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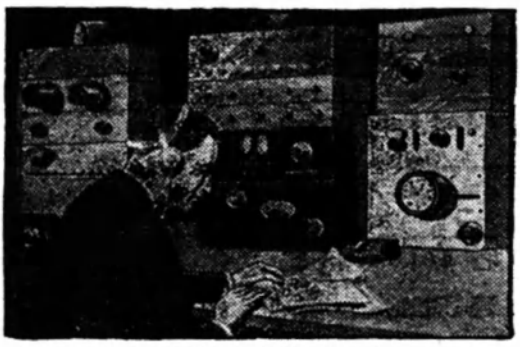

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THRILLING ADVENTURES

VOL. III, No. 2 | J. S. WILLIAMS, *Editor* | October, 1932

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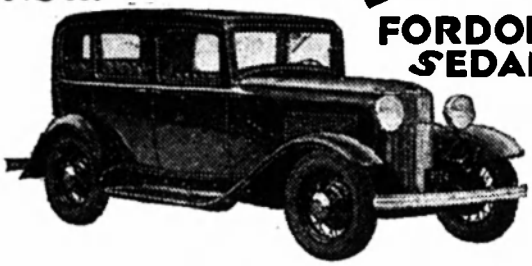

FORDOR SEDAN

9	2	6	7	3	9	4	7	4	3	9	4
4	8	3	5	6	3	8	5	5	7	3	7
5	3	8	2	6	6	5	7	2	6	5	5
7	5	4	8	3	5	6	3	9	2	5	7
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9	3	5	5	2	9	3	6	6	2	9	3
4	7	2	7	7	3	8	5	6	6	2	9

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100 PRIZES GIVEN AWAY

1st Prize $600 or New 8-Cyl. Sedan
2nd Prize $200 3rd Prize $100 4th Prize $75
5th Prize $50 6th to 100th $5 Each

IT ISN'T often you have an opportunity to win a splendid prize like this without being required to buy or sell something. To win this prize nothing is necessary but the time you spend working on the puzzle. Can you tell big numbers from little numbers? Can you draw a line connecting the biggest numbers? If you can you may win $600.00 Cash, or a brand new Eight Cylinder Ford Fordor Sedan, to be delivered to you by your nearest dealer. All you will have to do to win is to connect up more large numbers in accordance with the rules than anyone else. It sounds easy, doesn't it? But that's all you have to do and you will find it lots of fun; just try your hand at it.

WHY WE GIVE THESE PRIZES

We offer these Good-Will prizes just for advertising purposes. We sell the well-known Hollywood Marvel Products. We want you to see our new catalog which we are going to mail to everyone who registers in this contest. We feel sure we will receive enough business through the distribution of this catalog, and exceptional offers we make, to more than offset the cost of these prizes. Now remember, it is NOT necessary for you to buy or sell any of these goods to win this prize. The offer is open to everyone and absolutely FREE.

CONTEST RULES

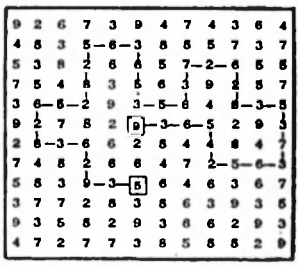
Complete rules and instructions will be sent on receipt of the registration blank. Final date for registration November 30, 1932, but if winner of first prize has mailed registration blank within three days after this announcement is read, $200.00 extra will be added to first prize. Final date for submitting official puzzle January 30, 1933. Contest restricted to continental U. S. Only registered contestants may take part. Employees of this company and their relatives are excluded. Ties, if any, will be eliminated by means of additional puzzles of the same nature, but larger, as explained on official puzzle blank, which will be mailed registered contestants immediately on receipt of registration blank. At the same time, we will mail you a dozen EXTRA COPIES of the Marvel Path Puzzle to practice on. Prizes will be awarded according to official standing of contestants after ties are eliminated. Duplicate prizes will be awarded in case of final ties as provided in rules on official puzzle blank.

$200 EXTRA For Promptness

No need to rush about drawing your Marvel Path. You can do that later. The thing to do RIGHT NOW is to DECLARE YOURSELF a contestant by mailing the registration blank below. $200.00 extra cash will be given first prize winner if he or she registers PROMPTLY. This makes $800.00 in all, or the Ford and $200.00 cash extra. SOME PRIZE just for drawing lines between numbers. So mail this registration blank IMMEDIATELY. Be ahead of time so that you can get ALL there is to be won. To step into this car, to know it's yours,—to know you don't owe a penny ON it, and haven't paid a penny FOR it—that's worth while. But when, besides this, there will be in the bank two hundred dollars extra, you can be sure your RIG CHANCE has come. RIGHT NOW is the time to say you're going to WIN!

HERE'S THE WAY TO SOLVE THE PUZZLE

Above is a Marvel Path Puzzle—the simple puzzle which decides the winner. All you do is take a pencil and draw a line or path through 40 of the numbers in the square as shown in the sample path at the right. In drawing your line or path, you want to include the MOST big numbers, and the FEWEST small numbers, as per the following rules. That's all.



(1) Your line must be ONE CONTINUOUS LINE but may turn as often as you wish. You may start at ANY NUMBER IN THE SQUARE and step at any number. When finished, your line must contain 40 numbers.

(2) Your line must go straight up or straight down, straight right or straight left—diagonal (slanting) lines are not allowed. See Sample Marvel Path at right.

(3) From the number you begin with you may go in a straight line, until your line contains 4 numbers. Then you MUST turn because 4 numbers are all that are permitted in a straight line. If you wish you may turn when your line contains 3 numbers. But LESS than 3 numbers in a straight line are NOT PERMITTED. Observe this rule throughout—NEVER LESS than 3 numbers in a straight line—NEVER MORE than 4.

(4) Your line must never touch or cross itself. When your line contains 40 numbers, STOP. Add up the numbers in your finished line and put down the total. The path that adds up to a bigger total than anybody else's WINS.

We have drawn a sample path in the small puzzle above to show you how to do it. You may start at any number in the puzzle. The numbers in our path add up to 189. See if you can beat this path by starting at some number. Try it. If you do and your path adds up to a bigger total than any one else's, you win, and the prize you win will be $600.00 Cash, or a brand new Eight Cylinder Ford Sedan. That's some prize for taking a pencil and drawing a line, but don't stop to solve the puzzle now—mail your registration blank first! Be in time to get the extra $200.00 that goes to first prize winner, for promptness.

REGISTRATION BLANK

HOLLYWOOD MARVEL PRODUCTS CO.,
1023 N. Sycamore, Dept. 412,
Hollywood, Calif.

Without obligation to me, register my name in your Good-Will Marvel Path Contest. Send me full information, the Official Rules together with the official puzzle blank and 12 extra copies for practice. I expect to submit a puzzle in this contest. It is understood that I may win first or any other prize listed above, without p aying you one cent for goods or service.

Name .....

Address .....

BARE

A Complete

By ARTHUR

Author of "The Yellow Hand,"

CHAPTER I

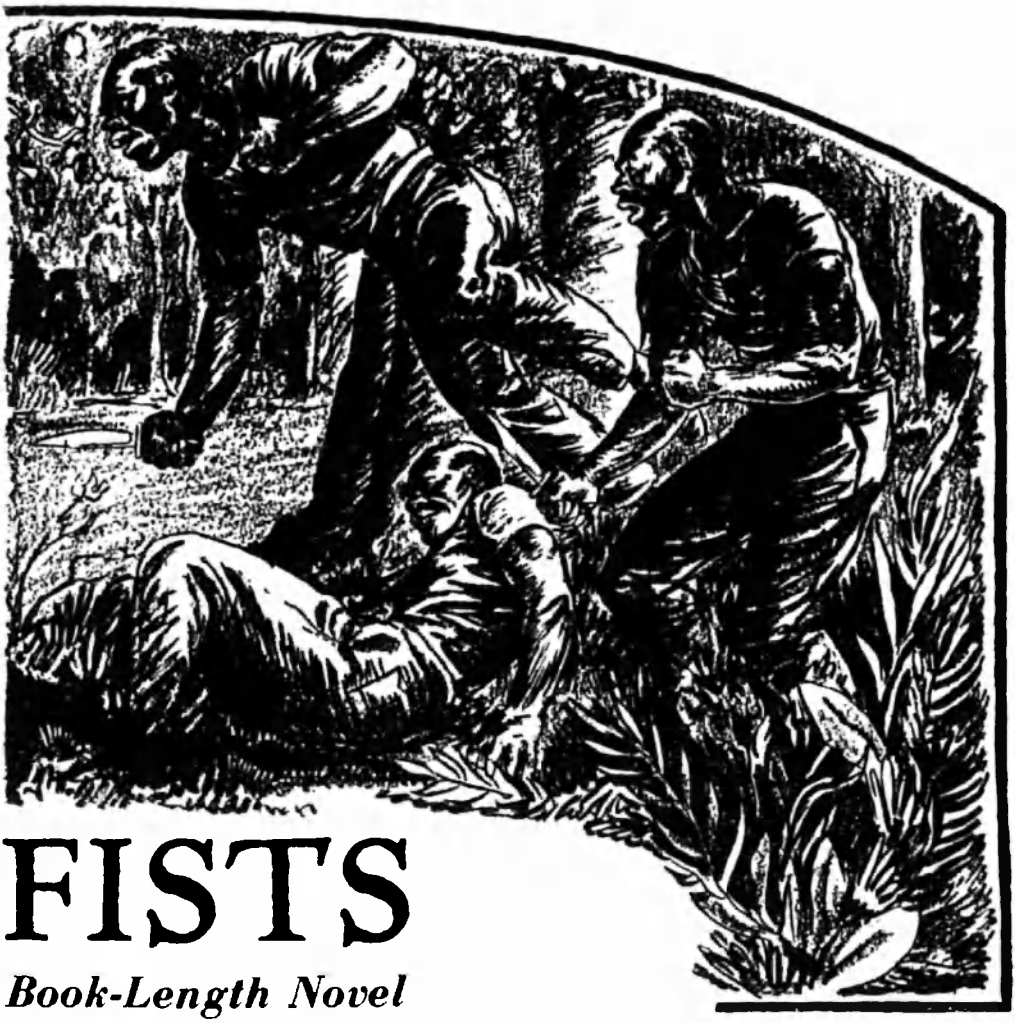
The Fight

GUNNERY Sergeant Daniel Leahy knew that he had been a fool to return from the native dance at Agua Dulce by way of Villa Francesca. But it was too late now to do anything about it. He'd taken a chance and must pay for his temerity. It meant, too, that he'd have to fight like hell.

He knew the minions of El Mocho, the one-armed one, who ran a hellhole for sailors in the restricted area of this evil Dominion suburb, and he knew that they would just as soon kill him as look at him. And they knew he daren't do anything about it for they knew that no marine in uniform had any right in Villa Francesca.

Leahy stumbled squarely into the center of El Mocho and his crowd, for there were no lights in the vicinity where the one-armed man—whose principal weapon of offense was a whip with frayed wire at the business end—and El Mocho started

Follow a Daring Marine Who Sets Forth



FISTS

Book-Length Novel

J. BURKS

"The Cowled Cobra," etc.

things instantly by snarling in Spanish:

"Smash the American dog!"

He began it by crashing his wire whip across the sergeant's face, with all the power of his left arm. Leahy reeled with the burning shock of it —and the three men with El Mocho, his spies and helpers, closed in with guttural laughs of pleasure. Gunnery sergeants might have a few dollars —and all was grist to the mill of El Mocho.

Leahy quickly recovered himself and started fighting, knowing all the time that if the alarm were given, if in some way the noise of his struggle reached the ears of the provost marshal's patrols, on duty in Villa Francesca to keep the leathernecks out, he was due for a court-martial. He would lose his rank and probably do some time in the brig, all on account of taking a short cut through forbidden territory.

It was a tough spot, quite regardless of the huge natives attacking him, and the wire whip of El Mocho. He might well be killed; might well

on a Perilous Mission Unarmed!

beg for the arrival of the patrols before he was finished with this. Meanwhile he would give a good account of himself. His left fist smashed into the stomach of a black man—and the stomach was as hard as a washboard. The black fellow didn't even grunt.

El Mocho laughed—and stepped in quickly as the two other blacks closed on Leahy from either side. His wire whip came crashing down, but Leahy heard it and ducked aside, squarely into the path of a huge black fist, which crashed against his jaw with stunning force, even as the whip cut into his shoulder. Even through his thick shirt he felt the bite and sting of it and felt the warm blood burst from his skin.

El Mocho laughed. Leahy whirled on the one-armed scavenger of the black alleys of Villa Francesca, intent upon jerking that wire whip from his grasp and giving the brute a taste of his own punishment. But the three blacks jumped him and bore him down, fighting like a fury.

"Keep back from his face!" yelled El Mocho. "Give me a chance to write my name on it in a way he'll remember! He won't soon turn on El Mocho again!"

THEY held him, two at his sides, the third squarely atop him. The latter started to draw back to give El Mocho his chance. Leahy had whirled to his back on falling, thus playing into the hands of his enemies. He saw the arm of El Mocho lift, saw the whip go over the native's shoulder, listened for the whistling of it when it started down. He was held hard and fast.

It seemed that nothing could keep him from taking that cruel lashing across the face. The whip was coming down now, the sound of its swing rising to a sort of shriek, like taut wire in a high wind. With a superhuman effort, his teeth tight locked with determination—he wouldn't cry out even if the whip cut his face half off—Leahy pulled the man on top of him.

Across the blackness of Villa Francesca, even to Santo Domingo City under the hill to the south, went the high shriek of the black man as El Mocho's whip crashed along his back, laying open his denim coat, whatever he may have worn under it, and cutting into the flesh like a razor.

AND the word the man shouted must have been the one word that occurred to him at the moment of the dreadful shock:

"Police!"

And he shouted in English, which marked him as a San Croix or Saint Kitts black. That shout in English would bring the patrols, and Leahy dared not be caught here, out of bounds by military regulation.

Far down the hill he heard shouted orders. He listened briefly, as best he could in the midst of the fight, immediately resumed, for the sound of racing hoofbeats, which would signal the approach of the provost patrol.

But there followed, after the far shouting in English, a strange silence. He could feel El Mocho listening, too—and the others. But they didn't stop fighting. If Leahy had a few dollars they intended to have them.

Somehow, anyhow, he managed to fight his way to his feet. He knew that his face was bleeding. The pummeling fists of the black men had bruised him from head to knees. He wondered why they hadn't used knives. Perhaps they would, before this fight was over.

El Mocho still hovered at the edge of the fight, like some gruesome bird of prey, and Leahy knew that the whip would swing again at the first

opportunity. That he might hit one of his own men bothered El Mocho not at all.

Leahy tried for a left at the jaw of the man who directly faced him. He missed. The man ducked—and Leahy's right fist met the dodging shadow. He felt his fist, packed with every bit of power he had, crash to the enemy's jaw. The man moaned—and went down.

"Down him!" snarled El Mocho.

The other two redoubled their efforts. El Mocho, while Leahy's flesh crawled with horror, stood over the man Leahy had knocked out, and belabored him mercilessly with the whip, trying in this ghastly manner to make him return to consciousness.

Leahy saw red. These men were worse than wild beasts. They were vultures that battened on the carrion of Villa Francesca's most malodorous alleys. They should be destroyed as one would destroy a den of snakes.

HE forgot, for the time, the blows of the whip which had all but cut him to ribbons. He forgot even the imminent approach of the provost patrol—and fought as he'd probably never fought before. His fist became twin battering rams with which to punish the minions of El Mocho.

His left crashed out like the striking head of a serpent, striving to measure the faces and jaws of his enemies for killing blows with his right.

One man had been down, but now he was up again, staggering drunkenly, while El Mocho, chattering like an ape, still belabored him.

"Get back in there and beat this dog!" he yelled.

Leahy hadn't a chance, but he intended to make even these men remember they'd been in a fight. There was the sound of hoofbeats of horses as the belated patrol came on, but Leahy didn't hear them. His whole being was concentrated on knocking out these three blacks.

AFTER that he'd take that whip away from El Mocho and use it on its owner. Nothing else seemed important—even the possibility of court-martial for being out of bounds.

He didn't know that, just around the corner, he had an interested watcher—a man in civilian clothing who could do much about all this when and if it ever came to a court-martial.

He didn't know anything, except to wade in and fight like hell. It was surprising how the blacks fought. Ordinarily they were cowardly, and knew little or nothing about fist fighting. Then he remembered the whip of El Mocho, which kept them from being cowards. They would fight until beaten to a pulp to keep from tasting the wrath of El Mocho.

The fight had lasted for ten minutes, each minute seemingly an hour long. Gnarled hands had ripped the shirt from Leahy's back. Dirty fingernails had scored his face and torso, but he scarcely felt them—for a savage right smash had dropped another of the blacks, over whom El Mocho was hovering, in his eerie chattering now, a note of fear.

Leahy sensed that note, and grinned grimly. Maybe, after all, he'd have a chance to make El Mocho taste some of his own medicine.

But the patrols were too close. Suddenly—it seemed that even El Mocho and his men had failed to hear the approach of the brassarded marines—three horsemen, led by a second lieutenant, rounded the corner and surrounded the fighters.

At that moment Leahy dropped the

third of the blacks, while the one over whom El Mocho labored started to stagger up, screaming.

"What's the meaning of this?" snapped the povost officer, turning the beam of a flashlight on the fighters. "Ah, Leahy! And out of bounds, too! You know what that means?"

"Yes, sir, and I've no excuse to offer. I cut across lots from Agua Dulce and El Mocho's men jumped me, that's all."

"Well, pull on what you can find of your shirt and lets go. You'll sleep in the brig tonight!"

At this moment the shadow which had been lurking in the darkness beyond the hut of El Mocho detached itself and moved into the center of the crowd.

"It's all right, Bentley," said the shadow. "I'm Lieutenant McCauley of Intelligence. This man volunteered to do something for me and got stuck with it, but it isn't his fault. I'll be responsible for him."

Bentley hesitated. McCauley raised his voice sharply.

"As head of Brigade Intelligence. I can requisition any man I wish for any mission. I did so in this case. Release Leahy."

The lieutenant touched hand to hat-brim in salute, snapped a command at his men, and rode away. Leahy turned to McCauley to murmur his thanks. McCauley waved him aside.

NIX on it!" he snapped. "I'm glad I happened to hear that yell. I was nosing around here, trying to hear what might be going on among the natives, and I came on to see what was happening. I saw the whole show. Didn't I hear someone say your name's Leahy? Yeah, well, I need a fellow who can use his fists a bit. I'll give you the brief story.

"Arms are being run into Santo Domingo from Curacao, Venezuela and Mexico, and it's my job to find out how it is done. I heard you speak Spanish to El Mocho. You speak it well. I need that, too. I wonder where El Mocho and his blackbirds ducked to? They vanished like rats when the patrol came. Never mind, that's over.

"THE word I just got was that arms were being run into the country somewhere in the vicinity of Playa de Caracoles which is about sixty miles west of here. I want you, if you'll do it—I can't order anybody to do it—to go down there in civilian clothes and get the lowdown for me on the whole show. It's dangerous.

"If you're caught, the contrabandists will feed you to the sharks. If you win out you'll get a tougher job next time. And it has to be a man who can use his fists, see? You can't use firearms. It's an understanding with the new Provisional Government. If you happened to get a bullet into a native, even in self-defense, you'd get a court-martial.

"So this job has to be done without arms in your hands—which means that your only defense against knives, machetes and guns will be your brains—and those two fists I've been watching you use. What say?"

Leahy grinned. His wounds pained him, but iodine would fix that. Iodine fixed everything in Uncle Sam's military service.

"I'd like it," he said simply. "When do I start?"

McCauley grinned back.

Then he was all business.

"Okay," he said. "Now listen. Here are fifteen dollars. Get some ragged clothes at the Intelligence office at camp. You leave right away, as soon as you've dabbed on some iodine, for Las Charcas and Estebania, near Playa de Caracoles. The arms

are to be landed there within the next thirty-six hours.

"I wish to know who brings them in, to whom they are consigned, with names, dates, places and where purchased. Hear me? I want the information. Get a few legs cut off, all sorts of internal injuries, go through torture—anything—but come back with brains enough left to make your report. Understand?"

Leahy put himself to rights swiftly, stood at attention before McCauley.

"Aye, aye, sir!" he said.

Half an hour later he quitted the Intelligence office in Fort Ozama carrying his spy's clothing under his arm in a newspaper. He had to pinch himself to make sure everything, even the fight with El Mocho's scavengers, hadn't been a dream. He felt of his bruises, found he had a badly twisted, probably broken nose—grinned—and was convinced he wasn't dreaming.

CHAPTER II

The Mosquito Man

LEAHY awakened from a dream, in which he battled endlessly with a score of foes, and looked about in bewilderment at the sides and floor of the rough hut in which he found himself. For the moment he failed to remember. Then he did.

He was no longer a marine, but a down-and-out beachcomber, and had rented this miserable hut for the sum of two dollars per month. It was to be his home at such times as he found occasion to be in Santo Domingo City.

He looked at himself ruefully. Torn shoes, ragged clothes, an old coat fastened across the front with safety pins, dirty face, greasy skin. McCauley had thought the whole thing out.

Standing over Leahy as he wakened, was about as dirty appearing a native as Leahy had ever seen, and the native was grinning down at him. The native wore the usual sandals, and his feet were grimy. A hard-looking customer.

The native smiled down upon Leahy.

"Logroño!" he said.

