice, as who would say he washed his hands of the consequences. He held the curtain back; and with three swift strides Logan was in the presence of the Blue Sultan.

CHAPTER III

"*Allah Wills It!*"

SI JIBULLA sat on a cushioned divan, attended only by the scribe who had admitted Logan.

The Sultan was a young man, with the high forehead of a thinker and large, expressive, rather dreamy dark eyes. The lower part of his face was concealed by the Sacred Veil, or *litham*, of dark blue silk, which was worn by the reigning Sultan on all occasions save in the intimacy of his own harem.

The veil, insignia of his almost divine authority, was long, falling well over Si Jibulla's knees as he sat cross-legged on the divan. For the rest, the plumpish form of the young Sultan was clothed in a robe of sky-blue silk, embroidered with pearls and turquoises. A *kufiya* of the same material, ornamented with a single large star-sapphire on the forehead, covered his head and fell in folds over his cheeks and neck.

Logan bowed courteously.

"The peace of Allah be upon you, and upon all within this house," said he in courtly Arabic.

"My house is yours, *sidi*," replied Si Jibulla. "Sit there upon the cushions, and refresh yourself."

He motioned toward a tabouret

upon which sweetmeats and Turkish cigarettes were laid out.

Logan sat down, Achmet standing behind him in the traditional manner of an Oriental servant.

His mind was working rapidly. It was plain that the household organization of the palace was badly out of gear. The mere fact that he, an "infidel" and a potential enemy, had been admitted into the Presence armed with sword and pistol showed that someone wasn't on the job. He had caught Si Jibulla's glance of surprise, not untinged with alarm, at the weapons.

"I come in peace and friendship, O Sultan," he said when the prolonged silence indicated that Si Jibulla was waiting for his visitor to speak first. "It is not for me to bear you the condolences of the Government of France upon the death of your lamented father——"

"May he rest with Allah," murmured Si Jibulla.

"——nor to congratulate you upon your accession to the Holy Litham. That will be done by an accredited mission with full ceremony, if Your Highness permits."

"**I** AM honored by the suggestion," said Si Jibulla. "It is my desire to live in peaceful amity with all my neighbors. I receive all who come to me in peace, as friends."

"It is well. Then as a friend, O Shadow of Allah, I warn you," Logan said instantly. "There is one within your dominions who would embroil you with France, to your undoing. I speak of the red-bearded one, Barbarossa!"

Si Jibulla frowned.

"Barbarossa has left Kerdous," he snapped. "He will not return. My face is turned from him. How can he bring war to my people?"

Swiftly Logan explained. He told

of the rifles, of Barbarossa's wild plans.

"He must come here to get your warriors, to lead them to the arms; they are gathered here for your father's funeral," he concluded. "Perhaps he is in Kerdous even now."

"Impossible," the Sultan said at once. "I have given orders that I be notified if he attempts to enter the city. I have closed the gates to all save my own people."

Logan felt suspicion stir again within his mind.

"I have to thank Your Highness," he murmured, his eyes on Si Jibulla's, "for making me an exception to that order. Your *askari* officer was most courteous."

Si Jibulla sat up very straight.

"I made no exceptions," he said sharply. "How could I have anticipated your arrival, *sidi*?"

Exactly what Logan had already perceived.

"Yet I was admitted without question by the captain of the Marrekesh Gate and conducted to the palace, even defended by force of arms against a mob who would have slain me as a stranger within forbidden walls," he said quietly. "If this was not your order, Highness, then who *has* commanded that these things should be done?"

"WHOSE brain has been shrewd enough to foresee that a French officer, I or another, might come to Kerdous to warn you against the danger of Barbarossa's forcing your hand?"

He paused, while the Sultan stared at him, frowning, alarm in his dark eyes.

"Obviously Barbarossa's," Logan answered his own question. "Those were his chosen *askaris* who garrisoned the Marrakesh Gate. That also was not coincidence, Highness."

"By the beard of Omar!" cried the young Sultan, rising suddenly to his

feet. "If that red schemer has dared to plot against me, to give orders in this my city with my father not yet cold——"

A question was throbbing in Logan's mind; a question which must be answered.

"But why, Highness," he said gravely, "has Barbarossa taken such pains to insure that I reach you in safety? Why did he not simply bid his men to slit my throat?"

"DO the motives of this insolence matter?" demanded the Sultan.

"I will have the city searched for him, and when he is found he shall die!"

"Be not hasty, Highness. There is more to this than meets the eye," advised Logan. "Barbarossa does nothing without purpose. And to have given those orders, he must be here, he must have foreseen my arrival. We must meet craft with craft, Highness."

The young Sultan sat down again. The puzzled frown between his eyes deepening.

"Aye, *sidi*," he agreed. "You are a wise man. Not without reason has Barbarossa ever feared you. Many is the time I have heard him say in council that you were the greatest obstacle to the fulfillment of those plans which he had conceived and which my father, rooted in the ancient ways, would have made his own."

"I will consult with Fatima, my sister, who is a woman wise beyond her years. But first, how do you read this riddle?"

"Thus," said Logan with a decisive nod. "Barbarossa knows that you do not favor these plans of his. He fears that by the exercise of your authority you may prevent him from taking the warriors to the coast to get the rifles. He knows how the people venerate the wearer of the Sacred Blue Litham. And so he has planned, all cleverly, to make it seem that you are in league with those

whom he will call the infidel; that your first official act has been to receive and take under your protection a French officer!

"He has perhaps even spread it about that you have been secretly in touch with us for some time, that it is not by chance that a French officer arrives so promptly on the heels of your father's passing. This will make it difficult indeed for you to oppose those voices which will cry out for the *jihad*!"

"By the ninety-and-nine sacred names of Allah!" snarled the young Sultan. "You are right, *sidi*. But we shall see whether any man in Ker-dous will dare defy the word which comes from the Blue Veil! May Allah the Merciful have pity upon the mutinous dog who dares so much, for I swear I will have none!"

"There is something more," muttered Logan. "The plan is not complete. He would not be sure that mere bazaar-scandal, mere discontented grumbling occasioned by my arrival, would be enough in itself to seriously undermine your authority. I am uneasy, Highness."

"It is Barbarossa who had best be uneasy!" the Sultan exclaimed. "Ali!"

THE secretary, who had stood by in silence, bowed low at the mention of his name.

"Go to the captain of my guard. Bid him search the city for this red-beard——"

The crimson curtains were abruptly swept back. Two white-robed *imams* appeared, bowing low to the Sultan.

"It is the hour of prayer, O Shadow of Allah, O High-horn," they murmured in unison. "Your sainted father—may Paradise shelter him forever—awaits your coming before his holy *qubba*."

"Go and prepare all things. I come," the Sultan answered. The *imams* bowed again and departed.

"I must go, *sidi*," the Sultan went on, "to pay my last respects to my father's body where it lies in state in the great mosque. The people will be gathered there to waft his soul to Allah's bosom on the wings of their evening prayer. Come with me, then, for out of my presence you will not be safe."

"I thank Your Highness," said Logan, "but let us not aid Barbarossa's schemes by allowing your people to see a French officer in attendance upon you at so sacred a ceremony. By your favor, Highness, bid your secretary get a couple of hooded bur-nouses, common brown things such as many of your tribesmen wear, and with my orderly I will follow you at a distance and observe what happens."

Si Jibulla nodded.

"That is well thought of," said he, and gave the order.

WHEN the Sultan issued from his palace in state to go to the Mosque of Spears, among the rag-tag and bob-tail of his numerous train no one marked the presence of two tall fellows in brown cloaks. There were a thousand such in Ker-dous that day.

And Logan told himself that victory was almost within his grip. The young Sultan was with him; and Si Jibulla was so aroused against Barbarossa that only the execution of that renegade plotter would satisfy his outraged dignity.

The vague uneasiness, the sense that behind what he knew of Barbarossa's scheming lay some deeper, more sinister plot, was with Logan yet. But he told himself it was nonsense. What could Barbarossa do against the traditional and fanatical devotion of the tribesmen to the authority of the Veiled One, their Sultan?

No, he had won! He had won!

The square was jammed with a

sweating, shouting through who barely gave way before the whips and spear-points of the royal escort and closed behind it again. Into the mosque they forced their way at last, where the crowd was quieter.

Here were assembled all the dignitaries of every degree. Beneath the vast dome they stood in respectful silence as the Sultan passed to his place between two blue-stone pillars, facing the open north wing, where stood the little domed *qubbas* of the royal house.

The vast interior of the mosque was a place of dim shadow, for the twilight of the dying day penetrated but poorly into the recesses of the great structure. The arched windows, in the center of each of which hung a great ornamental globe of glass, were not numerous.

Near the *qubbas*, directly before the pillars where Si Jibulla had taken his stand, a huge jewel-encrusted throne stood on a raised dais. Not yet might the young Sultan seat himself there. On the morrow, sitting in that massive seat of power, he would be invested with all the insignia of his authority, but first his father must be laid to rest.

NEAR the throne, a great sarcophagus of beaten copper stood on four pedestals of veined marble, guarded by chanting *imams*. On its flat lid lay a body, swathed and veiled in blue silk; this would be the corpse of the dead Sultan.

Far back in the crowded mosque, Peter Logan looked at the coffin with its blue-swathed burden and nodded in grim satisfaction. Merebbi Rebo, enemy of France, was dead. It was better so. Yet there was something in the air of that mosque, some queer electrical current of hidden excitement, that was not in keeping with the funereal purpose of the gathering.

Achmet felt it too. Low he whispered into Logan's ear:

"Things are not well in this place, *sidi*. There is trouble brewing!"

Could Barbarossa have plotted a revolt against the new Sultan, have bribed some of the sheiks to his side? It was impossible! Who would lead such a rebellion? Not Barbarossa in his own person, for how could an infidel lead a Holy War? Nor would the jealous sheiks follow one of their own number. Logan told himself not to be such a fool.

THE *imams* were chanting. The mosque was pungent with the smoke of the incense from their swinging censers.

"I do not like it, *sidi*," Achmet whispered again. "They are not chanting the service for the dead, but a prayer to Allah to strengthen the arms of true believers against the infidel. It is not good."

Faintly into the dim mosque came the shouts of the crowd on the square:

"Death to the infidel! The Holy War! Lead us! Lead us! Kill! Kill!"

And now the sheiks and officers inside began to stir and murmur as they realized what the *imams* chanted.

The young Sultan heard it, too, and he took a step forward as though to bid the priests be about their proper business at such a time.

Then a great sigh ran through the crowd, a sudden indrawing of breath as in the face of some wonder beyond belief. Logan stood frozen to the spot where his feet were planted, his eyes wide with horrified astonishment.

For the blue-robed body on the top of the sarcophagus was slowly rising! The hands which held the sword and scepter of Sacred Authority lifted those symbols, lifted them high that all might see. From behind the

Veil of the Dead boomed a commanding voice, a voice which rang like a trumpet beneath the dome of the mosque:

"I live, O sheiks and warriors! Allah gives me life! Hear the voice of Merebbi Rebo your Sultan—hear and obey! Allah wills it!"

CHAPTER IV

Wheels Within Wheels

"A MIRACLE!" screamed an *imam* in the instant of awful silence which followed. "A miracle! Allah has given us back our lord and Sultan!"

"A miracle!" The sheiks took up the cry. "Merebbi Rebo lives!"

"Out of this, Achmet! Quick!" muttered Logan, recovering his voice, and the two started to make their way toward the portico.

Past and over their heads roared the wonderful news. The mob outside took up the shout. The crowd within the mosque surged this way and that, excited to the pitch of frenzy by the astounding thing they had beheld.

In the confusion it was easy for Logan and Achmet to make progress toward the portico unnoticed.

Now the voice of the resurrected Sultan was speaking again in majestic, sonorous tones before which the cries of the crowd were stilled:

"Allah has shown me a vision, O my people. He has sent me back to you out of his infinite mercy and compassion, lest you be led astray by false counsels. He has sent me back to lead you in the Holy War against the infidel, which he has commanded and in which he will give us victory. Listen to my words and obey."

"We obey, O Sultan! Allah wills it!" cried a hundred voices, and again the chorus was taken up out-

side, till the blue walls of Kerdous trembled with the mighty shout.

Again the booming voice. The blue-clad figure stood erect beside the coffin:

"It is well, sheiks and warriors! Tomorrow in this place I shall proclaim, in the name of Allah, the Holy War, the *jihād!* Let all be here at the holy hour of my House! And in the meanwhile, let every man obey my will, speaking through the voice of my trusted counsellor, the great warrior Barbarossa! Do you hear, O sheiks?"

"We hear, lord. We hear and obey!"

"Do you hear, O Si Jibulla, my wayward son?"

The young Sultan stood forward, tearing from his face the holy veil which he had, while his father lived, no right to wear.

"I hear, O my father. Allah wills it!" he cried in a choked voice.

Logan and Achmet, in the portico, heard also those words of despair.

"Where shall we go, *sidi?*" muttered Achmet.

For a moment Logan, crushed by this ruin of all his high-built hopes, could find no answer. Where, indeed?

THEN his hesitation was resolved for him.

A tall *askari* jostled him, so that the hood of his burnous slipped back.

"An infidel!" cried the man loudly and at once. "Here, brothers! Seize him! To the stake with him!"

He was the *askari* officer who had commanded at the Marrekash Gate, but he was no longer courteous. Instead, he seized Logan in a grip of iron, laughing wickedly.

Logan put all his pent-up baffled fury into one mighty smash straight to the point of the *askari's* jaw. The man tumbled backward.

"Run, Achmet!" snapped Logan,

and together they plunged down the steps.

It was a trap, of course. The *askari* was Barbarossa's man, had doubtless been watching them all the time, waiting for the psychological moment to seize them.

They dived into the narrow entrance of a fetid alley behind the mosque.

They had not gone ten steps when a yell at their very heels told they were seen and pursued.

"This way, brothers! Death to the infidel!"

A yelling mob of *askaris* and tribesmen burst into the alley. Running at top speed, Logan came to an abrupt turning.

He felt Achmet shove him down the side alley.

"Run for your life, *sidi*. I will lead them astray!"

No time for argument. Duty bade Logan save his own life, that he might live to serve. Duty—stern, inexorable mistress.

He dashed along the side passage, came to a low wall topped by a hedge. He vaulted it just as the howling wave of pursuit swept by the turning and on after Achmet, who was uttering taunting cries of defiance as he ran.

Crashing through the hedge, Logan alighted cat-like on the other side of the wall. Close at hand a woman screamed. Logan had just time to see that he was in a flower-filled garden when his eye caught a flicker of steel.

HE dodged barely in time. A heavy blade flashed past his head, ripping the hood of his burnous. One leap set Logan's back against the wall; gun in hand, he faced a huge glaring negro whose scarlet turban and embroidered robe proclaimed him one of the palace eunuchs.

Great curved sword uplifted, the

eunuch started forward regardless of Logan's weapon.

"Drop that sword! Quick!" snapped Logan in Arabic.

"Kill him, Marbek!" ordered a ringing feminine voice.

Logan fired as the sword came down. The eunuch dropped the blade and staggered back, clutching a shattered shoulder. A chorus of screams arose.

THE light was bad, but Logan was able to see two women cowering at the foot of the rose-arbor, another standing in front of them, erect and defiant, a couple more that were just shadows in the corner of the wall. It was plain that he had jumped into a harem garden, probably one belonging to the palace, whose square cupola loomed against the fading sky close at hand.

Two more big lumbering eunuchs came darting across the garden in response to the screams; but they halted under the steady menace of Logan's pistol.

"Stand still!" he warned them. "Your next step'll send you sliding down to hell!"

As he shifted his position, in readiness to meet their attack, what light there was fell full upon his face—and upon the collar of his French tunic, beneath his burnous.

"Hold!"

It was the flute-like voice of the tall woman by the rose-arbor.

She took a step forward and spoke again:

"Are you Captain Logan, O intruder into forbidden gardens?"

"That is my name, lady," Logan replied.

She leaped forward, snatched a sword from one of the luckless eunuchs and began belaboring both with the flat of the blade.

"Back, cowards, pigs, fatherless offspring of dung-heaps! Back to

your places in the garden gate, and do not dare to lay a hand on this noble *Franzawi*! Go, all of you—and remember this:

"If one of you breathes so much as a single word of the *Franzawi*'s presence here, I will have his traitorous tongue extracted from the foul cess-pool he misnames a mouth—in many little, little pieces, with red-hot pincers! You have heard the word of Fatima! Out of my presence, for I would breathe cleaner air!"

Fatima! That would be the Sultan's sister. Logan had heard of her: A young woman of brains, said to have given much scandal because of her impatience at the restrictions of the harem. Also, she was said to be her brother's closest confidante and adviser.

"I thank you, Princess Fatima," he murmured.

The Sultan's sister snapped a word at the other women, who drew back out of earshot. Then she walked up to Logan.

"My brother's secretary, Ali, sent me word that you were in the city, *sidi*," she said in a lower tone than she had yet employed. "What has happened in the mosque? Listen to the dogs yell!"

FOR indeed, the shouts of the excited crowd were still thunderous.

"Your father, Princess, has come back to life, and the people deem it a miracle," Logan said.

"Now that cannot be!" the princess exclaimed. "Allah is great, but he does not bring men back from the dead. When they brought me in yesterday to see my father's body, there was no life left in it. The Hakim Ullar, who has studied the science of medicine not only in Cairo but in Europe, attended him to the last. Is such a man to be deceived? Nay, *sidi*, whatever it may be that has happened in the mosque, it is not that Merebbi Rebo has returned to a

life he has very certainly left forever!"

Logan stood quite still, forcing down excitement, forcing himself to think clearly.

"And this learned doctor, where is he now?" he asked.

"He departed last night with a caravan for Tafilelt," the Princess replied. "A message had come from thence, imploring his attendance at the bedside of the Sheikh Hassan ben Radhl, who is gravely ill."

"**A** LYING message," pronounced Logan instantly. "There is no man in the Sahara whom we watch closer than that same Sheikh Hassan ben Radhl. He is so far from ill that he is engaged in leading in person a raid of his warriors on his neighbor the Kaid of Juwa."

"But," said the astute Fatima, "this same Hassan is known to be a friend of a certain red-bearded brute who calls himself Barbarossa—and who has dared to speak words of love to a daughter of Kings!"

Logan began to see certain wheels within wheels.

"Lady," said he, "if you are sure that your father is dead, who is it that just now rose from the lid of his coffin, swathed in the Blue Veil of the Dead, and spoke to the people in his name?"

"That I cannot say," Fatima answered, "save that it is unlikely to be a Moslem, since no follower of the Prophet—on whom be peace!—would dare the sacrilege involved by assuming the sacred insignia. And—voices can be imitated."

"True," Logan admitted. "But what would be the purpose of such an imposture? It could not be kept up for more than a day or two."

"Perhaps a little longer, if the priests are back of it—as well they may be, since they have been preaching the *jihad* for months and would stop at nothing to get their way—not

not even at sacrilege," Fatima replied. "And may not a day or two be sufficient time so to rouse the people that thereafter my brother could not stay them?"

"True again, Princess. If all knowledge of the imposture could be concealed from the people, it could then be given out that Merebbi Rebo, exhausted by his last miraculous effort, were already dead, leaving his commands upon his son to carry on the Holy War. But if the people learned the truth——"

"They would forget everything else in their lust for vengeance on the authors of so horrible a sacrilege," Fatima completed. "But," she added shrewdly, "in that case it would be necessary for my father's body to be produced for burial."

"Which leads us to the question, where is that body now? If we could but find it——"

"*Ai*, you are a great man, *sidi*," Fatima cried. "You have put your finger on the weak joint in their armour, the sacrilegious swine! If we can find that body and show it to the sheiks and people, we shall have an end to miracles — and to miracle-workers."

"I have an idea where it is," Logan remarked.

"Where? Where?" demanded Fatima, gripping his wrist with surprisingly strong fingers.

"IN the coffin, on the dais in the Mosque of Spears! What more natural hiding-place could they select? What place less likely to be examined by prying eyes? And they could hardly hide the body of a dead King in some filthy hole, like a slave's carcass."

"*Wallah!* It is a true word. If the *imams* are in this—and they must be—they would not dare treat the body of my father otherwise than with respect."

"May it be so, Lady." Logan had

already taken his resolve. "Now to action. Night is upon us. I can safely venture out. During the night hours the mosque will be deserted, will it not?"

"Yes, save for a priest or two muttering prayers. But it is a vast place——"

"And you will trust my word?"

"Certainly, *sidi*."

"THAT is what I will do. I will go to the mosque, contrive to get a peep into that coffin. I will bring or send you word, and ride myself for Tiznit. You can contrive to notify your brother, and tomorrow at the holy hour of your House, which is——"

"About nine o'clock in the morning according to your clocks, *sidi*."

"Very well. It is then that all the sheiks are to present themselves in the Mosque to hear the false Sultan proclaim the *jihad* from the Throne of the Veil. Your brother can then and there rise and denounce the impostor, demand that the coffin be opened, and the body will be revealed!

"I will be on hand outside the walls with certain Spahis, to take charge of the red-beard in the name of France. I have no intention of allowing that scoundrel to slip through my fingers again!"

"It is a good plan, *sidi!*" Even in the gathering darkness Logan saw the girl's eyes flash with fierce delight above the edge of her veil. "But it is a grave risk for you. If you are taken—the stake."

"It is a risk that must be faced," Logan said firmly. "If you can keep your eunuchs from blabbing, Princess, we may pull it off!"

"They have no love for red-hot pincers, those black apes," Fatima said. "Stay here, then. I will bring you food and drink, for you will need refreshment, and afterward let you out by the small gate, of which I have a key from my brother"

She was gone on the last word.

Presently Fatima returned. She brought honey-cakes, cold mutton and a flask of the thick over-sweet fluid which in Arab lands passes for tea. And she brought disquieting news, which she told while Logan ate.

"That wounded eunuch, Marbek, has disappeared," she muttered. "The other three are at their posts and swear they know nothing of Marbek's whereabouts. It may be he has gone to betray you, *sidi* Logan."

"In which case I'd better be going," Logan said at once.

"Moreover," Fatima went on, "certain of my women who have been out in the town say that Barbarossa is here, going openly from sheik to sheik haranguing them about the *jihad*, taking notes of the numbers of men and rifles they possess."

"Marbek is in his pay, of course," snapped Logan. "I must be gone and get my work done before he catches up with his master."

Fatima led the way in silence to a small concealed gate behind a screen of vines.

"Allah guard you, *sidi*," she said as she unlocked it and threw it wide.

LOGAN expressed his thanks in brief but suitable words; then he was in the darkness of the alley, slipping along carefully toward the great square. The shouts and murmurings of the excited tribesmen filled the air with a sinister overtone. It beat in Logan's brain like the throbbing of some demoniac voice calling for blood — blood — blood —

A touch on his arm brought him to a halt, tense—

"Thanks be to Allah that you are safe, *sidi*!" murmured Achmet's voice in his ear. "I led the dogs astray, evaded them and returned to watch for you."

Never had that faithful follower been more welcome.

Their hands met in a soldier's hard quick grip. Swiftly Logan explained the situation to Achmet; and then, together, they went out of the alley.

CHAPTER V

Lesson From the Ancients

THE square was a busy place that evening. Everywhere the talk was war, war, war—and the name of Barbarossa was on many lips. Barbarossa, the great war-chief, the bringer of the rifles—aye, a captain upon whom Allah smiled with favor, although he was indeed of the blood of the *Franzawi*. But what mattered the color of his skin if he gave good rifles and plenty of ammunition? Think of the loot of red-walled Marrakesh—

Unnoticed amid the swirling mob, Logan found himself at last in the shadows of the mosque's portico. The vast interior of the great building was dark and silent, save for a couple of little flickering lamps, mere points of yellow radiance in the utter gloom. "Achmet?"

"Here."

"Come on; careful. Keep your hand on my arm."

Logan was slipping out of his boots as he spoke, and Achmet did the same. Now they moved into the mosque, the tiled floor cool and silent beneath their stockinged feet.

From pillar to pillar they made their way, guided by the little lamps and by the occasional glimpse of a star through one of the high windows. They reached the Throne of the Veil; the dark bulk of the sarcophagus loomed above them. Logan pulled out his flashlight.

"I'll only dare one flicker of this," he whispered. "Get up here with me, so that you can tell Fatima what you saw with your own eyes."

They mounted the dais. Logan felt

round the edge of the coffin lid, got a purchase on a projecting corner, and lifted. The lid was tremendously heavy; he could barely support its weight with both hands.

From the opened crack came an overpowering mixed smell of spices and stale incense and putrefying flesh.

"Achmet, get the flashlight from my pocket, find the button, and flash the light inside," Logan ordered, finding it impossible to hold the heavy coffin lid with one hand. "Careful now; just one flash."

The orderly's fingers fumbled in his pocket, withdrew the light. There was a second's pause; then a sudden white ray illumined the interior of the great coffin.

It shone on the dead face of the body that lay there; a face stamped with the lines of power and cruelty and command. The face, beyond all question, of Merebbi Rebo. The slash of a sword-cut lay across the forehead making the identification certain; for such a cut the dead Sultan had acquired in a hand-to-hand fight with Moroccan cavalry years ago.

The light snicked out. Logan started to lower the lid. It slipped from his sweating hands, fell with a loud crash that echoed thunderously through the mosque!

INSTANTLY, over by the little lamps, some *imam* yelled alarm. His cry was taken up by another. Slipped feet slapped over the tiled floor, running; somewhere in the gloom came the unmistakable swish of a sword being drawn from a leather scabbard.

Logan and Achmet were already darting for the portico, keeping close to the outer wall.

"We'll make it; they're all behind us," Logan panted as they neared the entrance.

But just at that moment the portico glowed with the red radiance

of torches. Torches which glittered on bright steel, on the striped *haiks* of a half a dozen sheiks and on the red *chechias* of as many *askaris*. Too late Logan tried to turn; the torch-light had caught him.

"Halt there!" Rifle-bolts clattered.

Behind him, *imams* with lamps and weapons were rushing toward the sound of the challenge.

TRAPPED. The torches were held high, revealing Logan and Achmet standing at bay within a closing circle of snarling enemies.

"Down with that gun, Captain Logan, or I'll put a bullet through your stomach!" roared a voice; and out from amongst the torch-bearers stepped a tall, swaggering man with a great spade-like red beard. His eyes glowed like pools of evil flame beneath the shadow of his *kufiya*. In one hand he bore a jewel-hilted scimitar, and in the other a Luger pistol.

"Barbarossa the renegade," said Logan softly.

He knew his duty; it was to shoot Barbarossa like a dog. He and Achmet would both be torn to pieces, of course; but with Barbarossa dead—Duty first—duty—

His finger tightened on the trigger, but an *imam* sprang on him suddenly from behind, like a wildcat. His bullet flew wide. Both Logan and Achmet went down under a sweating, panting rush of *askaris* and priests and tribesmen.

"To the stake with them!" cried somebody, and other voices took up the cry. "*Ai!* The stake, the stake!"

Barbarossa laughed, a booming laugh of triumph.

"Nay, gag them and bind their hands, and bring them to the cages reserved for traitors. Let them bide there till after the Holy Hour, tomorrow, to witness for themselves the ceremony that means the destruction of their countrymen. And then—then, the stakes!"

"It is well spoken, O Barbarossa!"

Logan, panting, striving for breath to call out to the sheiks that Merebbi Rebo lay dead in his coffin, found a dirty wad of rags stuffed between his teeth and made fast. His hands were tied behind him, and by kicks and blows he was driven back into the interior of the mosque.

Past the sarcophagus they dragged him, and so to the wall of the north wing. Here he was forced up a narrow stairway built into the wall itself, and a final kick propelled him against the bars of an iron cage. A grated door slammed shut behind him, bolts clanked home, a lock clicked.

Through the grating, Barbarossa's voice spoke to him, mockingly, in English:

"So! You come to the end of your rope, Captain Logan, eh? And at a fitting time, iss it not, the moment of mine own triumph! I will come und laugh in your face ven you are screaming on the stake tomorrow!"

His heavy steps departed, thumping down the stairs. Gradually the turmoil and excitement in the mosque died away. The place was left again in the darkness save for those same flickering lamps and another, near the coffin, where two *askari* sentries paced back and forth.

PETER LOGAN had not served a long apprenticeship in African Intelligence work for nothing. He believed in making preparations.

His fingers, working fast, found the razor blade he kept stitched in the lining of one cuff. A little sawing about with this, and at the cost of a couple of minor cuts his wrists were free.

He removed the gag, and his first precaution was to retie it loosely so that he could at a moment's notice slip it over his head and into place.

Next he examined his prison.

He was in a small cage, floored

with wood and otherwise constructed of stout iron bars. It hung on the wall of the mosque, overlooking the whole of the interior, that the luckless prisoner might be displayed in the full view of all who came to worship. It was about twenty feet above the floor and directly beside one of the high, arched windows. Logan could see the ornamental glass ball in its center twinkling in the starlight where it swung on its cord from the top of the window arch.

"FRESH air, anyway," he said aloud. "That's more'n I can say for some Moorish prisons."

"*Sidi!*" came a soft whisper from the other side of the window.

"I'm here, Achmet," he answered. Yes, there was a cage there. He could see the bars very faintly. Poor, faithful Achmet.

At the back of Logan's cage was the door which gave access to the narrow stair. He examined it; no hope of escape there. Bolts and locks were strong and well-fastened. The wooden floor was of thick planks, upon which he could make no impression with his razor-blade.

Not a chance.

Logan began feeling round the inside of his cage in the hope of coming upon something that might help him. He found only a broken jug, half full of water, left by some former occupant no doubt. The water was still pure and sweet; he drank a little, grateful for even so small a favor.

Somehow heartened, he got to his feet and peered out into the mosque. He could see very faintly the dark loom of the sarcophagus, the high back of the Throne of the Veil beyond; that throne from which, tomorrow, a false Sultan would proclaim a holy war to the tribes of the desert.