Leahy grinned, took the hand of the native. "Logroño" was the word by which McCauley's secret agents recognized one another.

"You're Sergeant Gracie," stated Leahy, "but you're just about the dirtiest looking native I've ever seen! How come?"

"I'm a native of Porto Rico, Arturo," replied Gracie, "so it isn't much trouble for me to become a Dominican, besides which I speak the language—since it is my mother tongue! —together with the Haitian *patois*, which we will need in our business."

"How come you call me Arturo?"

"Your name from now on is Arturo Sosa. We must get used to hearing it, and you must answer to no other, no matter who calls you Leahy, see? Now we've got work to do. It's nine o'clock. We must be in Las Charcas by two o'clock in the morning. The *alcade*, mayor, of the place, is a personal friend of mine, and I have already arranged for a hut for us to live in. Get this, too? Las Charcas is hot territory. Your life, nor mine, will be worth a plugged penny if we get found out. You must not, in any circumstances, speak a word of Spanish, must pay no heed if anyone addresses you in Spanish—and mustn't miss a single word you hear spoken in that language."

"Then what's our story? What am I supposed to be doing in Las Charcas?"

"You're a poor nut, see? In Las Charcas to write up a treatise on the mosquito which causes malignant malaria, and that particular kind of

malaria abounds in Azua Province, where Las Charcas is. In other words, you are a sort of itinerant doctor, slightly touched on the subject of malarial mosquitoes. I'm just your guide, and every chance I get I tell the natives how poor you are. They'll despise you, but they'll be tolerant, and you need toleration to find out what you are after!"

LEAHY and Gracie quitted the hut, mingling unnoticed with the natives of Bombilla Roja, that odorous section of Santo Domingo City in which their hut was located. A rattle-de-banging Ford awaited them on the Santiago Road, and they stepped into it without a word of explanation, save only a repetition of the word "logroño," which brought a grin from the driver, and an enthusiastic, "Got you, Steve!"

The car went quietly through the town, reached the road that leads to Azua, and went into it like a scared rabbit going into a hole, rocking to and fro like a ship in a storm as the noisy Ford ate up the miles, unwinding them from the rough, rocky, snake-like road.

It was two o'clock in the morning when the driver dropped Gracie and Leahy at the edge of Las Charcas, and turned about to go back to the Capital City, while Leahy and Gracie strode on into the town and took possession of their hut in the center of the slumbering village.

The heart of the tropics here. From a mile or two away came the booming of the surf on Playa de Caracoles, expressing the anger of Ocoa Bay. Darkness possessed the surrounding jungle like a shroud. Northward the glowering Cordilleras pointed their black crests at the moving mile-high clouds. For centuries this section of country had been a place of death.

Revolutions had started in this Province. Malaria and dysentery had taken toll of natives and sojourners alike. The whole country seemed, especially at night, to be brooding over the past, and plotting against the future. Fiery rum enflamed bloody passions. Knives were unsheathed on the slightest pretext. Men were hot-headed.

One had to stretch the imagination but little to hear the beating of native tom-toms, to picture cannibalistic orgies under the moon. This was Santo Domingo; but she once was under the foot of Black Haiti for twenty-one years, and the blacks had stamped themselves upon the country, had forcibly mingled their blood with that of the Dominicans, until it was difficult to say whether this country were Spanish, aborigine, Negro, or merely octoroon.

It was a place where death was ever-present. Even small boys were proficient in the use of the savage machete, and grown men carried *pata de mulas* (mules' legs—sawed-off rifles) in their clothing.

ALL this was known to Leahy. A smugglers' hangout, according to report, and Leahy here to gather names, dates, and places. If he were known to be a secret agent of the Marine Corps, his life wouldn't be worth a cent. No wonder McCauley had wished to be sure of his man.

Machetes *pata de mulas*, carbines of ancient make, flensing knives, pistolas and revolvers of every imaginable make. These were the weapons of the natives.

Leahy looked at his closed fists in the light of the candle with which they had lighted their malodorous hut. They were all he had.

He could not kill a native, even to save his own life. He could even be tried for hitting one with his fist—*if* it could be proved that this half-baked doctor were really a Marine.

"What a job, Gracie," he said softly to that worthy.

Gracie grinned. Then he rolled up his shirt, exposing his stomach, which was literally a welter of scars.

"I've been doing things of this kind in the West Indies for years," he said, "these scars are the marks of knives, wielded by men who wanted information I refused to give."

"But were you always compelled to use your bare fists?"

Gracie's swarthy brow darkened even more.

"Not always," he said, "but it is not pleasant to remember dead men, even men who died because I wished to live on!"

"Sorry, Gracie," said Leahy, "I won't ask questions, and I'm glad it is to be bare fists."

"There are about six hundred people in this town," said Gracie, "and most are probably, directly or indirectly, interested in contraband arms. They are compelled to be. If they aren't and a revolution is successful, it is well, in Santo Domingo, to have friends in the new government, else men may have long memories as to who refused assistance to the cause."

"Which means?"

THAT the walls have ears! Step into the street this very minute, and tell even one person who you are, and you would be dead before you could whistle, so full of lead a strong man couldn't carry you! Do you speak German?"

"Some," replied Leahy, "enough to get along on."

"Then we'll converse in that language. The natives always have warm spots in their hearts for squareheads."

"But why not English? They don't understand it."

"But many of those who man the boats bringing in arms are English-speaking Negroes from St. Croix and St. Kitts, with a few perhaps from the peculiar English-speaking colony at Las Fleches, and they are just as bad as cannibals—worse, even, because they do speak English!"

DON'T you think it wise to go down to the beach now and look the situation over?"

"Never! The jungle is full of eyes and ears. Better wait until morning, let the natives of Las Charcas know all about you, and your desire to investigate malarial mosquitoes, then carry your investigation to the sloughs just back from the beach, or even to the beach itself at times—and take care that no man gets behind you!"

Leahy fell asleep just before dawn and dreamed of the past of Haiti, of the overthrow of the whites by the blacks, of the expedition of thirty thousand men sent to the island by Napoleon, commanded by Napoleon's own brother-in-law, Le Clerc—and of the pitiful five thousand which lived to tell the tale.

All because, without ever actually fighting the French hand-to-hand, the Haitians had filled the jungles with eyes and ears, and the beating of tom-toms—whose sound made ants crawl up one's spine—and would not allow them to sleep.

Nature, and disease, had done the rest.

And black men had left their bestial stamp upon Santo Domingo.

Bare fists seemed so puny, so inadequate, yet Leahy knew they must suffice, that McCauley wished facts, not supposition, and that he, Leahy, must procure them. It was barely possible that the arms which were coming in secretly might one day be turned against the marines.

At the very least, a revolution at this stage of the game would mean military occupation by the marines for years to come.

And Uncle Sam was ready for his boys to come home!

Leahy, and others like him, held awful responsibility in his two bare fists.

Would they be strong to hold it?

Gracie, who sat beneath the guttering candle, looked at Leahy, asleep on the rough native cot, saw Leahy's hands ball so tightly into fists that the knuckles grew white, and a worried frown creased his brow.

Leahy would fight; but would he be too hot-headed under restraint, and in danger, to use the brains God had given him?

"I think he'll be all right," Gracie said to himself, as he turned in and fell instantly to sleep.

Being a Porto Rican, almost a blood brother of the people against whom they were pitted, none knew them better than did Gracie. It is little wonder he was worried.

In thirty-six hours they would either have information that would put as-yet-nameless plotters behind the bars, or—

Two strong men would know by experience the meaning of "Hades."

CHAPTER III

Eyes of the Congo

LEAHY'S greatest danger, he realized when morning came, lay in the fact that just around Punta Martin Garcia rested the town of Barahona, where for eight months he had been attached to the Marine Barracks there, and had been the N. C. O. in charge of the civilian prison, with the title of Prison Warden.

The prison had held Dominicans and blacks, and many of the boats which might in the next few hours put in at Playa de Caracoles might be ships which had put in at Barahona in the old days, and members of their crews might recognize Leahy for what he was, under his disguise.

A white man, no matter how dressed, looms up in Latin-America like a sore thumb on a prize fighter.

In those days, too, Leahy had spoken Spanish every day. Hundreds of natives had heard him.

HE was to pretend, here, total ignorance of Spanish. If exposed, how would he explain his pretense?

When morning came the first man to visit the hut was the *alcalde* of Las Charcas.

Gracie introduced Leahy as "Doctor Arturo Sosa," touching his own forehead significantly when Leahy seemed not to notice. The *alcalde* nodded understanding.

"He is eager to study the malignant-malaria mosquito," explained Gracie, "and I am his guide and interpreter. He speaks no Spanish."

The story then went through Las Charcas like wildfire. The town, it seemed was even then in the throes of a malarial epidemic, and the native doctor at Azua had sent this ultimatum to Las Charcas: pay me two hundred American dollars before I come to Las Charcas, or let your women and children die! So much for the native doctor's American medical education!

The whole town had been unable to raise the two hundred, and women and children were suffering the torments of the damned in consequence.

So a strange thing happened, an unforeseen thing.

The name of Sosa, with the prefix "doctor," fled through Las Charcas, through the country immediately surrounding, even unto Estebania, and two hours after sunrise a queue of natives, suffering with everything from itch to yaws, lupus and leprosy, stretched away from the door of the hut occupied by Leahy!

And Leahy knew nothing about

treating any diseases of any kind whatsoever! Yet he had claimed to be a doctor!

He had either to put up or shut up—which was synonymous with get out, and that in a hurry, without bidding good-by!

"Get the information!" McCauley had told him.

He couldn't get it by running away. He couldn't stay without doing something for the natives who had faith in him because of that "doctor" business.

THERE were beads of perspiration on the forehead of Sergeant Gracie as he realized their predicament, while from the long queue of natives the eyes of the Congo, through several generations of dwelling in Santo Domingo and Haiti, stared unwinkingly at the "doctor."

"We must do something," groaned Gracie, "and darned soon!"

He, too, had seen the eyes. He knew the things which nested in the brains of these sturdy natives whose forbears had eaten their enemies in the Dark Continent long ago. Cannibalism was infrequent now, but the bloodlust remained. Childlike in their faith, these natives; but relentless enemies when their faith was betrayed.

"All right, Gracie," said Leahy in German, "we are going to treat these people. Explain to them that, not expecting to practise, I brought no instruments with me. Tell the Las Charcans to bring me every bit of medicine, of whatever description, to be found in the huts of Las Charcas!"

It was a nervy thing to do. The main road from Santo Domingo City to Azua led through Las Charcas, and automobiles passed at intervals. If that queue of derelict humans should attract attention, and someone should stop to ask questions—

But Leahy, the die cast, refused to worry.

HE treated the natives for malaria, yaws, lupus, and whatever else seemed to ail them, giving long instructions in German to Gracie, who interpreted to the Spanish-speaking natives.

Leahy, knowing something of Santo Domingo, knew that much of the sickness of natives was due to bad water, and ordered, through the *alcalde*, that every drop of drinking water thereafter be boiled for thirty minutes.

Leahy's confidence in himself, apparent as it was, despite the fact that he was acting, imbued the natives with confidence, and they believed in him implicitly.

The simple trust of the Dominican hill people. . . .

Which could turn into murderous fury if they discovered that he was no more a doctor than their own *alcalde*, who *did* know something about bush medicine!

At any moment, since the natives were migratory, one might appear who remembered Leahy.

The eyes of the natives, as one by one they received treatment at the hands of the now freely perspiring Leahy, studied the face of the imposter, and those eyes told nothing to Leahy—opaque and inscrutable as the eyes of the Sphinx.

But to Gracie!

Gracie knew the volcanoes of fury which nested in the brain behind the softest eyes of the most friendly natives!

Leahy sat on a powder magazine and smoked cigars!

Just a whisper, and Leahy would be torn limb from limb. It wasn't pleasant to contemplate.

And as yet they had made no progress in their duty to gather information for McCauley.

It was not until late evening that the queue of natives, the last ones having stood patiently in line, under a broiling sun, for ten hours or more, dwindling to nothing, and a tired "Sosa," and Gracie that was even more fatigued, mostly because of his greater anxiety, found time to leave the hut of their mental crucifixion.

The natives who had been treated, intending to take fresh treatments on the morrow, hived up with the other natives of Las Charcas, doubling the population of the sun-baked town, and every doorway was filled with barefooted Dominicans, ranging in color from almost white to blue-black, and the eyes of everyone of them stared blankly at Leahy and Gracie as the two sauntered down the main street, making for the jungle which hemmed in the town—strange jungle, in that it was mostly thorn trees, set so thickly together that one needed a machete and a corps of woodcutters to get through.

They reached the jungle, found a dim trail which meandered off in the general direction of the beach, and strode in.

LEAHY, once out of sight of the town, increased his stride.

"Slow down!" said Gracie softly. "The jungle is full of eyes!"

"I don't see anyone," replied Leahy.

"Don't look for a moment," said Gracie, "but off to your left front, in the deep shadow of that bayohunda tree. Look casually!"

Leahy saw then. It was a native, motionless, scarcely recognizable as a man. He knew how to efface himself in his surroundings.

"I see him," said Leahy, "but I'd never have done so if you hadn't told me. How did you know?"

"He's smoking native tobacco, *anduga*. It smells to high heaven. Catch it?"

Leahy was not sure; but of one thing he was sure. The natives probably trusted him, but not out of their sight! It merely proved to him that his mission was freighted with danger. The natives, with contraband arms passing through their hands in case lots, could afford to take no chances.

GRACIE and Leahy strode on, discussing the surrounding sun-scorched scenery, with much waving of the hands, while the almost invisible native under the bayohunda did not move once, though as they passed close to him Leahy caught, strong now, the unmistakable odor of *anduga*, sharp and pungent as lye fumes.

Then the man was lost, and Leahy knew, because of the increased caution of Gracie, that they had been picked up by other eyes, and that they took not one step unwatched.

At last they reached their objective, a deep pool of seepage water, between which and the sea there was a screen of trees, through which came the sound of pounding surf on Playa de Caracoles.

Eyes were watching, Leahy knew, because Gracie whispered it to him as they peered into the pool.

And for two mortal hours Leahy and Gracie talked mosquitoes, malaria, mosquitoes, more malaria, more mosquitoes while the mosquitoes themselves, packing in their proboscis that malignant malaria which is the terror of certain parts of the little republic, stabbed the two men with their fiery darts until both were fit to enter the *manicomio* (insane asylum), the other side of Nigua.

But there was work to do.

From the beach, through the moaning of the pounding surf, came a sound of chanting.

"AI, ai! AI, ai! AI, ai!"

A monotonous rising and falling

of sound that never ceased or varied.

"Black men chanting in their cups, or bottles rather," said Gracie.

Leahy nodded. He'd heard Haitian negroes chanting before. It was so hot, even this close to sunset, that Leahy was ready to drop; but a cold chill caressed his spine as he listened, and his perspiration turned clammy.

This same chanting had been heard in the jungles of the Congo for thousands of years before the white man came. It had been used to keep time to tom-tom beating, where black men fed on their own kind; it was still used in Haiti, where black men gathered to practise Voodooism.

"AI, ai! AI, ai! AI, ai! AI, ai!"

"It is getting cool," said Gracie, "and from the sound there must be several boats in the *playa*. The natives are lolling on the sand, waiting for darkness—the native crews, I mean—in order to get their arms ashore. Tonight will be a busy night for us, Arturo!"

LEAHY nodded, even as he captured a huge mosquito and pulled its legs off with great satisfaction.

He looked at his hands, marked like turkey eggs with mosquito bites.

Bare fists, against . . .

From the *playa* came the sound of chanting, louder now and more prolonged.

"AI, ai! AI, ai! AI, ai!"

Hot as it was both men shivered. The sun was just going down in the Cordilleras, dropping into the heart of Black Haiti westward, via which dark republic, out of the Congo of the past, had come these invisible black men who chanted.

"It's getting cold," said Gracie, shivering, "let's be moving!"

Both men shivered again, moved out, toward the *playa*, apparently unconcerned—while in a dozen different places stumps of trees which had apparently been standing for ages, moved stiffly and became men, men with the inscrutable eyes of the jungle people.

CHAPTER IV

Nameless Terror

IN the thatched hut owned by a Dominican nondescript named Nicolai, a few yards back from the *playa*, Leahy lay at ease in a native hammock. A little over a mile from Las Charcas.

The hut was full of natives, for Nicolai was the Captain of the Port, and there were many who had business with him.

Four Dominican schooners bobbed up and down at anchor a couple of hundred yards out. Between the schooners and the shore could be seen the triangular fins of several cruising sharks.

On the beach the crews of the four schooners, black men all, some speaking English, most speaking the garbled French of Haiti, lolled in the sand and drank *Ron Carta Blanca*, and clarine. Very vociferous, quarreling among themselves.

Gracie was among the blacks, fraternizing with them, accepted as one of them, a native of the country.

In the house of Nicolai men and women were talking.

"It is Martel's great opportunity to start a revolution," said one. "He has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for arms—"

"Quiet!" cautioned the Captain of the Port. "Are you sure this man does not understand Spanish?"

It was the captain's own pimply faced daughter who replied. She had taken a shine to Leahy, and was sitting near the hammock, swinging it back and forth.

"He understands no word," she told the gathering, "people in Las Charcas tried to speak to him, and

he understood no word. It is safe to talk before him."

"It would go hard with him," said the Captain of the Port, "if he were an impostor. He'd be torn limb from limb. With what is stored in the holds of those four schooners—and in that of the fifth just tacking in—Martel can make himself king. His people know it. Such information would be dangerous knowledge for a spy."

"Faugh!" cried another man, a huge black. "This man is just a fool! A good doctor, yes; but blind as a bat. A mule train carrying sheet iron for roofing, went right through Las Charcas this morning, heading toward San Jose de Ocoa, taking the roofing over the inland trail to Piedra Blanca and the Cibao. There were carbines, many of them, between the pieces of sheet iron. This doctor even petted the mules, looked at the sheet iron, and semed not the least bit suspicious!"

It was difficult for Leahy to remain calm and incomprehending here, for he had done just as the speaker had said. Twenty mules loaded with sheet iron, with carbines and ammunition in between, among the burlap matting. Four or five hundred death-dealing arms—and he had let them get through without knowing it!

Unloaded last night perhaps.

The speaker continued.

"They were stored in Pimentel's warehouse last night, and loaded before daylight this morning. That's one shipment through, and the biggest of all to start tonight!"

LEAHY rocked back and forth, his eyes closed, missing no word. Suppose the mysterious Martel, and Pimentel the warehouse man, should discover that their names, and their future safety, had been given into his hands, what would they do, or not do, to see that this information did not get to the people who would act upon it drastically?

Then one had mentioned a fifth schooner tacking in. He dared not look, for someone might notice and remember the remark in Spanish Leahy was not supposed to understand.

He waited in a vast suspense for some speaker to mention the name of the schooner.

He turned, yawning, to regard the natives on the beach. None was armed. Wise owners, with their crews in their cups, had no desire to have them killing one another.

Leahy noted the schooner, which looked familiar, but when he heard her anchor go over the side he turned away in a bored fashion, and the daughter of the Captain of the Port kept on swinging the hammock.

Leahy's heart was pounding with excitement. Already he had gathered information with which none would permit him to get away alive, if they knew.

But perhaps they did! Perhaps they played with him as a cat plays with a mouse.

He could only wait and see.

"The boat is the *balandro* Maria Palenque!" said some one. "Her crew is rowing ashore now!"

It was well that Leahy's eyes were closed as he heard the name of the schooner. She had been at Barahona for months during Leahy's stay there, and members of her crew had seen him daily for that length of time! Things were getting thick.

The jabbering in the hut continued, and Leahy, while seeming to be asleep, missed no word, no name, and knew likewise the name of a man in far Caracas who was interested in the forthcoming revolution.

A sudden silence fell in the hut.

Leahy, yawning again, turned over,

looked out the door—the whole end of the hut being the door.

A black man stood there, negligently leaning against the center pole, and he was staring, a frown on his face, at the reclining Leahy.

This man had served a six months sentence in the Barahona prison, during Leahy's incumbency as Prison Warden, and had seen Leahy a dozen times a day!

"How are you, *sargento?*" said the man, unsmiling, and Leahy understood to the full the meaning of the sudden silence in the hut.

BUT he would play his string out. He looked questioningly at the others in the place, shook his head, smiled at the speaker.

"I do not understand Spanish," he said in English.

"But," said the black man, "when I knew you some months ago you spoke it better than I do. How is it that you have forgotten so quickly?"

Still Leahy, understanding every word, shook his head.

"I do not understand," he said again.

Without another word, still wearing his portentous frown, the black man turned away, went back to the sands, passed among the crews there, and their monotonous chanting ceased.

In knots of two, three, and half a dozen at a time, they got up, yawned and stretched elaborately, got into small boats and rowed out to their respective schooners.

They came back at once, flinging themselves down as before; but now, at the belt of each, swung either a skinning knife or a gleaming machete!

A half hundred blacks, a half hundred cutting weapons. . . .

Against two Americans with bare fists!

By two and threes, never more, the members of the crews set their feet in the trail which led to Las Charcas, returning after a time with bottles of white rum. All guzzled more freely now, and the chanting resumed.

LEAHY got up and strode around, among the men, with whom Gracie was talking and laughing. They did not move aside for him, disregarding him with elaborate unconcern. To his surprise Gracie looked up at him and scowled darkly.

"Watch your step!" that scowl said. "And let me play my own game. They do not suspect me!"

Leahy set out in the direction of the main trail leading into Las Charcas.