He might cry out to the crowd, bidding them look in the coffin of

Merebbi Rebo, but that would hardly do any good. There would be too much noise, and besides he had a feeling that Barbarossa would take precautions against such an occurrence—such as a sharp-eyed *askar* rifleman with instructions to shoot if Logan removed his gag.

If only he could be granted a miracle of his own, an arm long enough to reach out and snatch the veil from the face of the false Sultan, there before them all. Si Jibulla, at least, would know his own father. Logan looked out through the window at the starlit sky, as though seeking inspiration from those distant suns.

The glass globe swayed gently as though beckoning him to freedom, mocking him—

A thought stabbed through Logan's mind like a flash of light. A flash of light—yes, that was exactly it!

He turned, examined as well as he could the distance of the Throne of the Veil from the window. Not too far. Maybe this scheme wouldn't work, but there had been scientific backing for the story he'd just recalled. The ancients had used glass globes in much the same way. Thank the Lord for a classical education.

HE stretched out his arms through the bars. He could just touch the globe with his finger tips where it swung about on a level with his knees. He gave it a little push. It swung away, came back. He pushed it a trifle harder, and this time on the backswing caught hold of the cord which held it.

It was a double cord of silk. Logan drew the ball up to the bars of his cage and made it fast with a knotted handkerchief.

More with fingers than with eyes he examined the thing. It was a big hollow globe of smooth glass. At its top was a small circular hole, through

which were inserted the prongs of the grass clasp to which the cord was attached.

Carefully Logan cut one strand of the cord, and found, as he had hoped, that the cord ran free through a ring at the top of the window arch. He reattached the free end temporarily to the other strand by means of a bowline knot.

THEN he felt in his pockets, found a small manila envelope—they'd not bothered to search him save for weapons—and of it he made a conical funnel. A small hank of fine but very strong cord he attached to the free end of the cord supporting the glass globe, after releasing the bowline knot; and with a separate piece of this cord he attached a preventer stay to the globe.

He put the funnel into the hole in the top of the globe, and with arms outstretched holding the water jug, he very carefully, little by little, filled the globe full of water.

His arms were aching with the strain when at last he had carefully assured himself that the globe was full almost to running over. He wiped the surface of the globe clean of dust.

Now he secured the end of the lengthened silk cord to a bar, and releasing one end of his preventer stay, allowed the water-filled globe to swing slowly back into the center of the window.

He held his breath. Would the single strand hold the much increased weight? It would and did. By manipulating his end of the silk cord, he could move the globe up and down; by the short "preventer stay" he could move it back and forth. But not beyond the middle of the window, save by a pendulum-like swing—and that might prove essential.

"Achmet!" he whispered.

"Yes, *sidi!*"

"See the globe? I'll swing it over to you. Catch it — for God's sake don't let it hit the window—and take hold of one of the strings you'll find attached to it. Then let it swing back."

While he was talking Logan had pulled the globe back to him and attached another piece of his fine cord to the clasp, leaving the end free. He swung the globe back, saw Achmet catch it at the outer end of its swing, after an effort or two, saw him let it swing gradually back to center.

Then, in a low clear voice, he explained to Achmet what he hoped for from that globe.

THE night wore on without event. The first rays of the sun gilded the window with a glorious frame. It was an eastern window, as Logan had already perceived.

He looked out, and could see part of the great square. Several men were busy hammering a thick wooden stake into the ground. Logan watched fascinated. That it was for him, he was only too well aware. And unless his plan worked, there he would meet an agonizing, barbarous doom.

The sunlight grew brighter within the building. The slanting rays touched the top of the coffin, the top of the throne's back.

They glittered on the glass ball, swinging in the window.

Logan, gag in place now and hands behind his back as though still bound, leaned against the bars. Thus concealing his movements, he released the cord and lowered the globe a little, very slowly, that no casual eye might be attracted by its motion.

A fiercely brilliant spot of glowing white light appeared on the top of the coffin.

Logan felt his heart bound. Hastily he pulled the ball up to its former place and made the cord fast.

Achmet stirred and sat up awakened by the growing glamor in the mosque. Logan jerked his head toward the globe and nodded energetically. He saw hope dawn in Achmet's eyes.

As the "Holy Hour" grew close, the mosque began to fill. Not, this time, with mourners bowed by grief for a dead king, but with expectant, even turbulent warriors. The flash of weapons was everywhere.

The young Emir Si Jibulla came pushing through the crowd and took his place; far across the mosque this time, the object of many curious and some derisive glances and remarks. Logan suspected that Si Jibulla had been thus placed, lest Logan call out or make some signal to him.

Now the time was at hand. The *imams* came in, swinging their censers and chanting a throbbing battle anthem. Behind them, with majestic tread, paced a tall blue-veiled figure bearing the Sword of Authority and the Scepter of Compassionate Justice, attended by several armed officers.

"Merebbi Rebo! Veiled One! Lead us in the *jihad*! Blood! Loot! Allah wills it!"

AS though ignoring these cries, the Veiled One continued on his stately way, ascending the steps of the Throne of the Veil, and was seated there, arranging the veil over his knees after the manner of one well accustomed to wearing the sacred *litham*.

The *imams* were still chanting, the crowd still shouting acclaim. The sun's rays, slanting a little lower, had again touched just the edge of the coffin with that glaring white-hot spot.

Logan caught Achmet's eye, made an imperceptible motion. He had noted an *askari* who, rifle over arm, stood opposite him, watching him with ceaseless vigilance. The least suspicious act might bring a bullet;

yet the thick-headed Sudanese would hardly observe the slight change in position of the glass globe. At least, so Logan could only hope.

Achmet pulled in his cord. The globe moved toward him.

The bright spot moved also, transferring itself to the carved arm of the great Throne.

Under the dome of the mosque boomed the great voice from behind the Blue Veil:

"Sheiks and warriors! Listen to the words of Merebbi Rebo, your Sultan, the Shadow of Allah!"

"We listen and obey, O Veiled One!" roared the crowd.

Logan signed Achmet to hold steady. He eased off the main cord, lowered the globe a trifle. The fierce spot of light dropped a few inches, coming to rest on the folds of the Sacred Veil beneath the arm of the throne-chair.

"In the name of Allah and of his Holy Prophet—on whom be Peace—I call on you at this the Holy Hour of my House—"

A faint curl of smoke was rising from the Veil where the glowing spot touched it.

Cloth, in that desert clime, was wont to become so dry that it was almost like tinder.

THANK God his plan was working! Thank God he'd remember that a globe filled with water will concentrate the sun's rays like a burning glass!

"—to rise as one man, take up your arms and march into the North, sweeping into the sea the infidel *Franzawis*—"

If only the Veil would catch before the "hot spot" burnt through the robes beneath and reached the flesh under the robes.

"Allah, akbar! the *jihad*! The *jihad*!" The sheiks were screaming, interrupting the words from the throne.

Suddenly Logan saw the Veiled One shift as in discomfort.

At the same instant the Veil burst into flames!

The flame flashed upward swiftly, covering the breast of the Veiled One with a ruddy flare.

The sheiks howled in astonishment. Several of them started forward to assist the Veiled One, who had leaped to his feet and was tearing madly with his hands at the flaming veil.

THE flames went out under those beating hands. The charred fragments of the veil floated away in the streaming sunlight.

The face of the Veiled One stood revealed by the merciless glare—his face, and the broad red beard which the Veil had hidden.

Barbarossa!

A stillness, a silence as of death fell upon the horror-stricken crowd. And into that moment of silence Logan smashed, with all the power of his lungs, one terrible shout:

"*Sacrilege!*"

"*Sacrilege!* As the flames had swept the veil, so that word of flame swept the crowded mosque.

An infidel had worn the sacred veil, carried the sacred emblem, dared to speak in the name of Allah from the throne of God's anointed.

All this the single word drove home into the fanatical hearts and souls of those sheiks, and as one man they surged forward, swords and daggers out and glittering, screaming again and again:

"*Sacrilege! Kill! Kill!*"

The *imams* dared not try to stay that incarnate vengeance. They fled, or joined in the cry.

Erect, scornful, arms folded and head held high, Barbarossa stood before the Throne of the Veil waiting for the end.

"*Hoch! Barbarossa!*" rang his de-

fiant shout—and a score of blades clashed together as they ripped into his body. Then he went down under a rush of maddened sheiks, down under their feet while they stabbed and slashed and stamped with insensate, terrible fury at the infidel who had defiled their temple.

Logan was listening to a sound from without. It was impossible, and yet—

"Kill!" shrieked an *imam*, pointing upward at the cages. "Kill all the accursed infidels! Here are others—to the stake with them!"

There was a rush for the narrow stairs that led to the cages.

"Good-by, Achmet!" called Logan.

This was the end; yet in dying he had killed the holy war.

The sheiks were surging up the stairs, screaming their hate of all infidels, brandishing their bloody weapons.

"Stop! You fools!"

Logan saw a man in a purple robe fling himself upon the sheiks on the stair, striking recklessly at them with a heavy sheathed sword.

"Get back! Will you bring destruction on us all? Down on your knees and pray to Allah for mercy! Back, dogs, swine, offspring of lizards!"

It was Si Jibulla, the young Sultan, and before his words and blows even those raging sheiks gave back, leaping from the stairs, scattering into snarling, half-defiant groups.

Leaderless, they must submit to his authority.

"It is written that the infidel shall be slain, O Si Jibulla!" yelled one, bolder than the rest.

Si Jibulla jerked a pistol from his sash and fired. The sheik who had spoken pitched forward on his face, dead.

"Will any other jackal's cousin wish to howl?" snarled Si Jibulla, raking the crowd with wicked eyes.

NO man dared raise his voice in answer. It was plain that this young Sultan meant to be a King indeed.

It was the will of Allah!

"Then look, O fools, and see from what I have saved you!"

Si Jibulla pointed upward at the windows.

Out in the blue sky, dark wings were circling over the city. The air was filled with the throb of motors. The French planes had come from Agadir!

Colonel Delacroix, that wily veteran, had thought the day appropriate for a small demonstration!

"Now release that *Franzawi* and conduct him with all honor out into the square, that he may signal his comrades and preserve you from their bombs," Si Jibulla ordered. "His companion also!"

Logan went out of the opened door and down the stairs, past the gashed and trampled Thing that had been the enemy of France.

Side by side, he and Achmet passed out of the mosque into the sunshine of the great square.

Next Month: The Whirling Sky Trail of a Daring Spy in FLIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, a Novelette by GEORGE BRUCE—

Packed with Pulse-Stirring Thrills of the Great War!

*A Gripping Complete
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FIST *and*



His left hand swooped the lamp off the table

CHAPTER I

The Arms of Death

AS IF operating some delicate instrument which required hairbreadth adjustment, the man on the sun-baked granite ledge gently tilted the barrel of his rifle a quarter-inch higher and a bit to the left.

Again he looked through the sights, and an evil leer spread over his thick lips.

"That'll do it," he muttered.

The narrow trail, flanked by a sheer wall of granite on one side and an equally sheer sixty-foot precipice on the other, was just below him. The rider coming up the trail would not see the man on the shelf-like ledge, and would himself be invisible until he rounded the sharp curve fifty feet down the gentle incline.

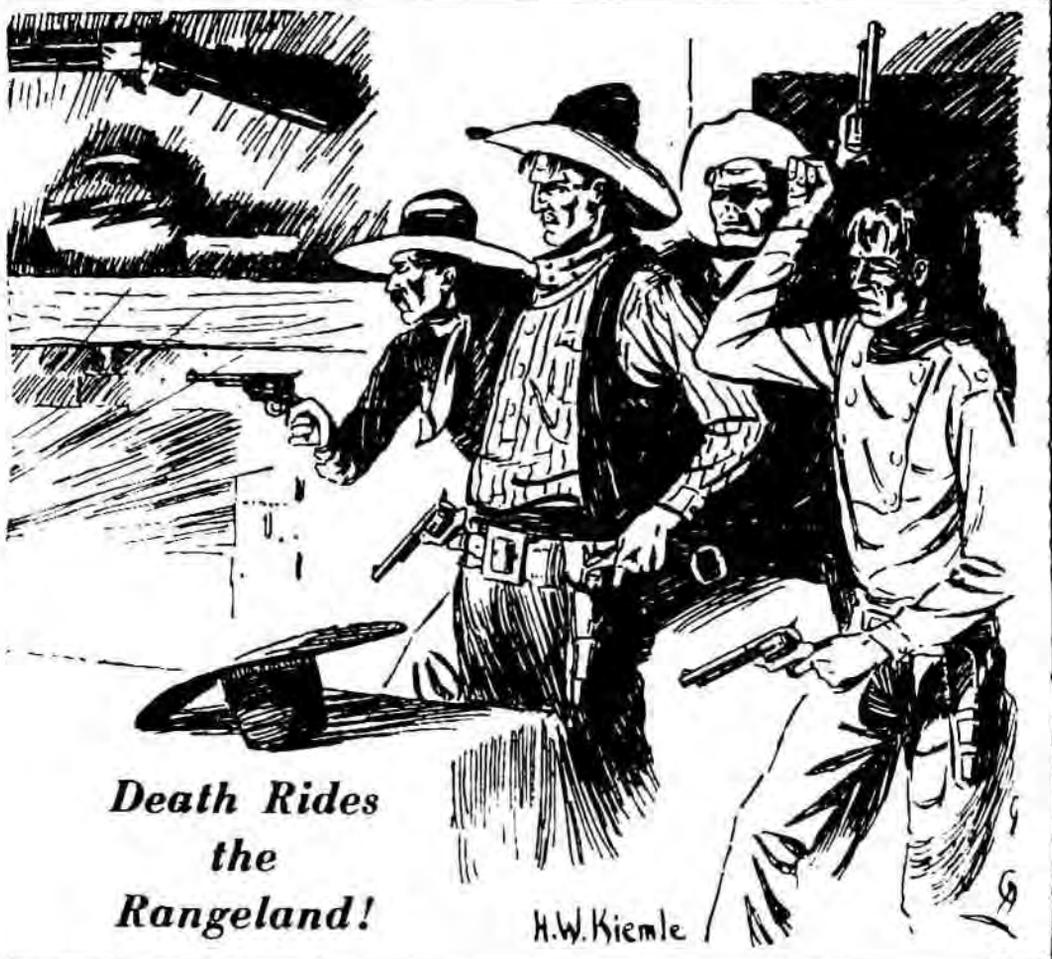
Blithely, he would round the curve—into the sights of the rifle. Into the waiting arms of death. For the man's forefinger, curled on the

When Red Wade Arrived to Claim His Ranch

SIX-GUN

By CHARLES GREEN

Author of
"A Man Amongst Men," etc.



Death Rides the Rangeland!

H.W. Kiemle

trigger of the rifle, itched with murder.

HOT minutes dragged. The man lay motionless over the rifle, which was wedged firmly in place between two stones. His eyes, red-rimmed from the dust and the sun, were ever on the point where the trail curved. And his ears were straining for the sound—that he now heard!

Iron-shod hoofs on the granite floor of the trail. Faint yet, but un-

mistakable. The rider was approaching!

The man placed his cheek against the hot stock of the rifle, his eyes squinting through the sights. He wetted his thick lips. He waited—

Slouching in the saddle, Red Wade whistled loudly and tunelessly, quiet contentment in his blue eyes. The powerful roan beneath him shared its master's good humor, tossing its silky mane as it gingerly picked its way up the rough trail.

The gorgeous scenery on the right

Property, All Hell Popped Loose at the Bar X!

thrilled Red Wade. The brilliant quartz seemed studded with precious stones as it reflected the sunlight. The plateau-like shelves which descended gradually to the fertile basin were thick with green spruce and pine. The basin itself, all of which he could see from the mountain trail, was green and flat as the top of a billiard table.

Good grazing country for cattle, and a paradise for one who could appreciate the wild glory of nature unspoiled by the hands of men.

Higher, higher the roan climbed. Red slouched dreamily in the saddle, off his guard, his mind as relaxed as his body. And every step that the roan took brought Red closer to the swift death beyond that turn.

Slowly, the roan rounded the curve. And then it shied suddenly, almost jerking Red out of the saddle. A bright-hued lizard had streaked across the trail in front of the horse; and the pretty little animal's attempt to escape being crushed by the iron-shod hoofs saved Red's life.

For in the split second that the roan had shied, the man on the ledge had squeezed the trigger. But instead of finding Red's heart, the bullet only nicked his leather vest. The roan, already frightened by the lizard, and now again by the report of the rifle, reared up on its powerful haunches—just as another shot cracked out.

RED'S STETSON came sailing off his head, as if slapped by some invisible hand. He threw himself backward out of the saddle, twisting like a cat in the air, and landed on his hands and feet. He straightened, leaped sideways to the wall. His big .44 was now in his right hand. Crouching, his blue eyes smouldering dangerously through narrowed lids, he tried to locate the treacherous killer.

He still hadn't completely rounded the curve in the trail. The horse had shied backward. When he had leaped out of the saddle, he was no longer in the range of the deadly rifle trained down from the ledge.

Crack! Another shot. For the second time, the roan reared up on its haunches. Red could see blood streaming from the animal's nostrils. Still on its hind legs, the wounded horse was backing up to the sheer drop at the edge of the trail. As he watched, it crashed over.

"BLAST him!" Red gritted through clenched teeth.

Deliberately, the killer with the rifle had shot the horse. What could have been his object? Unless—yes, that was it! He was trying to bait him into a reckless dash around the bend of the trail; gambling on the fury of a Westerner, whose horse is his prize possession and best friend, and who had just seen it shot down as if it were a mad coyote.

His good-natured mouth now a thin, grim line, Red began edging left toward the bend. Then he checked himself. He was playing the hand the man wanted him to play, and the cards were stacked. He did not know where the rifleman was, whereas the other knew the precise point where Red would shoot his body when he came around the bend.

Red glanced over his shoulder. About a dozen feet behind him, there was a deep crevice in the thirty-foot wall, running clear up to the top. A tricky thing to climb, but possible. Red jammed his gun back into the holster, and approached the crevice.

He began the steep ascent, his back firm against one side of the crevice, his knees jammed against the other, his fingers taking advantage of the slight handholds the jagged wall offered.

A hard, hot climb. Once he slipped, only a desperate and luckily successful clutch at a tiny niche in the wall saving him from breaking his bones on the rock below. Soaked with perspiration, blood oozing from beneath broken fingernails on his left hand, he finally reached the top. Cautiously, he crawled over the edge, the big .44 again ready in his right hand.

He found himself on a smooth, flat rocky plateau. At the far edge, it dipped sharply. No sign of the rifleman; he must be down in the hollow the dip made. Swiftly, yet noiselessly, Red crossed the forty feet to the far edge, looked over.

Yes, there was the murderous devil, lying flat on his belly just below, his rifle trained over the edge on the bend in the trail.

Red leaped down. His gun swung around, centered.

"All right, *hombre*," he snapped. "Reach for them clouds!"

The man had whirled on his side when he heard Red's boots thud on the rock. He now stared up at him.

"I said," Red repeated sharply, "up! On yore feet. That's right; jest let yore rifle lay there. An' if yuh start gittin' intimate with that six-gun on yore hip—well, what do you think will happen to yuh?"

THE man obeyed sullenly, standing now, his arms raised over his head. Just then Red heard hoofbeats approaching them on the trail below. The man heard them too. He half swung around.

"Easy," Red cautioned. "That's none o' yore business. Yore business is now with *me*. Yuh was plumb anxious to show daylight through *me*. Yuh shot my horse. Seems like the next move is mine." There was a sharp click as he drew back the hammer of his .44.

"Yuh won't shoot me down thisa-

way," the man said hoarsely. "That—that'll be murder!"

Red's eyes were cold.

"Murder, eh?" he drawled. "An' what was yuh tryin' to do to me? I don't recollect my secretary a-handin' me an announcement card o' the little shootin' party yuh was stagin' up here."

"Lissen!" The man's lips were grey with fear now. He took a step closer to Red. "That was a mistake, pardner."

"Yuh're danged right it was," Red said grimly.

"No—I mean, I thought yuh was somebody else. That's the truth. I thought—"

THE man's right hand jerked forward suddenly. Concealed in his palm, he had been holding a heavy, round pebble that he must have picked up when he had scrambled to his feet. Red stood only a dozen feet away from him. The pebble, hurled by the other with the accuracy of a bullet, struck Red squarely between the eyes. He staggered back, dropping his gun arm.

The man leaped at him, like a grey wolf at the throat of a calf. Once, twice, three times he smashed his fists in Red's face. Dazed by the pebble, Red took the blows with his arms limp at his sides. He now went crashing back against the wall of the plateau. A red glare danced before his eyes. There was a roaring in his ears.

Relentlessly, the man followed him, heavy fists pounding. Red had dropped his gun. Desperately, he tried to pull himself together. Through the red glare, he saw the man step back, fierce triumph in his piggish little eyes. He saw the hand drop to the butt of a gun.

Summoning every remaining ounce of strength left in his body, Red threw himself in a long tackle at the man's knees. A blind tackle, but

he had gauged the distance accurately. His arms closed about the man's legs. Both went crashing to the hard rock.

The man had his gun drawn now. Red's left hand caught his gun wrist. He clung to it blindly, his head buried in the man's stomach, his shoulders hunched.

THE man writhed like a wounded snake, cursing hoarsely, his free hand pounding at Red's head, neck and back. Red made no attempt to return the other's blows. He simply hung on, playing for time, for the few precious seconds when his head would stop reeling, when his strength would return.

And it did—quicker than he thought. The red glare disappeared. His wiry, muscular body no longer felt drugged. With a sharp twist, he wrenched the revolver out of the stubby, sweaty fingers clutching it, threw it over his shoulder. Then he pushed the other away from him and leaped to his feet.

"Git up!" he panted his blue eyes flaming. "Five minutes from now, yuh'll be beggin' for a bullet. *Git up!*"

The man did not need the second invitation. He scrambled to his feet. A burly, powerful brute, with immense shoulders, heavy torso and short legs, he looked like an anthropoid ape. He charged at Red, long muscular arms outstretched, fingers hooked talon-wise, his yellow teeth bared in an animal snarl.

Red pivoted his body, easily evading the bull-like rush. His left arm whipped out. It was a hard blow to the side of the head, and while it would have knocked another man down, the ape-like creature merely shook his head, turned and charged again.

Red's slim, wiry body was a melody of grace as it twisted, weaved, danced in and away to the huge bulk

which constantly, doggedly followed him around the ledge. Now a left would whip across to the head, now a hard right to the body. Cruel, scientific blows. Blows deliberately meant to hurt, to break and bruise the skin.

There came a time when the other reeled about drunkenly, no longer able to see, his face a bloody horror. A hard right-cross to the heart ended it. The man sank to his knees, tottered a moment, then fell flat on his face.

He lay there, motionless, on the sun-baked granite shelf.

CHAPTER II

A Date with Trouble

PANTING, Red towered over the man a few moments. It was a savage, merciless beating, but he had deserved it. With his sleeve, Red wiped the sweat pouring down his face. He turned to where he had dropped his gun, stooped to pick it up—and then whirled, gun hip high, at the sound of a man's voice.

A yellow-haired, blue-eyed giant sat loosely in the saddle of a rangy buckskin on the trail below, his battered Stetson pushed far back on his head, a brown-paper cigarette dangling in the corner of his mouth.

"I said," he repeated coolly, "that was a right handsome job yuh done. Nothin' in the remark to rile yuh, was there?"

Red replaced the gun into the holster, but his eyes remained wary.

"Only cautious," he drawled. "Seein' that strangers don't seem none too popular around these parts. A plumb hostile an' unfriendly country, one might say."

"Meanin' what?"

"Meanin' that a man to whom I ain't never had the pleasure o' bein' introduced starts a rifle a-pumpin' at me when I come around that

bend. Shoots my horse. Mebbe yuh kin tell me why?"

The blond giant stared steadily at Red.

"Mebbe," he said slowly, "I kin do that little thing for yuh."

He slid out of the saddle, threw the reins over the buckskin's head so that they dangled to the trail, and climbed up to the ledge.

"Ferguson's the name," he said, stretching forth a big paw. "Bill Ferguson. An'—thanks!"

Red accepted the hand.

"My name's Wade," he said. "But what're yuh thankin' me for?"

Ferguson took the cigarette out of his mouth, glanced at it, looked up.

"Mebbe," he said quietly, "for savin' my life. I might not've been as lucky as you was."

Red shook his head. "I still don't git yuh."

Ferguson grinned.

"It ain't very complicated," he murmured. "The skunk yuh rocked to sleep is O'Keefe, fore man at the Bar-X outfit."

"Bar-X?" Red said sharply.

"Yeah. It's a cattle outfit a little ways ahead as yuh foller this trail over the ridge. A good-size outfit, too. I own a ranch three miles west of it, an' mine *ain't* a big outfit. This country has been plenty dry the past few years. Only one worth while waterhole for cattle. Bar-X people claim it's on their property, which is a rotten lie. Sort of an old, old story, ain't it?"

RED nodded.

"Yeah," Ferguson repeated bitterly, "an old story. One waterhole. A big ranch, a little one close to it. Take away the little man's water, an' yuh force him to sell—or feed his cattle to the buzzards!"

"But the law," said Red. "If, legally, the Bar-X people don't control the waterhole—"

"Legally!" Ferguson laughed mirthlessly. "By the time the case comes up in court, the beef won't be standin' on one leg. The six-gun talks around these parts. Miller, manager o' the Bar-X, has eleven riders to my three, an' five of 'em are gunmen—rotten scum from the Border. Skunks that wouldn't hesitate shootin' a man in the back—as they did to one of my punchers this mornin'. Murdered him, stam-peded my cattle.

"THE sheriff is hundred an' sixty miles away at the county seat. The town marshal at Wesley is workin' hand-in-hand with Miller. There jest ain't nothin' I could do, 'cept goin' over an' havin' it out with Miller. Find out at least who the devil owns the Bar-X, an' mebbe appeal to him."

"A good idea," Red murmured.

"Yeah? Ferguson shrugged. "Anyway, Miller wasn't hankerin' to see me when I tol' his men I was comin' over this mornin'. I kinda got a temper, an' a rep for bein' pretty fast on the draw. So he sent O'Keefe, a born killer if there ever was one, to head me off on the trail.

"Yuh came ridin' up jest ten minutes ahead o' me. O'Keefe, waitin' here with the rifle, thought yuh was me. An' there yuh have it!"

"Looks like to me," Red drawled, "this Miller is a plumb ornery kind of a skunk. Yuh say he has eleven riders?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's right peculiar. Because he has sixteen listed on his payroll."

"How do you know that?" Ferguson asked sharply.

Red grinned.

"Well, yuh see," he explained casually, "I happen to own the Bar-X ranch."

There was a short pause. Fergu-

son stared at Red. "You," he burst out finally. "You own the Bar-X?"

"Yeah. Inherited from my uncle, Dan Bradley—my mother's brother, 'bout three years ago. Miller was Uncle Dan's manager; I let him hold onto his job. Thought he was capable enough. I never did want to go in for ranchin', havin' sort of itchin' feet.

"So I drifted down into South America. Every once in a while I'd git reports from Miller. They looked all right to me. I returned to the States about a month ago, an' found that things at the ranch didn't seem—well, didn't seem to smell jest right.

"An' then somethin' happened. So I'm on my way to have a long powwow with Miller right now."

Ferguson took a long breath.

"About that waterhole now, Mr. Wade—"

"Red is what most people call me, Bill," Red cut in, grinning. "An' yuh needn't worry about that waterhole any more. We believe in bein' neighborly where I come from."

"Thanks—Red!" Again Ferguson stretched out his big paw. "I can't tell yuh jest how much I—"

"**T**HEN don't try it," said Red. "I'm goin' to make some changes around the Bar-X. Also there's something plenty important that I've got to look into. I'll need yore help."

"Yuh kin bank on it. Fist or six-gun."

"I may," Red said thoughtfully, "need both. Looks like our friend O'Keefe is comin' to."

O'Keefe had groaned just then, and stirred. Red stooped over him, rolled him on his back. The man groaned again, and opened his puffy, swollen eyes. He cringed when he saw Red.

"Git up!" Red snapped.

O'Keefe obeyed slowly. He swayed on his feet.

Then he saw Ferguson.

He recoiled, ugly fear leaping into his eyes.

"S'prised to see me?" Ferguson drawled. "Yuh shouldn't be. Why, yuh come all the way from the Bar-X to meet me."

O'Keefe swallowed. He said nothing.

"Is that true?" Red asked sharply. "When yuh tol' me yuh thought I was somebody else—yuh meant Ferguson?"

"**Y**EAH," O'Keefe admitted sullenly. "But don't blame me. Miller ordered me to do it. It was that, or lose m' job. I ain't got nothin' 'gainst Ferguson."

"Yuh've already lost yore job," Red said grimly. "Yuh're fired from the Bar-X."

"Yuh can't scare me to keep away from the ranch," O'Keefe snarled. "I'm workin' for the Bar-X, an'—"

"An' I own the Bar-X," snapped Red. "Yuh'll walk back, git yore truck an' clear out."

"Walk back?"

"That's yore pony up the trail there, ain't it? Well, I'm borrowin' it. An' if I catch yore ugly map around the ranch, I'll horsewhip yuh clear to the State line."

Ferguson grinned.

"Somethin' tells me, Red," he murmured, "the skunks runnin' the Bar-X now will plumb dislike their long-missin' boss."

Red gave the blond giant a long, level look.

"Bill," he said quietly, "yuh don't know the half of it. Fist an' six-gun—there'll be plenty need for both. Still want to come along on this double date with trouble I'm cookin' up?"

"Shore," said Ferguson. "I need a vacation. 'Bout time I had me a little fun. Fist an' six-gun—I kinda like that."

"All right, come on!"

CHAPTER III

One-Way Ticket

TWILIGHT was casting its somber shadow across the hills when Red and Ferguson rode up to the big white house, the ranch building of the Bar-X.

Red's uncle had spent his boyhood in Georgia; he modeled the ranch-house somewhat after the stately southern Colonial home where he had been raised. The place had dignity and charm. Red felt a thrill when he realized that it was his.

But certainly there was little old Southern hospitality on the faces of the four men who stood up and waited, their thumbs on the cartridge belts, while Red and Ferguson dismounted. Hard-faced *hombres*, they were, with none of the genial, happy-go-lucky carelessness of the average puncher. Each had two guns strapped low on his thighs. Gunmen—riff-raff from the Border!

Red approached them. He paused, his foot on the lower step.

"Where's Miller?" he asked quietly, guessing instinctively that none of the four men was the manager of the Bar-X.

They appraised him insolently. One drawled, jerking his thumb to Ferguson.

"Jedgin' by the company yuh keep, Mr. Miller won't be int'rested seein' yuh."

"Say," another man said abruptly, "that's O'Keefe's pony. Where'd you git it, *hombre*?"

"From O'Keefe," Red replied coolly. "He's walkin'. I'm still waitin' for one o' yuh to fetch Miller. An' I don't like to be kep' waitin'."

"Yuh don't, eh?" the first man mimicked. "An' who the devil are yuh supposed to be?"

"Only," said Red, "only the man who owns this outfit."

A sharp voice cut in. "What's that?"

Red turned as another man stepped out on the veranda through the huge double doors leading into the house. He was a stout, burly man, completely bald, with a red face, coarse brutal mouth, and alcohol bloodshot eyes. He stared at Red.

"What did yuh say?" he demanded.

"Are yuh Miller?" Red countered. "Yes."

"I'm Stephen Wade," Red said curtly. He waited a few seconds, then snapped, "Well, how long yuh goin' to stand there starin' at me?"

Miller blinked, shook his head. And abruptly became warmly genial.

"O' course, Mr. Wade. I now recognize yuh from the photograph yore uncle had o' yuh. Yuh ain't changed much since it was took. Sorry if I was rude, but I was kinda surprised seein' yuh. I thought yuh went back to South America."

"I'm here," Red said laconically. "Yuh know Bill Ferguson?"

"We've met," Miller said heavily. "Come on in!"

Red motioned to Ferguson. They tramped by the gaping men on the veranda and entered the house. It was quite dark in the huge living room. Miller lighted the kerosene lamp on the table, then dragged out a bottle and glasses.

He seemed nervous, and under a tension. Red downed his drink, so did Miller.

FERGUSON said meaningfully, glancing at miller:

"No, thanks. I'm not drinkin'."

Miller frowned, an angry gleam in his bloodshot eyes. He opened his mouth, glanced at Red and checked whatever he wanted to say. Red gently lowered his glass. He swung around so that he faced Miller.

"Who's yore foreman here?" he asked quietly.

Miller started. "Why, a man by

the name o' O'Keefe. A good man, too."

"Good, eh?" Red repeated lazily. "How do yuh mean that? With a rifle?"

"I—" Miller stammered—"I don't foller yuh, Mr. Wade."

"Where's O'Keefe now?"

"He—he went to town."

"Oh, did he?" Red drawled.

Miller's beefy face turned a deeper shade of red.

"Far's I know, he did. Why?"

"No matter," Red said briefly. "I—met him on the way. I fired him."

"Fired him?"

"Yeah. Didn't like his looks. Any objections?"

Miller swallowed. "Yuh're the boss, Mr. Wade."

Red toyed with the whiskey glass.

"There's another man I want to talk to yuh about, Miller," he said, looking up. "A man by the name of Gray. Know anythin' about him?"

Miller's hands, flat on the table, clenched slowly.

"Gray?"

"Yeah. Tim Gray."

Miller shook his bald head. "Sorry, Mr. Wade, but I don't know the man. Never heard o' that name."

"Well," Red drawled, "it's a right funny thing. I sent Gray here from Denver about three weeks ago. I wanted him to look into that offer yuh had for the ranch. I didn't want to accept it blindly."

"IT'S a good offer," Miller said quickly. "Eighteen thousand dollars, cold cash, is a lotta money nowadays. More, 'tween you an' me, than what the ranch is worth."

Red shrugged. "Mebbe. But I wanted to make sure. Tim Gray knew ranchin', an' was my best friend. He was supposed to have looked over the ranch, and, if he thought it was a fair offer, to act for me. He had a certified statement from me, giving him that power.

"I saw him to the train. That was three weeks ago, an' he was supposed to write me as soon as he got here. I haven't heard from him yet," he concluded grimly.

Again Miller shook his head. "I dunno, Mr. Wade. He didn't come here."

"HIS name is on the register at the hotel in Wesley," Red said significantly. "I found out that he rented a horse in the town livery stable, an' asked directions here."

"I still say," Miller repeated stolidly, "I dunno. It's sixty-five miles to town, an' pretty rough trails. He might've got lost."

"Not Tim Gray," said Red. "He'd spent half his life on the back of a pony. I'm askin' yuh again, Miller—are yuh shore Tim Gray didn't come here?"

Their eyes interlocked a moment.

"I'm shore," Miller said evenly.

Red drummed his fingers on the table. There was a short pause.

"All right," he said abruptly. "Where did that offer to buy the ranch come from?"

"Well," said Miller, "as I wrote yuh, the deal is handled by Jeff Ellis, a lawyer in Wesley. Jeff told me that some rich dude was to buy the Bar-X, to play at ranchin' in his spare time. He's willin' to pay the highest estimate I dared to give him—eighteen thousan' dollars.

"But he don't want it known for a while that he's buyin' it. So the money will be deposited on yore name in any bank yuh want, an' when yuh transfer the deed, Ellis himself will fill in his client's name. It ain't 'xactly reg'lar, mebbe, but that's what he wants. An' yuh'll git yore money."

Red glanced at Ferguson.

"Do yuh think eighteen thousand dollars is a fair offer for this ranch, Bill?"

"More than fair," Ferguson re-

plied promptly. "I'd say it's a blame good offer."

"But yuh know about the copper vein in the gulch that cuts across the northeastern corner of the ranch, don't yuh? Uncle Dan spoke often about it when he used to visit my mother. Used to say the vein was so rich yuh could pretty near mine it with a pickaxe alone."

Ferguson grinned. "Who don't know 'bout the Bar-X copper vein! But what kin yuh do with that copper?"

Red stared at him. "Yuh kiddin'?"

"I mean, Red," Bill explained, "that yuh can't get it outa here. This country here is a great basin, surrounded by hills. Some o' the through passes are pretty steep. Why, even shippin' cattle is one devil of a job. No roads, an' it's a good seventy miles to a railroad line.

"It'd cost yuh a fortune to git mining equipment here; an' yuh can't lug copper ore on back of a pack-horse. So yuh're stuck with it! No foolin' Red, yuh can't do a thing with that copper."

"A road could be built," Red said sharply.

"Shore it kin—at the cost of hundreds o' thousands o' dollars. Why, yuh'd have to tunnel through those hills. No, it ain't worth it, Bill. Besides, where'll yuh git the capital?"

RED nodded. "I see what yuh mean." He turned to Miller. "I'd like to see yore ranch accounts."

"Ranch accounts?" Miller echoed.

"Yeah. Yuh keep books, don't yuh?"

"Oh, shore."

"Where are they?"

"In that safe there." Miller pointed to the corner of the room.

Leisurely, Red pushed back his chair. He walked to the safe.

"Open it," he said quietly.

Miller remained sitting.

"Why not wait until mornin', Mr. Wade?" he said smoothly. "I have some private papers in there that I wanna clean out tonight. I'll turn all the ranch stuff over to yuh in the mornin'."

"If yuh don't mind," Red insisted, a steely note in his voice, "I'll look at them now. I won't read yore private papers."

Miller waved his hand carelessly.

"BUT, gosh, Mr. Wade, what's the hurry? It'll keep until to-morrer."

"Now!" Red snapped. "This is my safe. I want it open."

Miller got up and crashed his fist on the table.

"Yuh can't talk to me thataway," he roared, suddenly furiously angry. "I don't give a hoot if yuh do own this outfit. I'll open that safe when I blame please."

"Yuh're fired!" Red said softly.

"Yuh go to hell!" Miller snarled. He stalked out of the room.

"Bill!" Red whispered tersely. "Take a look where he's bound for."

Ferguson nodded, moved his big body to the door.

"Left around the house," he reported over his shoulder. "Looks like he's headin' for the bunkhouse."

"Anybody on the veranda now?"

"No."

"All right, stay there an' let me know if yuh see him comin' back."

Swiftly, Red stooped over the ancient brass dial of the old-fashioned safe. The combination to it had been pinned to his uncle's will; he had memorized it. He twirled the dial, muttering under his breath: "Right 41, left 17; right 80, left 11." There was a metallic click. He turned the dial. Slowly, the heavy door swung open.

The interior of the safe was jammed with old record books, papers, yellowing envelopes. Working with feverish haste, he began

dragging them out, examining every scrap of paper, the contents of every envelope. A foot-high litter of papers soon piled up on the floor. Finally the safe was empty.

Red straightened. Helpless defeat was mirrored on his lean, weather-beaten face.

"Dang it," he muttered, "could I be wrong?"

A GAIN he leaned over the safe. Then an exclamation of triumph escaped his lips. Near the top of the safe was a little drawer which he hadn't noticed before. That which he sought must be in there. He yanked on the two tiny knobs on each side of the drawer. It was locked.

Cursing under his breath, he drew his revolver. He smashed the butt against the lock. Again. The plate bent. When he struck it the third time, the lock broke. Quickly, he slid open the drawer. It contained one long white envelope, sealed. He tore it open, glanced eagerly at the contents.

"That's it," he gritted through clenched teeth. "Why, the low-down, doublecrossin'—"

"Callin' me names, *Mister Wade*?" he heard a hoarse whisper behind him.

Red whirled. Miller stood near the rear door, his four gunmen behind him. They must have circled the house, and entered through the rear door. There was a double-barrelled shotgun in Miller's hairy hands, pointing at Red's chest, and a killer's look was in his bloodshot eyes. One of the gunmen also covered Red. The other three had their guns trained on Ferguson.

For a few seconds, the grim tableau remained so, none of the six men moving a muscle. Then Miller said, out of the corner of his mouth:

"Drop that six-gun, Wade!"

The sinister alternative in his

voice was unmistakable. Red's gun thudded to the floor. One of the men, a swarthy-faced Mexican, cautiously approached Ferguson, and jerked the blond giant's two black guns out of their holsters.

"So," Miller said softly, "yuh did know the combination to the safe, eh, Wade?"

"Yeah," Red replied coolly.

"Then why did yuh ask me to open it for yuh?"

"Jest to see if yuh would," Red drawled. "I kinda suspected yuh didn't want me to look in that safe until yuh removed a certain paper from it. I asked yuh to open it to make shore if I was right. And I was, blast yuh!"

"Yuh're a bright young man, Wade," Miller murmured. "Jest like Tim Gray was a bright young man. He got a bad case o' lead poisonin' one night. Shore, O'Keefe an' I dry-gulched him! Yuh say he was a friend o' yours?"

"He was," Red said evenly.

"In which case," said Miller, a leer on his thick lips, "I'll give yuh a ticket to join him where he is now. A one-way ticket. An' Ferguson over here can kinda come along with yuh. Good-by, *Mister Wade*, an' a pleasant trip!"

He stepped back and jerked the butt of the shotgun to his shoulder.

CHAPTER IV

Enough Fighting

THERE was no fear in Red's blue eyes as he faced the shotgun. Only cold contempt.

"Go ahead, yuh skunk!" he said evenly. "I'll tell yuh one thing, though. Yuh might've got away with Tim's murder; yuh won't git away with mine!"

"No?" Miller drawled.

"No! I had the sense to take certain precautions before I came down here. Pull that trigger, Miller, an'

yuh'll be the guest of honor at a swell necktie party. An' I'm *not* bluffin'!"

"The devil yuh're not!" Miller snarled. "March toward that door—both o' yuh. I don't want to mess up my livin' room."

A thin, hard smile on his lips, Red reached his right hand in the pocket of his grey flannel shirt. Ignoring Miller completely, he pulled out a black wallet, crisscrossed with two rubber bands.

"Before yuh do somethin' that yuh'll be heap sorry for later," he murmured, "there's a little paper in here yuh oughta see."

He removed the rubber bands on the wallet. Conscious of Miller watching him with reluctant curiosity, Red withdrew a small grey envelope from the wallet. He crossed the room unhurriedly, paused at the table, leaned over it, and extended the envelope to Miller.

"Better read it," he said coldly, "before yuh go pullin' that trigger. It'll change yore mind—in one devil of a hurry!"

Almost instinctively, impressed by Red's confident manner, Miller lowered the shotgun and took a step toward the table. It was the move that Red was gambling on. The large kerosene lamp in the center of the table was only a few inches from his left hand.

RED'S face gave no indication of the two lightning-like moves that followed. His left hand swooped around, slapping the lamp off the table. Then he threw his body forward, grimly conscious that in the next split instant he might feel hot lead tearing through his flesh.

The lamp smashed to the floor. A splintering of glass, heavy kerosene fumes—and darkness. Luckily, the kerosene hadn't caught fire. Red's mad lurch against the heavy table heaved it to one side. An orange

streak split the darkness as a gun cracked. The slug thudded into the heavy wooden top of the table.

A man cursed hoarsely. Then another gunshot. Red had watched for the second flash. He hurled himself across the wooden barricade of the table. His outstretched arms closed about a man's body. A gun barrel struck glancingly across his skull as the man smashed out wildly.

RED sank a hard fist in the man's stomach, then slammed him against the wall. His right hand snaked down, catching the man's gun wrist just in time to steer aside the slug which would have plowed through his body.

Savagely, Red twisted the wrist. The man screamed with pain, dropping the gun. Red released him and dived after it.

His groping fingers found it in the darkness. He felt a thrill of exultation when they closed about the heavy butt. Now he had a chance! A gun suddenly blazed at him, so close that Red felt the heat of the powder. The bullet, burying itself in the floor, sent tiny splinters of wood into his right cheek.

He rolled over, jerked up the heavy Colt. He knew that only a few feet away from him a gunman crouched—the same man, he thought, from whom he had just wrested the gun, and now firing with its mate. Red thought he could make out the blurred outline of his body, but he wasn't sure. If he missed, the tell-tale flash of his gun would seal his death warrant.

With his left hand, cautious not to make a sound, he wedged a cartridge out of his belt. He tossed it to the floor a few feet away from him. As Red expected, the gunman jerked the trigger the instant he heard the slight noise. Then Red's gun spewed hot lead. The screaming curse of a man mortally wounded lingered for

a long second in the black darkness.

His jaw set grimly, Red stood up. That had cut down the odds a bit! But still Miller and three of his gunmen were crouching in the darkness somewhere. And where was Ferguson?

As if in answer to his unspoken question, he heard Ferguson's booming voice:

"All right, I'll borrow that, *hom-bre!*"

A piece of furniture crashed out. A muffled curse, heavy boots scraping the floor; then, distinctly audible in the tense silence, the crack of bone striking bone. Ferguson's voice again, a note of triumph in it, boomed out:

"That'll keep yuh peaceful-like a while!"

Ferguson's voice had come from the left somewhere. Now a gun darted its angry little tongue from the right, the man obviously firing in the direction of the voice. Red sent three slugs at the flash, then quickly shifted his position. He did not know whether he had scored a hit.

He suddenly realized that it was much lighter now in the huge living room. And a moment later, he realized why. Someone had thrown open the huge double doors leading out on the veranda. It was a bright night; enough light came in for Red to make out figures.

THE man crouching just outside the door on the veranda was O'Keefe, his clothes grey with dust and caked perspiration. He and Red saw each other in the same instant. Both blazed away. O'Keefe's bullet passed so close to Red's cheek that he felt the air it displaced. The ape-like foreman of the Bar-X disappeared.

And now Red caught a glimpse of Miller, streaking out the back door. He fired after him, but knew

he had missed even as he squeezed the trigger.

Crouching in the corner, gun in either hand, was Ferguson. A man lay limp on the floor at his left. Another was sitting up against the wall, his hands on his stomach, his face twisted with pain. He now slouched forward.

AGAIN a gun cracked from the veranda. Red saw that he was standing at the foot of the stairs leading up to the bedrooms above. He backed slowly up the stairs, at the same time motioning to Ferguson. The blond giant raced across the room, bullets from the unseen gunmen on the veranda pursuing him like angry hornets.

Both paused halfway up to the second story landing.

"Dang it, Red," Ferguson panted, "we don't have to run from that mangy pack!"

"If we stay in that livin' room," Red snapped, "they'll pick us off through the windows an' the doors. Miller has eleven men; sort o' tough odds. Up here, we have a chance. They've got to come up an' git us."

"An'," Ferguson grinned happily, "they're welcome to it!"

They now heard heavy boots pounding in the living room below. Miller's hoarse voice shouted directions. Then a hail of lead came sweeping up the stairs.

"Hug the wall," said Red, "an' yuh'll be all right. They kin afford to waste ammunition; we can't. When they come chargin' up the stairs, we'll blast the daylight out of 'em!"

The charge came quicker than Red expected, but not from the living room. A hail of lead still came screaming from down there, smashing down plaster, splintering wood as some of the slugs found the wide bannister of the stairs. But at least one shot had come *behind* Red.

He whirled, to see a swarthy Mexican face glaring down at him from the top of the stairs. Red fired, missed, as the Mexican convulsively jerked his body aside. Then the swarthy gunman yanked his trigger. Something hot, like the burning tip of a cigarette, touched the lobe of Red's left ear.

Again Red jerked the trigger of his big Colt. The hammer fell on an empty shell. Desperately, he hurled the useless gun into the Mexican's ugly face. The man ducked, and slipped on the stairs.

Red reached him with two tigerish leaps. His right fist crashed out, catching the Mexican below and slightly behind his ear. The man went down as if he'd got a bullet through his heart. Red clawed for his gun.

He was panting when he straightened, sweat pouring down his face and neck. In the excitement of the fight, he had overlooked two vitally important things—to reload his gun, and the fact that there might be rear stairs to the second story of the ranch building. It had almost cost him his life.

Ferguson's two guns were hammering away with the speed of a machine-gun. The blond giant scorned caution. He stood there in the middle of the stairs, feet astride, pouring lead into the living room below. Suddenly, he stopped firing. The silence, after the mad bedlam of gunfire, was startling.

"LOOKS like to me, Red," he drawled over his shoulder, "the show's about over." There was ludicrous regret in the big man's voice.

Red stepped over the unconscious Mexican's body, and descended the stairs. O'Keefe lay near the first step, his ape-like body twisted grotesquely. He was dead. There were three other bodies on the floor of the living room. The place looked like

a morgue which has just gone through a violent earthquake.

But where was Miller? Red did not see the burly, bald-headed manager of the Bar-X. Hiding somewhere, was he? Oh—and the thought sent Red racing to the double doors—was he trying to escape?

RED ran out on the veranda. Cool darkness. Silence. Then he heard a board creak somewhere to his right. His next move was purely instinctive. He dropped flat on his face.

And not an instant too soon. For one of the barrels of the shotgun sprayed buckshot against the pillar where he had stood a moment ago. The creaking board, as Miller had swung around to level the shotgun, had saved Red's life.

He rolled over, jerking up his gun. There was Miller's burly outline behind one of the pillars, the double barrel of the shotgun even now tilting downward for another shot. There was no time to take aim. Red squeezed the trigger, trusting to luck.

And luck was with him. A choking scream burst from Miller's thick lips. He dropped the shotgun and stepped out, his arms high up over his head. There was bloody foam now on his lips.

He slid downward against the pillar and lay still.

"An' that," Red heard Ferguson, who had just stepped out on the veranda, "is—that!"

Red scrambled to his feet.

"Oh, is it?" he said grimly. "Miller has eleven riders, yuh tol' me. I counted only four bodies. Where are the others? They're not ridin' the range at this time o' the year."

"No, Mr. Wade," came a quiet voice, "we're not!"

A man had just come around the corner of the house.

"Come on up here!" Red snapped:

"An' with yore hands toward them stars!"

The man, his hands high over his head, walked up the steps to the veranda.

He was a short, bow-legged, leather-faced puncher.

"My name's Curly Harris, Mr. Wade," he said. "I rode range for yore uncle. The boys at the bunkhouse sent me as spokesmen, kind o'. We ain't never did have nothin' to do with Miller an' his pack o' coyotes. We're paid for punchin' cattle. An' we'd plumb like jest to continue in the same ca-capacity.

"When Miller ast us to help him dry-gulch yuh—why, we tol' him to go hang. We're workin' for you, Mr. Wade."

"Thanks, Curly," Red said quietly. "An' thank the boys for me."

The puncher nodded, touched the brim of his Stetson and waddled on his short legs back to the bunkhouse. Red glanced at Miller's body. With fingers that weren't quite steady, he rolled himself a cigarette.

"Yeah, Bill," he murmured, "I guess it *is* all over now."

"Say," Ferguson asked curiously, "what was that paper yuh found in the safe? I still don't git the set-up."

Red lighted the cigarette and inhaled the blue smoke deep into his lungs.

"I MAY as well start at the beginnin', Bill," he said. "Yuh know 'bout that offer I got for the ranch?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I spoke to Tim Gray, a friend o' mine, about it. He knows everythin' there is to know 'bout ranchin'—which is more than I kin say. I showed him Miller's reports. Jedgin' from those reports, that offer was too blame good, Bill.

"I was kinda suspicious, so I sent Tim Gray to look into it. I gave him a certified statement to act for

me, if he found that the deal was straight."

"An' it wasn't?"

"No. Tim Gray did write me when he reached Wesley, the nearest town here. He said the lawyer handlin' the deal had a right shabby reputation in town, an' Miller was his best friend. It seemed to Tim that the offer was comin' from Miller hisself. What he couldn't figger out, was why.

"THAT'S the last I heard from Tim, an' he was supposed to write me again in a few days. I thought I'd take a trip out here myself, an' find out what became o' him.

"I met O'Keefe on the trail, an' you saw what happened. That business kind o' gave me a slant on Miller's character. From that moment, I had suspicion that Miller had murdered Tim Gray—though I still didn't know why. Because that could be the only reason why Tim hadn't written me again. See what I mean?"

"Shore, Red."

"When Miller denied knowin' anythin' about Tim, I was sure he was lyin'. The letter I gave Tim was really power of attorney, as they call it; he could close all deals in my name. Now, no one really knew Tim 'round here. What was to stop Miller from takin' that letter, an' then havin' one o' his own men impersonate Tim?

"I had an idea that letter was in the safe. No reason for Miller to carry it 'round with him, an' it's a cinch he didn't expect me. I asked Miller to open the safe for me—jest to see if he would. An' when he wouldn't—why, then I was certain that there was somethin' in that safe that he didn't want me to know about.

"An' there was, Bill! Not only the letter I gave Tim, but also somethin' that proved *why* Tim had been murdered. I found a letter from the Cen-

tral Valley Railroad, notifyin' Miller that they were goin' to build a spur line from Wesley, an' askin' the permission of the owner for the right-o'-way through the Bar-X property."

"I see it now," Ferguson said tersely. "With a railroad line cuttin' right through here, that copper vein would be worth a fortune."

"Yuh bet! That's why Miller was so anxious to buy the ranch. An' he made a high offer, thinkin' I'd grab it. Tim must o' found out 'bout the Central Valley's plans. An' so Miller, with O'Keefe's help, murdered him."

"Gosh," Ferguson muttered, "it's clear enough now."

There was a short pause.

"Yuh know," Red said slowly, "I been thinkin'. I don't like the idea of a rival ranch usin' my waterhole.

It kinda leads to trouble. So we'll scrap that outfit o' yours."

"Red!" Ferguson's eyes were hard now. "I thought yuh promised me—"

"EASY," Red grinned. "I thought o' combinin' both in one. An' you an' me kinda goin' partners. What do yuh say, Bill?"

"But it ain't fair," Ferguson objected. "Yore ranch is six times the size o' mine, an'—"

"Didn't yuh have enough fightin' for one night?" Red asked wearily. "'Cause if yuh don't accept my offer, I'm goin' to sail into yuh!"

Ferguson laughed.

"An' because I like yuh too much to beat the lights outa yuh," he drawled, "I accept. Shake, pardner!" Their hands gripped.

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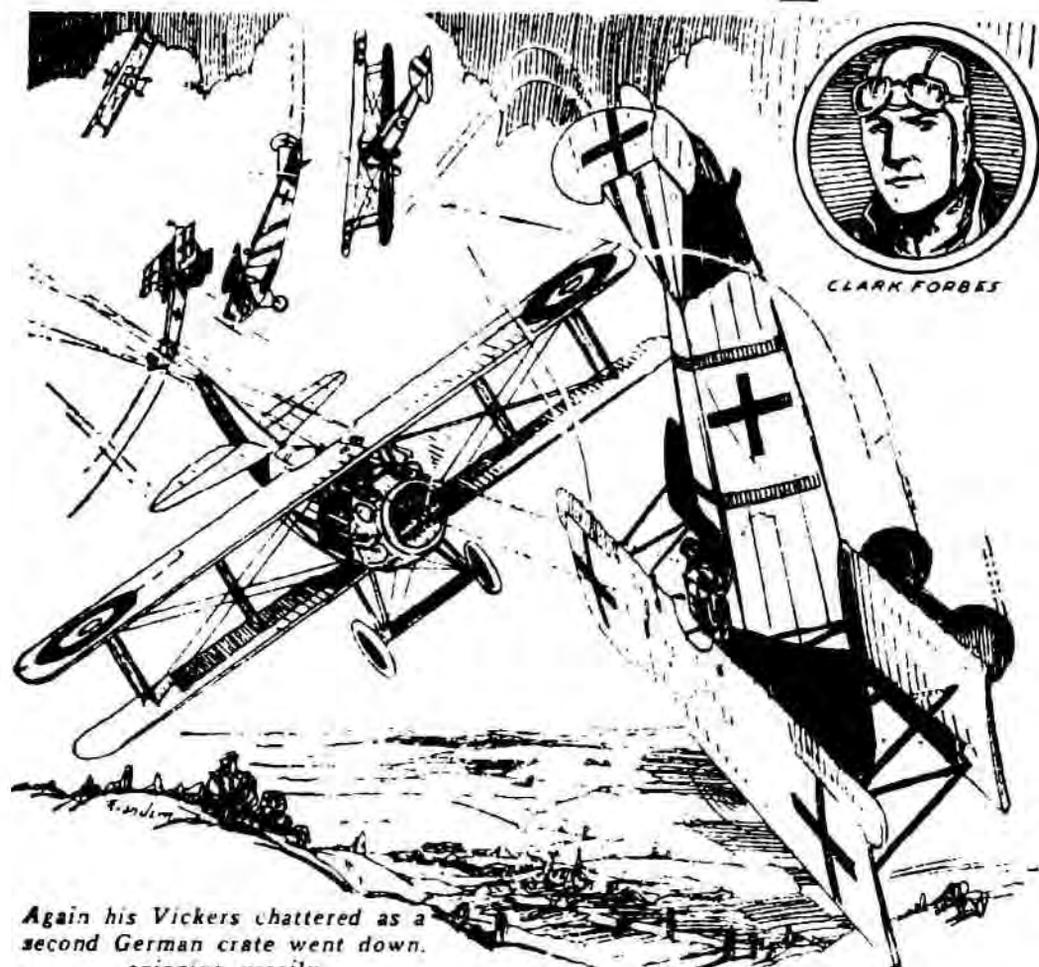
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STORIES BY GEORGE BRUCE, MAJOR GEORGE
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CAPTAIN LEE FREDERICKS AND OTHERS

Combat Report



CLARK FORBES

*Though Forbes Ripped into the Enemy Like a Thunderbolt
and Downed More than His Share of 'Em He
Wasn't Considered an Ace. Yet—*

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

Author of "Son of Mars," "The Ace From Hell," etc.

THIRTEEN thousand feet above German soil, and fifteen kilometers behind the German lines, Clark Forbes rode the wind in his specially constructed Spad. From here he could see all he had come to see, be in position to dive on any enemy who came too

close, or get away if he so chose. On a long slanting dive under full power, he could reach his own lines even ahead of a fast-maneuvering Fokker.

Forbes' nose was like the beak of an eagle. There was something about his helmet that suggested an eagle's

crest, something in his eyes of the eagle's miraculous vision.

Forbes was the falcon of the American forces. His duties were manifold. He spotted enemy encampments, concentration of German crates, the making of new fields; and when Allied flights came over the lines, he flew to meet them and led them to the attack.

When none of these tasks needed attention, Forbes found work on his own to do. He was a lone eagle, a battler *par excellence*.

To those Germans of the past who had attempted to dispute with him and had died, Forbes didn't give a thought. He was ruthless, but a sportsman, and he gloried in his work.

He shifted in his place, suddenly, and looked down.

Seven planes were taking off from the field he had spotted this morning and reported. It was a new field, equipped with the latest in Fokkers, officered by the cream of German Air. It represented a grim, savage force. The Fokkers rose over the field, circling.

FLYING swiftly and surely out of the north, angling eastward from the lines, nine Nieuports were coming to take a crack at the Boche. Nine to seven, this far back of the lines, even though many other Germans might see and come to take part, scarcely troubled Forbes. What did trouble him was that he seemed to have missed something in his first report, something that even his eagle eyes had failed to pick out.

Camouflage!

Inside the northern edge of the field below, sheltered by the trees, were other crates. He couldn't attempt to guess how many, but the intention of the trap was easily apparent. The seven planes were decoys. That they were so far behind the lines was a sure challenge to Al-

lied Air, which had become cocky with too many successes during the past two weeks. Forbes saw the Boche intent all too clearly. When battle had been joined, when the dog-fight was a mad scramble, the Germans had but to shoot their unreported planes into the sky and, fifteen kilometers behind the lines, beyond the chance of Allied help, they could knock down the Nieuports at their pleasure.

FORBES gritted his teeth and cursed himself for his failure to see the obvious. He should have known that there was something tricky about this particular field. He should have guessed, should have gone down closer to make sure.

"I'm a blind fool," he gritted to himself, "but it's too late to go into that now. I've got to do something, and quickly!"

He cursed himself for sticking to the heights, a habit he had formed because he loved the wild free play of the wind in his face, the glory of space about him. It might prove a costly habit now, unless. . . .