Easily half a dozen machete-armed men lounged out of the trees into the trail. They did not seem to notice Leahy, their backs were toward him, but he knew they would not permit him to go to Las Charcas.

Several natives called to him in Spanish, several called him by his right name; but he paid heed to none, playing his string out to the end. One very drunk black man stepped up in front of him, put forth his hands as though to seize the "doctor". Coolly Leahy dropped him with a savage right to the button.

The others laughed their enjoyment at the discomfiture of one of their own number, but when Leahy turned to them with a smile, their laughter changed to scowls.

The black man got up, staggering, grabbed his knife from its sheath, launched an upward slash at the stomach of Leahy. Quick as a thought Leahy stepped aside, remembering his Marine Corps training, forgetting *not* to remember it, grasped the up-plunging wrist, swung his left arm under the man's knife arm, palm against the man's chest, his own arm stiff, and brought the

knife arm down sharply across his own.

The black man screamed in pain, and dropped the knife. Leahy hurled the black aside, took the knife, walked to the water's edge, hurled the weapon far out.

He smiled at the crews again, spoke to Gracie in German.

"Tell them I'm terribly sorry. The man is very drunk. He'll be sorry when he sobers up."

Apparently with great reluctance Gracie interpreted in Spanish, adding that the doctor was just a fool anyway.

DEAD silence greeted Leahy's explanation. Many of these men had seen marines practising the knife-disarming trick.

But why didn't they make a move now? For what were they waiting?

"I'm going to pick a fight with you," said Gracie swiftly, "to show them I'm with them, against you! A real fight, too! Play up! When you get out—if you do—I'll stay behind to follow into the north!"

Leahy said nothing, his eyes narrowing.

Two blacks were rolling an empty gasoline drum under the palms on a spit of land that ran out into the plays, while another built a fire. He understood. The gasoline drum was to serve as a tom-tom. His fate would be decided when the blacks were filled with sufficient Dutch courage, and before the unloading began.

Gracie stepped up to Leahy, and spoke in Spanish.

"I've been with you for three days and you haven't paid me my wages yet. Shell out! I want my money, you American dog!"

Leahy answered in English.

"I do not understand you," he said.

Gracie slapped Leahy on the cheeks with every ounce of his power.

The blacks, shouting in high glee, formed a circle.

With Gracie and Leahy in the center, the crowd moved under the trees, where it was not very dark outside the circle of fire-light. A black man pounded the end of the empty unturned gasoline drum, the age-old cadences rolling through the jungle in a spine-crawling fashion, back through the jungle, taking its weird message to those who lived back there, even up to the crest of the black and forbidding Cordilleras.

"It's going to be close going," said Gracie hurriedly. "Remember, when you go don't wait for me. They think we are enemies, for I was the first to complain when that black said you were an American Marine."

Then, with one man beating the improvised tom-tom, the others sitting in a big circle, knives carelessly exposed, bottles passing the rounds, the blacks resumed their monotonous, "AI, ai! AI, ai!" and Leahy and Gracie joined in battle.

CHAPTER V

Ruse of the Empty Hut

IT was perhaps the weirdest battle ever fought under the frowning moon of the Island of Haiti, of which Santo Domingo is a part.

It was a bitter fight, for Gracie wished to save Leahy from destruction, and to gather information at the same time.

The information must get back.

Gracie must stay. This was the best possible proof, this battle, of the fact that Gracie was not a friend of Leahy. These men had witnessed many fights, too. There was no

chance to fool them. The fight had to be real.

The language of Black Haiti flew thick and fast as the two friends joined. One man kept at the tom-tom, not looking at it, his red-rimmed eyes watching the fighting of the two Americans, one of whom seemed to be a native because his father and mother had been Porto Ricans.

The circle of blacks squatted on their haunches. Knives were brought forth openly, and rubbed across thumb-nails suggestively.

In the open *playa* showed the triangular fins of cruising sharks. Leahy knew. He had seen them before sundown. He wondered how they sensed tragedy and came up to wait for carrion. Spots of phosphorescence showed out there. The fins, invisible, still were there. The phosphorescence proved that.

THE blacks were chanting their eternal blood-cry, weaving from side to side, guzzling fiery rum from black bottles.

"I'll knock you out," panted Gracie in German, "fall and lay still. But fight me with teeth and toe-nail for ten minutes before you drop. Then leave matters to me!"

Gracie's right fist swung smartly to the jaw of Leahy. He staggered. Then he bored in, smashing at Gracie with a flurry of rights and lefts.

The natives ceased their chanting as Leahy's nose began to bleed.

"Knock him dead!" cried one in Spanish. "Beat him to a pulp and we shall feed his body to the sharks in the *playa!*"

"They mean it," gasped Gracie to Leahy as he sent a stiff left to Leahy's heart, clinching for a moment to speak. "It is all planned. They but await the arrival of Martel, who will allow them their fun to keep their allegiance."

The natives all took up the cry.

"Injure him as much as possible! Break his face! Smash his nose! The sharks are hungry!"

The tom-tom kept up its monotonous beating, the player watching the fight, his face expressionless as though carved in ebony. Someone threw fresh branches on the fire, and flames leaped skyward so that dancing shadows wavered like black devils, giant-like, among the palms.

LEAHY dropped to his face. That right to his solar plexis had been a savage blow. He gagged with the nausea as he rolled to his back. Several natives sprang to their feet, started to close in as the wolf-pack closes in on a fighting wolf who is down—

"Stand back!" cried Gracie. "This American dog is mine! You may have him after I have finished with him!"

"Leave him alive for us!" cried the wit of the crowd, and the crowd roared its delight at his humor.

Leahy managed to get back to his feet. Head down, arms swinging madly, he whipped after Gracie, and the two men fought like furies all about the space inclosed by the circle of blacks. Now and again some of them drew back their legs to give the fighters room; now and again one of them would kick out at Leahy, muttering the vilest oaths known to the Spanish language—only Chinese oaths are viler.

Gracie staggered as Leahy battered away at his jaws with a flurry of rights and lefts. He gasped, almost dropped, clinched to save himself.

"Pull 'em, Arturo," he gasped. "If I drop they'll skin you alive—literally! Keep the old head working!"

Leahy slipped out of the clinch, still battering away at Gracie; but

his blows were wilder now, and usually his fists did not land squarely on the body of Gracie. It takes a clever boxer to fool an audience into thinking he is giving of his best.

Gracie bent far over, gasping—he was really hard hit—and drove piledriver rights and lefts to the stomach of Leahy.

Leahy's hands dropped down to protect his stomach, and quick as a flash Gracie's right came up to his jaw. Leahy saw it coming, but he did not intend to evade it completely.

But he was going away, unnoticeably but still going away, when the fist connected. He dropped like a log, rolled on the ground in agony.

Gracie stood over him, looking down.

"Get up, you dog!" he snarled. "Or I'll kick you to death where you lie!"

Leahy looked up. His mouth and nose were bleeding; but he wasn't badly hurt. His nose bled easily. But the face which looked up at Gracie, to the drink enflamed eyes of the blacks, was a red mask of agony, across which the light of the dancing flames drew an expression of weird terror.

"Have mercy!" he said in English.

"Have mercy!" repeated Gracie in Spanish. "Have the American swine had mercy upon us—never! What are you doing here? Would your general have mercy on us if you took back mad tales to the Capital City? Mercy! Mercy on such as you? Stand up, dog! I'm not yet finished with you!"

LEAHY managed to stagger erect. The eyes of Gracie bored into his. Gracie was worried. Perhaps Leahy was too badly hurt to get away, even if opportunity were given.

Leahy read the worried question in the eyes of Gracie.

"Okay," he muttered.

"What are you saying, dog?" cried Gracie again for the benefit of the blacks. "Is it that you plead again for mercy?" But there was relief in the face and eyes of Gracie.

THEY had been fighting for about eight minutes.

"Finish him!" cried the blacks. "Gouge out his eyes! Pull his nose from his face! Kick him with your feet!"

"I prefer to take longer and do a better job!" cried Gracie, his fists smacking home swiftly.

The blacks laughed at the grim humor of it. Gracie was winning them, if not already won, by his brutality. Leahy belonged to Gracie by right of conquest.

Leahy, guessing at the time, waited for the "finisher."

When it came his fall was realistic. It smacked home on his jaw. He flung up his arms, his bleeding fists, nose and mouth visible to them all, the jaw falling open, and crashed to the ground in the black circle, burying his nose in the sand.

And Gracie kicked him. The blacks laughed. But the kick had caused Leahy to turn so that his nose was no longer in the sand.

Leahy was out.

Gracie turned to the blacks.

"The American dogs are not the only men who know how to use their fists! See, one of your own knows their use! Have I then some rights among you?"

A huge black man strode to Gracie, slapped him on the shoulder with drunken gravity.

"Wait until Martel comes and we tell him what a fighter you are! He needs men like you. Now, this carrion: what shall we do with him?"

"What would you suggest?"

"Wait until Martel comes. It is just a matter of form, but we should wait. Then, feed him to the sharks, so that American spies will never know what became of him!"

"But until Martel comes?" said Gracie.

"It's your job to watch him."

"Then let's do this: down the beach a couple of hundred yards is an empty hut. I shall put him there and stand guard over him. It is best that he should not remain here in the open. The woods may be full of American spies. They may be watching this fire. If they see him here—"

A CHORUS of angry shouts from the blacks.

"You are right, compadre," they said. "Put him in the hut and watch him until Martel comes. We should throw him in the *playa*, but he is a bad one, that Martel—he wishes it known that he is boss in all things."

Without waiting further, Gracie stooped and swung the limp body of Leahy to his shoulder.

With his co-spy over his back like a sack of meal, Gracie strode down the beach.

"Keep him safe until we are ready to be amused!" cried the wit of the crews.

"I'll keep him safe, never fear!" retorted Gracie. "If he wakens and causes trouble I may not wait until Martel comes!"

To Leahy when they had passed out of earshot of the blacks:

"Are you all right, Leahy?"

"Yes. Good stuff!"

They reached the hut in question. In its shadow Gracie set Leahy on his feet.

"Right through the jungle there, two miles away, is Las Charcas and Estebania. Both full of enemies who know the truth. Get to the main road. Hold up a passing car if one appears, start walking if not! Beat it now!"

Leahy, without another word, darted into the jungle, shrouded now in impenetrable blackness.

Some ten seconds passed.

"Help! Help! The American dog got away! This way! This way!"

It was the voice of Gracie. Leahy grinned. Gracie was running, from the sound, down the beach, at right angles to the route of escape he had shown Leahy. Leahy heard the blacks give tongue as they took up the pursuit.

He ran for ten minutes, butting against trees in the darkness, cursing under his breath. The sounds of pursuit died away as Gracie led the blacks down the beach. Daring Gracie! If the blacks lighted matches and looked for footprints . . .

Taking chances!

Ten minutes more. The sounds could no longer be heard.

Leahy drew a deep breath, thinking of the gauntlet to be run in Las Charcas or Estebania, depending at which place he emerged from the jungle. Congratulating himself on his reprieve, he fought for strength to continue.

Then suddenly the woods began to move! Tree stumps became men. Black shadows, solid and substantial, rose up all around Leahy, and in a trice he went down, fighting like a maniac, under the weight of half a dozen evil-smelling bodies.

CHAPTER VI

The Fighting Heart

WHO were these people? There was no way of knowing. They might be anybody. They might be spies for Martel, or members of the schooner crews returning from Las Charcas and Estebania.

Whatever or whoever they were, they smashed into the running man without introducing themselves, and Leahy's chances of getting back to the Capital City with his information looked slim indeed. The people of this section had no intention of allowing their secrets to be disclosed.

They had visions of Marines in Khaki and olive drab laying waste their Province. The Marines never did it, nor had ever threatened to; but the natives always had the idea they would do so on the least pretext.

Those trees became men who launched themselves upon Leahy, and Leahy, his heart going down into his boots when he realized that he had much information he might never get back to the Capital City, was filled with the fury of despair.

"I must get back to McCauley with my information," he told himself.

His fists smacked out as he fought to his feet, and those fists seemed to keep time with the throbbing words which ran through the brain of Leahy.

"I must get back! I *must* get back!"

The dull glitter of knives under the trees, glinting on the moonlight which sifted through in moving patches. Black faces, the odor of fetid breathing close to one's face. Straining bodies that stank with perspiration.

One man against them all, fighting with all his tiger heart, to get his information through.

Several men, fighting for their freedom, and for Martel, determined that the spy return no more —backing their determination with cold steel that glittered in the specks of moonlight like serpents' eyes.

With every ounce of his power, as an upraised hand bearing a knife swung down toward his upturned face, Leahy dove forward, driving his right fist into the stomach of his adversary.

THE man groaned, but his knife came down. Leahy whirled just in time to escape its thrust, to grasp the relaxing knife-hand, possess himself of the knife, and, resisting temptation, hurl it from him into the blackness of the surrounding jungle.

Bare fists!

Strict orders from Lieutenant McCauley, who had held his position for months, doing this sort of duty every day, because of the power in his bare fists. And Leahy had got his job by answering the challenge of his superior.

Should he fail him now?

"I must get back! I must get back!"

His hands beating a savage tattoo on the naked torsos of the enemy, fists drumming against chins, chests and stomachs. Leahy was everywhere at once. When an enemy set himself to charge, Leahy saw him and charged first, getting in the first blow. The Dominican, and the Haitian, does not know how to use his fists, save when they grasp the killer's knife. Their jaws are soft, and a blow does damage. A man drops when hit.

But he may not be out. There are stories of Haitians running a hundred yards with bullets between their eyes.

A man drops, is too weak to get up; but he may not be too weak to raise himself on one elbow, and strike upward at a man's stomach.

One man dropped for Leahy, and Leahy engaged another one, stumbling over the man he had knocked down, and for the first time used his feet because his fists were engaged.

He kicked the man on the wrist who would have hamstrung him, and the man's howls of pain and surprise must surely have been heard in the streets of Las Charcas and Estebania.

Leahy knew it was useless to try to run. These people knew these woods from childhood. They would run him down, surround him, battle him until he dropped.

He must make sure, before he left this place, that none should follow. Bare knuckles must do it. Unfair, but necessary.

He *must* get back.

Leahy was almost sobbing as he realized the size of his task. Any moment the cries of his attackers might be wafted to those whom he had left on the beach. He wondered why they hadn't yelled for help, informing the others of his whereabouts. Perhaps even now men whom he had not seen at all were barging through the woods to the *playa* seeking help.

Hopeless, yet Leahy gave back not one single step. He charged each of his enemies in turn. If one eluded him, he paused not at all, directing his charge at another.

His right cracked like a pistol shot as it crashed into the jaw of the largest of his antagonists. The man fell. As he lay there on the ground he groaned, and the groan died away in a sort of sigh which told Leahy that one man had finished with the fight for a moment.

But even as he heard the sigh, Leahy crashed his left to the solar plexis of another man.

He had thought there were six men against him. There still were four, it seemed, yet he had dropped four already.

HELP had come out of the jungle for the enemy.

Leahy's breathing came in sobbing gasps. He could taste his own blood on his lips. His body was literally soaked with perspiration, for there are invisible furnaces at night under the trees where the Dominican jungles sprawl across the sun-baked earth.

His clothing clung to his body. Sweat dripped from his face to his pile-driving hands. The weakness of the outlander when exerting himself in the tropics was settling over Leahy. But the will to fight on, the fighting heart of the man who never quits, was with him still, and though he sobbed with exertion and with exhaustion, his hands kept up their relentless pounding at the bodies of his enemies.

HE saw a knife start down. He tried to block the blow. But his upraised arm was weak. He held the blow without stopping it, and a searing flame caressed his torso for a moment.

Instead of weakening him, it maddened him, and the man who had wielded the knife fell next instant, still gripping the knife, and his yell of pain, and fear of death, crashed through the jungle as he fell upon the weapon he had just dipped in the blood of Leahy.

The slashing cut of the knife filled Leahy with new resolve.

That sentence began to pound through his brain again with new and vaster significance.

"I must get back! I must get back!"

For the first time since he had undertaken this mission he spoke in Spanish.

"Are you children, then, that you retreat from a single American?" he cried, his voice a mere tired croak. "Come in and fight! Come all at once!"

"Curse you," said one, "you are a devil! You do not fight fairly.

Why don't you fight with a knife, like real fighters do? You are a fool to fight with your hands!"

"But they are all I have. They cannot slay, as knives can! Your advantage! Why don't you charge?"

AND charge they did, gathering their forces swiftly, as though a signal had been given by some invisible prompter.

As the first came to grips with Leahy, he dropped to his right knee, grasped the belt of the man in his right hand, the knife hand in his left, and almost broke the man's neck as he hurled him with all his power over his bowed back. The man flew a few feet, his feet uppermost, crashing on his head—and lay still.

Leahy whirled, sprang to his feet. He stepped aside as the second man passed him. That man struck at him sidewise with his knife, but Leahy eluded the thrust by a miracle, and as the man slipped past him drove the edge of his right hand, the hand held stiff, to the back of the man's neck.

The man's feet seemed to run ahead of his body, so that his head snapped backward, and the man fell supine. The man behind him stumbled over him, and did not straighten again because Leahy had dropped him with a right to the temple.

There were three men left.

From the *playa* came sounds of shouting. The crews of the schooners had heard and were coming in to the rescue.

Leahy was granted another reprieve, for the three who remained ran away, calling aloud to their approaching fellows, and the tired Leahy darted once more into the jungle, dank and clammy because the day's heat nested under the trees when darkness came.

As he ran, he staggered. His lips were salt-crusted with blood. His arms and legs were heavy.

But—

"I must get back! I must get back!"

As he ducked back and forth, zigzagging to avoid trees which loomed in his path, his padding feet seemed beating out the words in a maddening sort of refrain. He must get back, indeed; but what a terribly long way to go!

Then Las Charcas, silent, sleeping, the main road.

Sixty miles from the Capital City. Leahy stood, panting, in the road, which was also the main street of Las Charcas. Behind him the woods were full of cries.

Are prayers answered?

The headlights of a swiftly traveling car swerved into the main street, and Leahy stepped into it, spreading his legs apart, waving frantically, calling upon the driver to stop.

A door banged open in Las Charcas as the car slowed down. A man stuck his head out, came out in surprise.

HE heard Leahy speak Spanish, when Leahy had told Las Charcans he understood no word. If the man did not know already, he now knew for a certainty.

This man who had tended the sick in Las Charcas, pretending to be a doctor, was an imposter! The word, then, must not yet have got here from the beach. The crews who told the story would perhaps know nothing of the queue of sick natives Leahy had "treated."

The man came out, thrusting a knife into his belt, and ran swiftly from door to door, rousing the inmates.

"Come out!" he shouted. "Come out! The American dog who treat-

ed us is not a doctor! Let us take and punish him!"

The car slowed down. Leahy jumped to the running board, was sitting beside the driver. He showed him a ten-dollar bill.

"Speed!" he cried. "I must get back to the Capital City!"

The car picked up speed swiftly —toward Azua!

"Will give you another car in Azua. I'm too tired to drive back tonight!"

Even if this man played square, they traveled in the wrong direction, and to reach the Capital City Leahy must return by this road, which led through Estebania and Las Charcas, both places filled with natives who had been cheated!

Reprieve, but further to go than before!

He looked at his bruised knuckles, then relaxed in his seat, saving himself for the great struggle he knew he still must make before morning came.

Out of the corner of his eye he watched questions write themselves in the swarthy face of his driver, as Las Charcas, through which he must pass again, dropped swiftly behind.

CHAPTER VII

"Save the Windshield!"

LEAHY thought that the automobile man had taken quite too long to get the car ready for the return. He had moved with aggravating slowness since arrival in Azua. The chauffeur was asleep in the far edge of town and had to be awakened. The car had to be gassed and oiled.

The automobile man was surly and ornery long before they were ready to start.

The gasoline filling pump was outside the door of the home of the man who had picked Leahy up in Las Charcas, and for ten minutes before Leahy started on the return, Leahy heard the telephone ringing inside the house, and excited conversations thereon — in the Haitian *patios*, of which Leahy understood no word!

A black chauffeur, moving like the Day of Judgment, finally took his place behind the wheel, and Joaquin Fabra, the man who had brought Leahy to Azua, spoke three swift words in Spanish to the driver.

"Save the windshield!"

He had heard Fabra use the same words at the tail end of his last telephone conversation.

What had he meant?

Leahy would have given much to know. These people knew he was badly wanted in Las Charcas, their attitudes told him that, and that they were eager to stand in with the people in that neighboring village.

Leahy would have given much for a pair of Colts .45's in his belt.

But all he had were bare fists, and he must run the gauntlet of Estebania and Las Charcas with nothing else.

EVEN now the people with whom he had fought in the jungle could have him court-martialed for laying hands upon them, despite the fact that he had done so to save his life; yet had that life been taken, the United States could take no action in reprisal, because, in the final analysis, they had no right to take any part in civil affairs of any character, because of the fact that civil government had passed from the hands of the Military Governor, the Commanding General of Marines, into the hands of a Dominican Provisional President—who was closing his ears to tales of arms smuggling!

A mess all around.

Yet, mess or not, it was not up to

Leahy to ask questions. It was up to him to answer them, and he had to get through alive to do it.

Which meant running almost any kind of gauntlet at Las Charcas, which place had doubtless been warned by Fabra that Leahy was on the way back.

"Save the windshield!"

What had Fabra meant?

Leahy, as the car ate up the miles—your Dominican driver is without a peer handling a car on rough country roads—looked the car over carefully. It was spanking-fired, brand new!

"Save the windshield!"

To the driver Fabra had used the words, and to whomsoever he had been talking over the telephone. Who had that been? The *alcalde* of Las Charcas? Martel the revolutionist? Or Pimentel the warehouse man?

"If they fired on this car," mused Leahy, "they would probably put bullets into driver as well as passenger, and they'd probably make a sieve of the car!"

Then, swift as a flash, came the answer to the terse three words spoken by Fabra to his chauffeur.

"Save the windshield!"

Fabra had meant that the car must not be injured by bullets!

And after that?

Leahy's eyes narrowed. He doubled his right fist and looked at the still bleeding knuckles thoughtfully.

"ONE man against a thousand!" he muttered. "Not a chance in the world! Yet I'll bet that Fabra arranged with the Las Charcans to deliver me into their hands. All the driver has to do is stop in the middle of the reception committee, turn me over, save himself from bullets, and save the windshield from the same! Now, what to do?"

The car approached Estebania at a high rate of speed. It was a good car, and a good driver, though the roads were terrible, mere twin ruts through the jungle. The car missed trees by a miracle, swung past boulders in the road with hair-breadth margins, plummeted through the night like a mad thing.

"What's the big hurry?" Leahy asked the driver.

THE driver grinned derisively, showing two rows of snow-white teeth. He seemed to be grinning at some jest which the passenger did not know.

"In a hurry to get back to Azua and finish my sleep!" he said.

"But it is sixty miles to the Capital City. It will be morning before we get in. You won't get any sleep until we've finished the trip!"

"I'm not so sure," grinned the driver. "It's a long way to the Capital, and 'most anything may happen before we get there."

Leahy leaned over and touched the driver on the arm for emphasis.

"Black boy," he said softly, "I am going to breakfast in the Capital City!"

But the driver only grinned.

Then, far ahead, a glow against the sky, could be seen the lights of Las Charcas. Ordinarily, there would have been no lights. There is no electricity in the small Dominican towns. This meant that Las Charcas was awake, that bonfires and torches were making Main Street—the main road—light as day.

Leahy's lips tightened to a straight line and his eyes narrowed.

The reception committee was waiting. Already, doubtless, every member thereof knew exactly where he was, along the road to Azua.

"I've got to get through," Leahy kept telling himself. "Not only does McCauley want the information I possess, but my mother loves her

darling boy, and wishes to hear the story of his adventures in Santo Domingo when he gets home."

Then the headlights of the car described a great arc and shot their twin rays into the main street of Las Charcas.

Bare fists—

THE words kept ringing in the ears of Leahy.

The main street of Las Charcas was packed, crammed and jammed from side to side by natives!

The lights picked out gleaming knives, machetes, *pata de mulas,* carbines, pistols of every make.

A long cry, like the cry of the wolf-pack, went up to the stars from Las Charcas when the headlights of the car swung into the street. Leahy stiffened in his place. He looked at his driver.

The driver met his glance, grinned at him in high enjoyment.

The car was almost upon the crowd in the streets.

Deliberately, still grinning, the driver applied his brakes, and started to slow down. He would halt in the center of the reception committee. In the sea of faces closest the car, yet, for which Leahy was thankful, not in the center of the road, Leahy could make out the face of Gracie, who was brandishing a weapon and shouting with the rest.

Playing his string out, expecting Leahy to do the same, Secret agents, going into danger without hope of glory, because Uncle Sam needed information.

The car slowed to half speed.

Leahy's right hand slipped to his belt.

Something hard pressed against the belt of the driver. His left side. His body flinched from the contact.

"Give her everything she's got, black boy!" gritted Leahy. "Or you'll never live to get that beauty sleep! These babies will get me, but you'll never live to watch the fun!"

The driver gasped, but even as he gasped, as though it were reflex action only, the accelerator slammed against the floor-boards under his frantic right foot, and the car almost left the ground in a tremendous leap forward.

She was roaring like all the bulls of Bashan, going fifty or sixty miles an hour, when she crashed in among the natives.

They scattered to right and left like frightened chickens, yelling and brandishing their weapons—but with fright and surprise rather than anger.

Gracie yelled in German to Leahy as the car whipped past him.

"Go to it, you fighting fool!"

Only one shot was fired, a futile shot that caused Leahy to laugh outright, for when its sound reached him the car was through Las Charcas, still traveling like the wind, and the darkness, save for the headlights, had settled over everything again.

Leahy knew, however, that every car within reach, flivvers, *camions* and real cars, would be requisitioned to take up the pursuit which must prevent his making his report to McCauley.

He held his right hand still to the waist of the driver.

"Step on her every step of the way," he said softly.

"With that gun against my stomach, Mister," said the subdued driver, "I'll fly her if you say so!"

CHAPTER VIII

Mad Pursuit

IT is a rocky road, a snake-like road, which leads from Las Charcas to Santo Domingo City. It goes through a score of little towns, all connected by telephone,

service limited true, with one another.

Word had doubtless been sent ahead of the fleeing car by the *alcalde* of Las Charcas, or by Martel, or Pimentel. None could permit Leahy to get back with the information they knew he must have. It meant long years behind the bars for them—or exile.

Yet Leahy had no gun.

The knuckle of his right forefinger pressed to the belt of the driver would not fool that worthy for sixty miles. That was too much to hope for. Yet Leahy must get back.

The driver, head bent low over the wheel, eyes glued to the road, accelerator pressed to the floor, flung the staunch automobile on through the night.

Martel, if he were to succeed in his revolution, must surely have friends and supporters in every town. And a way to communicate with them. The danger to Leahy in the little town through which they must pass would be greater even than in Las Charcas, for Martel, whom Leahy had never seen, would report to his cohorts how Leahy had slipped through the hands of his minions at Las Charcas.

And would have them make sure that he did not repeat the maneuver.

A ray of light passed across the windshield before the face of Leahy. He whirled in his seat and looked back.

"Two miles back," he muttered, "another car! It must have some driver, too! Another car behind that! Burning the wind!"

LEAHY turned back to his own driver.

"Know what will happen to you when your friends in Las Charcas realize that I couldn't have escaped them without your help? They'll hang, draw and quarter you! You'd better make sure I get in, and then throw yourself on the mercy of the Commanding General. I'll make shift somehow to protect you until Martel is behind the bars!"

The driver groaned.

"They don't hang, draw and quarter in this country, Mister!" he said. "They skin traitors alive! What you want me to do?"

"Coax a few more miles per hour out of this rattletrap!"

"She's going sixty-five!"

MAKE her go seventy! Cut the corners! Forget the brakes on hills! Lean forward, black boy, and pray for speed! That bus behind us is making knots!"

"Mister, get that pistol outta my stomach! It makes me nervous!"

"I am unarmed," said Leahy. "That is just the forefinger of my right hand!"

"You bluffed me with that?"

Leahy chuckled.

"One more count against you when your friends find I had no weapon!"

"Mister," said the black boy, earnestly, "this buggy has just been crawling. From now on she *moves!*"

Even Leahy, accustomed to the macadam roads in the States, and high speeds, gasped as the car jumped ahead.

It took a grade that was as twisty as an eel, and her siren was screaming into the darkness for all and sundry to make haste out of the way. When the car turned on the grade, cutting the corners so close that Leahy held his breath, that beam passed once more across the windshield.

The car behind them hadn't lost any ground, nor had it gained appreciably.

A blowout, or if the gas gave out!

"Plenty of gas, black boy?" said Leahy.

"Thank the good Lord, yes!"

"Tires good?"

"If one goes out, we'll go in on three. Mister, I'm just as eager to get away from those fellows as you are!"

They reached the top of a branch of the Cordilleras, and far below them could be seen the lights of another village. There should have been no lights. Dominicans do not keep late hours.

"Las Tablas," said Leahy, "and the folks are waiting. Step on her, black boy!"

DOWN the grade swept the car, siren screaming, like a mad thing. On the right as they traveled downward, the side of the mountain climbed up into darkness. On their left it sloped away for hundreds of feet, almost precipitous in places.

A swerve of the car not managed by the driver meant one or two things: a crash against the bank, a car turning over and over along the road, smashing the driver and passenger to bits, or a plunge over the side and—a car rolling over and over down the mountainside.

The headlights glared one instant against the sheer side of a deep cut, and the right wheels of the car, on which the car rode for a second or two, pulling the left wheels free of the road, almost grazed the solid stone. But the driver had nerve, and was afraid at the same time—of Nemesis in the shape of his own countrymen, creeping up behind.

Then the light looked off across emptiness, as the car swung left, and the left wheels kicked dirt in dusty showers over the edge of the new road.

"Ride her, black boy!" cried Leahy, gripping his seat like grim death.

And because he had forbidden the driver to use the brakes, Leahy used them himself, vicariously, by pressing against the floorboards on his side when, according to all the laws of safety first, the brakes should have been applied—and were not.

Down into darkness, the headlights boring tunnels through the gloom. The grade dipped, turned, plunged off at a tangent, and the driver of the fleeing car, hunched low in the seat, his eyes glued to the road, held the accelerator down.

Leahy sighed his relief as, traveling at an unbelievable rate of speed because of added momentum gained on the grade, the car reached fairly level going and screamed on toward the lights of Las Tablas.

ONCE more the main road was also the main street.

Natives started shooting when the headlights of the car swung into the street.

Instantly the driver swung the car off the road, heading into the center of the town, making for an opening between two huts.

Pigs squealed as the car bounced madly, and driver and passenger, both praying that things hold together, cut a mad pattern between and among the native huts.

Lights were visible on all sides, the barking of firearms could be heard; but the natives of Las Tablas had been surprised.

A blowout was a certainty. Glass, bottles, garbage dumps, all sorts of refuse reposed in the lesser used streets of little Las Tablas. The car careened into these, sending the empty tin cans rattling. Children were wakened and set up a terrific clamor, while women appeared in the doors, half-dressed, to add their screaming to the roaring of the car, the firing of their men folks, and the other noises Leahy had brought to peaceful Las Tablas.

Then they were through, every-

thing seemed still holding, and had swung back into the road.

"Canafistola next, black boy!" screamed Leahy.

And the driver laughed aloud, like a hysterical woman.

"Hot damn, feller!" he said in English. "It must be exciting business to work for Uncle Sam! I'm beginning to like it! Got a job for a good man?"

"I have, you know, black boy! Want it?"

"I'm hired!" cried the driver as the car settled into the deep road with a screaming of outraged springs, the back seat cushion flying out the window as though hurled from a catapault.

Leahy looked back. Darts of flame spat at the hurtling car as they moved away, the bullets going harmlessly off into space.

Canafistola was only a few miles away, and the car was eating up the miles.

"Can't pull that stunt in Canafistola," cried the driver. "I don't know the little town, and the road is terrible enough in itself."

"You drive," said Leahy, "and leave the boarders to me!"

Then—

Canafistola, the bobbing lights, and a street partially filled with natives. A narrow street, with houses on either side, no way of passing through save the road.

AND lying in the center of the road, at right angles to its traverse, the prone figure of a man!

Instinctively, and for the first time since he had got the start of his career at Las Charcas, the driver slammed on the brakes.

He could never stop before he reached the prone man.

But he slowed appreciably, and a man leaped to either running board of the car. Just as the car would have run over the man, the fellow whirled parallel with the road, and the car did not touch him.

But he had accomplished his purpose, and two men, husky blacks, with knives in their hands, were on the running boards.

The driver pressed his foot against the accelerator again, swung sharply right, so that the right fender of the car scraped against the wall of a hut, shaking it on its foundations, causing the inmates to yell bloody murder, and the man on the running board to be flung from his perch to somersault over and over as he landed on the rocky street of Canafistola.

LEAHY'S man reached his hand through the window. Leahy grasped it in both his own, bringing the wrist down across his raised knee. The man dropped the knife, screamed.

Then the left hand of Leahy leaped to the man's face, palm opened, and pushed the man with all his power.

The second man went the way of the first.

Just as one single solitary bullet passed between driver and passenger, after having penetrated the rear window, and smashed to flinders the windshield Joaquin Fabra had been so desirous of saving!

The rush of wind against the faces of driver and passenger was now terrific. Tears came into the eyes of Leahy.

But they did not blur his eyes so that, looking back, he could not see that at least one of the pursuing cars was holding its mad pace in the rear of this man who must not reach the capital city.

"Bani next, black boy!" he cried. "Give her the gas! By the way, what is your name?"

"George Washington Thomas Jef-

ferson Kleinsmith, born in Las Fleches, Province of Samana!"

"I'll call you G. W. for short! Give her the gas!"

CHAPTER IX

Trapped at Bani!

AND G. W. gave her the gas. Fairly level going now, though the road still curved like a snake, as though it had been made by a cow which had eaten loco weed. The car screamed on through the night.

It missed a drowsing burro by a miracle. Early marketers, en route to Bani from the heights of the Cordilleras with coffee, plantains, *patatas* and *melones*, scurried to safety like scared rabbits as the car howled past them.

Bani was not far away, one of the largest towns in the Province of Santo Domingo. A revolutionary hotbed in times past. Now? There was no way of knowing until the crowd reached the place.

That Leahy and his driver were expected was proved by the inevitable lights against the sky. But there were electric lights in Bani —that village of the white-skinned people, which the black man gives a wide berth by request of the inhabitants—and the glow against the sky meant little or nothing.

Those twin hills westward of Bani loomed up ahead. Like a bullet the car hurled itself toward the notch between them.

After that a straight stretch of perhaps a mile, a straight road to Nizao, Nizao River, Sabana Grande, Nigua and the Capital city. The people behind would not follow much further. They were getting into the country patrolled by the *Policia Nacional Dominicana* and—but who knew whether the native soldiers, after all, were loyal to the Provisional President?

They might, a goodly share of them, be in the pay of Martel the revolutionist.

The car behind had dropped slightly further back, but it was still burning the wind. Further back yet was a second car, further back yet a third. Separated by miles, the four cars, including Leahy's, would reach Bani within minutes of each other.

THE car plunged through the notch between the two high hills westward of Bani, and drove straight at the heart of the town.

They discovered long before they reached the place that every possible way of getting through was blocked.

Natives had utilized the time since Leahy and G. W. had left Las Charcas by piling brushwood across the main road, and off on either side for several hundred yards.

G. W. groaned.

"Got to get through somehow, boss," he said, "and there's only one way! You can't cross the river the other side of the town any place except the ford, and if you hit even that at this rate of speed, you'll drown your motor."

Long before they reached the brushwood barricade the whole barricade leaped into flames at once! It had doubtless been doused with gasoline against this very need. Leahy grinned wryly. Evidently these chaps placed a high value on his carcass.

"G. W.," he said, "as I said before, I wish to eat my breakfast in the Capital City. You say there is only one way to get through?"

"Yes, sir, straight ahead!"

"Then straight ahead it is! Don't cut your speed!"

G. W. got a bit soapy of complexion, but he managed a grin.

"Straight ahead she is!" he said.

Leahy clung to his seat like grim death as G. W. pounded his panting car on the tail for more speed. A boulder in the way would have sent the machine on her nose, turned her about until she turned turtle from her own momentum; but they headed for the wall of flame, and Leahy prayed that the brushwood be brushwood only, and not a pile of camouflaged logs or something.

The heat blistered their faces as they swept into it. G. W. flung his left hand over his eyes as his right gripped the wheel and held her steady. Leahy crouched down so low that his eyes could still look through the broken windshield; but still the flames, from the speed of their flight, swept about him as the car hit the row of brushwood as though it had been a brick wall.

It hit hard, and the car seemed to leap straight into the air.

G. W. knew that they were through, because the flames were behind them, the hole through which they had come denuded of flames by their passage.

"Good Lord, G. W.!" shouted Leahy. "Look at that!"

G. W. let out a whoop that could have been heard in Santo Domingo City, but there was no fear in it. G. W. was reveling in the excitement, and he had got away with so much that he was almost sure nothing could stop him.

THEY had broken through the flames into a sort of plaza before the main street of Bani, and across the street was flung a cordon of native soldiers, their Kragg rifles leveled at the flying car.

"Duck!" yelled Leahy, suiting the action to the word.

G. W. ducked, dragging the wheel to the right as he did so. The car almost turned over, almost but didn't, and swung away at right angles, just as the heavy bullets from the rifles of the soldiers pounded against the car's body like hail.

Leahy felt a red-hot poker pressed against his left arm and the side of his head, and a terrible dizziness came over him. The car was bouncing up and down like a bucking bronco, and holding her speed. Leahy and G. W. were now down, a hopeless scramble, on the floor of the car which was rapidly, in its own way, taking the two out of range of the soldiers.

But whither?

They were soon to know.

WITH a crashing smother of sound the car hit something hard, ploughed through. To Leahy it seemed as though all the boulders they had encountered along the road from Las Charcas had been lifted and hurled upon his helpless head. Then he felt himself being catapulted forward, felt himself hurled through the opening where the windshield had been, and knew that he had left the car well behind him.

He landed and rolled over and over, end for end, and sidewise, and crashed, believing sure that all his bones were broken, against something solid.

And darkness settled over him.

He thought in a vague way, as though in a dream, about those soldiers. Were they in the pay of Martel, or had they somehow been hoodwinked by some cock and bull story into assisting in his capture?

Then Leahy felt himself being roughly jolted up and down, and gradually his senses returned.

He was on the shoulders of a panting G. W., and G. W. was running as he probably had never run before. He seemed, as nearly as Leahy could tell, to be running through the town

in the direction of the main road to the Capital City.

"Hold hard, G. W.," he said. "I can make my own way now, I think. How's the car?"

"Ain't no car! Leastways a car that anybody'll ever drive again. She very fittingly passed in her checks when we crashed through the wall around Bani's public cemetery!"

"Why didn't you beat it without me?" asked Leahy as G. W. set him on his trembling legs and he took a moment to make sure that his legs would hold and carry him.

"Where'd I run to? They want me as bad as they do you!"

"But you *did* run, and could have done it without me. Why'd you bring me out?"

"I want that job with Uncle Samuel, and you're the boy who promised me it! Besides, I don't like to pause too long in *any*body's graveyard!"

They broke from the town as natives broke from the town to right and left, running full tilt to head them off.

Ahead they could see the river, swollen by the rains in the Cordilleras to the dimensions of a real flood. No way of getting across.

"Can you swim, G. W.?" asked Leahy.

NOT a stroke, but I'll try. I'd ruther drowned than get skun!"

The pack was on their heels as they reached the river, which boiled whitely over the boulders in the stream-bed—dry ten months of the year, a torrent at the moment, and all of a quarter of a mile wide. Leahy groaned.

"Two chips in a mill race!" he said. "But here goes!"

Driftwood came thickly down, uprooted trees. Leahy dove in, grasped the first bit of wood he encountered, hung on. The water was icy cold, and he had been perspiring for hours, the last without realizing it. The water put new strength into his almost exhausted frame, then stole it away again. G. W. piled in, and was carried under. He lost his greasy cap, which was fortunate, since it gave Leahy a chance to grab his woolly hair as he swept past, and to draw him close enough to the log for him to grasp it.

WHEW!" gasped G. W. "I'm not so bad, am I? Didn't know I could swim! Now what?"

"What indeed?" repeated Leahy "More of the same, I wouldn't wonder."

Bobbing lights, swiftly moving, on the Bani side of the howling stream, which was rapidly carrying the two men toward the Caribbean, not so many miles away now.

The headlights of a car, heading for Boca de Bani, a little village named by the Marines because it rested at the mouth of the Bani River.

The natives were firing wildly, and bullets thudded into the water all around; but the two men furnished poor targets, since they swept along with only their noses out of the water. Leahy had little fear of being hit, except by a lucky chance shot.

"Keep down, G. W.," he said, "and let the winds and waters of chance waft us whithersoever they wilt."

The headlights of the car still burned holes in the darkness toward Boca de Bani, traveling at about the same speed as Leahy and G. W.

Then they were in the whirlpools where the rushing stream encountered the salty waters of the Caribbean.

"Grab my belt, G. W.!" cried Leahy.

G. W. did as bidden, and Leahy

dove, swimming strongly under water, for the nearest bank which happened to be still on the Bani side. They reached the bank, slipped ashore, and were in among the shadows of the huts before the car reached the little village.

There were four men in the car, all armed with carbines. The four men climbed out, shouting for the inhabitants to get up and help, and ran toward the stream, wildly firing.

In a trice G. W. was behind the wheel of the car, Leahy was beside him, and the car was going about swiftly, heading straight back toward Bani!

They reached Bani, and were halfway across the rickety bridge, when their ruse was discovered and firing recommenced.

Two cars got into motion in the heart of Bani and were just coming onto the bridge on the Bani end, when Leahy and G. W. were dashing off, and giving the car the gas, on the opposite side.

"Remember what I said, G. W.!" said Leahy, grinning at G. W., who grinned back. "We take breakfast in the Capital City."

"Mister," said G. W. fervently, "if you tell me the earth is flat, that the moon is made of limburger, and a elephant has wings, I'll swear it's true!"

He pressed the accelerator to the floor.

CHAPTER X

Gathering of the Clans

MARTEL'S move after Leahy got back to the capital was an unexpected one and, as it later developed, saved the government a lot of trouble.

Leahy, as he had promised himself, had got his breakfast in the Capital City, had reported to McCauley, ragged, dirty, bloody as he was, and McCauley had sent a single code message into the Cibao, which had much to do with a certain load of contraband which was going over the trail from San Jone de Ocoa to Piedra Blanca between galvanized roofing loaded on the backs of twenty mules.

McCauley made no comment upon the report of Leahy. He merely took it as a matter of course. Leahy wasted no words telling of his experiences.