"Once more," said Forbes to himself, "I get myself some Jerries I can't claim. They'll fall behind the German lines where they can't be confirmed. That's why, with twenty planes to my credit, they don't even call me an ace!"

Now the nine Nieuports were very close. The seven Fokkers were swinging into fight formation. Forbes watched, his unwinking eyes resembling more than ever those of an eagle.

The leader of the Nieuports should have been warned of treachery by the fact that the sky all about was so empty of other German crates. But apparently he wasn't.

The Nieuports swung in as, up aloft, unnoticed, Clark Forbes circled and waited. Now the Germans were in position. The Allies had

swung into a semicircular formation. Then, the dog-fight was on.

Forbes concentrated on the woods at the north end of the German field. He saw moving wings down there, knew that when the German crates came out they would come with a rush, and be up among the Nieuports before the Allies could even guess what a trap they had flown into.

A Nieuport went down. Right after it went a Fokker. Both were in flames.

As though this double death had been the signal, the woods at the north end of the field seemed literally to vomit forth planes. The Nieuport pilots saw them at once, as six crates leaped into the sky with a scudding rush of wings. The Nieuports swung together—and the six remaining Germans swept in between the Nieuports and the front lines.

The trap had been sprung.

FORBES, timing his movements and his flight to the split second, gauging his distance with that eagle's eye of his, turned his nose down and began his dive. He looked at his wings, especially reinforced for long dives, and grinned to himself.

The Germans were due for a surprise. They were ripe for it, because they probably hadn't bothered about a lone flyer, so far off in the blue. And there were few crates made which could dive as far as Forbes was starting to dive.

He gave his crate full gun. In a matter of seconds, even while the rising Germans were setting their wall of wings about the Nieuports, the whine and scream of the wind through his wires was a banshee-wailing sound. His wings seemed to bow back with the speed of his descent.

Forbes grinned. Nothing a-wing could withstand his initial dive. He would go straight into the middle of the German flight.

Fortunately for him, the Germans were not all mixed up now with the Nieuports, but were circling them, in the manner Indians had once circled wagon trains.

FORBES' speed increased. His eyes were glued to his ring-sight. His hands hovered over his trips.

"Speed, baby!" he addressed his crate. "Speed, and lots of it!"

The Spad responded like a falling rocket. The great black earth was a blur. Trees and ground were all mixed up together in that haze. The enemy crates were like winged bullets, shooting up to meet him as he pointed squarely at their center.

"More unconfirmed kills," he muttered.

The Germans had spotted him. But by this time there wasn't a crate in the sky that could have escaped his plummeting dive.

With the enemy still a thousand feet under him, he caught one of them in his ring-sight and let go, a single smashing burst. He saw a German jump and jerk in his pit. He laughed a little. He hadn't, save for the slightest shift of his bony knees, altered the direction of his dive. Now, watching that German start down, he shifted again, ever so slightly.

His Vickers blazed again. He knew that by this time the roar of his descent must be audible to friend and enemy alike, above the shrieking of Hissos and Mercedes and Benzes, above the chattering of Vickers and Spandaus. He grinned grimly as he realized what effect he was causing.

Again his Vickers chattered.

A second German crate went down, spinning crazily.

"Not so good that time," said Forbes with a shake of his head. "I got the prop when I wanted the pilot. Rotten shooting!"

He was more careful next time, and saw another pilot jump and jerk.

"Three!" he snorted. "Like shooting fish in a barrell!"

One more burst from aloft, and then he would be right among them. He let it go. This time it was the motor of the enemy, and black smoke tinged with orange flames blossomed from under the Fokker's motor-housing. Forbes forgot to count.

"What the devil?" he asked himself. "I don't get credit for 'em anyhow!"

HE was bolting through the heart of the sky battle. He saw, in a blinding flash of speed as he passed, that the Nieuports were taking advantage of the diversion he had caused by marshaling themselves for the flight home, while the Germans were getting set to finish this upstart who had caused them so much trouble by upsetting their well-laid plans. Forbes grinned again.

"Stick with me, old crate," he addressed his sky-steed. "You've never failed me yet, and don't start now!"

He came back on the stick. A pull-out at such terrific speed would have ripped the wings off any crate that flew. But his wings did not falter at the terrific strain. He struck the bottom of his dive, and was instantly reaching for the sky again in a mighty zoom into space.

So great had been the speed of his descent under full power, he was shooting back up among his enemies almost as fast as he had gone through them on the way down. As he flashed through them like a projectile from an Archie they scattered once more to let him through.

He looked at the six Nieuports. They were now far enough away that not even the fastest Fokker could have caught them.

"My exit cue," Forbes whispered hoarsely.

He turned on his back in a tight loop, spun down once more, his guns savagely flaming, bullets hammering

through his Vickers in twin streams like water from a fire hose.

Through them he went again, while behind him a Fokker slid away to the right, wreathed in smoke.

Only this time he kept on diving, mostly because the enemy would expect him to come back up among them. But he had lengthened his glide, heading for home. He was ten kilometers away before the Germans could possibly realize that he had quit the fight cold. It was too late for them to give chase.

He swept homeward, disregarding the Archies. He was rather tired. He had done a good day's work. Nobody had bothered him. There wasn't even one hole in his wings.

He slid to a stop on his own field, turned his crate over to the ack emmas, strode across the field to his Headquarters Office. He stepped inside just as the squadron commander took down the telephone, listened carefully to some report or other, made some marks on a pad of paper. The C. O.'s eyes were alight with interest. As he listened he looked at Forbes, beckoned him to a chair.

"Thank you, Colonel, thank you!" said the major, clicking up. "That was Wing, Forbes," he announced, "congratulating me on some great stunt you've done. Great stuff, son! Here's a combat report to make out."

FORBES sat down and wrote briefly. He shoved the paper at the major, touched his helmet in a half salute, quitted the Headquarters Office.

The major frowned after him, wondering about the man's eternal failure to do anything but his duty, about which he never talked. Maybe there was some clue to Forbes' behavior in his combat report. The major stared at it.

No clue there, for the combat report said, in Forbes' scrawling hand: "*Nothing of interest. Routine patrol.*"

PEARLS of DEATH

*Flaming Lead and Swishing
Knives at the Devil's
Outpost of Tobar,
Hell-Spot of the
Banda Sea!*

A Complete Novelette

By **GEORGE ALLAN
MOFFATT**

*Author of "Smarter than a Chinaman,"
"The Death Ship," etc.*

CHAPTER I

Portuguese Sam's Dive

THE boy entered Portuguese Sam's place, flanked on one side by Spike Morini, and on the other by Thud Dakin, making, in every detail, the perfect picture of a young lamb being led to the fleecing.

On the island of Tobar, or, in fact, on any island of the Banda Sea, there was no place where this could be done more neatly than in Portuguese Sam's dive.

The fat, round-faced half-caste had a reputation that included every crime known in the South Seas—smuggling and hi-jacking, women and opium, murder and robbery—



Then the men were among the

down to the simple process of fleecing wandering tourists that fell into his hands. The riffraff and the scum of the islands filled his place at night, but the worst of all were Morini and Dakin.

Jim Dryden, sitting at a table at the far end of the low-ceilinged room, watched the scene with cold, grey eyes, his bronzed face expressionless.

Everything about the boy indicated that he was new to the island. His whites were too well tailored and a little too clean. His face was thin, not overly strong, far too pale for one who had lived in the South Seas.

Spike Morini and Dakin would get him drunk, relieve him of all his money and valuables, and throw him on the beach somewhere to wake



trees—a whistling, snarling mass of fiendish killers

up and try to figure what had happened to him. All in all, Dryden figured it would be a good lesson for the young fool.

So Dryden drank his whiskey and watched the boy only casually. He saw that the youngster was ill at ease.

He was talking in a rapid, nervous manner.

Spike Morini, his thin, olive-dark face twisted in a show of friendliness, listened and then waved his hand reassuringly in reply. Thud Dakin, bulky of body, with a flaming red face and a bull neck, sat back in the chair, fumbling a gun in the pocket of his filthy white coat. Then, out of a door at the other side of the room, the fat, rolling body of Portuguese Sam came wobbling toward the trio.

Dryden smiled grimly. The boy was in for more than a mere fleeing; the presence of Portuguese Sam made the scene assume a certain importance.

Suddenly Dryden's body stiffened; the muscles around his mouth contracted, and his lean, powerful body leaned forward a little, his right hand gripping the automatic in his coat pocket.

Portuguese Sam had joined the three, and Morini and Dakin were on their feet. Morini stood with his back to Dryden, but from the crook of his right elbow, Dryden knew he was doing some talking with an automatic, partly hidden by his coat, backing up his words.

For a fleeting second Dryden saw the fear-stricken face of the boy.

In that second the boy's eyes

had seen him and flashed a pleading, helpless message. Then the youth was pushed to a door in the rear of the room, with Spike Morini and Dakin behind him. Portuguese Sam had disappeared.

Dryden started to rise from his chair—when a soft, slurring voice spoke at his rear.

"Ah, *Mynheer* Dryden," the voice said, "you have come to speak with me."

Dryden straightened up and turned around, grinned humorlessly. Then he shrugged, shoving his hand in his coat pocket.

"I came to drink a little of your bad whiskey," Dryden laughed, "and to see what victims you had roped in. Interesting catch, you got there."

Portuguese Sam's little eyes burned savagely.

"You are interested in—my affairs, *Mynheer* Dryden," he said in his soft, slurring voice. "You are here to—"

The sentence was never finished. The thundering roar of a shot came from the room where the boy had been taken. Then there was a scream and the noise of a terrific struggle.

In that second Portuguese Sam's right hand went for his automatic. It traveled with lightning speed, but Dryden's traveled a split second faster.

It crashed against the fat jaw of the Portuguese with a resounding smack, and Portuguese Sam blinked stupidly, glassily for a moment, then crumpled to the floor in an inert heap.

WITH a leap Dryden was at the door of the room from which the noise was coming. His body went against it with a crash. A roar behind him shook the building, and a bullet splintered the door above his head.

And then he plunged face for-

ward into the room, but he was on his feet in a flash. Someone had closed the door behind him and locked it.

A long, dark arm came out of nowhere, swinging a whiskey bottle. It caught Dryden behind the ear and sent him to the floor, his senses reeling.

Over him bodies lurched back and forth and men breathed heavily and painfully.

DRYDEN lunged forward, and his shoulders hit two legs. A man yelled and came crashing down on him. Dryden's shoulders shot up, carrying the body of the man with him.

His right arm went under the man's waist, and his left arm caught him by the neck; then he whirled on his toes, swinging the body around, and hurled it against the wall. The body sprawled on the floor, limp and unconscious.

Then Dryden stepped back. In front of him were three men, two of them half-caste cutthroats, and the third Thud Dakin. In front of them his back to the wall, his clothes nearly torn from his body, was the boy.

He was armed now with a long, gleaming kris knife, and he stood behind a table, eyes wild with terror, face a deadly white. Slowly, relentlessly, Thud Dakin and the two cutthroats were closing in, moving forward in a narrowing circle. No attempt was made to use a gun or knife against the lad.

Dryden saw all this in a flash, and almost in the same split second his body was hurtling through the air at Thud Dakin. The big man swerved to meet him, his huge fists coming out with the force of a pile-driver. Dryden ducked, bringing his right up in a short, vicious uppercut—a blow that traveled less than four inches, but which had all the speed

and strength of his strong body behind it.

It crashed against Thud Dakin's jaw, and the big head snapped back. For a moment the eyes blinked; then with a bellow of rage, he bored into Dryden, head down, arms flying wildly. Dryden sidestepped the blows easily.

His right and left went out in paralyzing blows, landing on Dakin's face.

But the bellowing bulk came on, taking the blows as if they were mere taps.

His fist grazed the side of Dryden's head, sending him back against the wall.

Before he could duck again, Dakin's right caught him on the neck, a crushing, paralyzing blow.

Dryden went to the floor like a load of bricks. Every part of his body seemed numbed from that blow. Though he had no feeling of what he was doing, he moved with the speed of lightning, his hands closing on Dakin's ankles. The body of the big man went up in the air, turned a backward somersault, and landed on his head in the far corner of the room.

Dakin groaned weakly, struggled to get up, then fell on his face and lay still.

FISTS and bodies were pounding against the locked door of the room. It was swaying and threatening to break through at any moment.

Above the noise, Dryden heard a weak groan coming from the floor. He looked around.

Lying under the table was the boy, his pale face covered with blood, and at his side was a dark-faced man—dead.

The boy struggled up from beneath the table. He stood swaying weakly, his lower lip quivering. Then the hinges on the door broke. There was a wild yell, and suddenly

the room was filled with Portuguese Sam's men.

CHAPTER II

Death Pearls

DRYDEN dashed to the window, smashed the glass. Then, turning quickly, he grabbed the body of the swaying boy around the waist and threw him out of the window as the mob came charging into the room.

Dryden leaped after the boy's body.

He hit the ground with a sickening crash as knives broke the glass over his head and guns roared threateningly behind him.

In the darkness he groped and found the boy.

"Can you run?" he whispered.

"Faster than a bullet—right now," the boy laughed.

"Follow me," Dryden answered, and started down the narrow, black alley at top speed.

Five minutes later Dryden entered a low, squat bamboo building on a narrow, muddy, and very dark street, skirting the water front. He went up a short flight of steps to the rear of the house and into a small room. There was a bed, a bamboo table, with a candle sticking in the neck of a bottle, and several bamboo chairs in it.

Dryden lit the candle in the neck of the bottle.

The boy fell in a chair weakly and groaned.

"Hurt?" Dryden asked curtly.

The boy shook his head slowly.

"A couple of scratches," he answered. "That and shock."

"Take this," Dryden broke in coldly, handing the boy a flask of whiskey. "It will put some nerve back in your body—and then you'll have to do some fast talking."

The boy took a drink, coughed and coughed and shuddered a little, and

then settled back in his chair. The whiskey brought some color to his cheeks. Dryden went to a latticed window and peered out.

"They'll be here soon," he said dryly. "Hiding from Portuguese Sam in this burg is a job for a magician. This place belongs to Fung Soy, a Chinese trading partner of mine. Sam will think of it soon enough. Now for you. What are you doing in Tobar?"

"I came here to get possession of property that legally belongs to me," the boy said, with a little show of anger in his voice. "My name is Fred Markel—"

"Markel?" Dryden repeated slowly. "You are—"

"I presume you know, or have heard of my uncle, Flint Markel," the boy said. "He lived in these islands most of his life."

"Anyone living here knows of Flint Markel," Dryden said. "He was a pearler and worked these islands fifteen years ago. What property did he leave you?"

The boy wet his lips and looked at Dryden.

"My uncle died some years ago," he explained. "I was his only heir, and at first there wasn't much—a few dollars and an old sea chest. My guardian—for I was only seven—paid no attention to the chest. They put it away and forgot about it. Six months ago I went through the chest and found an old yellow paper with a map on it."

DRYDEN sat down wearily and groaned.

"A map," he repeated. "Buried treasure, I suppose. My God, after keeping my nose out of other people's business in these islands for five years, I jump in feet first—all over a map of buried treasure!"

The boy smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Portuguese Sam and his men

thought enough of this map to go to a lot of trouble to get it," he shot back at Dryden. "And those men don't chase will-o'-the-wisps very often."

"They never do," Dryden agreed. "But spill your story."

"I'LL have to go back some years," Fred Markel replied. "Fifteen years ago my uncle worked an island called Pearl Island, according to this map. He worked it with two men who doubled-crossed him when the haul had been made. There was murder and death on that island. Uncle got away in an old rowboat and left the two men to die there. But before he went, he buried the haul of pearls, hoping to return and get them.

"He died from exhaustion and fever, and his chest was shipped to the States. If my guardians had gone through it, they would have found the map and uncle's diary. They didn't. Fifteen years later I did—and I came to get the pearls."

He reached in his waist, untied a money belt, and brought out two papers. Dryden took them, moved over close to the burning candle, and studied each closely. One was a diary, or the part of a diary covering a period of nearly a month. The second paper was a map, crudely drawn. There was a hill, traced in a round circle and named Dead Man's Hill. A stream was indicated running at the base of the hill, and on this stream a cross was marked, with instructions as to the exact number of paces away from the base of the hill.

Dryden folded the papers and handed them back.

"Now how the devil!" he said grimly, "did Portuguese Sam and his cutthroats know about this map and the buried pearls?"

Fred bit his lip.

"Well, you see," he explained, "I

didn't know much about the islands, and I was alone. On board the ship from Singapore, I met a man named Thorton—"

"I see," Dryden cut him short. "You don't need to explain any more. Thorton is famous as a confidence man and a crook. You told him everything, and he advised you to see Spike Morini or Portuguese Sam and—"

"Spike Morini," Fred corrected.

"HE told me Morini knew these islands and would be glad to work with me for a share. The trouble started in that rear room tonight when Morini demanded to see the map. It's very clear now. After getting the map they would have killed me; they didn't kill me to get the map because I was too valuable to them alive. If I didn't have the map, they knew I would have memorized the instructions and they could have forced it out of me. I was a fool, but what else could I do?"

Dryden laughed and patted his shoulder.

"O.K.," he said. "We won't cry about what has happened. When I jumped into that fight to save you, I cut any strings that might ever hold me to Tobar. A man doesn't live here with Portuguese Sam gunning for him. You want to get to the pearls, and I have no place to go. I'll help you, and you can figure my share yourself."

Fred jumped to his feet, his face lighting up.

"It will be fifty-fifty," he cried. "If you help me, we'll outwit Portuguese Sam and his gang!"

"Right now we've got to get out of here," Dryden amended. "Here they come down the street."

With a quick movement of his hand, he snuffed the candle, and instantly the room was thrown into darkness.

Dryden led the way down a dark passage to a closet from which he

took automatics and ammunition and razor-edged knives.

"Can you swim?" he clipped.

The boy nodded.

"We'll board one of Fung Soy's junks and make a try for the island," Dryden said grimly. "Portuguese Sam will probably beat us there. He doesn't have the map, but he has sense enough to find out what island your uncle worked."

They went down a short flight of stairs, along another passageway, and out a back door into the night.

Behind them, howls rent the night as the mob swarmed into the street and stormed Fung Soy's house. As Dryden led the way to the end of an old dock, renewed yells of rage told them that their escape had been discovered.

Without a word he plunged into the sea.

Fred followed after him, swimming easily. Dryden led the way through the maze of boats and Chinese junks out into the more open water of the harbor.

On the lee side of a junk, he stopped, grabbed a rope, and pulled himself up.

Fred fell on the deck, exhausted and breathing in short gasps, as Dryden sprang to the anchor and started hauling it in.

As the tide started out, the little junk went with it.

CHAPTER III

Pearl Island

PEARL ISLAND lay in a cluster of atolls some hundred miles southeast of Yulla Island in the Banda Sea. Treacherous and dangerous with coral reefs and their cross-currents, it lay well out of the travel lanes.

Dryden, standing at the wheel of the ancient junk, narrowed his eyes a little as they came alongside the brilliantly green island. Fred Markel sprawled on the deck near him. In

the five days they had been at sea, his face had tanned and his body had taken on a rugged look.

"Here we are," Dryden said grimly. "We'll make for that lagoon to the right."

He swung the junk around slowly, on a starboard tack, and started through a wide opening in the beach, an opening that led into a large lagoon.

The old junk moved swiftly, gliding through the entrance with an ease that would have been impossible for a large ship.

At the far end of the lagoon a broken-down landing came in view, in front of a clearing filled with great piles of shells.

Dryden's eyes flashed. He knew what the pile of shells meant and he guided the junk to the landing, yelling instructions to Fred to take in the sail.

Zip-wang! Out of the dense green of the jungle came a bullet. It crashed against the wheel near Dryden's waist. There was a splintering of wood, and the bullet ricocheted to the right and skimmed over the water.

Dryden was on his stomach, his automatic in his right hand. Fred was fore, struggling with the anchor of the junk.

He let it drop in the water, and the boat stopped some feet away from the broken old dock.

ZIP-ZIP-P-WANG! Bullets came in a regular barrage now, cutting every part of the aft deck of the junk. Little curls of white smoke rose out of the jungle. Dryden had crawled behind the main hatch and lay there, his body doubled up, protected against the rain of bullets.

Fred was crawling along the side of the deck toward him. His gun roared, and then he darted behind the main mast, his body barely hidden from the bullets. Then suddenly the peppering stopped. Silence fol-

lowed, and Fred made a dive for the hatch where Dryden lay curled up.

Dryden lay still, watching the shore. In all the green fastness no life moved, no sound came to break the stillness. In the west the sun had set, and the grey mist of twilight was falling.

"We're going to have to do some fast diving and swimming," Dryden said. "In a few minutes Portuguese Sam's men will come charging us."

Fred looked at him, and fear came into his eyes.

His lips quivered, and his body started to tremble, but he shook his head stubbornly.

DRYDEN patted him on the shoulder and laughed.

"It's tough for a kid like you," he said, "but keep a stiff upper lip, and when they come charging out of the jungle dive overboard with me and stay under water as long as you can. If we can make it to shore, we can crawl up in the jungle and be safe for a little while. So don't—"

His words were cut short by wild yells from the mangrove bushes as ten men burst into the open, armed with rifles and revolver.

Dryden and Fred went over the starboard side in long, angular dives. Dryden hit the water, with his arms shooting out in powerful strokes to take him far under the surface. Then he straightened and swam quickly and easily, under-water, heading for the bank.

At last his fingers touched ground, and he crawled on his hands and knees up to the shore. On the bank, he lay completely hidden by the dense foliage, breathing heavily and wondering what had happened to Fred.

By now night was falling. Loud cries were coming from the old junk. Then, suddenly, flames leaped high in the air, lighting the lagoon with the brightness of day.

Dryden smiled grimly, as he

crawled back farther into the foliage. Portuguese Sam's men had set fire to the old junk—the only hope of escape from the island. Now he and Fred were prisoners.

Something moved near him. A twig cracked. Dryden's body doubled up, ready for a spring. Then other twigs snapped and he heard someone crawling toward him. He lay flat on the ground, his knees buckled up under his body, but suddenly he stopped, relaxed and smiled.

"ANYWAY I'm a better swimmer than you are," he heard Fred say. "I made it to the shore ahead of you."

The youth crawled to Dryden's side.

"There goes the junk," Dryden said. "Now it's kill 'em or get killed." If we can—"

He stopped talking suddenly, his body going flat on the ground. Somewhere ahead of him, he heard men stamping through the mangrove bushes, beating them down with long poles.

The flames from the burning junk rose high in the air, lighting the lagoon and the jungle brightly, penetrating even to where Dryden and Fred lay. The oncoming men were within feet of them now. Dryden reached over, patted Fred's shoulder. The boy was trembling, but no sound came from his lips.

In the tense, deadly moment that followed, Dryden lay immovable, hardly daring to breathe. The men were over them, shouting and talking, beating to the right and left with long poles.

The brush was knocked down and hit Dryden's face.

At last the searching party had passed; their voices and the lashing of the brush were slowly dying away.

Dryden was on his hands and knees, moving through the brush. Fred followed, asking no questions, keeping as close as he could. The

liana vines cut Dryden's face and slashed his shirt, but he moved forward, breaking the way for Fred.

Finally they came to a path, once wide and well trod, but now a mere trace in the jungle. Dryden jumped to his feet and started up the trail, walking quickly, his eyes darting right and left.

The darkness was intense, and palm trees, stunted and misshapen, shut out what light there might have been.

Suddenly Dryden stopped. Somewhere ahead he heard a human voice. He made a headlong dive for the mangrove bushes to his right, just as dark forms appeared in the darkness ahead. Fred was at his side, crouching low.

Two men passed along the path, talking low and excitedly. Dryden was unable to catch their words.

"We'll see where this path leads," he whispered.

Then he was out on the path again, his body hugging the darkness. He moved swiftly now with arms swinging and body crouching. His face was hard and cold, and his jaws were set.

"Ah, *Mynheer* Dryden," a voice spoke suddenly in the darkness. "I would advise you to keep on walking — straight ahead — and please put your hands above your head."

In the next second, before either Dryden or Fred could reach for his automatic, guns were shoved in their backs and the night became alive with forms on all sides of them.

Dryden's body tensed. Then he grinned coldly, and his hands went above his head.

CHAPTER IV

Voices of the Dead

DRYDEN walked ahead of the gun, over the dark path, with his hands above the head. Fred was at his side. After a little while, they came to a clearing, in the center of which was an old

wooden shack. Overhead, the moon had come out, above the tops of the tall cocoanut trees that surrounded the open space.

There was something weird about that old shack in the moonlight. It was almost a crumbling ruin, with the jungle growth crawling over it, as if to wipe out completely the grim reminder of the men who had lived, worked, and died around it.

Around the house stood a clump of casuarinas. Talking trees, the Malays called them—trees that made the dead talk again. A gentle breeze was coming out of the dense foliage, and the leaves of the casuarinas whispered softly. And near the shack, all bleached and white in the bluish moonlight, lay a man's skeleton, wasting away in dust.

Dryden looked at Fred. The boy was staring at the skeleton, eyes wide. That old shack had been used by Flint Markel and his partners, and the lonely skeleton was a grisly reminder of what had happened there when death stalked the clearing.

Portuguese Sam and his men hustled Dryden and Fred up to the shack and thrust them inside roughly.

Someone lit a candle, and the interior of the old building was suddenly flooded with the smoking glow of the candle flame. Near the wall, Dryden saw the remains of an old bunk, with shreds of blankets still lying across it. A bamboo chair, broken and covered with the dust of years, stood near the bed, and in the center of the room was an old table. Everything seemed to be just as it had been fifteen years before.

DRYDEN'S hands were still over his head, and a gun was still shoved in his back. Portuguese Sam came around in front of him, his fat, greasy face was twisted in a murderous grimace. The gun slipped away from Dryden's back, and he heard the door of the shack close.

"Ah, *Mynheer* Dryden," Portu-

guese Sam said in his slurring accent, "I was saying the last time we talked together that you could hardly be interested in my affairs."

Dryden shrugged and let his hands drop to his sides. Portuguese Sam held a gun pointed at Dryden's body, and he made no objection when the hands were lowered.

"An unfortunate occurrence," Dryden replied dryly. "Your affairs happen to be my affairs right now. A bad mix-up."

Dryden's lean face was tense and hard, eyes squinted slightly.

"I do not understand, *Mynheer* Dryden," Portuguese Sam replied coldly. "You—"

"Buried pearls, Portuguese Sam," Dryden broke in curtly, "belong to the man who buried them, and when he dies they belong to his family. A matter of law, which, of course, you can hardly understand."

Dryden's weight shifted slightly to his right foot.

"Then I will have—"

Portuguese Sam never finished that sentence. Dryden moved with the speed of a tiger, coming up crashingly under Portuguese Sam's heavy body.

The half-caste Portuguese's gun roared simultaneously with the movement of Dryden's body. Yet between the two movements there was a split second—the fraction of a second that it takes a bullet to go a few feet. The bullet cut through his shirt and entered the body of the man standing behind Dryden. The man screamed, doubled up, and fell to the floor with a groan of anguish.

Then pandemonium broke loose.

Dryden's arms had gone around Portuguese Sam's fat legs, and the fat man went up in the air, screaming and kicking and clawing. His gun lay on the floor where it had fallen when Dryden's shoulders hit him.

Boards creaked and splintered, as the fat Portuguese's body crashed

against the wall of the shack. Dryden dove head first after him, and, as he did, his right shot out and caught Portuguese Sam flush on the jaw.

Then Dryden rolled over on his back, his automatic in his right hand. The shack was rocking and shaking with the thunderous roar of exploding guns. A bullet crashed in the wood over Dryden's head. His gun belched red flame. A man screamed, grabbed his throat, sank to the floor with blood running from his mouth. Three times more Dryden's gun roared.

He saw Fred standing with his back to the wall, his automatic smoking and jumping.

THEN, as quick as it had started, the din of roaring guns stopped. Dryden was on his feet. Portuguese Sam lay huddled against the wall. Three other men lay on the floor. The rest had gone.

Dryden walked to the door, kicked it open, then dropped to his hands and knees and crawled outside. Guns roared all around him. Bullets crashed through the doorway, over his head. Then his body was on the ground, rolling over like a log. With him was Fred, duplicating every move Dryden made.

They rolled into the clump of casuarina trees, where the moonlight did not penetrate. Rifles thundered, and the bluish haze of the clearing was cut by the leaping, stabbing flashes of orange red. Bullets cut through the trees, tearing bark and great splinters out of the trunks. From the shack the fat, waddling form of Portuguese Sam came stumbling, yelling frantically. Thud Dakin was at his side.

"Let 'em have it," Dryden said coldly. "Running is out of the question."

Slowly, the shadowy forms of twenty men closed in on them, rifles ready to belch forth death. The

moonlight was bright enough to reveal their dark, scowling faces.

Dryden slipped away from the trunk of the tree and kneeled on his right knee, his automatic resting on his leg. Fred joined him.

"You take the front; I'll watch the rear and the sides," Dryden directed. "Shoot to kill. We won't get pearls, but we'll send a bunch of half-castes to hell."

Then Dryden's automatic roared, and a jumping flash of red leaped out from the darkness of the trees. A man screamed and sank to the ground. Again Dryden's gun roared, and another man fell. Fred's gun was in action now, cracking slowly and deadly.

But no answering fire came from the advancing line of men. Dryden smiled grimly. He knew what that meant: Portuguese Sam wanted to take Fred alive—to torture the boy until he talked.

With a wild, savage yell the circle closed on the clump of trees. Dryden brought two more down. Fred accounted for another.

Then the men were among the trees—a whirling, snarling mass of killers. Dryden fought grimly. Knives flashed over his head, and guns clubbed at him. His automatic was empty now, and he had no chance to reload. He laced out with his fists desperately, hopelessly.

Then a glint of blue steel flashed before his eyes. There was a deafening roar and a flash of something dazzlingly bright.

Dryden remembered nothing more. Darkness closed around him.