THEN a coded message was sent to Azua, with the names, dates and places which had been furnished by Leahy.

"Now, that's that," said McCauley, "and our next move is to go to the commanding general and tell him all about it. Let's go!"

"With me looking like the wrath of Heaven, and in these rags?"

"Exactly!" said McCauley. "When you are doing secret service work you can't get away with it by dressing like a parade-ground officer."

This was about ten o'clock of the morning upon which Leahy had returned to the Capital City, having apparently outrun all pursuit. He was dog-tired from his endless exertions and lack of sleep.

Just as the two were preparing to leave the office of Intelligence, the telephone rang with a sound of authority.

McCauley answered it.

"Yes, sir! Right away, sir! This instant, sir!"

McCauley hung up the receiver, turned to Leahy with a puzzled frown.

"I'm to report to the commanding general instantly, bringing Number Twelve with me, under arrest."

"Who's Number Twelve?"

"You! All my operatives have numbers so that written reports, if they fall into enemy hands, may not

give away the identities of operatives."

"I'm under arrest, then?"

"Yep. Let's go. I'll do my best to see that you don't get seriously injured, or locked up for more than twenty years."

The office of the commanding general was packed and jammed with Dominicans. There were so many of them that they overflowed the office and half filled the desk space allotted to the chief of staff, brigade adjutant, brigade law officer, and the rest of the staff.

Leahy looked them over carefully, his eyes alight with puzzlement.

Most of the men near the general's door were bandaged in spots, or simply unbandaged and looked as though their wounds needed dressing.

McCauley reported to the adjutant, who looked curiously at Leahy and then forced his way through the cordon of natives into the general's office.

"BRING THEM IN!"

It was the voice of the "Old Man," who sometimes spoke loudly when he was excited, which was frequently.

The adjutant came back, beckoned McCauley and Leahy, and he was grinning as he ushered the two into the general's office, where they stood at attention, side by side, before the Old Man.

MR. McCAULEY," said the Old Man, "what do you know about this? Here are a dozen natives who are fit for the hospital. They claim to be from Las Charcas. They say that fifty Marines, all out of uniform, invaded Las Charcas and Estebania, raving drunk, armed with revolvers, Springfields and sawed-off shotguns, and literally devastated the place. These are only the wounded. The dead were buried."

"May I ask the General, sir, who makes the report?"

The general pointed to a swarthy man who sat at his left hand.

"This gentleman, a law-abiding citizen of Las Charcas, makes the report, and these are his witnesses substantiating his story! That is Mr. Martel. Next to him is Mr. Pimentel, who corroborates his report. Full and complete investigation must be made at once, McCauley, and the guilty Marines punished in accordance with the law. The Provisional President's secretary is here, representing the President, to vouch for the character of Mr. Martel and Mr. Pimentel."

McCauley, half smiling, looked around the group of scarred natives, many of whom were dressed in blue denim and were barefooted, all dirty, while most wore machetes at their belts.

GENERAL," said McCauley, "the report which they make is true, with the following exceptions: there was only one Marine, not fifty, he wasn't drunk, he didn't kill anybody because I sent him down there unarmed, and he used nothing against these people save his bare fists. Does Mr. Martel mean to tell us that one lone Marine so badly used a half a hundred of his men?"

Without waiting for an answer, McCauley strode to two men who wore bandages, tore the bandages away, to show to all eyes that there was neither mark nor scar under them!

Martel had tried to pull what is technically known as a "fast one."

Men who had been really hurt, numbering less than a dozen, had been left unbandaged. The others had been made up for the show. Martel knew the law, knew that a Marine could be court-martialed for touching a native, and that Uncle

Sam, eager to get home after seven years of occupation in Santo Domingo, was inclined to lean over backwards in giving the natives the best of all arguments.

But the general's eyes narrowed when he saw the unmarred skin under the bandages McCauley had torn aside.

"General," McCauley went on, "allow me to inform you that the fifty Marines to whom Mr. Martel refers are all embodied in the person of Gunnery Sergeant Leahy here, and that he went in, and with his bare fists as his only weapons, brought back the information that Martel here, aided and abetted by Pimentel, who owns a warehouse in Las Charcas, is the leader of a revolution being started for the sole purpose of making sure that Marines remain in Santo Domingo indefinitely.

Martel, a fiery octoroon, was on his feet instantly, crying his denials.

"It is false, General, false as falsehood! Me, I am a Dominican gentleman! I—"

"Martel," interrupted McCauley, "what of the arms which went into the Cibao yesterday over the trail through the Cordilleras from San Jose de Ocoa?"

"I know nothing of any arms!" cried Martel. "Falsehood, all of it! I own not one single mule!"

"Martel," said McCauley softly, "who said anything about mules?"

A laugh sounded from the office door. It was the brigade adjutant and most of the staff, who were enjoying the show hugely. The general frowned at them prodigiously.

I HAVE here, sir," said McCauley to the general, "a code message from one of my men in Bonao, informing me that twenty mules loaded with galvanized roofing were stopped at Piedra Blanca before daylight this morning. Between the sheets were four hundred carbines, with ammunition for same! They were consigned to a chronic revolutionary in Monte Cristi, and the papers bore the name of Jose Martel as consignor! Mr. Martel, is your name Jose?"

Martel was on the verge of having apoplexy. His face got red as fire, while his men, who did not understand English, but understood pantomime and the fact that their leader was exercised, shifted uneasily.

AND I have here," went on McCauley, "a code message from Number Nine, now in Azua, to the effect that the *Policia Nacional Dominicana* of Azua has taken command of a warehouse in Las Charcas, a warehouse owned by a gentleman named Alfonso Pimentel, which at this moment contains two thousand rifles, three thousand pistols, and ammunition enough to kill every Marine in the republic, using ten bullets to each one. Is your first name Alfonso, Mr. Pimentel?"

It was the turn of Pimentel to wax apoplectic.

Martel rose to his feet.

"I refuse to remain here to be insulted!" he cried. "Your Marines come into my province and lay it waste, and when I report their depredations you laugh at me, and try to make me look silly! You and your stories of smuggling arms! Me, a patriotic Dominican gentleman who loves his President! We shall go at once!"

"You may go, gentlemen," said the general, "for I am without authority to stop you."

"I, however," said the President's secretary softly, "have some authority as the President's representative. I ask your assistance in holding these men, pending the arrival of

Dominican soldiers to take them in charge!"

He reached for the telephone.

"Just a moment, sir," said McCauley, grinning. "I anticipated some such request, and before we were called in here, I took the responsibility of telephoning the *commandancia* in your name, and a hundred soldiers are already on the way here! They should arrive any moment!"

Martel shouted in Spanish to his men.

"Let us go! We are being grossly insulted by these American dogs!"

The natives rose in a body and moved toward the door. The general looked at McCauley. Some said he nodded his head thoughtfully, some said that he even winked at his Intelligence officer. Whatever he did, McCauley interpreted it to suit himself.

"Leahy!" he shouted.

He sprang to the door, forcing the natives back into the office.

"Outside, General!" he cried.

The general moved sedately from his office, and took a seat at the right hand of the law officer, who was as fat as the general, and who could not fight for the same reason, while Leahy sprang to the side of McCauley.

"You got away from them by yourself, Leahy," cried McCauley. "Surely two of us should keep them from getting away from us!"

Martel and Pimentel led the attackers. It developed shortly that their men were not nearly as helpless as they had pretended.

McCAULEY and Leahy, tired as Leahy was, took the brunt of that first charge. Martel singled out Leahy and charged, head down, hand grasping a knife, and Leahy let him have a right to the chin that put him on his back, groaning with pain, atop of the desk which the general had just relinquished.

McCauley grabbed Pimentel about the waist, lifted him and hurled him into the faces of his followers.

The natives in the outer offices started to make a break, only to discover big Marine officers negligently standing before all open windows, and in each door, and when they darted back to attack Leahy and McCauley in the rear, they discovered that the big brigade adjutant, fire of battle in his eye, was standing there in a fighting pose, awaiting their advance.

OUT of the general's office came a snarling, clawing native hurled back over the head of Leahy. He landed on his head before the brigade adjutant and when, knife in hand, he got up to renew the fight, the B. A. kicked the knife from his hand and then placed a foot on the back of his neck to hold him down.

Meantime, the office of the general was a wreck. Windows had been broken. The desk was upside down against a wall, and the remains of one Martel rested in the midst thereof—certainly a sad end for a patriotic revolutionist who had planned to lead his cohorts to "freedom."

Not dead, Martel, you understand; but he would be, perhaps, when the Provisional President got through with him.

Four or five natives, groaning and swearing, were down in the cleared space where the desk had been.

The brigade adjutant stole a look at his commanding general and smiled—because the Old Man seemed to be enjoying the whole thing.

Came shouted military commands from outside, beneath the office window, in Spanish. In the place strode a dapper young Dominican captain, all puffed out with importance.

"Here are your prisoners, *Capitan*,"

said the brigade adjutant. "We are turning them over with our love!"

Martel, handcuffed to Pimentel, strode from the place proudly, as proudly as a man could whose nose was bleeding all over his shirt, with his free hand in the front of that shirt—his idea of Napoleon's historic pose—to become a "martyr for freedom."

The revolution had turned into a comedy.

Yet. . . .

Martel's record had proved that he had started ten revolutions during the past twenty years, and that ten thousand graves had been filled because of him, and his desire to make himself President!

CHAPTER XI

Virtue's Reward

ONCE more McCauley and Leahy stood before the Old Man.

"Leahy," said the general, "you have done well. I wish to fittingly reward you."

Leahy's chest rose slightly. He was thinking of medals of honor, military crosses, or, at the very least, letters of commendation.

"Yes, sir," he said quietly.

"There is a rumor that a huge cargo of arms is to be unloaded and cached in the Caves of Los Haitises, on the south coast of Samana Bay. You have done so well with this task that, if McCauley approves, I am assigning you the task of going into the badlands north of Hato Mayor and Seibo, and gathering all possible information about it!"

"Blast the luck!" said Leahy to McCauley as they left the Headquarters building some time later. "Look what a fellow gets for getting away with a tough job! The chance to tackle a job three times as tough!"

"Never mind, Leahy," said McCauley, with a soothing grin. "Just remember what the oldtimers say: that the first hundred years are always the hardest!"

BAH!" said Leahy, forgetting the respect due his superior officer. "By the way, Lieutenant, didn't you get quick action on your code messages to Azua and the Cibao? Seems like your men must have replied even before you telegraphed."

"I made those messages myself," replied McCauley. "I got no word from either Bonao or Azua! It was a bluff, and Martel fell for it. I had to take a chance on your report being true, to get away with it."

"You mean you think I might have, just possibly, been faking it?" cried Leahy. "Why, blast you, Loot—"

But McCauley only grinned.

The two reached the Intelligence Office in Fort Ozama.

There were two telegrams on McCauley's desk, one from Bonao, the other from Azua and, save that the telegrams doubled the number of arms which had come in at *Playa de Caracoles,* they were almost identical with the fake telegrams McCauley had made up.

"You see," said McCauley to Leahy, "I merely put two and two together, and these two real telegrams prove that they make four!"

"Tell me, though, Loot," said Leahy, "how one lone Marine posing as a crazy doctor, can become fifty Marines, and whip half a province full of natives?"

"Can't do it," said McCauley promptly. "I am just an American Marine, not a Dominican revolutionist. With me, two and two make four. With badly smacked natives one and one make fifty—all armed. But that's all over now. You leave for the badlands tomorrow!"

Twenty Dollars Gold

An Enchanting Story of the Sewers of Paris and a Man's Salvation

By PAUL REGARD

Author of "The White Giant," "Kwa of the Jungle," etc.

THE Seine flowed black. The wind was raw. The sky was a ragged gray blanket that reminded Bishop of the blankets used in the Morgue. It made him laugh. He'd reached the center of the bridge. As he gave a last look about him what he saw of Paris was less a *ville lumière* than a city of the dead. It looked dark, gloomy and deserted —like himself.

You had to hand it to Paris for that, he reflected. Whatever you were and whatever your mood might be, Paris remained the most responsive city in the world.

He stood there with his hands on the stone parapet looking down at the black water thirty feet below. He'd crossed this bridge in his student days—just out of Harvard—thought he knew it all. Only ten years ago. It seemed like a century. Then he'd had everything. Now—nothing!

Not quite nothing, he recollected.

But the recollection brought with it a savage stab of disgust. From a

vest pocket of his evening clothes he brought out a coin. It was large. It was heavy. Even here in the dim light it shone with a sort of splendor. It was an American coin—twenty dollars in gold.

He'd carried the thing about with him almost ever since he could remember. It had been given to him as a boy. Tonight he'd gone to the club intending to gamble with it. Just one play—if he lost. On the other hand, he might run it into the thousands. He'd done it before.

The club was one of the most exclusive in Paris. If you weren't a millionaire—and in the social Blue Book to boot—you didn't belong. He'd been a member of it for years.

But the moment he entered the place tonight he could feel the difference. Even the doorman was barely polite. The members had cut him. The steward—smooth as ice and as cold—had rendered an overdue bill. Why not? They'd heard the news of his smash.

SIGHT of the coin was equivalent to the opening of a stop-cock. All the pent-up bitterness, hate, remorse, and despair in his heart, came spouting up—clouding his brain, suffocating thought.

He half raised his hand to throw the coin into the river. He'd follow. But he didn't want them to find it on him. As he raised his hand he heard a voice:

"Mon prince!"

He turned.

He must have been followed. He saw two persons standing there. His preoccupation had been such that he hadn't heard them. He was still a little blind. He stood there staring from one to the other as the two were staring at him.

There was a girl and a man. They stood some distance apart, as if they'd approached him from different directions—one to the right, one to the left. Also they were keeping their distance from him, ready to run. He could read their thought. This lunatic might be dangerous. The girl had reason to be afraid. She was slight. Starvation—or disease—had reduced her to not much more than a wraith. But the man was a hulking brute. It dawned upon Bishop that he'd seen them both before.

For some reason or other he'd singled them out from the swarm of beggars, touts, *filles de joie*, and other human spectres he'd encountered at night. The neighborhood of the club was infested with them. They haunted the shadows.

"What do you want?" Bishop growled. He suspected the truth. They'd seen him go away from the club on foot and they'd trailed him here.

Neither of them answered at once. The man smirked and winced a little at the challenge of Bishop's look. Bishop loathed him. He knew the type, the brawny swine! Bishop turned to the girl. She also had been looking at this man. He surprised in her meager face an expression of dread and defiance.

In an instant she'd shifted her gaze and her eyes met Bishop's.

"What do you want?" Bishop repeated. But his tone was no longer harsh.

THE girl was too white, too starved, for harshness even in his present mood. He resented her having followed him here but he couldn't blame her. It struck him that she'd suffered far more than he himself ever had. She had that pitiful beauty that suffering sometimes gives—wide eyes, with something of both terror and heroic dreams in them; a face drained of coarseness.

As she didn't answer at once, Bishop himself answered for her.

"Money! All right, take this." He still held the coin in his hand.

To his surprise the girl held back.

The big tout broke in. "Give it to me. She's crazy."

"Keep out of this, you!" Bishop told him. He could speak French like a Parisian—like an Apache of the outer boulevards when he felt like it, and he felt like it now. The presence of the girl restrained him, but he told the fellow, adequately, just what he thought of him.

Having said his say, while the fellow both bridled and cowered, Bishop once more turned to the girl and proffered her the coin.

"It's gold," he assured her. "It has value."

"I know," she whispered. "But it wasn't for that."

It was all she said. Her voice had come as soft and gusty as a viola. Bishop remembered now. The few times he'd ever noticed her before she'd made no gesture of solicitation. She'd looked at him—even with a sort of desire, mute and mysterious, like that of a ghost with a secret to tell.

HE wanted to be rid of her. He thrust the coin into her slim hand and saw the beginning of a smile. He turned away slightly stifled.

He wanted to be rid of this man too. He wanted to be alone. It would be obscene to do what he meant to do in the presence of a witness like this. That would be like committing hari-kari in the presence of a buzzard.

The fellow muttered.

Bishop ignored him. He continued on across the bridge. He sauntered. He could feel that the fellow was following him. He was annoyed. His revolt against the world was now a red hot coal that made him want to shriek. One last poor favor he'd asked of the world—to die in peace; and even this favor the world was trying to refuse.

He'd reached the end of the bridge. He'd chosen this bridge expressly because of its loneliness at this time of night. So was the quay beyond devoid of traffic—an infinite length of granite to left and right, between the dark river and a darker park. Not even a policeman was in sight.

BISHOP slowed his step. As he did so something whipped about his throat and tightened. He sought to tear it loose. It was a silk scarf. Already it was drawn so taut it was hard as steel.

"La garrotte!"

There'd been centuries when the garrottiers of Paris had been notorious—no blood, no noise, a nice gradation of strangulation. The victim could be saved alive or—*fini!*

There must have been a lapse of consciousness. He felt himself being jostled and carried. He wondered if he had died—if this was the body he'd set out to slay. He'd read somewhere that death comes to men unrecognized—they'd go on thinking that they were still alive—alive and awake, or alive and dreaming.

Why were they carrying him so fast? Why were they so rough? Was this a burial? His trailing hand had touched dank stone? They were taking him down stone steps.

It wasn't until a chill mist from the river struck his face that he began to remember. With a memory came pain. His head was splitting. There was a taste of blood in his mouth. He tried to protest. He choked. He struggled. He knew the effort to be feeble.

Those about him snarled like furtive wolves. He recognized the argot of the underworld and understood what was said, although some of the words were strange. They were

threatening—to gag him, knife him, mutilate him. He subsided. He preferred to die in his own way, not theirs.

A faint, shrill whistle sounded.

Those bearing him began to run. They must have been wearing the rope-soled sandals of their kind. They made no noise. They'd brought him down from the level of the bridge to the river bank, paved and walled with granite here as throughout the length of the Seine in its leisurely way through Paris.

To Bishop's surprise they'd turned away from the bridge, which would have furnished the most convenient hiding-place. There were four who heaved him along. There may have been others besides that sentinel! above who had given the warning whistle.

"I have nothing," he started to tell them.

When they found this out for themselves they'd be killing him anyway.

He was dropped to the granite coping of the bank. While one put a knee on his chest and a hand on his throat, Bishop saw two of the men who'd been carrying him slip over the coping and into the water.

"Shut up, and you won't be hurt," the man who was holding him warned in a swift whisper.

"Give!" came a whisper from the river.

BISHOP was slid over the edge and seized. There was no boat there. He was in the water up to his shoulders before he recovered from the shock of the surprise.

But the shock had served him. Now he was fully alive, all right. He began to fight. Under his feet there was a precarious footing, greasy with slime and but a few inches wide, where the masonry of the river-wall formed a ledge. Below this there was an unknown depth—sufficient, in any case, for the deep-draught barges and powerful tugs to tie up along the banks.

HE flailed. He shouted. He'd slipped and was under, dragging one of the enemy with him. Then two of them had him. He was fighting with all his strength. But he was encumbered by the heavy fur-lined pelisse he wore. He'd never been a strong swimmer.

He'd figured that out before—just enough of a swimmer to let himself die without any unseemly floundering. But he was floundering now, and he didn't want to die.

In the midst of his losing battle—choking, kicking, straining to take these others with him—these fools who were taking all this trouble to do something that he'd done better himself alone!—Bishop had a touch of vision or perhaps a touch of delirium.

But he was beset and his head was back and his face was going under when he saw—or thought he saw—the girl again, the girl on the bridge. She was at the parapet. She was a witness of this fight. Oddly, he felt that she was sorry for him, calling down to him some message of hope, and he was sure of her goodness and beauty. All this at the instant of his going under.

Whatever it was, reality or illusion, it brought with it some swift change—swift as a ray of light. It was a touch of peace, also of pardon. He didn't want to murder these poor fools anymore. He felt somehow that—impossible as this might seem—he was going to live.

He caught a quick breath. He relaxed.

Two bicycle cops had been wheeling along the deserted quay, side by side, making no more noise than a pair of phantoms. They looked like

phantoms when they were visible at all, which was only when they passed the white shine of a street lamp. Their dark capes covered themselves and most of their machines. They seemed to be moving magically, with long, easy strides, just above the surface of the paving stones.

"What's that?" one of them said.

"Those damned river-rats again."

"Someone calls for help!"

"To draw us off our beat—"

"—while they pull another dirty job."

THEY were old and experienced men. They'd been moving pretty fast in spite of their apparent leisure. They picked up speed—not too much—keeping an eye about them. The sounds had come from far away.

It was like these river-rats to create a disturbance only when it suited their purpose. For the rest, if the disturbance was real, it was apt to be one of two things, a suicide or a murder. If it was a suicide, too bad! If a murder, good riddance! Respectable people kept off the banks of the Seine at night.

The policemen scouted beyond the bridge then back again. They parked their wheels against a sycamore tree and carefully chained them there. Like all policemen in France they'd been trained in the army. They had no nerves and were as nearly fearless as any men on earth. Discipline had made them so. But to have your bicycle stolen—*bon Dieu!* Better a ball in your skin!

They unholstered their guns and made for the stairs leading down to the river. They searched the bank. They searched the dark arch of the abutment. Three tramps were sleeping there in a huddle, one of them a blowsy old woman nursing an empty bottle.

The policemen went over the group with an electric torch. They were all old-timers and harmless. This was their home.

"Shall I wake them?" the younger policeman asked.

The elder meditated a second or two. The river was silent.

"Pas la peine!"

They sheathed their guns and started on back to where they'd left their bicycles. They were halfway up the stone stairs when they encountered a white-faced girl.

As proof of the story she told them she showed them the piece of gold.

Bishop had been granted the chance for one more gasp of air. He was against the masonry wall again when it came. But he was through—heavy as lead, resigned as a corpse. Only his brain had power to act. His brain was luminous. Not only all the life of his numbed and battered body seemed to have become concentrated in his brain, but all the years of his life—perhaps with mental flashes and perspectives from former lives.

HE knew now what was meant by those stories of men who were drowning—men who were getting hanged, or passing through the instant of some other supreme crisis—remembering all that they'd ever done, or thought, or dreamed.

Wow, what a waster he'd been! Wow, how he'd fallen! Girls and booze! Baccarat for ruinous stakes! He remembered his winnings the night before the young Marquis de Karnac so suddenly passed out. He'd displayed no feeling. He'd rather prided himself on that. The Karnacs had been ruined. A great old family wiped out.

It was almost as if he'd seen the ghost of Karnac standing up there on the bridge just now. That would have been like Frederic de Karnac. Too fine to hold a grudge.

Karnac!

He hoped Karnac would be waiting for him if—

A rope had been passed about him. He was under again. But this time it could have been for no more than a second or two. He'd been snatched into a place where he could dimly see. He'd held his breath. In another moment he was gasping. The air was dry. The concentrated vitality of his brain was spreading to his defeated body, calling upon it to resume the battle of life again.

HE made no resistance—he couldn't have done so, anyway, even had he wanted to—as he was dragged along, up a stone incline, without unnecessary roughness.

He heard voices about him. But he didn't pay much attention at first. Even when he began to take note of what was said there was an interval before he guessed that they were talking about himself. But the slang—some peculiarity of the special argot—recalled what he'd heard on the quay. Then he knew.

"It's an American millionaire."

"Big George won the grand prize."

"Push some cognac into him before he croaks."

"The pig, he almost drowned us."

There was more of it, Bishop listening in a daze, glad simply to be alive and too far gone to wonder even what it was all about. But they propped him up with his back to a wall and put the gullet of a bottle to his lips.

"He knows how to drink," said one, with a touch of admiration.

Bishop looked about him. He saw stone walls and an arched stone roof lit by a candle and strongly barred by dancing shadows as a number of men moved about.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"Monsieur le Prince, is at home," came a mocking voice. "He's down the sewer."

"Seriously!"

"Seriously! No joke!"

Bishop was neither surprised nor alarmed. It was as if he'd passed some frontier into a domain of the spirit where neither surprise nor alarm would ever again be possible. They'd died. He'd sloughed them off back there in the river. Perhaps he'd sloughed off other useless qualities.

"My friends," he began, "I'm poor."

There were various comments: "He's drunk!" Don't make us laugh!"

But a voice broke in: "Tell all that to the chief."

Bishop asked: "What chief!"

A chorus answered: "His Majesty, the King of the Sewers."

Those voices, answering like that in unison, made a hollow rumbling. It was as if a giant had whispered. It was as if the breath of the giant was tainted. A gust of air had reached him, tepid and mephitic, from a dark tunnel that was like the throat of the giant.

A MOMENT later he saw a dark figure approaching along this tunnel and he recognized his enemy of the bridge, the man who'd throttled him.

The companions already present hailed him with respectful admiration.

"Big George!"

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Big George asked, pretending that whatever he'd done tonight was not worth comment. He gave Bishop a glance of sneering triumph. "Take off some of his clothes," he commanded. "He'll walk faster. And hurry, or we'll be late for the ball. His Majesty won't be content."

So far as Bishop could count, there were a dozen in line besides himself. Big George somewhere up

ahead. The others strung out behind. In darkness or semi-darkness, mostly, but there was light enough to give Bishop some idea of an eerie uniformity in his escort. Only Big George was different. No wonder they had treated him with admiration and respect. He, at least, looked like a human being—a something, however vile, that had been reared in the open. These others suggested rats, two-legged rats, sub-human, unclean.

There was not only a general resemblance of face and figure but of clothing, as well. They were all dressed in jumpers and overalls, caps, rope-soled sandals. None of them was very large. They were undersized but lithe. There was a sleekness to their movements. There was some corresponding sleekness to their lean but pasty faces. Their eyes were too bright. Their feet were too nimble.

Each, Bishop noted, wore an elaborate silk muffler about his neck instead of collar and necktie. So did Big George. Had he schooled them in the garrotte?

AT Big George's command, they'd stripped Bishop to his undershirt and trousers. He could be grateful that they'd left him his shoes. It would have been torture to keep up with this band if they'd taken his shoes away. They were moving at a sort of sliding trot —a sinuous, sliding movement through the dark; something to induce an occasional whiff of nightmare—the flow of a river of rats, the flow of a snake through a burrow. Until the sewer itself became like the endless maw of a snake—slimy, lulling, hypnotic.

Twice—perhaps oftener—they had passed iron doors that had to be opened then afterward closed. Now the sewer was narrow, again it was wide and high, but always high enough to permit the passage of a man. Most of the walking was dry—footpaths that followed as swift-running gutter. These were not the horror of a morass that had all but stifled Jean Valjean a century and more ago. There'd been half a century of progress since Victor Hugo knew them.

But they held a horror still.

Paris was a monster, living, breathing, feeding, loving, scheming to keep its mighty life entire. So had it done for a thousand years. These were its entrails.

THEY'd passed another iron door which was closed and locked. For a while the whole band—Bishop in the midst of them—were crowded into a small chamber with another door beyond. No one spoke or moved. He was aware that a signal had been given, then answered.

There was another pause, while the silence of the little chamber became like that of a tomb. Then a soft but voluminous voice was filling the place:

"Tell us who you are."

It was Big George who answered first. He spoke with a certain tremor that robbed his words of any humor. He barely whispered it:

"Hog!"

Others were answering in turn, each with the name of an animal: "Bat, Lizard, Adder, Gray Rat. . . ."

"And the other one?" came the voluminous voice.

"Sire, a larva—"

Big George, alias Hog, was proceeding to a description of larval descent and incubation when that new calm that Bishop had acquired snapped with an explosive violence. Until now this mummery had merely wearied and disgusted him. He'd felt nothing but a profound humiliation

when he'd been referred to as a larva. His mind had skipped back to the luxurious, the lazy and pandering Zephyr Club.

He saw it now. The place was a nest of maggots—a sating-place for appetites. And he'd belonged. He thought of Karnac whom the club had killed. He'd sped that killing. Then his own turn came. Here he was, worse than dead, perhaps, but grateful to that beggar girl who'd intervened.

As a boy he'd read that guardian angels sometimes showed themselves disguised like that.

He heard Big George make a reference to her.

Bishop let out a sort of grating roar. He'd become an animal like these others. Only, he'd become an animal ready to fight for something these others had forgotten or had never known.

A silk muffler shot about his neck. Instinctively he'd been ready for that. Before the garrotte could tighten he'd snatched it free. The effort had flung him over his back against the wall. It was an accident that saved him.

The man who'd tried to strangle him had been thrown off his balance. He squealed and showed his teeth. But going down his chin met Bishop's left.

His head snapped back. His eyes popped.

BISHOP lost sight of him in the confusion of other heads and faces—teeth, eyes. He plunged toward Big George, sideways, keeping his back to the saving wall, hooking, jolting, with both hands going at once.

Just as he made his final lunge, the light went out. He heard the door ahead clang open. He lunged again.

He tried to catch hold of something. There was nothing there. He was falling.

He'd struck a sort of stone toboggan—a slope down which he sped and whirled to a black abyss. There was nothing to hold to but that thought that had come to him when he was fighting in the river. That wraith of a guardian angel had saved him then. Would she save him now?

He was at the bottom almost before he could complete the thought. He sprawled and gripped the floor with all that remained to him of his nearly exhausted strength. For what seemed a long time he lay there without moving. He plumbed his memory for something vaguely familiar about this situation in which he found himself.

BURIED alive! The streets of Paris just overhead! He could see the Gauls in Roman times, then other bondsmen, hewing out rocks from underground quarries to build the ever-expanding walls of Paris. They'd used those long inclines to hoist the rock to the surface.

The abandoned quarries became a charnel house in times of plague and wars. They became a dumping-place when the tenants of old graves were dispossessed.

He was in the Catacombs.

He lay on his back. He stretched out arms and legs. He'd been flayed, strangled, beaten, drowned. Worst of all, perhaps, he'd heard himself named for what he was—what he had been—but would be, O Lord, never again!

Was the end of it all now to be a lingering death here in the dark? Better men than he had done as much. He shut his mind against all pity for himself. Something was telling him that for all that could happen to anyone there was compensation. Where had he heard that?

Emerson? He'd almost forgotten the name of Emerson.

He lay there for a while with his eyes wide open staring up into the blackness. He saw a vague drift and whirl of faint illumination.

He closed his eyes. The illuminations continued just the same—brighter, forming shapes and fleeting away, others coming to take their place. They appeared far off, drew near. He forgot that his eyes were closed. The lights became the substance of a dream.

HE thought that he was dreaming still when his eyes came open to another sort of illumination. This was red. He was surrounded by a high circle of flame. He sat up. He heard a chorus of laughter.

The flaming circle was a circle of flaming candles. The candles were held by a ring of grotesques, none of whom looked quite human.

There were queer hags, squat and flabby, but painted and bedizened like the queens of comic opera; animal heads on the shapes of men; girls who looked as if they'd been dead and buried, then galvanized again—all but their brains, all but their eyes.

Bishop stared, motionless and silent.

He saw that these less than human creatures had come accompanied by a herd of swine and goats. A small donkey, clipped and hennaed into something that Bishop found heartbreaking and revolting, thrust its way into the inner circle and looked at him with the manners of an impudent child.

"Mes enfants—"

Bishop recognized the voice. It was the voice that called the roll in the chamber above.

"My children—"

This would be that King of the Sewers for whom Hog and his swarm of vermin had shown such reverence. Bishop, still unmoving, save for his eyes, found the owner of the voice. He was a bullheaded man, huge but squat, somewhat as a real bull might have looked, hung about by some sort of hairy toga. Curiously fascinating yet ghoulishly disgusting. Against his breast he nursed what looked like a huge bat—a vampire, a flying fox. It crawled and quivered. The King of the Sewers—old Minotaurus of ancient Crete—come back to life in this worse than any Cretan labyrinth, stroked the bat and brought it to his lips. These lips, to Bishop's sick fascination, he now saw were the Minotaur's own. He'd taken them for a part of the bull-mask. The man, apparently, had merely pointed up some natal monstrosity of face by adopting horns.

"My children," said the Bull, "what say you? Shall we salt him down?—accept his ransom and let him go?—or make him one of us?"

There was a stir and a murmur about the flaming circle.

ONE of the limp, dead-faced girls took a wilting step toward Bishop. He saw the effort of a smile on her distorted purple lips.

But one of the hideous old women was quicker.

She smirked.

"Make him one of us," she squeaked.

Bishop was on his feet as a frightened stag might have leapt. He stood at bay. The nightmare thought came to him that none of these poor creatures either was to blame. That he and others like him, the fine young men, had played their part in shaping these horrors.

He was saying to something within himself that he pitied them,

was willing to help them, that from now on—

A strange clamor broke out.

It was like a distant howling, a squeaking, a shrilling of whistles, then the unmistakable sound of an automatic pistol fired three times in quick succession.

The flaming circle broke and scattered. Frightened animals were adding clamor only a shade less human to the twittering and shrieking of those who were neither beasts nor images of God.

ACROSS the wide vortex of riot and madness Bishop saw something that he'd never dared to pray even that he might see again. He was enough in possession of his wits to stoop and pick up an abandoned candle that was sputtering on the floor.

He held the candle above his head and looked—heart thumping, arm weaving like a reed in a gale. He'd thought that he was through with wonder—through with dread.

He knew that this was not so.

The place was raided. The police swarmed in.

These were a detachment of what Parisians call *la brigade centrale*—the most feared police in Paris, where evil-doers are concerned; the most earnestly prayed for by honest folk in time of need. They were veterans to a man—survivors of Verdun, old territorials back from Morocco and Tonkin.

Some of them, at least, had seen things as queer as this—down in the Soudan, down in Dahomey, among the remoter tribes of Madagascar and Cambodia. Yes, and right here in Paris, too. There was never a time, perhaps, when queer, outlandish things could not be found in Paris—a Madame de Brinvillier, a Tour de Nesles, a Mesmer, a Cagliostro. The gamut had merely expanded since the War.

Those horny handed members of the Central Brigade were to hunt out the subjects of the King of the Sewers for days to come. Minotaur himself, the despot of this modern yet ancient labyrinth, was never found. But things were found that made all those who heard of him devoutly hope that he'd lost himself in the dark.

Maybe he'd been keeping that pet bat of his for just such an emergency, to guide him through black ways to some new temple of the Paris underworld. Maybe he needed no guide. There's a sect in Paris that has learned—at a price—to see in the dark.

Big George and his rats were taken—to a man. Most of them went to Cayenne, which is no man's paradise, especially for those who dread the sun.

A lieutenant of police came up to where Bishop stood holding his candle aloft.

"It is you, Monsieur Bishop?"

"Yes, sir."

"I congratulate you."

"Thank you, sir, and accept my gratitude."

THE lieutenant was a gentleman, polished and agate hard. He divined that Bishop's interest was elsewhere, that he wished to be left alone. But he lingered a moment longer.

"Your gratitude, Monsieur, is due to Mademoiselle—"

The lieutenant didn't finish. He'd seen Bishop start and stare. The lieutenant strolled away into the shadows. And standing there for half a minute longer he saw something that made him wish that he'd have an experience like that of his own before he outlived youth.

It was the girl of the bridge that Bishop was seeing again. She came as deftly, as magically almost, as one of those blue flames he'd seen in the darkness a while ago. Even while she was still at a distance he could feel the influence of her eyes, the spirit back of her eyes. She was smiling at him. Yet there was a quality in her smile that made him repent of his sins, hope for a better record from this time on.

"Mademoiselle,' he began.

"I'm glad," she said.

Bishop set the candle down and stuck it to the floor with melted wax. Near it there was a block of stone that would serve them as a seat. They sat there for a while in silence, not looking at each other. They were silent. They'd got through the initial banalities.

THIS silence of theirs was like a song without words—a duet in which their hearts were joined.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm Laure," she said.

"Well, Laure, I'm Anthony—Antoine."

"I know. I've known you since a long time. You are Anthony Bishop."

"Laure, how did you know?"

He was looking at her. He noticed the delicacy of her profile. He was asking himself where he'd seen that profile before. It was impossible that he should have met her. Had he met her, talked to her, he could never have forgotten.

She was lost for a moment in contemplation. She came out of this and turned her sober eyes to his.

"First," she said, "let me give you back your piece of gold." She'd been holding it in her hand. She tried to put it into his hand. But he closed his hand over hers and held it shut. "Keep it for me," he said. "Keep it as a symbol. Some day I'll be coming back and asking you for it. I know I shall."

"I've had a message to give you—since a long time," she said. "That's why I used to go to the street near the club and watch you pass. But I never had the courage. You looked so—so—"

"Beastly!"

"No! No! But tonight—last night—when you left the club I knew that you needed the message."

"What was the message?"

"That you shouldn't feel badly—that you weren't to blame."

"I've been to blame for a thousand things," Bishop cried passionately.

Her look stopped him.

"The message was from a friend of yours—my brother—Frederic."

HE was looking at her with stricken eyes. This was like a pardon from the tomb. He was unable to speak. She saw his trouble. She spoke for him.

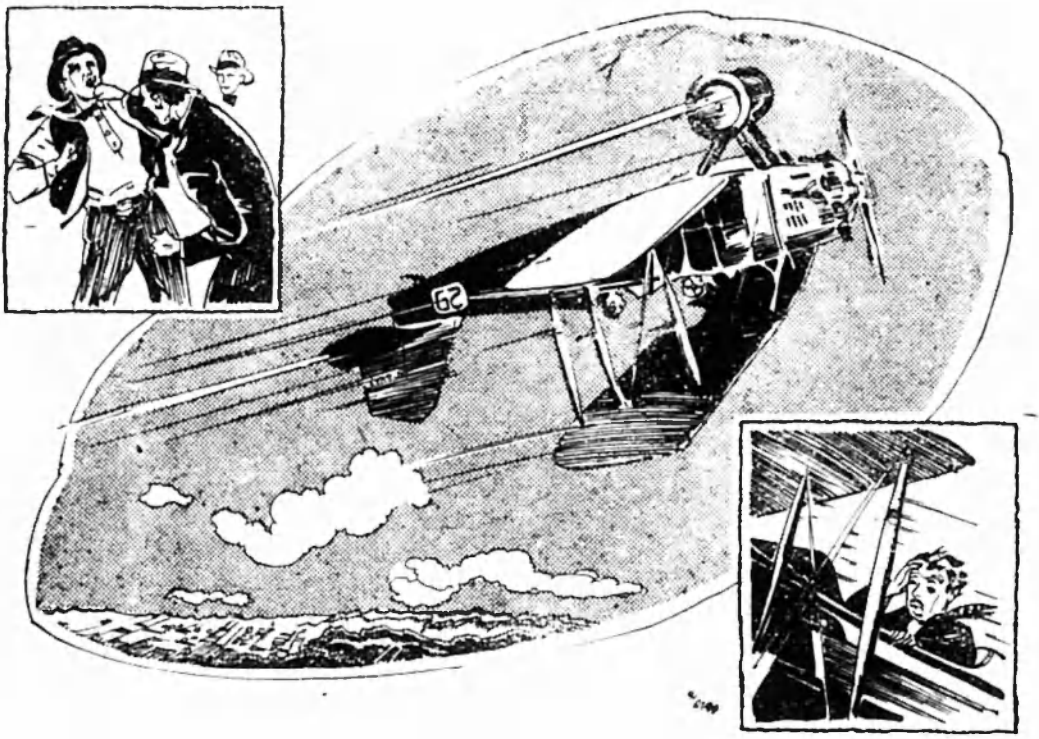
"I'm Laure de Karnac. I'm a great sinner. He gave me this message to you just before he—"

Her voice trailed off.

Bishop lifted the hand he held to his lips and held it there, his head bowed low.

"I took you for my guardian angel," he said. "Now I know—I know."

High Finance



Zip Hendrick, Aviator, Knew How to Make Business Men Talk Turkey

By ORRIN HOLMER

Author of "Ace of the Air," "Sky Loot," etc.

ZIP HENDRICK tore a hole through a cloud and shot into the blue ozone of northeastern New Mexico. Trinidad, Colorado, was belching industrious smoke in black smudges a few miles behind. Ahead, and below, lay Raton, New Mexico. Lynn, the first town on the New Mexican side of the Colorado boundary, stood out like a high patch of shingles clustered about a small area of rolling country.

That was enough to show Zip Hendrick that he was cleaving the air straight and true to his fighting destination.

Only a few miles farther—few, compared with the great strip between him and Chicago, where he had taken off in his steam-line "Blue Bullet"—and he'd be at San Torre.

And at San Torre—blood! That was why Zip Hendrick was ripping holes through clouds at seven thousand feet and a hundred and forty per hour; blood was red, and Zip Hendrick saw red.

A matter of minutes now. Cactus

and hillocks and wind-shaven rocks skimmed by beneath his landing gears. Yet, the minutes seemed hours.

But even minutes that seem like hours do finally come to an end; and as these came to an end, Zip Hendrick balanced on his left wing, slapped the stick back, cut 'er down, and rolled to a stop at the heart of San Torre, sending a crowd of cursing citizens scurrying angrily out of harm's way along the main thoroughfare.

HARDLY three minutes ago he had been eight hundred feet above the dirt road leading into the center of the town.

Zip raced the engine, killed it and flipped himself out of the cockpit with a springy grace that gave the lie to the thousand miles he had covered.

No man, it seemed, could possibly have that spring in his muscles after being cooped up in a narrow cockpit for almost ten flying hours.

No man, tha is to say, except Zip Hendrick, when Zip Hendrick was too mad to think about his cramped sinews.

Anybody but Zip, pulling a raw landing like that right in the heart of town, would have been in for a rough time. San Torre boasted enough tough hombres to make sure that a bad-acting stranger would certainly run smack up against at least one set of warty knuckles.

Zip Hendrick, however, was no stranger to San Torre, for one thing; and for another, he was known not to be a bad actor. And if Zip Hendrick pulled a crazy stunt like this, he knew what he was doing, and what was more, there were few hombres in or around San Torre who'd like the task of trying to make Zip Hendrick explain his actions—whatever they were.

Ignoring the shouts and hand-waving of men surprised to see him, Zip leaped up three steps and across a narrow piazza leading to a store. He stopped for a moment only, to peer through the window on which was lettered, in gold and black:

SAN TORRE PHARMACY

At the low left-hand corner, almost entirely worn off, the words were blotched in Spanish. But Zip paid no attention to words. He saw whom he wanted to see, and in another moment he strode through the door and into the San Torre Pharmacy.

"Zip!"

The surprised exclamation came from a middle-aged man, small in stature, wearing silver-rimmed spectacles. His astonishment was genuine, and he came on the run to meet the visitor.

"H'ya, Dean?" Zip Hendrick puffed a bit; he was somewhat out of breath. His eyes swept the store, and met nobody else. "Listen—are you alone?"

"Sure I'm alone. Say, what's the trouble? You look like something's up."

"Did they find oil when they drilled your land?" Zip was quick and to the point.

"No—not a drop."