CHAPTER V

Buried Pearls

DRYDEN moved along the top of a sharp ridge that ran through the center of the island. He crawled on his hands and knees, like an animal. Saliva was running from the corners of his mouth,

and strange sounds were coming from his throat.

The moon had now risen high in the skies, and it flooded the little island with soft, enchanting beauty. But Dryden saw nothing of this. His eyes were glassy as he dragged himself through the brush.

Then suddenly he sank down and lay limp and lifeless. When, at last, he stirred again and opened his eyes, he raised himself weakly on one arm. His eyes had lost their glassy expression. He looked around slowly and then sat up and felt his face.

Then his brain started to function—a little muddled at first. He remembered the fight at the clump of talking trees, the sight of Fred being overwhelmed, the face of Portuguese Sam, and the dazzling flash in front of his eyes.

But as he looked around, he could not understand where he was. From the ridge he could see far out into the sea; he could see the far ends of the island and the lagoon where the junk had burned.

He looked at his body, covered now with only strips of what had once been his shirt and trousers. He saw the torn, bleeding scratches across his chest.

Then, suddenly, he realized what had happened. The bullet from Portuguese Sam's gun had creased his temple. They had left him as dead, seeing his bloody head lying there in the moonlight.

WHAT happened after that was a mystery. When consciousness returned, he must have crawled away and climbed to this ridge.

Dryden got to his feet slowly and looked out over the beach at the far side of the island where he and Fred had sailed the junk. There in the moonlight, lay a schooner—Portuguese Sam's ship. A light was moving on it, and a boat was coming toward the beach, where men walked with rifles under their arms.

The blood was coming back into Dryden's body, and he felt better. He turned around and looked up and down the ridge. Not twenty feet away from him was a small, round-topped hill—and at the base of the hill and at the bottom of the ridge, a small stream flowed like silver in the moonlight.

Dryden sprang forward with a little cry. The hill and the stream had been marked on the map—the hiding place of Flint Markel's pearls! Ten paces from the eastern point of the base of the hill. A small boulder. Dryden had memorized the map.

HE started down the ridge, sliding and crashing through the mangrove bushes. His mind was fired now with only one thought—to get the pearls before Portuguese Sam found their hiding place!

He landed in a narrow path that ran along the stream, and saw that the brush and the jungle growth along the path had been broken by men walking there recently. If they had gotten the pearls, it meant that Fred was dead!

Dryden ran anxiously to the base of the hill. There he stopped and studied the ground. Slowly he paced off ten steps, stopped and looked down. There was no boulder—no sign as indicated on the map.

He went back to the base of the hill and started from another point. The map had specified ten paces from the eastern base of the hill, but it had not stated where the eastern base of the hill started.

His second attempt brought him no better results than the first. He tried again and then again, but he did not locate the boulder. Then he sat down and studied the ground and the little stream—which was only a few feet across.

Suddenly his eyes flashed with comprehension. Not a foot from where he sat, he saw the point of a rock hidden underneath the matted

foliage. On his knees, he tore the foliage away.

There it was—a small boulder that lay in the bank of the stream. When Flint Markel had buried the pearls, the rock was clear of foliage, but in the fifteen years that had passed, it had been overgrown.

Frantically Dryden tore at the rock with his fingers. He moved it a little, but could not dislodge it. He clawed at the ground around it. Then, when he had both sides cleared of dirt, he swung his strength against the rock. It moved, and one final heave brought it out of the ground.

Dryden looked down in the yawning hole it left in the earth. All he could see was black dirt. Clawing in the muddy dirt, his fingers touched something hard and cold. He pulled the object out and stared at it.

It was a small black box—an old-fashioned thing of heavy iron. He smashed it against the rock until it opened. Inside lay a large leather sack, tied with a leather string. When this was open, Dryden pulled out a handful of pearls.

In the moonlight they looked large and perfect, but it was not the pearls that caught his eye and made him stare in awe. Among the pearls were other stones—priceless stones far more valuable than diamonds or pearls. They were a deep green, and the moonlight drew shafts of yellow from them.

SINGHALESE chrysoberyl—the rarest and most valuable gem in the world. Each a fortune in itself!

Suddenly Dryden's eyes left the rare stones, moved slowly upward. In the silence around him there had been no sound, not even the breaking of a twig, yet his sixth sense had telegraphed an alarm.

His gaze stopped as it focused on two human legs covered with dirty white duck trousers.

Dryden dropped his eyes. His face contracted; his muscles went taut.

He poured the stones back in the sack, tied it slowly, and then looked up quickly, coming to his feet with the spring of a tiger.

But there he stopped. He was looking into the barrel of an automatic held in the deadly hand of Spike Morini. Morini's face leered darkly in the moonlight.

"THIS time, Dryden," he said in a low, deadly voice, "there won't be any slip-up. I can't say that I'm sore you weren't dead when I left you at the clearing, since you've found the pearls for us."

"Where is the boy, Morini?" Dryden asked hoarsely.

"Oh, the kid?" Morini sneered. "He's on the boat. Now we won't have to torture him. A bullet—like you're going to get—will end his suffering."

Abruptly, the night was cut by the explosion of the gun in Morini's hand. He fired two shots, so rapidly that the reports were almost one.

Dryden's body jerked, as if someone had given him a sharp blow to the stomach. His mouth gaped open; his body sagged. Then slowly and heavily he went to the ground and rolled over on his side, his right arm outstretched, touching the iron box. A tremor seemed to pass through his body. Blood was gushing to the ground, and a guttural rattle came from the throat.

Morini relaxed. The gun went down to his side, and he leaned over for the leather sack. His fingers touched it, but in that second an incredible thing happened.

The iron box fairly leaped from the ground, to strike him flush in the face and knock him backward into the little stream.

Before Morini could get his breath, Dryden dived through the air, and landed on him with a force that knocked all reason from his mind. Yet Spike Morini fought back; fought back stunned and dazed, with

his subconscious mind sending his right hand for the knife in his belt.

The long blade flashed dully in the moonlight, but it came down in water. After that, Dryden and Morini struggled and fought madly in the water of the little stream, splashing back and forth desperately.

Morini's knife sliced Dryden's back thinly and then went up again, but Dryden's right hand shot up with a speed greater than the knife, caught Morini's wrist. Slowly, relentlessly, the knife came down, with Dryden's hand guiding it—until it was lost in the white of Spike Morini's shirt.

Then the water was no longer silvery white in the night. It was streaked with a reddish black. Morini gasped just once and fell back into the stream.

Dryden got to his feet and smiled grimly. His fingers touched his belt buckle. It had a great dent in it, made by one of Spike Morini's bullets. The second had grazed Dryden's right shoulder.

Then Dryden turned and dragged himself up on the bank and crawled back in the mangrove bushes.

CHAPTER VI

The Death Ship

HALF an hour later Dryden lay on the far side of the ridge, hidden by the foliage, and watched the beach and the schooner that lay a quarter of a mile out from it. Boatloads of men were coming from the ship. On the beach men walked back and forth, carrying flares and torches.

It all had happened as Dryden had figured. The body of Morini had been found, and the hole in the side of the bank and the iron box told the story of the pearls. Now Portuguese Sam, knowing that Dryden was wounded, was mobilizing every man to search the island.

Twenty minutes later Portuguese Sam had completed his preparations.

Men were advancing in a long line toward the center of the island.

ONE man remained at the beach to watch the boats. He sat on the prow of one of them, a rifle across his knees. He was watching the jungle and did not see the thin streak in the water far to his right—a thin streak made by a man swimming slowly and painfully.

When Dryden reached the schooner, every part of his body was utterly numbed and without feeling. He crawled over the rail and dropped heavily on the deck.

For some time he lay there. From the schooner came only silence. Dryden knew there would only be one man left there to guard Fred, and this man probably would be in the forepeak. The knife that had killed Morini was still in Dryden's hands. Half crawling and half walking, he made his way to the forepeak.

A dim light shone from a partly opened door. Dryden lunged toward it. A man lay on a bunk in the room. He jumped to his feet, grabbed a gun, eyes full of terror as he saw Dryden. But he never got the gun into action. Dryden moved swiftly—and the knife did its work in a flash.

Then Dryden dragged himself out on deck and groped his way aft; then down a companionway. In the darkness he could see nothing, so he called out loudly. "Hello!"

The word cracked through the darkness shrilly. Dryden groped until he touched the knob of a door.

"Here I am, Dryden," Fred called out. "In this cabin."

The door was locked, but Dryden finally cut a hole through the panel. The lock came next, and as the door opened Fred stumbled out into the companionway. "Can you start a gasoline engine?" Dryden snapped, before the boy could ask questions.

"Sure, I can—"

"Then come on."

Dryden led the way to the deck,

and sent Fred down the after hatchway, where the auxiliary engine of the schooner was located. Then he fairly crawled forward to cut the anchor cable.

Coming from the shore was a boat, and in the front of it stood the fat form of Portuguese Sam. The boat was halfway to the schooner, coming rapidly, the oars dipping in the bright water with heavy splashes. Frantically Dryden hacked through the stout manila.

Below, the engine gave a weak chug and then died. Dryden groaned. He knew the difficulty of starting those crazy auxiliary engines. His body was numb all over now, but his face was flushed and he was hot. Fever! He knew the signs. But there was no time to worry about that now.

A yell came from the oncoming boat, a yell to the shore and then two shots. Bullets cut across the deck. Immediately the beach was filled with dark forms, racing for the boats.

DRYDEN wondered what was happening below. The engine chugged again and stopped. He got to the wheel. The boat carrying Portuguese Sam was nearly to the schooner.

There was no hope unless—

Then a regular chug-chug sounded below. The engine had started—but a feeling of utter futility came over Dryden. For in that moment he knew that all was lost.

The engine was going, but the schooner was not moving. The tide was at the flood, and the engine was helpless to send the boat against the current.

Now the water was filled with boats rushing toward the schooner. A rifle blazed from the first boat, and the bullet whined through the air near Dryden's head.

Then out of the hatchway popped Fred. He took one look out at the water and then darted for the cabin. Dryden heard Portuguese Sam's boat

slide against the schooner, and then he heard men clambering up the rope ladder that hung over the rail. Three other boats full of men were coming toward the schooner.

DRYDEN'S body sagged over the wheel. The boat was moving a little now, but it was too late.

A loud yell from the companionway caused him to look up. His body jerked into action, and the fever that was burning his face and brain left him.

Fred was coming up on the poop deck, and under his arm was a dark object—a machine-gun. With a loud yell for Fred to take the wheel, Dryden sprang for the machine-gun and threw himself flat on the deck.

Then there was a cry from Fred. Dryden swung around—to see dark forms come piling over all sides of the ship. They came at him from the front and from the sides and from the rear, a snarling mass of infuriated men. And above the noise of their yells, he heard the bellowing voice of Portuguese Sam shouting orders from somewhere down at the water's edge.

With a spring Dryden was up on the poop deck, the machine-gun moving in an arc, spitting its deadly lead at the onrushing attackers. Many stumbled and fell on their faces, but others attacked from all sides.

At his rear came the crack of Fred's automatic and the boy's voice yelling excitedly, but Dryden had no time to turn. His body was moving to the right and left, with the machine-gun jumping in his hands.

Two men got on the poop deck. A machine-gun bullet flush in the head sent one of them hurtling backward to the deck, but the second fairly leaped through the air at Dryden, hitting him near the waist and sending him backward, the machine-gun falling from his hands.

In the next second the poop deck was covered with men rushing toward

him. He was on the deck, and then up again with a heaving movement of his shoulder, arms clutching the legs of a man.

With a wild curse, Dryden raised the man and swung him around as a human bludgeon. The body crashed against heads and faces. Men thudded, cursing, to the deck.

Then suddenly Dryden was conscious that the boat was moving. He threw the human bludgeon in the faces of the men still standing in front of him and, with a leap, was at Fred's side.

The schooner was moving swiftly now, and Fred was turning the helm hard over, sending the prow upward as it swung around and started for the open sea. There was a crunching and splintering of wood below as the schooner passed over the boats carrying Portuguese Sam and his reinforcements. From the water came a medley of cries and shrieks.

BUT Dryden gave little attention to this. He was on his knees, pulling Fred down with him. Bullets flew through the air a foot over their crouching heads. On the poop deck were still a number of Portuguese Sam's men. "Keep the ship headed for the ocean," Dryden directed. "I'll take care of the men on board."

Bent double, he started for the poop deck. Consternation had broken out among the men there. Some ran and dived overboard when they discovered that the ship was moving, but five of them remained on the poop deck, their snarling, evil faces turned toward Dryden and the wheel.

The machine-gun lay on the deck where it had fallen from Dryden's hands. He started for it, Fred's automatic belched fire to cover him. It brought down one of the five.

Dryden was out on the poop deck, his body plunging in a head-long dive for the machine-gun. An automatic roared in front of him, and a bullet splintered the deck. Then two

bodies came down on him, with knives flashed.

With a quick twist of his body, Dryden met the rush, his hands catching one of the men by the ankle and sending him to the deck with a crash. Then his left went out in a blow to the second man's jaw.

Dryden lurched forward, his hand closing around the machine-gun. He brought it up, spitting fire at the two in front of him. One fell face forward on the deck, and the other turned and ran, leaping from the poop deck into the water. The man Dryden had pulled to the deck followed in the same manner, but the man he had sent down with the left to the jaw had struggled to his feet.

In his right hand was a knife. It flashed through the air. Dryden ducked, and as he did the machine-gun sent a line of lead tearing into the body of the knife-thrower.

The schooner was heading for the high sea, the change in the tide carrying it out. Dryden was still firing the machine-gun wildly. Then suddenly he stopped and crawled back to the wheel.

"We made it, kid," he whispered weakly to Fred. "We made it. You had nerve, boy. Pure nerve to go through it. I got the gems, and there is a fortune—a great fortune—in them. In my money belt. Singhalese chrysoberyl stones. A fortune. God—water—get me a drink of water!"

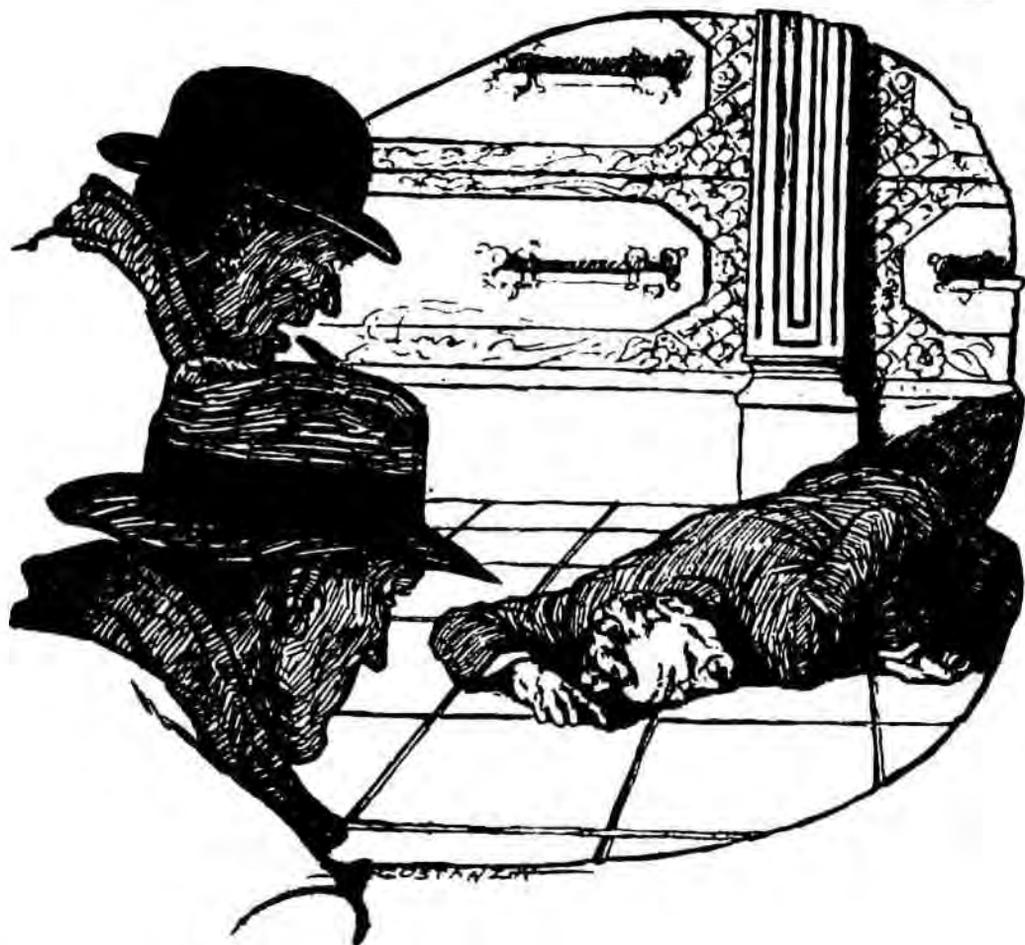
The schooner had now passed the spit and was out in open sea. Fred slipped a bight over the wheel and hurried off for water.

Dryden gulped it greedily, when the youth returned. Then he looked up at Fred and smiled.

"We did it, didn't we?" he said with a weak laugh. "Fooled the smartest crook in the islands—and you've got that uncle of years to thank for a fortune he left you."

"You mean left both of us," Fred laughed happily.

Death Calling



The body of a man lay, face down, in a far corner of the vault

Chief Devlin Unravels the Tangled Threads of a Grim Mystery in this Exciting, Weird Story of Baffling, Blood-Curdling Events!

By E. L. NALENCE

Author of "Mystery Mansion," etc.

THE sleepy night operator in the little town of Middlebury plugged in automatically as the tiny light flashed on.

"Num-bah, puh-leese?" she intoned, drowsily.

Into her ear-pieces there came a

mumbling, incoherent and choked, as if someone were speaking through folds of heavy cloth. A scratching, clawing noise followed, then a thump, and the crash of a telephone falling.

Startled wide awake, the girl

glanced at her board to see who had called. When she saw the line she had plugged into, her eyes widened with horror. With a terror-laden shriek she fainted and pitched forward across the board.

Her scream carried across the midnight stillness of the town's miniature square and through the open windows of the police room in the town hall. Chief Devlin and Sergeant Aleck Murphy of the New York Police Force, who was spending a busman's holiday, were reminiscing over a bottle of repeal liquor.

"What was that?" demanded the startled Murphy.

"Sounded like Ella Wilson, over at the telephone office." Devlin snatched up his pistol belt and raced for the door. Murphy followed, pausing only long enough to cache the bottle in a desk drawer.

A GLASS of water, administered both internally and externally, revived the operator.

"What happened?" asked Devlin.

"That—that call," babbled the girl, pointing a trembling finger at the plugged-in line. "It was horrible!" She swayed, eyelids fluttering.

"Snap into it," growled Devlin. "Tell us what happened, and then faint all you want to. Who called?"

"That line—" the girl's white lips trembled with fear—"Leads to the Craven mausoleum, in the cemetery!"

"What?" Devlin tore the receivers from her head. "Hello! Hello!" He put the phones down. "Line's dead," he said, looking at the girl suspiciously. "You sure you didn't dream—"

"It wasn't dead a moment ago," moaned the operator. She started in new fright. "You said the line was dead—so are the people in that mausoleum! It was a call from the dead!" With a wail of terror, she backed away from the board.

"Horsefeathers!" snorted Devlin.

"Probably grave thieves. You get Burgess and tell him I said to come off his patrol and stay here with you. You'll find him at the lunch wagon, probably. Come on, Aleck. Let's see what's going on in that tomb."

THE smooth white concrete was sliding under the beams of the headlights before Murphy asked the question that troubled him.

"Joe, what the devil's a phone doing in a mausoleum?"

"Craven had a gripping fear of being buried alive—it ran in the family," explained Devlin, as the car purred swiftly through the night. "And he had some religious scruples against embalming or cremation. So he had a phone installed in the family tomb, paid up for a year. That's long enough to make sure you're dead, isn't it?"

"Yes, but—"

"Hold it," said Devlin. "Here's the entrance now."

As he was about to swing the wheel to drive into the cemetery, a blinding pair of headlights suddenly caught them. Devlin cursed and braked the car to a squealing stop.

Plunging and lurching, a heavy car roared out of the graveyard. Rubber shrieked in protest as it took the curve on two wheels. With a sickening lurch it plunged half into the ditch on the other side of the road, swayed and then righted itself. In another instant its tail light was disappearing down the road toward Middlebury.

"Never turn around fast enough to get him," growled Devlin. "We'll go on and find out what makes this place so popular tonight."

He turned into the cemetery, drove a short distance and stopped.

"Finish on foot," he explained. "It's quieter."

The faint light of a sliver of moon threw deep, eerie shadows about

them and brought tombstones into ghostly relief as they silently proceeded along a pathway.

"There it is," said Devlin, pointing.

Just ahead, on a slight rise, stood the Craven family tomb, bulking dimly in the semi-darkness. They neared it and tensed as they saw that the heavy bronze door was slightly ajar, and a faint glow issued from the opening.

A huge brass key protruded from the lock. Grabbing it, Devlin swung open the door, and, pistol ready, stepped into the clammy chill of the house of death.

NEAR the entrance an electric torch lay, still alight. Its rays were focused on the body of a man, face down in a far corner, near the overturned telephone. The back of his head was crushed in, the hair matted with blood. A short iron bar, crimson stained, lay near him.

Devlin turned the man over. The two detectives looked into the face of a man in his fifties, grey-haired, and with a close-cropped, grizzled beard.

Murphy saw Devlin grow tense and bring his flashlight closer to the dead face, then recoil with a gasp of astonishment.

"Seth Craven!" he cried, turning to the New Yorker.

Murphy looked the question.

Devlin pulled himself together with an effort.

"He's supposed to be in there."

Murphy's eyes followed the finger that pointed to one of the marble slabs that lined two walls of the mausoleum. A new, shiny brass plate bore the legend: "*Seth Craven 1880-1935.*"

"Then what's he doing out here?" demanded Murphy.

"Ask the other questions, too," snapped Devlin.

He examined the slab carefully,

and tried to pry it open, but it resisted his efforts.

"Confound it!" he growled, irritably. "Seth Craven's dead and buried these four months. Yet this is Seth Craven here—and he's still warm!"

"It couldn't be a relative, now?" suggested Murphy. "A twin brother, for instance?"

Devlin shook his head. "Seth was the last of the family."

He lifted the telephone and clicked the receiver.

"Ella? Okay, it's me. Burgess there? Tell him to pick up Coroner Holden and come out here right away. Never mind, you'll know later. Call Pop Hart at his house and tell him he'll have to finish the night's patrol for Burgess."

During the twenty minutes it took the coroner and Burgess to arrive, Devlin and Murphy went over the interior of the mausoleum, and the ground outside, thoroughly.

Devlin straightened up finally, dusting his hands. "Well, what d'you make of it, Aleck?"

"**S**A**M**E as you do, Joe. Craven wasn't killed here."

"Right," agreed Devlin. "I saw those bloody trails outside, too. And I don't think that bar killed him, either—it wouldn't make that sort of a wound."

"I can't figure why he was brought here, though," confessed Murphy.

"That's easy. Whoever bumped him off wanted to plant him in the vault again. Craven wasn't quite dead and knocked over the phone—scaring the killer away."

A motor purred up the pathway and stopped outside the tomb. The two detectives turned to greet Holden, county coroner, and the night policeman.

Holden's eyes fastened on the body; he walked over and stooped to examine it.

"What the devil!" he exploded:

"This—this is Seth Craven! That beard wouldn't fool anybody."

"I already know that," growled Devlin.

"But Craven's dead," expostulated Holden. "Dead—and buried."

"He's dead now, all right," said Devlin, grimly. "No question about it this time, is there, Doc?"

Holden favored him with an indignant glare and bent over the body.

"Skull crushed," he announced. "Died within a short time; can't say exactly how long." He pointed to the iron bar. "That did the trick."

Devlin turned to Burgess.

"Get the tire irons, and anything else like a chisel that's in the car," he ordered. "We'll open the vault."

WITH the assortment of tools, Devlin and Murphy attacked the marble slab. A chisel, forced into the lower crevice, finally pried it out, and the marble swung free, hinged at the upper edge. Devlin wedged it open.

There was no need to work on the coffin itself, for the side facing the slab lay open. The casket was empty.

"Well, I'm blamed!" cried Holden, eyeing the ingenious arrangement of levers. "He could get out easily enough, couldn't he?"

"Yeah. I remember when he had the coffin made, and the vault fixed, more than a year ago," said Devlin. "Look, there's a ventilator."

"Everybody knew he was afraid of being buried alive," said Holden.

"I don't doubt that," growled Devlin. "He wouldn't have gone to all this trouble, otherwise—phone and all. Didn't it come in handy when he wanted to slope?"

"Why should he want to beat it?" asked Murphy.

"The Craven National Bank was discovered to be bust, two days after Seth's funeral. There were hints he committed suicide — nobody cared

enough to investigate. But this changes the story."

"How?" asked Murphy. Holden seemed intently interested, also.

"About a million dollars worth of negotiable bonds and securities, left with the bank as collateral and for safe-keeping, were missing. Everybody supposed Craven had turned them into cash and speculated with the money, in a last effort to put the bank back on its feet financially."

"Now you think Craven stole them?" asked Holden.

"Right. And here's his getaway, already fixed. Everybody knew of his besetting fear—he used to describe the nightmares he had about it—and so his elaborate preparations just made people smile indulgently. So here he is, presumably dead and buried, with no chance of pursuit, while actually he's very much alive in some other part of the country."

Murphy bobbed his head appreciatively. "Swell stunt."

"Look here, Doc," said Devlin. "How closely did you examine Craven when he was supposed to be dead?"

Holden looked uncomfortable.

"TO be truthful, Devlin, hardly at all. I knew his doctor, Gilbert; his reputation is good. Besides, from a casual examination, Craven certainly appeared dead—no heart beat I could detect, nor was there any noticeable respiration. I'm afraid this is going to do me a lot of harm." The coroner wiped his forehead nervously.

"Probably," said Devlin, curtly. "At the time, Craven was not dead!"

"Look here, Joe," Murphy spoke up, puzzled. "Granting that all you say happened, why should Craven come back here, of all places, after he'd made a clean escape?"

"That's what we've got to find out," said Devlin. "We're not sure he came here first, at that. Burgess, you stick here until we have the

body removed. We'll stop at the Craven mansion first, and then see what Dr. Gilbert has to say. Want to come along, Doc?"

"No, I'll go back to the office and take care of the routine first, and meet you at Gilbert's. Won't take me long."

Leaving the reluctant Burgess to share the mausoleum with the dead, the trio stepped out of the tomb into the night. Scudding clouds flitted across the slice of moon, obscuring its faint light.

As they paused for a moment to get their bearings, a rift in the clouds allowed the moon to peep through, and a vagrant beam of moonlight fell full on Holden's face.

Simultaneously, from a clump of bushes facing the tomb, there came a flash and a sharp report. Holden plunged forward to the ground.

Devlin and Murphy leaped for the bushes. Their heavy pistols whipped slug after slug into the darkness, the explosions reverberating and echoing among the tombstones and houses of the dead. Then silence, heavy and freighted with menace; a silence that could almost be felt.

STUMBLING over mounds and markers, the two detectives fine-combed the area around the tomb. They quit after it was obvious that the assailant had fled, and came back to find Holden sitting up, ruefully examining his hat.

"Get you, Doc?" asked Devlin.

"No, but he spoiled my hat. Why should anyone try to plug me?"

Murphy and Devlin exchanged puzzled glances.

"Getting curiouser and curiouser," muttered the New Yorker.

From somewhere down the road a twig snapped, followed by the swift patter of feet on the gravel. Devlin made for his car.

"Snap into it, Aleck!" he cried. "Jump in."

Even as he stepped on the starter, they heard the whine of a motor at the entrance to the cemetery. Disregarding the wheel marks he left on graves, Devlin whipped the heavy car around and thundered down the driveway. Almost at the main road, he jammed his foot down hard on the brake. The heavy chain that ordinarily hung across the driveway had been replaced.

MURPHY leaped out and fumbled with the knotted chain, while Devlin cursed and raved from the driver's seat. Far down the road a pin point of red was fast diminishing, until a turn hid it completely. Finally, after five precious minutes had been lost, Murphy got the knot loose and dropped the barrier.

"That's two cars have got away from us tonight," Devlin snarled. "Well, we'll try the Craven house. The butler's there—been with the family for years. Being kept on until the estate is settled."

Devlin's savage driving brought them to the gloomy old Georgian house in a very short time. To Murphy's surprise, Devlin did not turn into the driveway, but parked near it in the road. Not a light showed anywhere, but Devlin, motioning Murphy to follow, slipped through the gate and skirted the gravel, keeping in the shadows of the enormous box hedges.

He led the way past the house and to the rear, where the old coach house stood. The big sliding door was padlocked, but Devlin, after making sure he could not be seen from the house, went to work with his bunch of keys.

In a few minutes the lock yielded. Devlin opened the door just wide enough to admit him and Murphy. By the light of his torch, they made their way to a big, old-fashioned car.

Devlin laid his hand on the radiator of the machine, and muttered:

"Still warm, Aleck. Just the way I thought it would be."

They went out as softly as they had entered, slid the door to, and snapped the padlock. A minute later they were at the front door of the house, and the sound of a bell was echoing inside.

Devlin rang again, keeping his finger on the button for a full minute. Still no answer. Then, with a savage growl, he whipped out his gun and brought it down on the plate glass. It smashed to splinters just as the hall light was snapped on.

A lean, grey-haired man with a hawk-like nose stood with his finger still on the light switch, staring through the smashed glass in obvious fright.

"Open up!" snapped Devlin. "Took you long enough to get here!"

"I was asleep," faltered the man, sliding back the bolts.

"Yeah? Standing here in the dark hall?"

Devlin and Murphy walked into the hall as the door swung open. The butler, they saw, was wrapped to the throat in a bathrobe, his slippers feet and bare ankles showing beneath it.

DEVLIN began without preliminaries.

"Have you seen Seth Craven tonight, Grimstead?"

"Mr. Craven?" The butler gaped at them. "Why, Mr. Craven's dead—you know that."

"He's dead, all right," said Devlin grimly. "But he was alive and around this town tonight. I want to know if he came here, or if you met him anywhere else."

"But that's impossible, Mr. Devlin. There must be some mistake."

"Why was Craven buried so soon after his death—a matter of hours?"

"Those were his orders, sir. There weren't any relatives, and so there

was no reason for—er—having him around. He didn't believe in embalming or—"

"Everybody knows that," Devlin rapped out. "In fact, it's too well known."

"I don't understand what you mean," insisted the butler.

"Craven was found murdered tonight, in his mausoleum; and his vault is empty. That's plain enough, isn't it?"

"**Y**ES, sir." The amazement in Grimstead's face seemed genuine. "But I still don't understand. I don't see how he could be alive; but if he was, why didn't he come here, instead of going to the cemetery?"

"The bank failure might have something to do with it," said Devlin, dryly.

"I'd never have turned him in," said the butler defiantly.

Devlin grunted noncommittally at this display of loyalty and changed the subject.

"Were you in bed when I rang, Grimstead?"

"Yes, sir. I went to bed at eleven."

"You haven't been out at all tonight, not even for a drive?"

"No, sir. I haven't used the car for days."

"You're a liar, Grimstead!" snarled Devlin. Suddenly he reached and seized the bathrobe, whirling the butler around. The robe opened as he did so. Except for his shoes and socks, Grimstead was completely dressed, his trousers rolled up so that they would not show.

"Haven't had time to undress, eh?" Devlin hooked the thumb of his right hand in his belt, close to his hip holster. "Frisk him, Aleck."

Murphy's hands swept over the butler's body and produced from his coat a nickle-plated revolver.

"Always carry a gun?" asked Devlin, mildly.

"At night, yes, sir. It's a habit,"

stammered Grimstead. "Mr. Craven got me the permit—"

Murphy cut in. "None of these cartridges have been fired, Joe. But the gun's just been cleaned and oiled. It's still sticky."

"I—I cleaned it yesterday." Grimstead looked as if he were going to faint.

"Come clean!" Devlin snapped. "The radiator of the car in the coach house is still warm. You claim to have been in bed, yet you're fully dressed. Where've you been? How much do you know about the killing of Craven?"

"I—I don't know anything about it." Grimstead's lips were white and his hands shook. "I got dressed to— to come down. I—"

"All right. Skip it." Devlin started for the door. "Come along with us; we'll give you a few hours to think it over. You're in a pretty tough spot, Grimstead. Never mind your shoes."

They drove to town with Murphy in the rear seat beside the cowering, frightened but silent butler.

Not far from the town hall Devlin saw the stocky form of Pop Hart, the day policeman he had ordered to take Burgess' place. Devlin drew to the curb and beckoned.

"Tuck this bird in the cooler, Pop," said Devlin. "Here's his gun. Put it in my desk. I'll book him when I get back from Doc Gilbert's."

MURPHY spoke up as they slid away from the curb. "I don't see why you're going any further, Joe. You've got your killer."

"Think so, Aleck? Well, maybe. But there's a lot to be settled yet. I'm mighty curious to know where Gilbert fits in."

Before Murphy could speak, they turned into an elm-shaded street and stopped in front of a large house, set well apart from its neighbors, and screened by tall hedges.

There was a light in the doctor's study, and his car stood at the curb.

Gilbert himself, in shirtsleeves, answered the door.

"Hello, Devlin," he said. "I was thinking of calling you."

"What's up?" Devlin asked.

"I got back from a long ride half an hour ago, and found evidence that someone had been in here while I was gone. Come and see."

HE led the way to the rear of the house and switched on the lights in a large, tile-walled room. The tiled floor sloped gently to a small central brass drain. A deep basin for washing instruments was fitted in one corner, and cases of instruments and sterilizers lined the walls. Full length windows opened on a rear garden.

"Nothing missing," explained the doctor. "Nor has anything else in the house been touched. But look at the door of that case."

One door of a large instrument case had been shattered. Devlin glanced at it and then down at the floor. The pieces of glass, he noted, had been swept under the case. He seemed to be more interested in the floor than anything else. He walked around the room, keen eyes sweeping everywhere.

"No one in the house?" he asked, finally.

"No. I live alone. My nurse-secretary and the two servants come in the morning and leave after dinner. I've got a bad habit, Chief, of leaving my front door unlocked." He smiled faintly. "I always figured that no burglar would ever try the front door."

Devlin nodded absently and picked up a heavy pair of obstetrical forceps from the examining table.

"Do you usually leave your instruments lying around loose, Doc?" he asked.

"No. That's another odd thing;

those belong in that other case, over there. I never leave things around like that."

Devlin examined the forceps casually as he went on.

"Let this go for a while, Doctor. I've something more important. Seth Craven was found murdered tonight, in his family tomb. Wait—" he raised his hand—"I know what you're going to say, and I'm kind of tired of hearing it. Get this—Craven was alive this evening, and someone crushed his skull within the last hour and a half. What about it?"

Gilbert's face was white, but his voice was steady.

"Seth Craven died six months ago; I signed his death certificate. And Coroner Holden saw the body."

Devlin sneered. "You know as well as I do that in the circumstances Holden's examination would be perfunctory. And just why did you call him in? You're a licensed physician—why was it necessary to have someone back up your certificate?"

"Well, if you must know," said Gilbert, hesitantly, "I diagnosed Craven's death as a stroke, but I had a vague idea he might have taken some obscure poison. I knew he was worried about matters at the bank—for good reason, as it turned out. So I was protecting myself."

"Where have you been tonight?" Devlin was still handling the forceps.

"THAT'S why I've wanted to get you; it might have something to do with this business. About ten o'clock someone phoned and said he was speaking for Harry Emerson, in Highland Falls, about thirty miles away. You'll remember Harry used to live here."

"Yeah, I know. Go on."

"The caller said Harry was very sick and wanted me. I don't usually take cases so far away, but Harry was a good friend of mine. So I

drove to Highland Falls, only to find the house boarded up. I thought at first it was a joke, but it was obviously a ruse to get me away."

Devlin walked over to a white-enamelled phone extension.

"Hello—Ella? Were you on the board at ten o'clock? . . . Since nine? . . . What calls have you had for Dr. Gilbert? . . . I see . . . Nothing else, eh? . . . Thanks."

HE replaced the receiver. "The operator says she had a call for you at ten o'clock. It came from the booth down in the railroad station. There's no one on duty there at that hour."

Gilbert shrugged his shoulders. "I can't prove I was in Highland Falls, unfortunately. But what's the reason for this questioning?"

"Craven was beaten right in this room," said Devlin, slowly. "Mind, I don't say he was killed here—he managed to hang on to the last spark of life until he was thrown into his own mausoleum." He held out the forceps. "These did the job. There's a bloody iron bar alongside Craven's body, but that never made the wound in the back of his head."

"The murderer did a good job of cleaning up the blood that must have spattered about this room—the floor's still damp in spots. Even that glass—probably broken when Craven put up a struggle—has been rinsed off. But he overlooked that—" Devlin indicated a little blob of crimson at the base of a wall, half hidden by an instrument case.

"There's nothing unusual in a spot of blood here," countered Gilbert. "I frequently perform minor operations here. I had a drainage case today. And the nurse isn't always as careful as she might be."

"Correct," agreed Devlin. "But this little blob is still fresh—it's coagulated, but not dried. Look at the color of it. I'm going to stake my

job that a chemical analysis of that blood will prove it's Craven's."

"Are you accusing me of murdering Craven?" Gilbert's bloodless lips moved stiffly, automatically.

"I haven't accused you of anything—yet. But you can't prove where you've been most of the night, while a man has been mortally beaten in your house."

"But why should I want to kill Craven? He was my friend."

"Because you had a quarrel about the stolen bonds! Gilbert, you knew blamed well Craven wasn't dead. I'm aware there are drugs that produce a death-like trance—but a medical man wouldn't be fooled. Holden made no examination at all, just as you expected—professional etiquette, I suppose you call it.

"Why should Craven want to be thought dead? Simple—to make a getaway with no fear of pursuit. Thanks to his genuine fear of being buried alive, everything had been fixed beforehand. You supplied the last thing necessary—the death certificate—and don't tell me you didn't cut in on the haul!"

"If that's true, why should Craven return?" demanded Gilbert.

"That's puzzling," admitted Devlin. "But I'll get it." His voice grew harsh. "Now—where's your share of the bonds—and why did you kill Craven?"

THE veins stood out on Gilbert's forehead, and little drops of sweat beaded there. His lips moved several times before the words came.

"I didn't kill him! I swear I didn't even know he'd come back! I did go to Highland Falls, even if I can't prove it."

Devlin shrugged. "Okay. Save it for the district attorney. I'm arresting you, Gilbert—for murder."

The last phrase shook Gilbert out of his daze.

"You can't do that, Devlin! I didn't

kill Craven—didn't know he'd returned. I got my share of the bonds, but that's all. I'll tell everything—everything—"

His voice suddenly broke off and with his mouth still open he stared past the detectives towards the open window. Over his face crept a mask of terror that overshadowed the fear of arrest. His eyes bulged, he threw up his hands as if to ward off a blow. "No!" he screamed. "No! I won't tell! I won't tell! *Don't!*"

A sharp, staccato report cut off his plea, and a dark spot appeared in the center of his forehead. With a stifled sob, the doctor pitched forward on the floor.

DEVLIN lunged for the window, his pistol half out of its holster. A little coil of acrid smoke still weaved about the opening as he leaped through to the ground a few feet below. A faint rustle came from the thick shrubbery that hemmed in the back of the house.

Together he and Murphy scoured every foot of the grounds, but a few minutes later, in the dark shadows of the elms in front of the house, they realized that their quarry had gotten away clean.

A pair of headlights flashed around the next corner as they turned to re-enter the house. The car drew up before the door and Coroner Holden stepped out. He caught sight of the two darker blots in the shadow and stepped toward them, hand at his hip.

"It's all right, Doc," said Devlin.

"Oh," said Holden, relieved. "What did you find out?"

"Gilbert was just killed under our noses," growled Devlin. "Through the window. Someone plugged him as he was about to spill the works."

Holden started. "What? Who did it?"

"Don't know. He got away through the bushes."

Holden glanced past the detectives;

his hand gripped Devlin's shoulder.

"Look," he cried. "Back in the hedge!" He whipped out his pistol and the shot roared in the stillness as Devlin's flashlight swept the greenery. No one was there.

"You're too quick on the trigger, Doc," snapped Devlin. "Been too much shooting around this town tonight!"

"Sorry," said Holden. "Guess I'm getting jumpy."

"Let's go inside," said Devlin, still surly.

In the examining room, Holden examined the still form perfunctorily.

"Getting thicker," he said. "Why was Gilbert killed? Who broke that glass?"

"I had a hunch, and it was right," said Devlin. "Craven got that blow on the head in this room. There's the weapon."

Holden picked up the forceps and nodded after a brief scrutiny.

"I believe you're right. You think Gilbert did it?"

"I did."

"I hope you were wrong. Gilbert didn't look like a killer."

"Nobody looks like a killer," said Devlin, absently. "Say, Doc, isn't that gun of yours the Police Positive I got for you?"

"Yes." Holden produced the weapon and handed it to Devlin. "I'm sorry about that melodramatic business—"

"FORGET it, Doc." Abstractedly, the detective swung the cylinder out. Only one shell of the six had been discharged, and that had just been fired in his presence. He spun the cylinder, lost in thought.

The doorbell rang, footsteps pounded down the hall. Policeman Pop Hart burst into the room, red-faced, sweaty and excited.

"Chief!" he yelled. "Grimstead's escaped! Slugged me, grabbed his

gun out of my pocket and beat it before I could get on my feet!"

"When did this happen?" asked Devlin.

"'Bout twenty minutes ago."

"Took you a devil of a long time to report it to me."

"I—I been searchin' for him." Pop Hart wiped his face with a shaky hand, the picture of misery. "I—I hated to tell you—"

Holden interrupted. "Then it was Grimstead who shot Gilbert! He knew you were coming here, didn't he?"

"YEAH, he knew," said Devlin. Tersely but unhurriedly, he gave Pop his orders. "Shoot out the routine alarm. All roads, state troopers, every town within a hundred miles. We'll get him. Then, Pop, you drive out to the Craven house, just in case Grimstead has nerve enough to go back there. For his shoes," he added, dryly.

Holden eyed Devlin curiously as Pop hustled off to redeem himself.

"You don't seem very excited," he commented, "knowing that a dangerous killer is loose."

"The killer isn't loose, Doc. He's just being arrested."

"Arrested? Who?"

Devlin drew a pair of manacles from his hip pocket. The pistol in his hand was now pointed steadily at Holden's heart.

"You, Holden. Try these bracelets and see how they fit."

"You're crazy!" Holden cried.

"Am I? You won't think so tomorrow, when I have the ballistics experts check this gun with the bullet in Gilbert's head."

Holden's face was impassive, but there was defeat in his eyes as he extended his wrists. His lips curled contemptuously.

"Smart, for a hick cop," he sneered.

Murphy gazed in open admiration. "Joe, you should never have retired

from the New York force. How did you get onto it?"

"Two shots, Aleck," said Devlin, snapping on the cuffs. "They were a long time apart, but Holden just brought them together for me. The first was the shot at Holden in the cemetery, and the second was the one he fired a few minutes ago, in front of us."

"I still don't get it," said Murphy, mystified.

"The shot in the cemetery was puzzling, although all the time I felt that it linked Holden with this queer affair. Why else should anyone try to plug him? You'll find it was Grimstead who tried it.

"The second shot, Aleck, was fired to make us witnesses, if Holden were suspected, that the only cartridge discharged from his gun was fired in our presence."

Murphy stared as Devlin went on. "Holden shot Gilbert through the window and got away fast, to where he had his car parked a couple of blocks away. Then he drove here, arriving while we were still searching.

"But suppose someone examined his gun and found he'd just discharged it? So he extracted the empty shell, put in a new one, and turned the cylinder back so that the next shot would come from the same chamber. Then he pretended to see someone in the shrubbery and fired. See it?"

Murphy nodded. "Cute. But how does it piece together?"

"That's simple now. I may be wrong in a few details, but that's all. Craven was ruined financially, but he had those bonds in his vaults. Gilbert and Grimstead had to be included in the plot, and I guess Holden was cut in to make sure there'd be no hitch. A bad idea, as it turned out. They split the swag, and Craven went into his trance.

"Then Holden couldn't resist the temptation to steal Craven's share out of the coffin, where it was hidden so that Craven could take it with him when he left the mausoleum. That right, Doc?"

"You seem to know," said Holden, bitterly. "But I did leave him five thousand dollar bonds in the package I substituted."

"Didn't think he'd dare to return, eh?" Devlin said. "Craven did come back, Aleck, when he found he'd been doublecrossed while he was in his self-induced stupor.

"He saw Grimstead, then Holden, who got Craven to come here with him, after getting Gilbert out of the way. You know what happened here. So did Grimstead, who must have trailed them. But he couldn't squeal, because he was involved himself, so he took that shot at Holden outside the mausoleum to avenge his employer's murder."

"Uh-huh," agreed Murphy. "Gilbert was killed to shut his mouth. Grimstead would have been next. Then Holden would have been safe."

"IT'S a good story," sneered Holden.

"It would have been a better one," said Devlin, "if it hadn't been for Craven knocking over the phone in the mausoleum while you were looking for something to open the vault with. No one would ever have known, except Grimstead, and you had him buffaloed. Well, he'll talk now."

Murphy spoke up abruptly. "That reminds me. How about getting back to your office, Joe?"

"What's the hurry, Aleck?"

"I want another drink, and a timetable," said Murphy, firmly. "I'm taking the first morning train back to New York, where dead men stay dead."

URGAH *and* *the Pygmies*



He crashed into a deep pit that had been cunningly masked

*You'll Thrill to this Colorful Story of Life as it Was
Lived in Ancient Lemuria in the Dim Past
Before Civilization's Dawn!*

By JOHN FREW

Author of "Blerbah the Magnificent," etc.

PERIODICALLY, in old Lemuria, the molten earth let off steam, and a fiery ruin overtook all living creatures, licking up, with tongues of flame, forest, animal

and man. Streams of lava, showers of molten rock and hot ashes, turned the teeming jungles into desolate wastes where not a single spear of vegetation met the eye.

Inexorably, the first humans were driven towards the Western Hemisphere, where Atlantis was slowly rising from the ocean bed. But the process was unhurried: millions of years were to elapse before the continents should assume their present form. At that epoch human tragedy was on a wholesale scale; men scurried from the scene of disaster like ants from a ruined ant hill, only to fall victims to other dangers which they could not foresee.

URGAH was a refugee from one of the great volcanic disasters which changed the shape of a continent. To him was granted the boon of survival. From his loins there yet might spring another race less offensive to the angry gods. But the only sign of celestial indulgence that he could point to was his immediate escape from the fate which had overwhelmed the other members of his tribe.

The prospect before him was not reassuring. Volcanic ash had obliterated every landmark, and he saw an interminable stretch of desert which would have to be put behind him if he were ever to reach safety. A sulphurous haze hung over the land, rendering breathing difficult. Water, wherever it could be found, was so impregnated with sulphur that it increased thirst instead of slaking it.

Urgah's mouth was dry and parched. His tongue, swollen to an unnatural size, remained immovable in his head: even the poor relief of licking his stiff lips was denied him.

So far as he could see he was alone in this desert; but that feature of the situation did not disturb him. For many seasons he had shunned the herd. A victim to the jealousy of Urk, the mighty leader, he had never forgiven the old man for trouncing him in the presence of the females. Other males of the tribe had learned to adapt themselves to the old man's

truculence, but not Urgah; he was unable to stomach the role of second best.

Years of solitary ranging had widened the breach between him and his fellow Lemurians, transforming him into a sort of silent marauder, hostile to his own kind, and dangerous to meet. Consequently, when the mountain blew up, Urgah was as far from participating in the general ruin as he had been in sharing the social benefits of the tribe. He was miles away from the centre of destruction at the time, and hastened to widen the distance between him and it as soon as he saw the nature of the tragedy.

Like the rest of his tribesmen he had been caught in the hurricane which followed the eruption, and had been forced to endure the merciless pounding of enormous hailstones that had killed so many of those who survived the first shock. But years of exposure had toughened his hide.

Thus it was that Urgah, making all haste to cross the arid zone before he should fall from exhaustion, very reluctantly checked his speed on hearing a cry of distress near at hand. When he located the source of the noise, he saw it came from a young man who waved to him while remaining standing beside a recumbent figure.

URGAH paused and sniffed the air suspiciously, but the wind was in the wrong direction for him. He circled the group warily, and as he came to a quarter which held the scent, he recognized the characteristic Lemurian effluvia, coupled with the earthly smell of death. When he approached closer he saw that it was a woman who lay there dead; and that she was still clutching to her breast an infant, as lifeless as she.

The young man, still a stripling, made known to Urgah that this was his mother; that he had assisted her

to this point where she was unable to go further; and that when he saw her die he had given up hope, himself, and sat down to die with her; but that the sight of a fellow tribesman had renewed his desire to live.

He was a pitiful sight, hollow-eyed and gaunt. His body was a mass of cuts and bruises, as was that of the dead woman. It was evident that they had run the gauntlet of a shower of stones, and that the mother's injuries had been so severe that she had no chance of survival. The youngster kept his eyes fixed on the older man's, as though trying to read what was going on behind them.

BUT what he read there was far from encouraging. For Urgah, in extremity himself, tortured by hunger and thirst, could not resist the feeling that here was fresh meat within hand's reach.

The woman was quite dead, and, therefore, of no use to anyone except as food. But something about the cub's eyes checked Urgah's cannibalistic impulse. He felt like cracking the youngster's head with the butt end of his spear, in order to simplify the problem; but the youth's eyes clung to his in such a manner that he could not shake them off. It seemed impossible to make a move that the cub did not anticipate.

The situation was very annoying to Urgah. But for this interruption he would have been very far away to windward—perhaps within striking distance of food and water—while here, right under his hand, was plenty of meat. And yet this exasperating cub, with his unwinking eyes which would not tolerate an unfriendly act, stood in the way. It was maddening. He glared ferociously at the youth, hoping to surprise a look of hostility which would give him an excuse to strike; but the unwavering eyes held steady to their look of trustful pleading.

Urgah gave it up. His rudimentary mind could not grapple with this novel idea that a weakling who trusts you is not to be molested. There was something wrong about it, somewhere. But he could not wait to straighten it out. His own personal griefs came back with a rush: his dry mouth tortured him; his eyes burned where the volcanic ash had caked around the lids.

He turned on his heel, without so much as a backward glance, and headed into the wind. The pause had stiffened his muscles, and he labored over the ground for a long while before he limbered up again and struck his stride. Then he bowed his head and leaped forward like a kangaroo in great swinging leaps.

The distant hills towards which he was heading loomed darkly on the horizon, as the daylight failed. He was nearing them, he felt, and there would be water there—cool, sparkling water, flowing in streams; water, in which one could wallow and drink one's fill! But how far off those hills seemed! Would he ever reach them?

AND why did that cub's eyes stare at him from all directions? He could see those unwavering eyes everywhere. Even when he shut his own to hide the sight, that pleading look haunted him. He shook his head and plunged on. Now—the eyes were behind him—boring into his back. He slowed his pace gradually, and turned with an elaborate air of having stopped merely to get his bearings.

There was no doubt of it—the cub was trailing him! The slim figure of the youth could be seen bobbing up and down on the trail of the older man. But he came to a sudden halt, and balanced irresolutely from one foot to the other, when he saw that Urgah had observed him. Then, as the latter made no move, the youngster picked up courage and ventured nearer; but Urgah, growling deep in

his throat, turned away from him and headed into the growing darkness.

When the black, starless night of Lemuria settled down, rendering locomotion dangerous, Urgah flung himself on the ground to await morning. He could see from the tail of his eye that the youth took up a position opposite him, but at a respectful distance. With the first glimmer of dawn they were both on the move; Urgah setting the pace, and the youngster accommodating his gait to that of the older man. Without further communication, a tacit assumption of companionship had been set up; and the two primitive creatures pushed on into the unknown together.

The air had freshened, and seemed less oppressive. The volcanic ash was thinning out, and the spongy Lemurian soil began to appear. As they advanced, the ground became more rolling, and waterholes more frequent, but the water was still impregnated with mineral salts.

TOWARDS the middle of the day, they disturbed a large bird which was feeding on something. It rose heavily in the air as they approached it; and they both rushed over to examine the quarry, which was found to be the partially-eaten body of a good-sized lizard. There was enough meat here for several hungry people, but Urgah pounced on it as though he meant to wolf the whole carcass at once. He drew it toward himself, and roared viciously when the youth attempted to share the feast.

And now ensued a scene which was illuminating for the light it threw on the early emergence of human characteristics. On the one hand the burly savage, Urgah, thewed like an aurochs, and radiating hostility from every line of his massive bulk; and, on the other, the slender youth—man in the making—turning over in his primitive mind the best way to over-

come this show of force by cunning.

He seemed to have no fear of the larger man; but merely to be restraining his appetite from pure politeness. Suddenly he uttered a cry of warning, and pointed over Urgah's shoulder; and when the latter hastily looked to see what threatened him, the youth dexterously and coolly withdrew the meat from his relaxed grasp.

URGAH was furious at this trick. He snatched at the carcass of the lizard, but the young fellow held on, and a tug-of-war ensued. The leg came away in the youth's hands; but Urgah, although still retaining the lion's share, was not content to let him keep it. His dignity had been assailed—and he leaped at the presumptuous cub to chastise him.

To his intense bewilderment he found himself balancing on his nose with his mouth full of dust, and the youth nowhere in sight. The latter, who seemed to regard the situation as a sort of game, had rolled out of the way just in time to save himself; and was now sitting at a few paces distance gnawing the lizard's drumstick as though nothing had happened.

Urgah roared his displeasure, and seemed disposed to carry the affair to a definite issue. But the smell of the meat put him in a more tolerant mood, and he sat down to finish his interrupted meal. When he had eaten his fill, he lay back and allowed the cub to polish the bones, without any further objection. After much rumination, he announced that he had found a good name for the youngster.

"Your name should be Nerk," he said, "because that means One-who-plays-tricks." The youth objected that his people had called him Wangah, and that he liked that name better.

"Your name is Nerk," responded Urgah, with finality.

Having decided this matter to his

own satisfaction, and having put the youngster in his place, Urgah took the trail again, and the newly-named Nerk loped along beside him.

The country to which they were coming now was hilly ground, of recent formation. Some seismic disturbance had pushed up the bottom of an estuary, and the newly formed hills were surrounded by an expanse of marsh, through which the only practicable way was along the tops of the exposed ridges of rock. The lush, reedy vegetation of the tropics had pre-empted every spot where there was sufficient root-hold; and the two Lemurians slowed down to a walk.

THE hot, steamy air reeked with the stench of decayed vegetation; and the marshes swarmed with low forms of life: crayfish, amphibious reptiles, and noxious insects. While the Lemurians appreciated this inexhaustible supply of food, they did not relish the misery that went with it; for they were almost eaten alive by the voracious insects, and were forced to watch every step for fear of treading on something whose bite meant death.

Higher ground, and freer movement, was what they wanted; and a supply of water less unpalatable than the brackish liquor of the swamp.

After much grief they came within sight of a promising location. It lay on the other side of a ravine, in which a sluggish stream, choked with weeds, barely maintained momentum. Facing them was a grassy slope, which led from the water's edge up to a plateau surrounded by ancient trees. The trees were of a more substantial species than the quick-growing vegetation of the swamp: merely to look at them gave the Lemurians the comforting feeling that here was food and shelter such as they had been accustomed to.

It was late in the day when they discovered this haven, and they has-

tened down to the banks of the dark, sullen stream to learn if it could be crossed before darkness fell. Urgah tested its depth with his spear, and finding that it was no deeper than mid-leg, started across boldly. As he moved towards mid-stream there was a sudden swirl in the water, accompanied by a prickling sensation. He plunged forward waist-deep, and the prickling followed the water level.

Thoroughly alarmed, he raised one knee to see what was attacking him, and found that he was completely covered with leeches. They swirled around him in thousands, leaping out of the water in their eagerness to taste blood.

Urgah roared his dismay, and tore madly for the further bank. In his haste he stumbled, and went under the surface for one horrible moment. He quickly righted himself, spluttering and bellowing, and struggled to *terra firma*, where he went into spasms of agonized activity in his efforts to free himself from the blood-thirsty vermin. He rolled in the dust, and scraped himself on the bushes, slapping and clawing at his tormentors. He was covered with blood from head to foot, and nearing exhaustion in spite of his prodigious strength.

NERK, open-mouthed and pop-eyed with excitement, watched the extraordinary capers of his companion with complete incomprehension. Nothing like this had ever occurred to him in his brief life; but, whatever it was that could transform the stolid Urgah into a wildly gyrating mass of arms and legs in this fashion, must be terrible indeed. Out of the welter of his emotions only two ideas stood clearly: first, that nothing on earth could tempt him into that deadly stream; and, second, that there was not the slightest chance of Urgah ever returning to him by that same

route. They had come to the parting of the ways.

Something of the same confusion was passing through the primitive mind of Urgah. The leeches had almost done for him; but he had freed himself from his own ordeal sufficiently to bestow a thought on the plight of his young companion. He stood up in the gathering gloom, and peered across the black water at the pathetic figure squatting on the opposite bank.

HE couldn't very well urge Nerk to attempt the crossing, for the memory of the nameless horror that lurked there was still fresh upon him. Nor could he think of any other course to recommend. But a growing irritation surged up within him at this helpless creature who seemed to hamper his movements. He thought of Nerk's tricks, and growled to himself that this was a good time for the tricky one to try another one of his tricks, if he had it in him.

The dumb, pleading eyes of the cub seemed to reproach him for abandoning a pal; but there was no intention on Nerk's part to utter a reproach, nor on Urgah's side to abandon him. The situation was simply beyond their limited intelligence.

Nerk's momentary hesitation had saved him from the ordeal of the leeches; but it had also lost him a companion. Urgah, sensing the futility of standing there inactive, and the danger of his exposed position, turned toward the wooded slope, and selected a tall tree in which he could shelter himself for the night.

With the coming of dawn he returned to the water edge, and called to Nerk, but the youngster did not respond. He was nowhere in sight; but whether he had been killed and eaten, or was holed up somewhere and still sleeping, Urgah could not determine. There was also a possibility that he had gone off scouting for

a safer crossing of the stream, and might even now have reached the upland side. With this in mind, Urgah reconnoitered the banks of the stream, but failed to sight the missing one. He gave up the search, and turned his attention to his own affairs.

The slope on which he found himself was covered with a finer type of vegetation than any he had ever seen. The bushes and trees, although luxuriant, were more delicately formed than the crude, fast-growing flora of the surrounding swamp. As Urgah plodded up the incline, sampling the unfamiliar nuts and berries, he experienced a feeling that he was penetrating ancient territory. At any moment he expected to be challenged by old grey-bearded men, wrathful at his intrusion into their stamping ground.

But no one disputed his progress. Such animals as he sighted effaced themselves silently, taking cover in the brush or disappearing among the tree trunks. An unwonted feeling of elation seized him. His chest expanded to the clear upland air; his enormous thighs, coming into view one after the other as he climbed the slope, seemed filled with inexhaustible power. He exulted in his strength, and as he passed the brow of the hill and entered on the plateau, the sense of relief was so great that he leaped in the air repeatedly, in a very ecstasy of well-being.

FACING him across the level terrace on which he stood, the wooded slope of a mountain towered aloft. To his left, where the shoulder of the hill cut the sky, and behind him, lay the low-lying plain and swamp he had just crossed. As he looked at that plain, lying so peaceful in the soft blue haze, the agony of hunger and thirst he had endured there faded into the likeness of a dream.

The nerve-wracking fatigue seemed

to him, now, no more than a pleasing languor; and the whole ordeal but a necessary step towards the attainment of this state of bliss. And young NerK—the tricky one! Why couldn't he be here to enjoy this moment?