AND they made you an offer for the land after they looked for oil and didn't find any?"

"Yes," Dean Luce's forehead drew up in wrinkles as he answered. "They wanted the place anyway; said they'd be able to make good use of it in some manner. I couldn't attend to it, and mother's old and too tired of the place, so—"

Zip Hendrick's lips tightened into a blue streak across a hardened face of tan. His eyes were blazing, and

he tore the helmet off his head, disheveling his hair. He looked astutely at the pharmacist.

"And so—you *sold* it?" asked Zip.

"Yes."

"By God, Dean, if you weren't what you are, if you were anything but a damn-fool druggist who don't know a damn thing outside a drug store, I'd like to paint a quick pair o' black eyes on your face and stretch you cold! Why—you damn-fool idiot! What do you think they wanted your land for, if it hasn't got oil? To build a convent on it, or make a seaport out of it, or something?"

"What do you mean?" Dean Luce's lower jaw fell away as he began to get the idea. "You mean—"

"Yes—say it—that's what I mean! Like a blind idiot you've been gypped out of a fortune. You've been hangin' around these parts workin' day an' night like a slave for more'n twenty years in a lousy old drug store, when right under your feet you had a million dollars in liquid currency.

"You didn't know it—nobody knew it, and I don't blame you for not knowin' it all these years."

Zip stopped a moment to wipe the perspiration from his forehead with a leather sleeve.

BUT after oil has been discovered surrounding San Torre like an underground flood, you'd ought to've wisened up at least enough to hold on to the ground you owned," continued Zip. "At least, you oughtn't to've sold it without waiting a long time to make sure it didn't have oil on it. But what'd you do? You let a couple o' crooks like Rhoades and Sturgis poke a hole into your sod and tell you it's stone dry. And right after they tell you your land ain't any good, they turn round and make you an offer and you accept.

"God—man, can't you see six inches past those windows on your eyes? You sell enough vaseline in the joint to be able to recognize a drop of petroleum when you slip on it. At least, you ought to be free enough from catarrh to smell a skunk trick when you're dealing with a rat like Rhoades. And I'll bet your mother's proud of you, cause you *succeeded* in selling the old farm! As a sensible business man, Dean, all you're good for is selling hot water bottles and soda pop."

DEAN LUCE leaned back weakly against a counter. He seemed faint with the realization that he'd been mulcted of millions.

"God," he groaned. "Go ahead, Zip; call me anything you want to call me! If there's oil on that stretch of sandy loam I ought to be burned at the stake. But nobody around here, exceptin' those promoters, know anything about oil. If anybody'd known I had oil under my feet, they'd have warned me, told me not to sell. But some of the other fellows sold, too. And glad they were, to get real hard cash for something nobody'd wanted to buy for twenty years."

Zip Hendrick turned away in disgust. He looked at the window. It was crowded on the outside with faces pressed against it. All San Torre knew, by this time, that trouble was in the air.

But with Zip on the inside of trouble, all San Torre preferred to remain on the outside. For that reason there wasn't a man in San Torre who had any need, at the moment, for any variety of merchandise dispensed by a druggist.

"But, say," said Dean Luce suddenly, "how'd you know I had oil there? Who told you?"

"I've been in Chicago. Found out accidental-like. I ran out o' cash and

looked for a job in the *Tribute* ads. What do I see, but a big ad in the classified column callin' for experienced securities salesmen. The address is Rhoades-Sturgis Company. The ad says to see a Mr. Culver. Just out o' curiosity I go up there; more to find out something about them than to tell them anything about myself.

"But before I could find out anything about them I had to tell this Culver a whole lot about myself. And maybe five per cent. of what I told him was true. Maybe! I think less. I told him one truth—that I once lived in this country. But I also told 'im that I had sold securities in New York four years after the War. This Culver fellow warms up, thinkin' I'd be hot for sellin' Rhoades-Sturgis stock because the operations are right here at San Torre. He tells me that they've made big oil finds—and that they'd bought up lots o' rich land.

I MENTIONED some names, including yours, and he tells me that Rhoades had bought your property only two days ago, and it's swimmin' in oil. I thought he was a liar, but didn't tell 'im so. I asked 'im for proof—before I'd go out an' sell his stock. He digs up a certified sheet sworn out by experts before notaries, provin' that your piece o' property assayed the richest oil find in the San Torre country! Well, I told 'im I'd think it over.

"That was yesterday afternoon. But I spent the rest of the day tunin' up the buggy, and all night wakin' up old friends and touchin' 'em for loans to get me enough gas for a swift ride here. An' here I am. What's more, I'm goin' to get back your property for you. Your mother was my mother's best friend—an' now is when I pay her back for what she did for my mother."

Dean Luce's eyes watered with joy. He leaped forward and grasped Zip Hendrick by both arms.

"You're going to get it back for her? You're going to save it for us? God! How can I thank you? How are you goin' to do it?" The grateful little druggist was quaking with joy.

"Rhoades doesn't know me," declared Zip, thinking aloud. "He's here now—Culver told me Rhoades was in San Torre."

SURE he is—his office is three doors over," cried the druggist, gesticulating excitedly.

"Who is Rhoades's worst enemy in these parts?" asked Zip Hendrick. "He ought to have plenty of 'em. Everybody can't be blind; somebody around here must know he's a crook and be man enough to tell him so to his face."

"Hal Gaston," shouted the pharmacist. "Hal had a run-in with Rhoades. Hal told 'im he's crooked."

Zip Hendrick shook his head in dissatisfaction.

"Hal Gaston," he repeated. "Hal is a doggone good fellow. . . . Well. . . . It's got to be done, though, that's all. I'm goin' out to find Hal."

"What're you goin' to do with him—what're you goin' to put Hal up to?" asked Dean Luce.

But Zip was already striding toward the door. He did not bother to answer. He slammed the door behind him, and asked the first man he met, "Where's Hal Gaston?"

The faces had already removed themselves from the drug store window. Everybody was looking at Zip Hendrick, but at the same time giving him a wide berth. Zip's six feet, and hundred-eighty pounds of wire muscles, merited a wide berth when he was in an angry frame of mind.

There was no answer. But a moment later a tall, rangy fellow carry-

ing no less than two hundred pounds of hardened sinews, strode up toward Zip Hendrick.

"What d'ye want me fur, Zip?"

It was Hal Gaston.

Zip Hendrick's eyes flashed. His jaws were set tight, and for fully ten seconds he glared at Gaston. The ring of men about the two widened perceptibly.

"I'm workin' for Rhoades," Zip Hendrick shot at him, finally. "I'm an honest man, an' I don't work for crooks. I understand you got ideas concernin' Mr. Rhoades. You're sayin' he's a crook. Callin' Rhoades a crook is callin' me a crook. Rhoades ain't a fist-fightin' hombre. I am. Rhoades has got gray hair on his head. I haven't.

"Now, what I want with you is an accountin' right here an' now—I'm tellin' you t' swallow what you said about Rhoades—to swallow the words afore I push 'em right down your throat!"

Hal Gaston flushed a deep red beneath his coat of tan. That he had never expected anything like this from Zip Hendrick was plain as daylight. He'd never been a pal of Zip's, but the two had always been quite friendly the few times Zip had been back in San Torre during the years following the War.

"Looky here, Zip," began Gaston, trying to straighten out a strange situation. "You got somethin' all wrong. Ef yo're a-workin' fur ol' man Rhoades, yuh've been humbugged into workin' fur the worst crook yuh—"

HAL GASTON did not finish. In a moment, Zip Hendrick had dropped his helmet and peeled off his jacket. Gaston was in shirtsleeves.

"I'm pushin' those words down your stomach," spat Zip.

He swung a wicked left, missing purposely to give Gaston time to recover from surprise and protect himself. In another instant they were locked in a clinch. They broke, and Zip landed a stiff right to the body.

BUT it was apparent that Hal Gaston did not have his heart in this scrap. The pained expression on his face was anything but ferocious. Zip crossed a left to the chin and stung his man. Gaston fell into a second clinch.

Once more they broke, and this time Zip Hendrick stung his opponent with a right that drew blood from the nose. Gaston lost his look of complacence. He also lost his temper. And as a jolting left to the side of the face sent him tottering off balance, Gaston lost his head. He recovered his poise in a moment, and plunged madly at Zip Hendrick.

A rapid-fire exchange of blows showed about an even score. But it was apparent that Zip had a way of catching punches where they hurt least. In his fighting there was something of the eel in him. Wallops that were ticketed with slumber, seemed to hit him either too soon or too late, and slide off with a minimum of damage.

Zip's wallops, to the contrary, carried precision and timing. He was jarred only once, a blow staggering him in bouncing off his shoulder.

And that was all Zip Hendrick needed. His eyes narrowed in slits. He crouched, slipped inside Gaston's guard, shot up erect, and with a lightning motion he rammed a piston-rod left to the point of the button. Gaston's arms dropped and his knees sagged.

Zip could have slipped over one more wallop as a certain finishing touch. But he didn't. It was not necessary. Hal Gaston's elbow struck the back of a chair; he careened to one side, slipped over, and fell un-

conscious to the wooden floor of the narrow piazza outside the pharmacy.

A large crowd had congregated. Questions had been buzzing. Why the devil were Zip Hendrick and Hal Gaston scrapping? They were both good fellows. What was it all about? The answer went the rounds in undertones.

And for once in his life Zip Hendrick found himself unpopular in a scrap. It had seemed that most faces brightened visibly every time Gaston had landed effectively, while no such satisfaction greeted Zip's well-placed efforts. And the final result met no cheers, no congratulations.

There was an elderly stranger looking on. Zip picked up his trodden helmet and jacket, and elbowed his way through the few spectators who had not been able to get out of his path. He went directly toward a shop window three houses to the north.

At the door he turned and entered. The elderly man—a short, corpulent individual with a ruddy face and impeccable attire—followed behind him, shutting the door.

"Is Mr. Rhoades in?" asked Zip, turning to the man behind him.

"I'm Rhoades," declared that individual, in a soft, even voice.

GLAD to meet you," said Zip. "Hendrick is my name. I'm work- for you. That's why I had that little fracas out there—I—"

"Proud to know you, young man," affirmed Rhoades. "I know all about it. That Gaston bully had it all coming to him. And I'm glad to know you're working for the Rhoades-Sturgis Company. We can use men like you—and plenty of them! I wish I knew where I could find more like you."

He extended his right hand. Before accepting it, Zip wiped his own hand on his trousers.

"I'm working out of the Chicago office," explained Zip Hendrick. "Selling Rhoades-Sturgis Company oil securities. I've sold stock before—in New York. Sort of a side interest with me; aviation is my first interest, but a fellow needs money to maintain a plane, and I find it easier to earn my way selling stock than competing with a lot of stunt fliers or paid pilots. There's more freedom my way—and more cash!"

"What brought you way out here?" asked Rhoades.

BUSINESS," replied Zip. "I've got a big man up in Denver; I've sold him before. He buys in big figures, or not at all. I went up to see him, and dropped in here to see you."

Rhoades' eyes sparkled. He liked big men who bought in big figures—or not at all. A good salesman would see to it that the latter would not happen. And there was something about Zip Hendrick that seemed to indicate he was the kind who got what he went after.

"What is this Denver proposition?" beamed Rhoades. "Sounds big. Were you able to do business with your man?"

"That all depends entirely on you, Mr. Rhoades," answered Zip Hendrick. "My man won't go into anything on a small scale. He's interested in this development. Fact is, I've got him all worked up to enthusiasm. He's never lost a cent on anything he got through me, and he's made plenty. If this development is all that I represented it to be to him, he'll take the whole thing off your hands. That is, if you want to sell.

"If a half interest is big enough for him, he'll buy a half interest, He's kind of eccentric. He acts in a hurry. Let him cool off after you've got him interested in some-

thing, and he'll turn to ice. He's got to be hit while he's hot."

"AND he's hot now?" Rhoades fairly exuded oil. Better than oil—he fairly exuded balm. Already the crude product was refined in the demeanor of the silken promoter, Rhoades.

Zip Hendrick laughed.

"Hot!" he repeated. "He's burning! I showed him copies of the sworn certifications, and he's sizzling. He wanted to come right down here with me, but I hadn't been here yet, and I wasn't sure things were ripe for him, yet. You haven't got enough wells, it seemed to me, while I was flying above San Torre.

"To tell the truth, I know how to handle him; and I think we could do business better up in Denver than down here. He's an impatient cuss, and if he sees you haven't got as many wells working and things don't look as busy as he imagined, he might fall through."

"Denver it is, then!" returned Rhoades. Already he was referring to his watch.

"Great!" Zip Hendrick was enthusiastic. "I can get you up to Denver in about an hour and a half—two hours at most. You just take along whatever deeds and titles you've got to San Torre properties, and maybe the leases, and show 'em to him. If he doesn't fall then, I'll give you my ship and walk to Alaska."

"When can we start?" asked Rhoades.

"In one minute by the clock—if you're ready," answered Zip Hendrick, running a hand through his hair and putting on his headgear.

Rhoades retired to the rear of the room. In a few moments sounded the click of a safe. Rhoades rummaged through some papers and documents, pocketed a selection, locked others back in the safe, and reported ready to go.

A crowd was gathered around the "Blue Bullet." They made way for Zip Hendrick and Rhoades. In another minute the "Blue Bullet" was blowing clouds of dry dust in the air. It taxied forward along the main street of San Torre, and lightly floated like a graceful bird off the ground and into the skies.

HIGH up in space went the "Blue Bullet." It circled San Torre several times. Climbing higher and higher, it circled San Torre several more times. Circling San Torre was not the surest way of reaching Denver within two hours; but it was Zip Hendrick's way.

At twelve thousand five hundred feet he turned off the motor and turned to his lone passenger, Rhoades, seated in the rear of the two-place plane.

"Rhoades," said Zip Hendrick, "let me introduce myself again. I'm not only Zip Hendrick, but I'm also the big man from Denver. Yessir, I'm the Big Man from Denver! Fact is, I haven't been in Denver for two years. That was just a stall I gave you. And so was my scrap with Hal Gaston a stall. I asked Dean Luce who your worst enemy was, so's I could get your confidence by licking a guy you'd like a heap to see licked. I'm doggone sorry it had to be so nice a fellow as Hal Gaston."

Rhoades' ruddy cheeks lost some of their ruddy qualities. His mouth was open in surprise.

"What's more," continued Zip Hendrick, "I'm not working for your crooked outfit. Your Chicago manager, Culver, wanted to put me on, but I'm honest. That's why I handed out that line of lies. I'm too damned honest to tell you the truth

before I'm good and ready to let you hear it—and now I'm ready.

"All I wanted was to get you up in this sky-cuttin' scythe o' mine. I'm buyin' back from you, Rhoades, every doggone lease and every piece of property you bamboozled out of the San Torre natives with your crooked lyin' and dirty business. I know damn well I can't do it legally—it'd take thousands o' dollars an' many years in the courts.

"But it's goin' to take only a few dollars and a couple o' minutes right up here in the air. Rhoades, I'm offerin' you cent for cent what you paid for all the properties and leases you acquired in an' around San Torre. Not a cent more!"

Rhoades smiled.

"You're not as clever as I thought you were, young man," he answered. "Now how the devil do you think you can make me do up in the sky what you couldn't make me do down on terra firma?"

"Like this," shouted Zip Hendrick, picking up the engine and slipping into two loops.

When the "Blue Bullet" came out of them, he turned to look at Rhoades. Rhoades' ruddy cheeks were now positively a pasty white. But his lips were firm, and he pretended to laugh.

Zip Hendrick also laughed; but his was no pretense.

"Well, are you selling?" he asked.

"Don't be foolish," was the reply.

ZIP gave her the gun, zoomed and went through half a dozen more slips. Leveling out, he found Rhoades slumped low, holding the cowling with both hands so firmly that he was unable to unfasten his grip for a whole minute.

"What do you think of selling now?" asked Zip.

"Nice day," answered Rhoades, "isn't it?"

Zip smiled.

"There's lots more loops left in this ship," he said, and proceeded to prove it. This time he performed twenty-two consecutive gyrations without a halt.

When he did at last draw to an even keel, he saw Rhoades with his tongue hanging out and teeth clamping down on it. But still the promoter was obdurate.

WELL," said Zip Hendrick, amiably. "This crate knows a lot more tricks. Loops aren't the only stunts up its sleeve. Did you ever go down an elevator a bit too fast? Remember how it felt? Well, compare it with this."

Zip shot up to thirteen thousand feet. Then he shot right down to three thousand. He could see the crowds gathered in the main street of San Torre wondering what the air circus was all about. They'd find out soon enough!

"How'd you like that?" he asked Rhoades pleasantly.

His answer was a shock. Zip Hendrick found himself gazing right into the ugly barrel of a Colt.

"I can't waste any more time riding around," said Rhoades, who was evidently sicker than the sickest dog at sea. "We're going down now. Go—on!"

Zip laughed aloud.

"No," he said. "I think I'd rather get shot than go down. I like the air up here. But before you shoot me, be sure to put on a 'chute pack if you want to make a safe landing. The tough part of it is, though, we haven't got a 'chute pack with us. I was careful not to bring one along. Maybe we'll find one for you in the sky, if we ride around a little more."

He went up to ten thousand feet.

"Now listen, Rhoades," he shouted. "You're a rich man. There's no

reason in the world why you shouldn't pay for this ride. Fact is, I'm going to charge you a hundred dollars a minute from now on." He looked at his watch.

"That's cheap enough at half the price. Of course, if you don't like the charges, all you have to do is to sell me those little deeds and leases. The idea is this: Until you tell me you're selling them to me, I'm going to take a hundred dollars off my offer for every minute you make me stunt you around. See?"

Rhoades' gun was pointing down. His bluff had failed. But still he refused to sell.

Zip Hendrick tried a new bag of tricks. He slipped into a barrel roll. Then he zoomed, turned over, and fell into a nose dive.

But Rhoades, pasty, refused to sell.

"That was five minutes—five hundred dollars' worth," declared Zip. "We'll run up the charges some more."

AND this time he zoomed and fell into a tail-slip. When he pulled out of it, he found Rhoades in the act of ejecting his last meal through a mouth framed by a pair of pasty white cheeks blotched with red.

"God!" exclaimed Zip Hendrick. "That's a nasty thing to do—mess up my clean ship! It's going to cost you an extra hundred; I'll have to get somebody to clean it up. And to help you make up your mind soon, I'm going to give you the real gem of all air thrills. It's a great cure for sea-sickness. It's an outside loop. You don't know yet what it is; but you'll find out soon."

Zip rose to eight thousand feet. Then, instead of looping over backward, he set the "Blue Bullet's" nose flying due west. He let down its speed, and gracefully arched the ship's nose forward and down, at a sixty degree angle.

A few moments later, it was a forty-five degree angle, and then thirty degrees. The plane was now gethering momentum like a comet. Twenty degrees of angle toward earth, seemingly heading direct toward a nose-on crash, the plane was dizzying toward earth like a falling star.

ZIP narrowed the arc, gradually ruddering under and under till the "Blue Bullet" was riding on its back; and soon, after a straining of the wings, the ship's belly was facing the sky. Up nosed the "Blue Bullet," up and over, and a few seconds later the perilous outside loop had been successfully completed.

Rhoades was way down low in his seat, one hand gripping the cowling, the other hand gripping his throat. His tongue was puffed high and out, cheeks bloated, and eyes glaring red. He could not speak for a long time.

"Swell, wasn't it?" asked Zip Hendrick innocently. "That was an outside loop. There aren't a lot of people who've lived through 'em. But if you enjoy it, my li'l 'Blue Bullet' has a couple more outside loop trials left in its system. Want some more —or would you rather sell?"

Rhoades tried to speak, but his tongue would not recede to its normal position. At last he succeeded in making his vocal apparatus function.

"I'll sell," he said, and slumped forward, rocking from side to side in the deathliest nausea that ever overtook an oil promoter.

Zip glanced at his watch.

"Eleven minutes," he said. "That's eleven hundred dollars. Add a hundred for messing up the crate, that makes it twelve hundred all told. I've got a fountain pen with me, and some paper. I'll make out

a bill of sale. You sign it and give it back to me with the leases and deeds, and the transaction will be complete. How many have you got —and what's the price of each, the price you paid?"

For answer, Rhoades merely handed over the documents. The figures were in plain evidence. Zip Hendrick merely totaled them, and subtracted twelve hundred dollars. Then he penned out a bill of sale and an I. O. U. to the amount of $56,000. He included a payment of $1.00 on delivery of the various leases and deeds—leaving a balance of $55,999.

He handed over the bill of sale, which Rhoades signed and handed back; and as Zip Hendrick pocketed the documents, he handed to Rhoades his I. O. U. and a crisp dollar bill.