THE massive slope of the tree-clad hill invited exploration. Glimpses of white cliffs among the foliage, and the sparkle of falling water, lured him on to penetrate those woody depths. He strode forward like a conqueror taking possession of a new realm. His elation was such that he was moved to pound his chest with his fist, and roar a challenge. The high cliffs echoed back his cry to him, and he was struck with astonishment. He repeated his challenge, and waited for the response. The echoes dutifully returned to him, and it seemed to him that there was more than a little mockery in these ghostly voices.

A group of humans suddenly emerged from the woods, and stood looking curiously in his direction. At first glimpse Urgah thought these people were afar off, they seemed so small; but, on peering closely at them he could make out features not ordinarily visible unless people are close by. He was puzzled by this odd circumstance, and rubbed his hand over his eyes to clear his vision.

While making this gesture, his own great hairy paw came into view; and he realized with a definite shock that these people were pygmies, compared to him—that to them he must appear as a giant! Their delicate forms were of a piece with the delicacy of the vegetation he had already noted.

He advanced with renewed confidence. The pygmies sprang for the trees, and disappeared in the foliage. Presently he heard a rustling in the branches near at hand, and saw them proceeding with incredible swiftness through the treetops—swinging boldly from tree to tree with abso-

lute fearlessness. Urgah, carried away by curiosity, leaped toward the trees and peered up at the clustering pygmies.

A half-dozen of the little people, clinging among the branches, repaid his scrutiny with interest. Soon every tree in the neighborhood was populated with a chattering, gesticulating throng.

His curiosity still rampant, Urgah forgot his customary caution so far as to take hold of a tree with the intention of shaking it, and perhaps dislodging a pygmy or two. Instantly an enormous cocconut came hurtling through the air, aimed with such precision that if he had not sidestepped quickly it would have brained him. A perfect hail of missiles followed this first range-finding shot; and Urgah was forced to beat a hasty retreat to open ground; where, rubbing his bruises, he revised his first estimate of this desirable location.

During the rest of the day he made repeated efforts to storm the pygmies' first line of defense; realizing that unless he could establish some sort of a hideaway where he would be safe from their attacks, he would have to relinquish the whole territory, and retreat to the swamp at the foot of the hill.

BUT his foes were on familiar ground, and were able to keep out of his way, while harassing him at every turn. Repeatedly, the little people led him into ambush. Two or three of them would stroll out of the woods in his direction, dance up and down, making derisive gestures and dare him to come on. When he dashed at them, they would take to the trees, and Urgah would run into a barrage that was too hot for comfort.

Toward evening, they had worked him back to the brow of the hill over which he had entered their territory. He was tired and sulky, and

could no longer be tempted to charge at their pickets. He lay under a bush, chewing leaves, and morosely turning over in his mind the possibility of retreating along the line of the swamp, and getting around their flank.

THE little people suddenly changed their tactics. They poured out of the woods in a body, and took up a position behind a low ledge of rock in the centre of the clearing. Then they rushed back to the woods again, remained there a short time, and repeated the maneuver. It dawned on Urgah that they were moving ammunition to this rock, and meant to defend it. He waited uneasily for the next move.

It was not long in coming! A group of the pygmies detached themselves from the defenders of the rock, and began a determined move in his direction. When the advance guard came within range they hurled their missiles at him, and then took to their heels. The next line stepped forward, delivered its attack, and joined their fellows in the woods. The first line was already returning to the rock with more ammunition; and Urgah could see that he was completely out-manuevered. These contemptible little pygmies had got the upper hand.

There were two things he could do: either turn tail and flee down the hill; or charge into this crowd of vermin and beat them to a pulp with the butt end of his spear. A vision of the leech pool at the foot of the hill flashed through his mind, and he squirmed at the very thought of crossing it again. He gathered himself together, and leaped at the oncoming pygmies with a bellow.

The little people scattered when they saw him coming. He flailed into them, using his spear like a two-handed club. He crushed a number of them at the first charge, but after

that it was like trying to hit mosquitoes on the wing. While he was chasing one, the rest got away. Soon he was alone on the field, with the exception of the determined group poised back of the rock ledge. Urgah knew they had the reserve ammunition there, and realized that it would be folly to rush the position head-on.

The rock was a mere out-cropping, flush with the ground at the back, but rising shoulder-high in front. A drift of dead leaves and twigs surrounded it. Urgah put on full speed, and charged with a circling movement, intending to take them on the flank, and trample them before they could escape. But as he struck the zone of dry leaves, his footing gave way. He attempted to check his leap, but it was too late. He crashed head first into a deep pit that had been cunningly masked with a thin covering of leaves and twigs, and lay there stunned and motionless.

When he came to his senses again, there was a dull ache in every inch of his body; and a heavy weight seemed to crush him into the earth. He freed his head sufficiently to look around, and saw that he was almost completely buried in a mound of sticks and stones and cocoanuts.

A slight projection of the rock under which he had fallen had protected his head from the pygmy barrage; but the rest of his body was exposed to their fury. At intervals, the hail of missiles was renewed, and Urgah could imagine the little folk scouring the neighborhood for things to bury him under.

Instinct prompted him to play dead: it would have been fatal to let his tormentors know that he was still capable of movement. Night was coming on, and darkness would force the little people to suspend operations till morning. During the night he could free himself and attempt escape from the pit.

He was relieved to note that the

barrage was thinning out—only, now and then, some spiteful little wretch would put his whole strength into a vicious drive, and yell with delight at the solid thud it made. Presently, the whole crew pranced around the edge of the pit, and went into a chant of triumph. Darkness descended, and the shrill little voices faded away in the distance.

FOR some time after complete silence had been restored, Urgah lay still. His bruised body throbbed violently; and at intervals, sharp jabs of pain shot through his tortured limbs. His position was becoming unbearable. Now that the threat of immediate death was removed, the lesser evil asserted itself. Working cautiously, he removed the debris around his shoulders, and then heaved himself into a sitting posture. The piled-up stones rattled like a peal of thunder in the silent night.

He struggled painfully to his feet, and reared his great bulk against the side of the pit. Instantly, the stillness was shattered by a chorus of yells, and a shower of sticks and stones came pelting around his ears. The beleaguered giant ducked under cover like a startled rabbit. He had not dreamt of the possibility of a guard set to watch him.

Urgah burrowed his head under the rocky projection that had saved him once before. The floor of the pit was littered with bones and offal, souvenirs of the unlucky beasts which had preceded him into this trap.

But filthy as this mess was, Urgah squeezed into it enthusiastically when he found it was the only way he could conceal himself. The barrage ceased as suddenly as it had started, and Urgah was left to his bitter reflections.

This was indeed a sad sequel to his dream of conquest. Only this morning he had leaped with joy at the sight

of an ideal stamping ground waiting, apparently, for the foot of the discoverer; and now, here he was, weltering in muck, like a wounded snake—waiting for his death-blow at the hands of a venomous crew of pygmies that he could trample into dust if he were only on solid footing.

He cowered miserably in his inadequate shelter, and felt sorry for himself. Something in his humiliating attitude brought up a memory of young Nerk, with his pleading eyes, looking up at him from the other side of the leech pond. He groaned at the recollection; and then, completely beside himself with rage and mortification, he struggled to his feet again, and, regardless of consequences, roared his defiance to the high heavens.

The lofty cliffs hurled back a mocking echo of his challenge, repeating it and tossing it from rock to rock, like a legion of devils encamped in the dark. In spite of himself, Urgah shuddered at the sound. Whether night-prowling beasts, or the wrathful guardian spirits of the place had answered his challenge, he could not tell; but the effect was the same—it brought him back to a sense of his helpless position. At any moment, now, some beast might pounce on him, and he was in no position either to run or to fight. He marveled at the audacity of the pygmy guards, daring to remain out in the open terrain when death stalked abroad!

AND then it occurred to him that his challenge had not drawn the expected response from his captors—there was not a sound from the brink of the pit. Had they fled from the approach of the beasts? Was he free to leave the pit unmolested? Or were the pygmies still lurking silently there in the dark, waiting until he should expose himself and present a fair mark to shoot at?

The dark Lemurian night brought

no answer. Urgah ached from head to foot. Every movement of his battered body was an agony. His joints creaked noisily as he groped his way along the length of the pit, seeking a way out. He could reach to the top everywhere except on the rocky side, but the earthy sides had been cunningly undercut. Strain as he would, his battered muscles refused to cooperate. There was only one thing to do: build up a pile of stones and trash of sufficient height to enable him to escape easily.

THIS work proceeded laboriously. The covering of branches and leaves still remained in place at the far end of the pit, and he tore them down and added them to the pile. At every unusual noise from the outside world, he stopped and listened anxiously. And each time he took this humble attentive attitude, the image of Nerk flashed through his memory, and caused him to shake his head regretfully. Nerk, and freedom, seemed to go together, somehow.

He must hasten his efforts, and get out of this mess quickly. He could get over the brow of the hill before daylight, and hole up somewhere in the swamp until his wounds healed. Perhaps he could find Nerk, and they would work up a plan to rout the pygmies from this desirable location.

While thinking thus, he was suddenly conscious of a regularly recurring tremor in the ground. He clapped his ear to the side of the pit, and made out the sound of approaching feet. It was not the pygmies returning; he was sure of that! Their light pattering feet would never make this ponderous tread. It must be the beast which had scared off the pygmy guard. Urgah seized a couple of rocks and backed into the end of the pit, under the remaining screen.

He had no sooner taken this posi-

tion than the screen of branches crashed around his ears, and something, screaming horribly, landed on him. Through the smothering cloud of dust and trash which obscured his vision, he struck at his unseen assailant, and had the satisfaction of feeling the stricken flesh give.

But, the next moment, the thing grasped him, and sunk its teeth in his throat. He could feel his legs being torn into strips as the creature tried to disembowel him. He got a grip on its throat, and thrust back with all his force, straining the writhing body to him with the other arm. His battered muscles responded numbly, like those of a man in a dream.

For what seemed like an eternity he struggled with this writhing creature, which struck and tore at him in the dark. Never before had he realized the tenacity with which a creature clings to life.

The tense limbs of his antagonist weakened. Urgah put forth a last tremendous effort, and the neck vertebrae crunched in his grip. He brought up his foot and completed the disembowling movement. The creature sagged to the ground, and he fell over it, exhausted.

HOW long he lay there, without power of motion, he never knew. Nor did he care. The events of the past twenty-four hours had drained his emotional reservoirs. The first glimmer of dawn penetrated the pit but he did not see it. The rhythmic tremor of the ground, heralding the approach of some other creature, did not arouse him from his lethargy. If it was another beast like the one which lay beside him weltering in its blood—let it come. He had no more fight left in him.

The footsteps came to a halt at the edge of the pit, and he hunched his shoulders to withstand the impact of the leap. After some mo-

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delay endangers your vitality, and you should not lose a single minute in starting to take the doctor's special prescription called Cystex (pronounced Size tax) which helps Kidney functions in a few hours. It starts work in 15 minutes. Gently tones, soothes, and cleans raw, sore membranes. Relieves new energy and vitality in 48 hours. It is helping millions of sufferers and is guaranteed to fix you up and make you feel like new in 8 days or money back on return of empty packages. Get guaranteed Cystex from your druggist today.

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ments of tensed expectation, during which nothing happened, he forced himself to steal a glance in the direction of the silent menace. An involuntary cry of joy was wrenched from his lips. For there, looming against the sky like a young palm tree, was the slim silhouette of Nerk! Nerk, the tricky one, who, with the cheerful heedlessness of youth, had blundered through this labyrinth of hidden perils without turning a hair.

It was in vain that Urgah tried to impress Nerk with the severity of the ordeal he had passed through. He hadn't adequate language, and his auditor hadn't adequate imagination. Nerk could see the dead beast, all right; he could see the wounds on Urgah; and he could put two and two together. He could understand that there must have been a fierce tussle before the beast succumbed; but he couldn't help reflecting that Urgah could have escaped all this grief if he had stuck by his friend.

As for the pygmies, Nerk refused to take them seriously. They buzzed around the two Lemurians like angry hornets, but did not dare to venture near. They had exhausted all their ammunition the day before.

Urgah, supported by Nerk, made his way through a neck in the woods, and attained a rocky defile, down which a mountain stream rushed noisily. Here was water, and cover, and a situation commanding a view of the enemy. He sat down in a pool to soak his wounds.

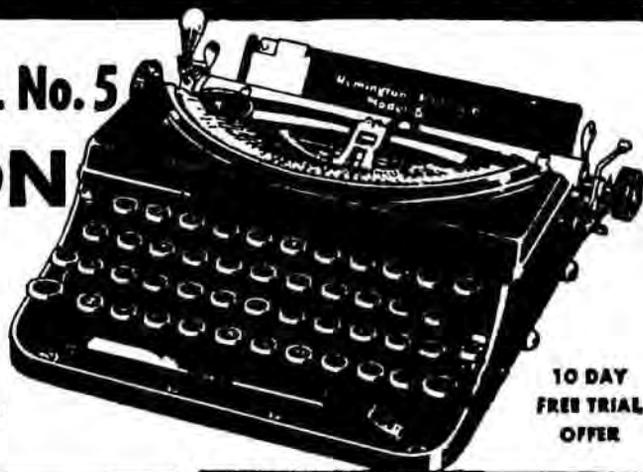
The thought came to him, a thought which he would have repudiated two days ago, that when you are fighting an uphill fight it is just as well to have somebody backing you up. And that thought was the beginning of a new wisdom, a new philosophy which was to guide mankind many centuries hence. But Urgah, naturally, could know nothing of this.

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To those six lucky adventurers, the *Director* was a dream come true; the realization of nights of dreaming and days of planning.

Dreams to Come

The day the *Director* pointed her nose down the Narrows and sailed out past Sandy Hook, Ye Olde Globe Trotter was riding in a crowded New York subway—strap-hanging above a young fellow whose avid eyes were racing down columns of type.

He was reading "We Flew the Jolly Roger," by Henry Morgan Krech, in last month's issue of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**—and in his excited face was all the eager anticipation with which those young adventurers

on the *Director* faced the flying spume of the Atlantic.

Brothers under the skin, he and those more fortunate heirs of the itching foot. Their dreams are coming true, but his are building up—until his ship, too, will sail out.

Magic Carpet

That subway reader was one of thousands of adventurers who are still anchored at the dock but planning eagerly for the thrilling cruise ahead. Tim Mohrman puts their case succinctly:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am an adventurer. No, I haven't actually traveled a great deal. I haven't set foot out of the old U. S. A. and have seldom been outside of my own State—physically.

But I've adventured all over the world in my imagination, and in the columns of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**. Sure, I'd like to pack up my old kit-bag and go places myself—and some day I'm going to do just that!—but sometimes when I get impatient waiting I remind myself that if I were on an expedition I'd have to be satisfied with Mexico, or Zanzibar, or the Hudson Bay country.

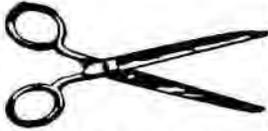
Couldn't very well scramble them up. I'd have to stay put—but now I can hop from the North Pole to the tropics, from the Sahara to the South Seas, in a night!

Kidding myself, am I? No, sir—for some day I'm going to see all those places; and



I'll like them a lot better for having read about them and visited them in my imagination. So, until I'm ready to shove off on my own, I'll go right ahead getting the lay

(Continued on page 148)



TO MEN WHO WANT TO MAKE **more money**

You don't "get" raises these days—you earn them!

THESE are strenuous times in which we are living. Competition is keen . . . the demands for efficiency are constantly increasing.

The day is gone when you can "hit the boss" for a raise and get it "on your nerve."

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Today a man must think about himself — and his future. Remember this: If you're just getting by, you're falling behind. Tomorrow your present job may be only a memory. The way to be sure of the future is to be sure of yourself!

Men are realizing this — a new era in the utilization of spare time to acquire specialized training is here! Men who a few years

ago thought they were "sitting on top of the world" today are coming to International Correspondence Schools for additional training. Still more are enrolling because they see the handwriting on the wall. They want to make more money.

Do you want to make more money? If you do, we challenge you to mark and mail this coupon! It has been the beginning of success for men all over the world.

But don't bother if you're a quitter! It takes fight and hard work to get ahead these days—and weak-kneed, spineless men have no more chance of helping themselves by spare-time study than they have of getting a raise tomorrow!

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Continued from page 146)

of the land and familiarizing myself with the far places I'll head for some day!

Tim Mohrman.

Minneapolis, Minn.

Globe-Hopping

Well, Tim, in this issue, it doesn't look as if you'll have to stay put very much. From start to finish we seem to go globe-hopping in a big way. To begin with, we tackle almost inaccessible Tibet; and about that almost unknown country Norman A. Daniels, author of "Sealed Orders," tells us:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I've never been in Tibet. The white men who have been in that strange land can be counted on the fingers of your hand. Tibet has been a closed country for hundreds of years. The only expedition that crashed its borders was early in this century when the



Younghusband Expedition, armed to the teeth, forced their way into Lhasa.

However, I've studied the land with a fascination I should be applying to countries where a good old U. S. passport opens the way.

Tibet is as old as sin. It is a country that lies on top of the world, its elevation the highest of any land. Its weather is terrible. There is no other word for it. Nights send the thermometer skidding to forty below, and day rocket it up to as high as a hundred and twenty. The wind that sweeps over the plateau is biting, and the natives dress in at least half a dozen thicknesses of clothing. When the day becomes warm they do not bother to take any of this clothing off, and no true Tibetan has ever washed. There is a good reason for this: a bath would give any Tibetan pneumonia within twenty-four hours.

They are extremely religious, almost fanatics. The country is ruled by a Lama, or high-priest, who can never die. Death to him means only that he will be reincarnated within a time set by the priests. Reincarnation is the universal belief of the lowest peasants, and their greatest dread is that they will be reborn a louse. To avoid this, they have prayer-wheels, little gaudily painted boxes on short sticks. Bits of paper, with certain markings, are inserted, and the wheels are spun. For every revolu-

(Continued on page 150)

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(Continued from page 148)

tion there is merit gained that places them further and further away from being reborn a louse.

The country has intrigued travelers for scores of years, an intrigue only aggravated by the strict closed door policy they maintain toward whites. Here is a land where the impossible exists; where the bath water of the Dalai Lama is sold for its own weight in gold—and never enough to go around. Fully one-third of the male population are holy men. The women do the heaviest work, but they are independent creatures, marry as many men as they please and divorce their husbands by throwing them out the front door.

Fire is scarce in Tibet for there are no trees, no coal mines or oil wells. Because of this, yak dung is prized almost as much as the animals themselves.

Abounding in bandits who are the cruellest in the world, this raw, barren, God-forsaken land is truly one of mystery—the land of the unwashed man.

Norman A. Daniels.

The Dark Continent

From the forbidden fastnesses of Tibet it's just a few pages for us to drop into North Africa—just as mysterious and dangerous, in many ways, as the Dalai Lama's domain. Major George F. Eliot, author of "The Blue Sultan," wants to tell us something about that remarkable personage:

Dear Globe Trotter:

There is perhaps no more interesting region in Africa, or one of which so little is known, as the vast territory designated on the maps as Rio de Oro and colored brown to indicate that it belongs to Spain. The



Spanish "protectorate," however, does not extend beyond the walls of their forts at Villa Cisneros and Cape Juby; and the most considerable source of information regarding the interior is that collected from unfortunate pilots of the Casablanca-Dakar air service, who have from time to time had to make forced landing in this inhospitable region and have invariably been held for ransom by the tribesmen.

The Blue Sultan certainly exists, and reigns at this moment in his "holy city" of Kerdous—which the official French publication, "Documents et Renseignements de la Direction Generale des Affaires Indi-

(Continued on page 152)

LONELY?

Write me! I will send you FREE my latest descriptive list of girls—interesting men charming women—many wealthy. Confidential service. Quick results.

P. O. BOX 88—1877 MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

WHY MEN GO



Science Finds New Way to Remove Germ
Cause and Activate Dormant Roots
to Grow New Hair

(Read Free Offer)

A germ called "Fusca Bacilla of Unna" gets deep into the scalp skin in many cases of abnormal hair deficiency causing a most dangerous type of dandruff. It clogs up pores and hair follicles, causing itchy scalp, falling hair and prevents dormant hair roots (papilla) from growing new hair. This germ is seldom suspected. Washing and shampooing and use of tonics, ointments and lotions don't remove the cause. They merely cleanse and treat the surface and roll off the outer skin like water rolls off the back of a duck. No wonder baldness is increasing.

Now a new discovery enables people who have dandruff, falling hair, thin hair and baldness to harmlessly remove the congested skin outer layer of scalp skin. This permits opened pores to breathe in air, sunshine and absorb a penetrating, stimulating scalp-foam to activate the smothered, dormant hair roots and grow new hair. It is the most sensational discovery in the history of falling hair and baldness. It is all explained in a new treatise called "GROW HAIR" showing "anatomy of your hair" and tells what to do. This treatise is now being mailed FREE to all who write for it. Send me money, just name and address to Dermolab, Desk 613, No. 1700 Broadway, New York, N. Y., and you get it by return mail free and postpaid. If pleased, tell your friends about it.

SAVE 50% by BUYING YOUR RADIO *Direct from* MIDWEST LABORATORIES

Thrill to Guaranteed World-Wide HIGH FIDELITY Performance with This Amazing New MIDWEST SUPER Deluxe 16-TUBE ALL-WAVE Radio! (ALL FIVE WAVE BANDS)



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TERMS as low as **\$5.00 DOWN**

BEFORE you buy any radio write for the new FREE 1935-36 Midwest "Fifteenth Anniversary" catalog and see for yourself the many reasons why 110,000 satisfied customers bought their radios direct from the Midwest Laboratories and saved from 1/3 to 1/2. Why pay more than the direct-to-you laboratory price? You, too, can make a positive saving of from 30% to 50% by buying this more economical way. Learn why Midwest outperforms sets costing up to \$200.00 and more. Never before so much radio for so little money! Midwest gives you triple protection with: One-Year Guarantee, Foreign Reception Guarantee, Money-Back Guarantee.

Only Midwest Gives You Multi-Function Dial

This dial was designed in keeping with the trend of the times, yet it is not an airplane dial! It is a many-purpose dial that performs many functions. Now, Midwest guarantees that inexperienced persons can secure good foreign reception. Send for FREE miniature of actual rotating dial which clearly shows these outstanding advantages:

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New Style Composes
The Midwest 36-page catalog pictures a complete line of beautiful, artistic de luxe composes and chassis in four colors. Write for new FREE catalog today!
Midwest long-range studios are priced as low as **\$27.50**

50 ADVANCED 1935 FEATURES

Many exclusive features include: Micro-Temulator, Fidel-A-Stat, Separate Audio Generator, Ceramur Coil Forms, etc. Only Midwest covers a tuning range of 9 to 2400 meters (33 Megacycles to 125 KC)—enabling you to easily and successfully tune in even low-powered foreign stations up to 12,000 miles away with crystal-clear, loud-speaker reception.

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SENSATIONAL HIGH FIDELITY RECEPTION

This bigger, better, more powerful, clear-toned, super selective, 16-tube radio gives you absolute realism—assures you of life-like, crystal-clear tone—unlike anything you have ever experienced before. You will hear one more octave—overtones—that cannot be brought in with ordinary radios. Now, hear every instrument, every voice, every shade and inflection of speech.



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MAIL COUPON TODAY... FOR FREE MINIATURE DIAL... FREE 30-DAY TRIAL OFFER... FREE CATALOG

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Dept. 53-A Cincinnati, Ohio.
Without obligation we will send you your new FREE 1935-36 catalog, FREE Miniature Dial, and complete details of our liberal 30-day FREE trial offer. This is NOT an order.

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 Check here if interested in a laboratory radio.

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DEPT. 53-A - CINCINNATI, OHIO, U. S. A.

Established 1920 Cable Address Miraco... All Codes

Operator No. 22



FOLLOW THIS MAN

Secret Service Operator No. 22 is on the job! Operating device dangerous Communist (left) Oscar Talcott finger prints in numbered grid a room.

Free

The Confidential Report Operator No. 22 sends to his chief. Write for it.

Earn a Regular Monthly Salary

YOU can become a Finger Print Expert at home. 2000 per year more than at small cost. Write for complete full report and details. Literature will NOT be sent to boys under 17 years of age.

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beautiful girls' heads and figures for pleasure and profit. Be an artist and make big money. Amazing NEW easy way quickly starts you. No experience necessary.

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Established. Reliable Members everywhere. (Many Wealthy) If lonely, write for sealed particulars.

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WE PAY UP TO **\$2 EACH** IF MORE THAN 11 YEARS OLD

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Box 731-C Milwaukee, Wis.

NEW STUFF FOR MEN **MAGGIE & JIGGS**

Tittle and Mac (Mouth Burn, Boys and Bubbles, Peaches and Brown and), A French Stenographer, A Bachelor's Dream, A Model's Life, Adam and Eve, Kip and Alice, Harold Teen and Lullums, Toots and Casper, The Gump, Wanda Winkle, Gus and Gusette, Barney, Google and Spark Plug, Boss McNutt and Pearl, Tittle the Tugler, A Broker's Stenographer, Mabel with the Old Fiddler, The Unfaithful Wife, What the Janitor Saw in the Artist's Studio, A Strip Police (a) Crime, A Saboteur and a Northman, The Woman on the Look out, The Tugler and the Missus Taking Her Morning Exercise, Also 32 high grade glossy photos of naughty, French Posing French Men and Women in French Style Love Scenes, Also Women alone, in different poses, And 8 Photos of Beautiful French Models with beautiful poses in exciting poses taken from life. All the above will be sent you prepared for only \$1 for

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ONE FRENCH WOMAN TELLS ANOTHER



In Europe women are not distressed about unnatural delay when the calendar passes the danger mark. They use Dr. Haller's famous Prescription 5000, and end delay safely, quickly, dependably. Hundreds of thousands of treatments are sold there yearly. For almost half a century Prescription 5000 has also been dispensed to American women through ethical channels. Now you may buy this highly scientifically improved combination treatment direct from us. Mrs. A. R. Milwaukee, says "It sure is wonderful and does the work." Mrs. C. Santa Ana, Calif., writes: "I believe it is the only successful treatment on the market." No interference with your work. Attention: Nothing else to buy besides no so-called half strengths or third strengths. Knowing that you cannot afford to waste time we offer you our very best and complete combination treatment in the first place, at a very moderate price. End delay now by getting Prescription 5000 at once and be done with it. Dr. Haller's Prescription 5000 successfully relieves some of the longest and most stubborn cases and is absolutely

GUARANTEED TO FUNCTION OR YOUR MONEY REFUNDED

or at our option a second treatment furnished free. Shipped same box that order is received, in plain sealed box. Send five dollars for complete combination treatment to P. W. Lewis Drug, Inc., Eastern Office: Steubenville, Ohio; Western Office: 1928 Taft Avenue, Hollywood, California, or pay postman, plus C.O.D. on delivery. If your local druggist cannot supply you WRITE TODAY. Take no substitute. Prescription 5000 is entirely different from anything you may have used. We also offer you our reliable Full Strength Prescription 2600 . . . at \$2.00 per box.

Continued from page 150)

genes," a storehouse of information on the "dissident" tribes, states no European has ever seen.

Certain gentlemen who appear and disappear periodically in the night-life of cafes in Agadir and Marrakesh, and who certainly have not been asked to contribute their views to the "Documents," assert otherwise when they have absorbed sufficient cognac. Rumor whispers that these gentlemen are engaged in supplying rifles to the aforesaid "Dissidents," and certainly the gun-running profession still flourishes along this barren coast.

Whether the Blue Sultan considers himself strong enough to start a "holy war" against the French at any time in the near future is difficult to say. He is regarded as a spiritual, if not a political suzerain by many tribes along the borders of Southern Morocco; and there is always to be remembered the tragic fate of the Sultan of the Rif, Abd-el-Krim, who having defeated the Spaniards, was forced into a hopeless holy war against the French, contrary to his own wishes, by the ignorant enthusiasm of his followers and the belief in his own invincibility which he had fostered in their minds for the purpose of making them confident in their battles with Spain. Abd-el-Krim went to his fate with his eyes open, a victim of as cruel a jest as Fate has played upon any ruler of modern times.

Something like that may very well happen to the Blue Sultan; or in their own good time those wise and far-seeing colonial administrators, the French, may come to one of their little "agreements" with Spain, and the Blue Sultan's hidden city of Kerdous may find itself discovered by such unpleasant explorers as bombing planes, 65-millimeter mountain guns and columns of hard boiled Legionnaires and Tirailleurs.

In the meanwhile, Kerdous remains a center of disaffection and a thorn in the side of those bronzed, harassed officers who command the military zones of Southern Morocco in the distant name of *Madame la Republique*.

George F. Eliot.

The Far North

No need to swelter in the heat of North Africa when you're on this expedition. Our next stop is a good cooling-off place—forty and more below zero, says Harold F. Cruickshank, author of "White Gold":

Dear Globe Trotter:

The color and plot for "White Gold" and my other Northern stories came from actual experience with the North, its white wilderness, its white gold, and its general ruggedness. It was my good fortune, sev-

Continued on page 154)



Married Secrets Now

DON'T be discouraged or alarmed because nature fails you. You can now depend on this wonderful new S. P. PERIODIC RELIEF COMPOUND Double XX Strength (Pills) often successfully relieves some longest, overdue, unusual, discouraging, suppressed periods generally very quickly if due to usual abnormal causes. Some say magic-like, quick in action without danger, pain or inconvenience. Rely on this new wonderful RELIEF COMPOUND. It is one of the most successful compounds that often produces the most unbelievable and remarkable results. Doctors recommend it because it is compounded of the best fresh effective ingredients strictly according to U.S.P. Standards. Thousands of women who have tried many uncertain methods that failed have had their greatest desire gratified in the satisfying relief given by this wonderful new S. P. PERIODIC RELIEF COMPOUND, DOUBLE XX STRENGTH.

TRIAL SIZE ONLY 25c
FULL SIZE \$2.00

If you have tried other methods without success and are skeptical, we will send you a trial size of the Double XX Strength for 25c. See coupon. Other women have tried the trial size and are now ordering the full size package at \$2.00 each or 3 for \$5.00 because this new S. P. PERIODIC RELIEF COMPOUND has given them relief and gained their confidence. Orders shipped same day received, in plain wrapper, sealed.

SEND NO MONEY

You need not send one cent with your order. Just pay postman when your package is delivered to you. While we are very glad to send your order C. O. D. we want to caution you that the Post Office charges small collection and C. O. D. fees for this service. These charges you save if you send money with your order and besides you may be saved some embarrassment because you have to sign for a C. O. D. package. Your money is safe with us because we guarantee to ship all orders same day received in plain wrapper sealed. We have been in business many years and are highly recommended by women everywhere. **QUICK IN ACTION.** The new S. P. PERIODIC RELIEF COMPOUND (PILLS). Read what grateful users have to say of the wonderful relief it brought to them in their irregularities, unusual abnormal cases which were long overdue. We have hundreds of praises like these and more arriving daily now. You owe it to yourself, your health and your happy future to help nature when it fails. Don't be late. Send your order now.

GRATEFUL USERS SAY: I received your S. P. Periodic Pills. I thank you very much. I had suffered greatly for 9 weeks. Within 3 days relief started.—Mrs. P. Iowa.
 ● I received the package of S. P. Relief Compound and I think they are simply wonderful. I only had to take 3 tablets. I will be sending another order soon. I would not be without them.—Mrs. A. P., Ind.
 ● I ordered your Periodic Pills some time ago and they brought results. I had missed my normal cycle for two months, but I took your pills and in three days I had results.—Mrs. A. R. Ohio.
 ● I have tried one box of your S. P. Periodic Pills and think there is nothing like them. They are just fine. Please send me two more boxes to keep on hand.—Mrs. B. N. Y.
 ● I received your trial size you sent me, and have taken them, and they helped me. They are sure wonderful pills. I never had any like them.—Mrs. A. M. N., Pa.

FREE BOOKLET "What A Married Woman Should Know" will be sent to you, and literature on many of the female troubles, in plain wrapper without obligation. Rush coupon.

Don't Delay—Cut Out and Mail Coupon Now!

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Send me at once your free Hygiene Booklet "What A Married Woman Should Know" and literature. I have checked below what also I want. Remittance enclosed.

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<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Boxes S. P. Double XX Strength.....	6.00
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SAVE 50% Write today for FREE Mail Order price list of Sanitary Necessaries of all kinds for men and women. Goods sent in plain sealed envelope, postage paid by us.
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 The Health Products Company of Kansas City is now offering a NEW scientifically prepared treatment to aid men and women banish quickly all desire for smoking, chewing or snuff. Thousands have already proved success of this New **FREE** Easy way. Write today for Free Booklet. Accept no substitutes. Write **HEALTH PRODUCTS CO., Dept. 332,** Manufacturers Exchange Building, Kansas City, Mo.

As our SPECIAL, and to convince you that we have the stuff, we offer on GLOSSY FINISH photographic paper, well made and clearly developed, the following 4 groups of Photos:

Play a Tune In 10 Minutes

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Get your Spanish Guitar, Ukulele, Tenor Ukulele, Mandolin or Banjo, Mandolin. No knowledge of music necessary. No practice. Play first by number. Learn by notes. Simply attach E-Z Player to your favorite instrument, press number, fretted left and play.

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The above are the photos of men, and women in interesting poses, when and where you feel just as for the Paris of Art. Remember they are all actual reproductions of genuine French Pictures.

And with the above we include a combination of 72 miniature pictures, 24 of each of the four sets, at the extra cost. These are included so that you may secure complete subjects, and we will make up a large photograph, 10 inches by 14, any size of moderate price. These will be actual photographs made for you and not art copies.

FREE—Send this ad with your first order and we will also send you an album free. It is one of the Little Letters that we have just written for you, and is an interesting insight of interesting current scenes that you will be able to see and enjoy.

EVERYTHING MENTIONED ABOVE INCLUDED
ALL FOR \$1.00

Send in this ad with or without stamps, immediate shipment, sealed. **L. F. FLEUR CO., Dept. TA, 548 Melrose Ave., N. Y. C.**

My face was hideous.. covered with pimples and blackheads..



until a prominent New York Cosmetologist persuaded me to try REMEDERM. In almost no time the terrible blemishes disappeared . . . my skin became as clear as a babe's. I cannot recommend REMEDERM too highly to skin-sufferers!

A QUICK, SAFE WAY TO RID YOUR FACE OF PIMPLES, BLACKHEADS

Until now it was impossible to enjoy REMEDERM'S marvelous skin benefits except at great cost, by professional treatment in New York. But now the discoverers of this remarkable scientific remedy have made it possible for you to treat your skin personally in your own home, with the same guarantee of success . . . and at only a fraction of the cost!

BEWARE OF "QUACK" METHODS

Don't let dangerous "cure-alls" irritate your pimply condition. Above all, don't pick or squeeze pimples or blackheads . . . they can easily become infected, leave unsightly, disfiguring scars. Clear your complexion . . . clear it quickly and safely—with REMEDERM, the scientific discovery that has relieved the most aggravated conditions and brought new hope—and a glorious new skin—to thousands of sufferers from facial blemishes.

REMEDERM PLEASANT TO USE

No complicated methods, no long waiting for results . . . REMEDERM'S miraculous clearing qualities make themselves felt and seen almost immediately . . . even in the most stubborn cases. Soon you again show the world a marvelously clear, glowing, healthy complexion!

REMEDERM treatments are gentle, pleasant, safe . . . and definitely effective. YOU can use REMEDERM at home with the same positive assurance of wonderful results that thousands have experienced at the hands of high-priced specialists. Furthermore you now PAY ONLY ONE DOLLAR FOR HOME TREATMENTS THAT FORMERLY COST MANY TIMES MORE PROFESSIONALLY APPLIED. There's Nothing like REMEDERM. REMEDERM has no equal—so resist a substitute. Insist on the genuine REMEDERM at your Druggist. If he does not carry it send \$1 to Dept. P., REMEDERM CORP., 599 Fifth Avenue, New York, and you will receive your REMEDERM promptly, postpaid.

GUARANTEE—If you are not entirely satisfied with REMEDERM'S results we will cheerfully refund your dollar. Should you desire a sample of REMEDERM, have your physician request it on his letterhead.

ATTACH \$1 TO THIS COUPON—MAIL AT ONCE

REMEDERM CORP., Dept. P., 599 Fifth Ave., New York City

I enclose \$1 (ONE DOLLAR) for which please send me postpaid a full sized jar of REMEDERM. It is understood that if I am not entirely satisfied with results I am to be refunded the full purchase price.

Name

Address

City

State

(Continued from page 152)

eral years ago, to enter a part of the North that was then only very sparsely settled, for the most part by trappers and some venturesome souls who pioneered in a country that teemed with wild life.

To the north of my campsite was a chap named Andy Forbes, perhaps the greatest hunter and trapper I have ever known. We became friendly; I assisted him along his far-flung traplines. How well I recollect those frigid dawns—forty and more below zero. Frosted pack ponies, almost white with their own frosted steam; crunching snow—a cold that burned down deep into



one's lungs; and then the thrill of the catch; lynx, in the timber, coyotes and wolves along the fringes of the booming frozen lakes, and, greatest of all, the foxes—the white gold.

Then those nights in the log cabin, where a little tin stove struggled to keep out the sting of a hurricane no'easter. Supper of lynx hams and thawed out bread. Yes, that lynx tasted swell; and then, after the pelting for the day was done, yarns together—yarns from a man who was full of them. Long after we crawled beneath the many layers of Hudson's Bay Point blankets, we'd be yarning—until at last Andy would drop off to sleep, leaving me with the solitude of my thoughts in that great Northern silence broken only by the booming of some frozen, tortured lake, or the eerie *whoo-hoo-whoohoo* of some hunting snow owl who sifted through the cracking tamaracks.

I had nine of such winters. When Andy Forbes passed along, I hunted and trapped alone, many times bedding down on the snow when it was so cold that you could almost break off your breath.

"White Gold" is more than a piece of fiction. Its drama is woven out of actual experiences; its color and atmosphere are the North as I lived it.

For your information, I might say that in a single winter Andy Forbes and I pelted more than a hundred and twenty fur-bearers, including wolves, coyotes, foxes, lynx, and many of the smaller fur-bearers, as well as the odd deer for grub and his pelt for buckskin.

Harold P. Cruickshank.

That's covering pretty wide territory, for one issue, don't you think? We'll have to call a halt now and turn to some of these other chaps who are clamoring for attention.

A while ago Ye Olde Globe Trotter

announced regretfully that it is impossible to attempt finding jobs for any of you fellows. Yet the letters keep coming in. If you're looking for employment in foreign countries I'll be glad to pass along the names and addresses of U. S. consuls located there, but I can't attempt to give you a line on specific jobs.

In particular I've been hearing lately from a lot of you rolling stones who are anxious to hook up with some sort of adventure expedition. Says one:

Dear Globe Trotter:

If you happen to know of anyone who needs a young man of twenty-one years, with a taste for adventure and travel, who knows how to handle himself in a tight spot, please forward my name and address to him.

Cicero, Illinois. Stanley J. Jasnasz.

Another wants a position "on any sort of ship, sailboat, schooner, tramp steamer—anywhere where I can find adventure." While others are anxious to hook up with the authors of the true adventure features we have published in recent issues.

Chances for Adventure

Ye Olde Globe Trotter would like nothing better than to hook up each one of you with the sort of proposition you're seeking, but that's too big a job even to start. Whenever I hear of a chance for adventure I'll pass it along to you—with the understanding that you are to take it at your own risk, with your eyes wide open; that you'll investigate thoroughly before tying up with it; and that no such proposition has the endorsement of this magazine or has been investigated by the Globe Trotter.

I'll pass them along for what they're worth. That's all I can do.

Partner Wanted

Here, for example, is a call for a partner. Several of you who read Captain Rey's letter in a recent issue of this column commented that you'd like to go along with him. Here's his proposition:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I'm looking for a partner—some young man who would like to travel through the tropics in search of gold and adventure in a twenty-two foot sailing vessel. The only

(Continued on page 156)

4 INCHES of MUSCLE PUT ON YOUR ARMS with the GERMAN IRON SHOE MUSCLE BUILDER

Here is the greatest exerciser ever made to build giant-like arms, wide, powerful shoulders, a brawny back and a tremendous chest! John Fillpone added five inches to his arms; E. Peters added one inch to each bicep the first week! What they have done, you can do!

Now You Can Have the Strength and Physique the Equal of the Strongest Professional!

Become the center of attraction wherever you go! Decide now that you are going to have muscles that not only look good but are good! Get sinews of steel! The iron shoe will develop them to a super-state that cannot be equalled. Buns of our pupils have put four inches on their biceps and increased their shoulder spread six inches.

NEW MODEL NOW READY! Special new features including the "Peak Strength Beator" based on the famous European Block System and the "Strength Register" which registers your day by day improvement.

SPECIAL FREE OFFER!

The Iron Man's Famous 80 day Illustrated Picture Course of Instruction is included FREE! This is the greatest body-building offer ever presented. Ring in now for the lowest priced and biggest result getting exerciser under the sun!

Send today. NOW for FREE illustrated information and SPECIAL Gold Medal Prizes Given FREE! No obligation.

WIN A GOLD MEDAL AWARD!

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Gentlemen: Without obligation and without cost, send particulars about your Iron Shoe Strength Builder and Special offer.

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Train for

ELECTRICITY IN 12 WEEKS AT COYNE

The great Coyne Schools in Chicago have a world-wide reputation for training men here in Chicago in this big-pay field in only 12 weeks. Then they get behind you to assure success by giving you lifetime employment service. By my new plan YOU can take advantage of their wonderful method of learning-by-doing NOW—no need to lose time and money while you strive and save to raise the necessary tuition.

I WILL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

Come to Coyne at once. Get your training. Then start paying me for your training a full ten months after you graduate, and take a full ten months to complete your payments. If you will write to me at once I will send you complete details of this sensational new plan, together with the BIG FREE Illustrated Book telling all about COYNE and how many men while learning and the training you can get there without book study or useless theory.

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SEND NOW FOR FULL DETAILS!

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590 S. Paulina St., Dept. 35-34, Chicago, Ill.
Tell me how you will finance my training at
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Join Our Select Club

This is the oldest, largest, most active up-to-date club, known for the splendid class of members, the reliable confidential service. Refined members everywhere.

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Women Don't Worry

about delayed or irregular periods, use our amazing V2 Relief Compound double strength, acts quickly, relieves many stubborn unnatural delays in two to five days without harm, pain or inconvenience. Send today for this amazing remedy. Double strength, \$2; two boxes for \$3.50. Sent same day order received in plain wrapped box. Send 25c for Trial Size. VICTOR REMEDIES, Dept. A., 466 No. Armour St., Chicago.

TILLIE and MAC

(NEW STUFF) Priches and Browning, Dumb Dora, Macks and Jags, How and Bubbles, The Gump, French Struckwater, A Bachelor's Dream, Adam and Eve, Kip and Alice, A Model's Life, Original—Night in Paris, Toots and Casper, A Coachman's Daughter and over 100 more. Also over 70 Darling French type pictures, incl. 18 Actual Photos. Montmartre type of Men and Women in various poses. Also incl. Women Alone in different positions, etc., special free with order. "Advice on How to Win at Cards," also "The Night Life of Paris" and some short stories, etc., etc. Goods sent sealed. You will receive all of the above. You may send cash, money order or stamps.

SPECIAL: ALL FOR \$1.00

PARIS IMPORT CO.

4166 Park Ave., Dept. THA, New York City

(Continued from page 154)

requirements he would have to have are a cheerful disposition, an ability to stand extreme hardship, an ability to live in cramped quarters for days at a time without complaining. Whether he can share expenses is no object as long as he is sincere and willing to stick it out through thick and thin. I expect to start just as soon as the weather warms up.

Capt. Belton R. Rey.

1433 W. Lombard St.,
Baltimore, Md.

There you are, Globe Trotters. If you are interested, get in touch with Capt. Rey—not with the Globe Trotter. Ye Olde Globe Trotter assumes no responsibility for these propositions.

Another Matter

But here's a proposition that I will endorse and back to the limit: as fine an outfit of red-blooded he-men as you'll bunk into in a generation of Sundays!

Yeah—I'm talking about the Globe Trotters Club. If you are not already a member, brothers, it's sure time you got wise to yourself and climbed aboard with the rest of us. Maybe you can't go galivanting off to all the places you'd like to see, but you can line up with the gents who are going there for you; you can enjoy their thrills vicariously; you can correspond with them.

The Globe Trotters Club is open to you without initiation fee and without dues. Merely fill in the coupon which appears on another page, giving your name and address and the other information requested. Enclose with it a stamped and self-addressed envelop, and send it along to us—now.

We will immediately place your name on the Globe Trotters membership roll and send you a handsome membership card. The Globe Trotters is your kind of outfit, brother, or you wouldn't be reading this column. If you're not lined up with us already—hop to it!

Some of Them Say—

Cowboys, sailors, stamp collectors—you can find most any sort of jasper in the Globe Trotters. Here is a

(Continued on page 158)



The THIRD SEX! Man or Woman?

For hundreds of years men and women have talked with hushed voices about "STRANGE PEOPLE"—men who are not men—women who are not women. No one has ever dared to talk out in the open about it. Is it any wonder that the shocking, lurid facts of this great social evil are unknown to the great mass of men and women? Is it any wonder that queer nicknames are commonly used to describe these people?

A Doctor Casts the Light of Truth on the Strange, Exotic World of Twilight Men and Women!

Now a doctor has dared to tell the truth about sexual abnormalities. In plain, understandable words he describes the unbelievable facts. "STRANGE LOVES," by Dr. La Forest Potter, noted authority, is so frank and daring that it will shock and amaze you.

THE TRUTH REVEALED!

Do you know what really goes on among these men and women of the "Shadow World?" Do you know that their number is constantly increasing? The strange power they have over normal people is almost unbelievable. Dr. Potter says, "NO MAN ON EARTH HAS A CHANCE AGAINST A WOMAN ONCE SHE HAS SUCCEMBED TO ANOTHER WOMAN." He tells about actual clinical cases that reveal the unnatural desires and actions of these twilight men and women. There is proof that men have been MADE INTO SEXUAL ABNORMALS. For the first time a Doctor reveals the full facts about abnormalities, what they are, how they may be corrected; information of absorbing interest.



"STRANGE LOVE"

Dr. Potter tells about the hidden, secret passions of these men and women. Frankly and openly, he reveals the life and habits of the effeminate man, half man, half woman. He relates the bestialities and savageries practiced by the old Egyptians, Hindus, Greeks, Assyrians and Romans—the development of these strange practices in France and Germany its tremendous spread through the United States.

Must These Subjects Be Clothed in Silence Forever?

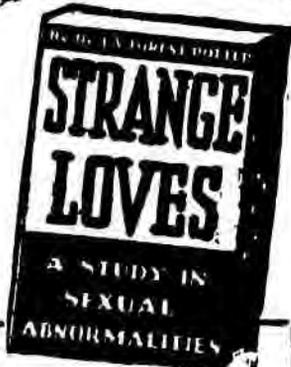
Fearlessly, openly, the real meaning of many misunderstood subjects is clearly explained. Sadism, Necrophilia, Phallic Worship, Sodomy, Pederasty, Tribadism—Uranism, the normal man and woman will refuse to believe that such abnormalities exist and are practiced.

Astonishing Disclosures About the World's Most Famous Men!

How many of the famous men of history were considered "odd?" Socrates, Plato, Caesar, Virgil, Oscar Wilde, Leonardo da Vinci, Lord Byron, Tchaikowsky, the musician, Walt Whitman, the gentle, lovable poet, Napoleon—men and women of all kinds in all stages of life. These little-known secrets about well-known people are an astonishing revelation.

FOR MATURE READERS

This startling book contains bewildering disclosures and discoveries that rarely, if ever, find their way into print. . . . that most people know little or nothing about. A limited edition has been prepared for ADULTS ONLY—beautifully bound in cloth, printed on fine paper—complete with glossary explaining all the terms used. Reserve a copy of this book at the now REDUCED PRICE OF \$1.98 by mailing the coupon. If dissatisfied you can return the book within 5 days and your money will be refunded.



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Enclosed find \$1.98. Send book postpaid.
 I ship C. O. D. I will pay postman \$1.98, plus postage.

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Address

Town State

(We reserve the right to return all orders after this edition is exhausted. Prepaid orders receive preference and will be shipped before C. O. D. orders.) (Canadian and Foreign orders must be accompanied by remittance for \$2.25.)

ROBERT DODSLEY CO.
110 W. 42nd St. Dept. C-50 New York, N. Y.

Okay—it looks as if you two Californians ought to be able to get together nicely. Any of the rest of you stamp-collectors who want to be listed, send in your names.

Lack of space has prevented Ye Olde Globe Trotter from answering some of the queries you fellows have been sending in. Rather than hold them any longer I'll clean them up this way—just the inquirer's name and the answer:

A. Smith: You can address Max Baer at the Hollywood A. C., Hollywood, Calif., but gloves used in an important bout will cost you plenty—if you can get them at all.

Chas. Davis: "Waddy" was originally used to designate a rustler, but beyond that I have not been able to trace the term. Perhaps some Globe trotter can tell us how it came to be applied to cow-punchers?

Elgin F. Ralston: Glad to run a swap column in this department, if the Globe Trotters want one. Speak up, if you do.

Ernest K. Rulisill: Sorry, can't give you addresses of Frank Hoyt and John Powers. Address them in our care, if you wish.

Joseph Lesinky, and others asking the same question: It is impossible to give you a complete or regional list of Globe Trotters and their addresses; you'll have to clip them from the magazine each month.

Rita Moran: The "grapevine" is that mysterious, word-of-mouth means by which native, so quickly spread information; it is used in a slang sense to mean gossip.

(Concluded on page 160)

LIST OF MEMBERS

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Published from Sept. month

- Jack T. O'Brien, 1441 W. Larkin Ave., Birm., Ala.
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ALL FOR \$1.00. PLAIN WRAPPER
CONCORD NOVELTY CO.

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(Concluded from page 159)

James Watters: Write to the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce, 14th St., Washington, D. C., for information about American construction in Australia, Russia and Japan.

George Nester: For information about the Bolivia-Paraguay War, write to Officer of the Legation, Bolivian Legation, Room 609, Hill Building, Washington, D. C.; or Officer of the Legation, Paraguayan Legation, Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D. C.

George Baldwin: For information about the Foreign Legion, write to French Foreign Legion, Maurice Hamoneau, 681 Fifth Ave., New York.

Joseph Cappiello: For information about the merchant marine, write to United States Shipping Board Bureau, New Navy Building, Washington, D. C.

Hing Chung: The subscription price for THRILLING ADVENTURES in Hong-kong is \$2.30.

Morton Fichtelberg: Billy the Kid was killed by Sheriff Pat Garrett in Fort Sumner, near Lincoln City, N. M., in 1870. The Kid was 21, and he had killed twenty-one men—"not counting Indians and Mexicans." to use his own words.

Daniel M. Bayles: The United States Shipping Board Bureau can give you the information you desire.

Next Month's Issue

Fellow Globe Trotters, there are great fiction treats in store for you next month! Leading off with a complete book-length novel by ARTHUR J. BURKS — HELL'S OASIS, the April issue will take you to many lands where adventure reigns! HELL'S OASIS is a humdinger—a stirring yarn of swishing swords and flaming guns in a forgotten outpost of hell. Bang-up thrills in the desert wastes!

Then there's FLIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, a great war-air novelette by the famous author, GEORGE BRUCE. Also, stories by Major George F. Eliot, Laurence W. Harrell and others. And—

The most exciting true experience story you ever read! I FOUGHT THE YELLOW HORDES, in which an intrepid adventurer uncovers the secret of the Jade Casket of the Dalai Lamas! Many other interesting features—and another talk with

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER

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Don't suffer unnecessarily when nature fails you. Get a modern woman's remedy for gaining relief from distress. Used by thousands of women from coast to coast for relief of overdue, late appearing, abnormal, suppressed periods. Only a woman knows how another woman can suffer at times, so if you are troubled with delays read every word of this message from another woman who wants to help women everywhere.

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If it is inconvenient to get a money order or a bank draft I will be pleased to send your order "O. D." I will pay the regular postage as usual but you pay the "O. D." Fee. However, if you wish to save time and possible embarrassment I suggest you send remittance with your order. Nearly every woman who orders does so for it is much quicker. I do not recommend "O. D." if you wish prompt service. Your order will be shipped the same day as received in a plain box, carefully sealed so it cannot be tampered with.

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If you have never had the pleasure of trying my "Special Relief Compound" I will be pleased to send you a sample of Formula No. 2 for 25c. I make this offer particularly to those who may have tried other remedies without success and who perhaps are a bit doubtful as to the merits of my compound. The fact that a great many of my orders come from friends of my customers is ample

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1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30
31					

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Some will be offended by the amazing frankness of this book and its vivid illustrations, but the world has no longer any use for prudery and false modesty.



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Normal, sex-soiled young people are torn apart because they lack sex knowledge.

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Sexual Irritation
Glands and Sex Instincts
To Gain Greater Delight
The Truth About Abortion

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Premenstrual
Birth Control Chart
How to Attract and Hold Men
Sexual History of Woman
Essentials of Happy Marriage
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29x4.50-20	2.35	0.85
30x4.50-21	2.40	0.85
28x4.75-19	2.45	0.95
29x4.75-20	2.50	0.95
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.05
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.15
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.15
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.15
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.15
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.15
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.15
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.25
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.25
31x6.50-19	3.60	1.35
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.35
34x7.00-20	4.60	1.65
35x7.00-21	4.60	1.65

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30x3 1/2	2.35	0.75
31x4	2.95	0.85
32x4	2.95	0.85
33x4	2.95	0.85
34x4	3.25	0.85
32x4 1/2	3.35	1.15
33x4 1/2	3.45	1.15
34x4 1/2	3.45	1.15
30x5	3.65	1.35
33x5	3.75	1.45
35x5	3.95	1.55
Heavy Duty TRUCK TIRES		
Size	Tire	Tube
30x5	\$4.25	\$1.95
32x6 8 ply	6.95	2.75
32x6 10 "	7.95	2.75
36x6	8.95	3.95
34x7	9.95	3.25
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Heavy Duty Truck Balloons		
Size	Tire	Tube
7.50-20	\$6.95	\$3.75
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9.00-20	10.95	5.65
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This is a call for men everywhere to handle exclusive agency for one of the most unique business inventions of the day. To such men we say, "This is no doubt one of the most attractive money making inventions that has ever come to your attention." To those who ask, "Is it some clever new gadget?" we say, emphatically, "NO! This is no kink-knack, no trick billing idea—no new kind of adding machine—not a check protector." Instead, it is an invention needed by the smallest business man as well as the largest corporation and it has already saved countless thousands for the business firms which have adopted it. AND, in no time, IT HAS PAID THIRTY TIMES TO THE SALESMEN WHO HAD THE GOOD LUCK TO BE THE FIRST TO SEE OUR NEWSPAPER HELP WANTED ADVERTISEMENTS! Think of it! One of these first men has already made over 1,000 sales—each of these sales paying a profit of \$5 to \$60—truly a fortune in profits on the 1,000 sales! Another's record shows \$151.71 clear in 3 days! Still another's orders give him a profit of \$1,920 in three months! Now we know this is a great success—and now we are out to cover the entire country. Men wanted everywhere. Any man, young or mature, who grasps this opportunity, may duplicate this success. The annual business should run into millions. We feel it will be worth while for every man who realizes the importance of this opportunity to telegraph, or rush by fastest mail, the coupon for our proposition.

Saves Thousands of Dollars for Offices, Stores, Factories

What is this remarkable invention? You have to see what it is, read all about it, what it has accomplished, to believe it is possible. This astounding record of accomplishment is reported and verified over the signatures of many of America's finest and most distinguished business houses. Large firms are not the only beneficiaries—small organizations are enjoying exceptional dividends, too. Samuels Hardware of Kansas invests \$98.60, saves \$4,707.00 between April 5th and June 20th. Fox Ice and Coal Co., Wisconsin, saves \$3,261.00. Baltimore Sporting Goods Co. saves \$1,600.00 on \$45 installation. Warner Merc. Co., Texas, saves over \$1,000 on \$15 installation. With these and scores of similar results to display, our representatives interest many business men, from the very smallest to the very largest. No one can dispute the profit in the photo-copies of actual letters which our men show.

Installed on Free Trial—Sells Itself—Saves Enough to Pay for Itself Before Salesman Returns

We actually enable you to make installations at our risk; let the customer sell himself after the installation is in and working. This does away with the need for high pressure selling—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get money before customer is really convinced. You simply tell what you offer, show proof of success in every line of business and every section of the country. This starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation has actually produced cash money that is there and available to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time! You then call back, collect your money. Think of it! Out of every \$7.50 business you do, nearly \$60 is your own profit! The very smallest you make is \$5.00 on a \$7.50 installation! Nothing is so convincing as our offer to let results speak for themselves without risk to the customer!



RECORD SALES
Made by building from investment cash profit on his investment. Very few business men are so foolish as to turn down a proposition guaranteed to pay a profit, with proof from leading concerns that it does pay.

Each Installation Paves Way for Automatic Repeat Sales

No need to go elsewhere, once you have sold every good prospect in town. You may stay where you are and build up a permanent substantial business. Every pleased customer needs "refill" supplies constantly. You make exactly the same commission on these big repeat orders as you do on the original sale. Washington Sanitorium and Hospital writes: "We have already used more than ten installations of the large size so far." H. C. Heath writes, "We have only 15,000 population and I have already sold 75 installations, many of which repeated, and the above order makes 128 units for yours truly." Practically every time you establish a new customer, you increase your permanent income from repeat business. This enables you, on exclusive contract, to build an established permanent base of customers which can be sold like any other established business.

Your Customer Takes No Risk

Customer gets signed certificates guaranteeing cash profit on his investment. Very few business men are so foolish as to turn down a proposition guaranteed to pay a profit, with proof from leading concerns that it does pay.

No Canvassing No Super Salesmanship

Communicate with Us at Once

If you have not already heard of this invention being sold in your territory, lose no time but get in touch with us immediately. This specialty is as important a business opportunity (today as the typewriter, adding machine, and the dictaphone were in their early days. Men who can take the measure of an opportunity will see this instantly. If you can show us you are the right man for exclusive franchise in your territory, your success is assured. Write or wire at once. If writing, use the coupon below for convenience. No obligation. Full information will be sent to you at once.

F. E. ARMSTRONG, Pres.
Dept. 4047-C, Mobile, Ala.

SALESMEN NEEDED EVERYWHERE
YOU SEE NO MONEY in trying out this business. Complete Training furnished. Many men with us today started at scratch, many coming out of clerking jobs, many out of small businesses, some out of large concerns. Can't possibly tell you all in the limited space available here. Mail the coupon now for full information—nothing to risk, everything to gain.

A Business of National Importance

As well as selling thousands of installations to small merchants, professional men, etc., we number either the parent companies or branches, or dealers, etc., of many world-famous concerns among our customers: Cities Service Oil Co., Great Lakes Fisheries, Inc., National Majestic Radio, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Daimler Steel Products, Public Utilities Consolidated Corporation, Union Gas Corp., Coca-Cola Bottling Co., National Radio, Timken Silent Automatic Co., Central States Petroleum, United Aluminum Corporation, Street Handwriters Advertising Co., Great American Life Underwriters, National Paper Co., and scores of other nationally known, Universities, newspapers, doctors, etc., buy substantial installations and heavy repeat orders.

RUSH FOR EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY PROPOSITION
F. E. ARMSTRONG, Pres., Dept. 4047-C, Mobile, Ala.
Without obligation to me, send me full information on your proposition.

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