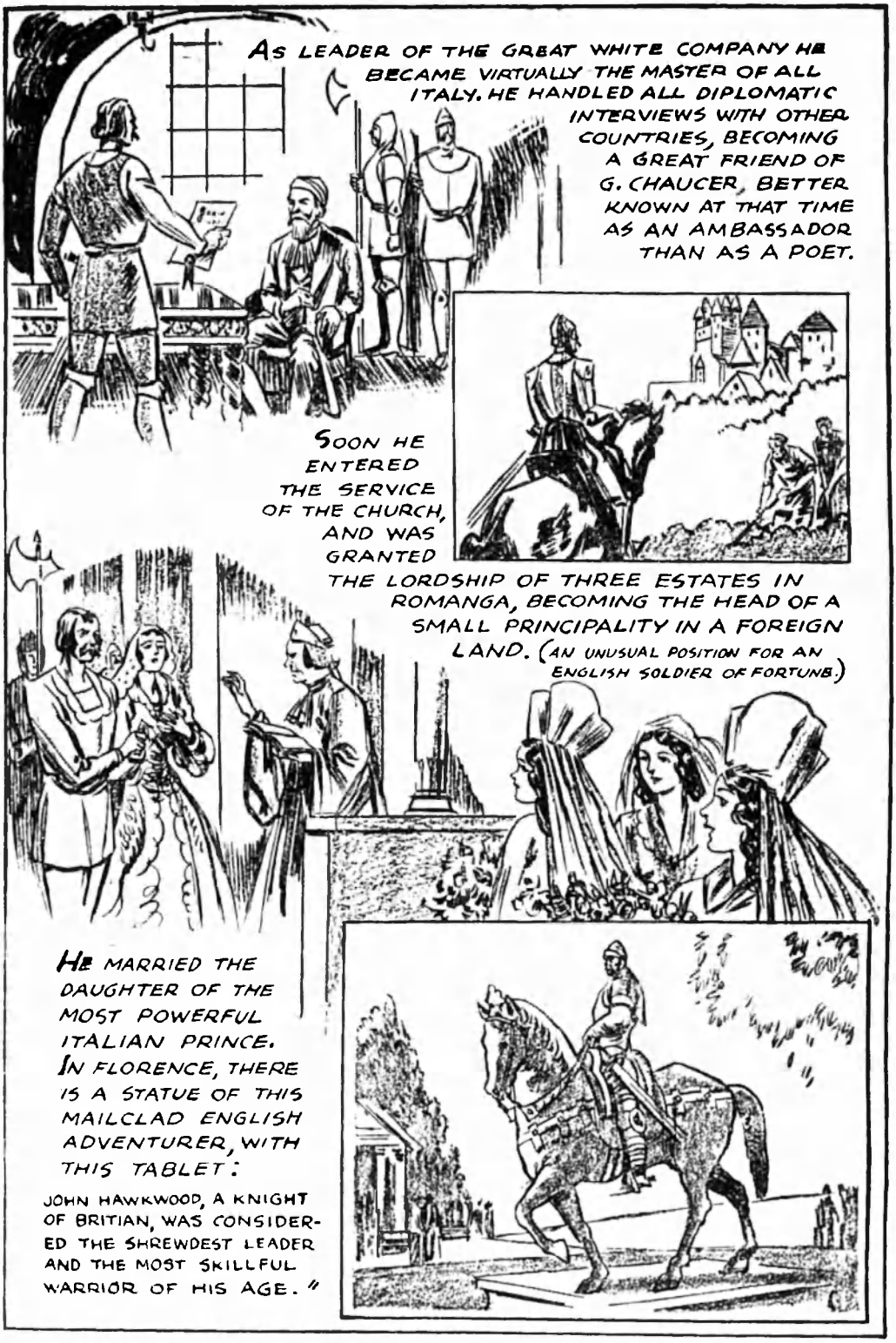
"You may like to know what I'm going to do with these papers, Rhoades," offered the versatile pilot-financier, Zip Hendrick. "I'll tell you: I'm going to sell back to those gypped San Torre people everything they sold to you, and at the same price you paid them.

"Then I'll take off the twelve hundred dollars you owe me for this ride, and give you what's left. That will be the amount on that I. O. U. The twelve hundred will come in handy. All I've got in my pocket right now, after giving you that dollar, is eight dollars and thirty-seven cents. Hal Gaston will get an even two hundred bucks for taking it on the chin.

"That'll square accounts with Hal, and leave me a clear profit of one thousand dollars.

"It's the crooked deal you pulled on Dean Luce and his poor old mother, that got me way out here. I swore I'd get back their property for them. While I was at it, I thought I'd do the same for all the rest of the San Torre folks. Well, I did it, and I'm a thousand berries to the good, and the business was transacted at an altitude of exactly ninety-two hundred feet. That's what I call high finance!"

This is the Original Illustrated Adventure



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Begin this Exciting New Serial Novel of

Frozen Face

A Three-Part Serial

By ANTHONY M. RUD

Author of "The Shadow on the Reef," etc.

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

Poem by a Pack-Rat

THE two young fellows had been broke for days—weeks, more likely. They were drunk, as a result of running two silver dollars into twenty, at faro.

They had been cowboys, and good ones, too, before this gold-and-silver craze had struck Nevada. Then they became luckless prospectors—then swampers, odd-job men. Still and all those excuses did not help them much, now they were dead.

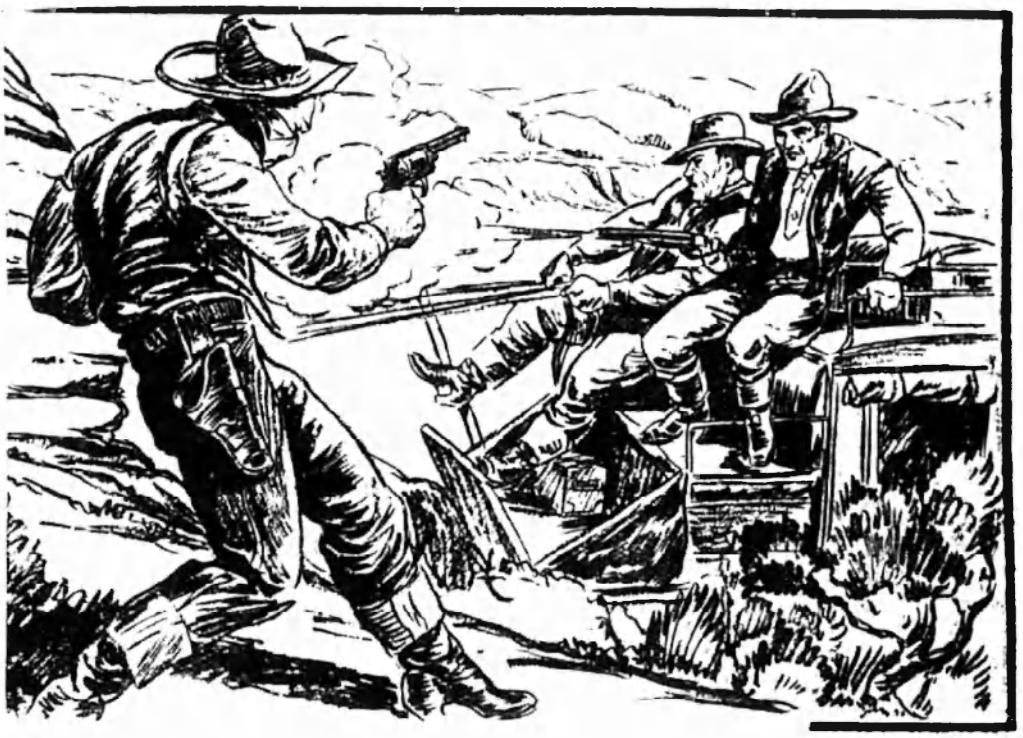
Their killing was absolutely legal and justified. It came about this way:

Rotund and jolly Cussemout Crandall drove an old Concord swaybelly from railhead at Caton, to Hartnett, Bardwell, Torres, and then around the circle to Lamar and in to Caton again. There were several mines, with stamp mills, cyaniding plants and all, on his route. That meant express bullion shipments, and payrolls coming in.

Cussemout never carried a gun, and everybody knew it. The express company hired a guard named Joe Bardeen—called Buck-Tooth Joe, but only behind his back. He had been held up three times, but never robbed; and he was mighty proud of that record.

Joe was young, pretty well educated, and would have been handsome except for his teeth, and his peculiar yellow eyes. He never talked much, and never boasted at all. But men knew he was ambidextrous with revolvers, swift and uncannily accurate.

But, best of all, Joe liked the sawed-off Greener filled with double loads of slugs. He sat up on the



box with Cussemout, dandling little Death and Destruction across his knees in a way that made Cussemout shiver.

That just made Joe grin. He had a secret lust for killing; and like all men who are murderers at heart, he particularly enjoyed blasting the liver-and-lights out of a victim.

This day of the fourth hold-up, there was a small iron box under Cussemout's fat legs. This held about eighty pounds of scrap iron, but neither Cussemout nor Joe was aware of the fact. They thought it the monthly pay-roll for the Miser's Nightmare, at Hartnett.

The real pay-roll was in a steamer trunk, strapped on top of the sway-belly; the trunk ostensibly held samples belonging to a drummer who was the only passenger.

The two would-be robbers lurched up together out of the gray-purple sage, just as the stage horses were walking up the hill toward the Gray Mesa trail into Hartnett. That was bad, very bad. They should have been separate, and armed with rifles. As it was, they flourished six-guns.

"Grab sky!" yelled one of them hoarsely, throwing one shot whistling a yard above the head of the driver.

Bong! Bong!

Two crashes of thunder came from just above the knees of Joe Bardeen. Acrid smoke veiled everything for a merciful second or two, during which time Joe leapt over the wheel, and crouched with six-shooters ready.

There was no need for more shooting. The two ex-punchers lay in bloody shreds there in the dust of the road.

"Oofus! Hoofus!" groaned Cussemout shakily, wiping his red face

with a redder bandanna. "A-are there any more?"

"Reckon not," said Joe Bardeen tersely. He was grinning without mirth, as a wolf grins.

The passenger had descended. He was a spare, lean sort. He watched as Joe spread a tarpaulin on the stage floor, and then helped drag the bodies and lay them inside.

"Well, a couple hundred more for you, huh, Joe?" he commented, and spat dryly. He referred to a practice of the express company, which paid guards one hundred dollars bonus for each bandit killed or captured in such a fracas.

"Yep, I can use it," agreed Joe with a grisly chuckle. "Special with what I got in mind, right now!"

In five minutes everything was over, and the swaybelly once more rattling on its way to Hartnett.

THIS evening, when Joe Bardeen rode back into Hartnett, licking his lips over thoughts of the extra two hundred—which he thought he'd prob'ly spend on a ring for Belle Bennett—was late summer in 1892.

Back East a World's Fair was just about ready to open, in Chicago. Nevada had the Comstock, and also this dry-range sagebrush country centering around Hartnett, where there were important gold, silver, copper and cinnabar mines. All of Goldfield, Tonopah, Rhyolite, Bullfrog and Rawhide lay in the unimagined future.

Nevada still had lots of Shoshone Indians—lazy louts that they were. There were a few horse outfits, and a few dry-range cow spreads scattered here and there. But in the main Nevada was still called the Washoe Desert, and regarded as a good place to avoid.

This date, and the fact that Joe Bardeen was twenty-four, are good things to remember; because after this tragic afternoon and evening there comes a big jump in the story.

Part of that space we can fill in with known facts; but most of it that has to do with the older, twisted man that right now was the nonchalant young killer, Joe Bardeen, has to remain surmise. Only Joe himself could have told that part straight.

Joe kept his clothes in a room at the Squeejaw, in Hartnett. Each time he hit town he bathed, shaved, and climbed into this flossy get-up —which made him look half like a Mexican vaquero and half like a Virginia City gambler. Then he went to call on Belle Bennett, whose dad and mother ran the Green Front Store, selling everything from jellybeans to anvils.

Hartnett was glum about the killing of those two boys. They hadn't been especially wild — pretty good fellas, in fact. Joe had done just what he was paid to do, however, and nobody blamed him out loud. They kept out of his way, just the same.

Nobody chummed with him at any time; and now the way men at the Squeejaw bar remembered business somewhere else, the minute he came in, you'd have thought he was a wolf-poisoner, or maybe a U. S. marshal with warrants in his pocket.

Joe didn't care. He drank by himself, and swaggered a little. Then when it came seven o'clock, just growing dusk, he went out and walked down to the little house where Belle Bennett lived.

BELLE had always treated him courteously enough; and though Joe realized that every two-legged bachelor in fifty miles wanted to marry her, he never had worried.

He was far too great an egotist to see that Belle was a whole lot more

than just courteous when big, quiet Kerry Lassiter came around.

Kerry was a prospector who had been to school out on the Coast. He had found and developed the Crosspatch Silver Mine near Bardwell. After he sold it he started developing a gold prospect he had, right near Hartnett. Real prospectors rarely are able to sit down and simply grow rich as mine-owners.

OUT at the side of the little house, where there were some discouraged lilac bushes and a couple of big cottonwood trees, Belle had strung a hammock. She was sitting in it this evening—with Kerry. For reasons important to the two of them, they did not hear Joe's footsteps in the soft dust of the yard. And besides, he came up more or less behind them.

Joe's lemon-colored eyes nearly popped. He gasped soundlessly, and his fingers, spread like claws, went down for his revolver. The gun, of course, was not there. No man wore one when he went sparking a girl.

There was no getting around the fact that he had lost Belle Bennett. She and that big hulk of a prospector were talking about getting married!

Well, they went on talking about it, never guessing for a second that the shadow of death had fallen across their lovers' happiness, there under the gray-dusted cottonwoods.

Face working, lip drawn back from his buck teeth, snarling to himself like a mad thing, Joe Bardeen went away from there. Fiery hate churned inside him, bringing an acid slaver like foam to the corners of his mouth.

He would kill, kill, kill!

The perspiration ran from his forehead down the creases at the side of his long, hooked nose—though the evening was cool.

He let himself in through a window of a private card room, and stole upstairs in the Squeejaw for his belts and guns. Then, composing his face as best he could, he went down to the bar and bought himself a pint of Bourbon whiskey.

Nobody spoke to him. He walked out into the night.

An idea had come to him. Let's not believe for a minute that Joe Bardeen was a yellow-belly. He was a killer who up to that time had taken his chances with outlaws in the most precarious profession of the time.

But there was teeth-gritting desire for gore in him now. Just killing Kerry Lassiter in a stand-up fight with guns would never assuage this! Old-fashioned drawing and quartering would have suited fairly well. The Chinese death of a thousand slices would have been still better, but he never had heard of it.

He did know, however, that Kerry Lassiter kept a box of dynamite out at his gold claim, two miles from Hartnett. And that the claim would be deserted now!

TWO hours later, out at the prospect hole, Joe Bardeen had everything ready. A black thread fixed just so a man would kick it as he came into the drift, let drop a cleverly set piece of drill steel. This fell into a notch where Joe would lay three fulminate of mercury caps. The dynamite was there, half a box of it. It was sixty percent, touchy stuff.

Joe had one worry, though. A big gray pack rat, tame as a pet squirrel, came nosing in while he worked. He shooed it away. Before he left he'd shoot the rodent, just to make sure it didn't upset calculations.

Now everything was set. He nodded grimly, and placed the three

caps where they were meant to go. He stood up. . . .

The gray pack rat fairly leaped away—toward the entrance. The black thread caught its neck, stretched, snapped. The piece of drill steel fell—

Chaos!

The last acrid smoke from that awesome explosion had drifted away before something stirred and groaned, something half-hidden in the debris. An hour dragged by. Then something that whimpered, moved again, crawling to the open moonlight.

After a time that hideous, gory thing which had been a man raised itself to a kneeling position—finally staggered erect. There had been hair on that man's head. There had been a long, hooked nose. There had been protuberant teeth.

Now there was nothing but a bloody smear.

Lurching, stumbling, holding his side where an unknown number of ribs were crushed in, the Thing started back through the sage and greasewood, toward Hartnett.

Unharmed, the gray pack rat watched it go, beady little eyes twinkling with wickedness.

CHAPTER II

The Amargosa Desert—1906

THIS man's name once had been Joe Bardeen. He had changed it several times since that night when Cussemout Crandall had rushed him to the clever surgeon at Bardwell—explaining that "the pore devil's sawed-off shotgun must of blowed up in his face!"

That surgeon had built him up a short, straight nose out of the fragments. The rest of the face was scar tissue, horrible to behold. Only the creepy-looking, lemon-yellow eyes could by any stretch of the imagination be connected with those of the Joe Bardeen who had been express guard on the stage. And now these were the eyes of a wild beast.

Miles back on the trail of this fugitive lay a single dead burro. Still further back, on the shimmering waste of the Amargosa, he had abandoned the pack which contained his food, blankets, cooking utensils and other accoutrement.

Now here in the grotesquely gnarled boulders of the Belted Range, where prickly pear, catclaw and squaw-weed made up the total of vegetation, he had found plenty water—but he was starving to death!

IN face of death men bargain queerly; and this man had done so. This hidden rock tenaja had been marked on the map he had done murder to steal. The consequences of that murder had made him leave the path he intended to take, circling wide over the dead lava beds, before he could throw off the posse that rode his trail, and aim again at the spot where he thought raw gold in chunks awaited him.

By the time he reached the rock tank, however, he had nothing left save one gun—and the folded map with the blood smear on its back. All else had been left to the buzzards of the Amargosa.

At first he had not cared about food. His body, rendered out like a crackling by the sun, had craved just water. Now it was six days since he had tasted food—six days of squatting hopelessly here on the hot lid of hell. There *was* no hope! How could there be?

He was light-headed from the intense heat and lack of nourishment. He drank—spat and cursed. The sound of his voice startled a gray,

ground-hugging shape. A chuckwalla!

The lizard ran. With almost all his tremendous speed and accuracy, the man grabbed at his short-gun, thumbed and fired, seemingly all in one motion.

Its head spattered by the heavy slug, the chuckwalla leapt and fell kicking. Snarling, the man was upon it, tearing, rending, devouring the thin slivers of white meat, crushing the bones. Raw—but what did he care? It was a mouthful or two of food!

BUT another day came with its brassy sun; and there were no more chuckwallas, even when he bestirred himself to hunt. Very shortly, staggering from weakness, laughing crazily at queer pictures he saw—even as he knew in his twisted brain they were delusions preceding death—he sank to the baked ground. All over. Well, what of it?

There was only one deep ache of regret, deadened fury. He never had caught up with the man he hated. He had done aplenty to Kerry Lassiter indirectly, though. Even now his scarred lips twisted in a leer.

Out through the heat haze that played in the mouth of the valley, his dull gaze wandered. Of a sudden he blinked, the lids almost sticking on his eyeballs. He frowned, trying to concentrate his slipping faculties. A dust cloud. Dots. Moving. My God, it was mules and men! Coming his way! Food! He was saved!

Leaping to his feet, almost falling again, he screeched feebly and tried to wave his arms. But a sudden thought made him draw back, even in extremity. Could this be a posse, following his zig-zag steps through the alkali and sand?

But hardly that. His crime had been committed eighty, a hundred miles away, in another county. And in a circle that encompassed fifty miles he had walked on lava rock, leaving no trail that even a bloodhound could have followed, after the sun had been on it one hour.

He did not show himself again, though. The yellow eyes had regained something more like composure. He would hide, plan things. Sooner or later if everything broke right he would kill these men for what they had with them—food, pack beasts, and weapons.

It was near evening now. Dark would arrive in this valley in less than an hour. He drank deeply of water, and then walked back further in the gulch to hide—and watch his intended victims.

They approached with exasperating slowness, their elongated shadows stretching far to eastward. Two big men. Four pack burros. One riding mule, on which was slumped the figure of what looked like a little boy! Hell of a place to take a family party, reflected the fugitive.

The two men slouched along in a loose-hipped stride, not too fast. They were desert men, all right, and right now they were tired and thirsty. Ah well, come along strangers! Drink and rest—and sleep forever! A man who has only failed once in all his career of murdering awaits you!

LEAVING the rest of them now, the leaner of the two men strode forward, a big empty canteen in his hand. He made for the narrow fissure which led to the hidden tenaja, and darted a sharp glance at the ground where the starving man's footprints were plain.

"We ain't the only ones that know about this water!" came back the booming voice of the giant with the canteen, as he reached in and let the

receptacle gurgle full. "It ain't been two days since somebody—"

"Oh, Dad, hustle up!" urged the clear soprano of a boy's voice. "I'm so dried up, I'm about to blow away!"

The other man, standing with one hand affectionately on the lad's knee, grinned through the alkali-caked stubble on his cheeks.

"'Sall right, Jimmy!" he said, patting the lad's knee. "Here it comes! Drink all you can hold! Gosh, but don't that look good, Kerry!"

HE-E-E-L-L-P! Oh, Gawd—!" Drawn-out and plaintive, the cry came plainly enough to all three. The small boy, who had dismounted, leapt about, staring up the gulch.

"Oh, Dad!" he whispered. "Didja hear that? *Didja?*"

Kerry Lassiter accepted the canteen from his brother, but did not raise it to his lips. Instead, he suddenly left the group, striding between boulders on up the gulch.

"Stay back, son!" he bade gruffly over his shoulder.

The eight-year-old obeyed, remaining with his jolly, bronze-featured uncle—Ding Lassiter, ex-buck private, lately the enthusiastic prospector-partner of his elder, more sober-sided brother, Kerry.

"Feelin' dizzy at all?" asked Ding.

The lad paid no attention. He was staring, blue eyes wide, up the gulch, wondering who had called for help. He was sensitive about the attacks of sun-sickness, too. Undersized, wiry, Jimmy Lassiter wanted more than anything to grow big like his men-folks, and make a name for himself in this great, raw land. The cards had been stacked against him from the first, however.

We had better take a moment, while Kerry Lassiter is gone on his errand of mercy, to look at Jimmy more closely, and to see how it was that he, jolly Ding Lassiter and his father happened to be out here on the second-worst desert in North America. For all his small size, Jimmy Lassiter cuts a big figure in this story.

Kerry, as it happened, had not returned to his gold prospect for more than a month after the night it blew up so mysteriously. He married, and went for a honeymoon with the sweet girl who had been Belle Bennett.

He heard about Joe Bardeen's accident indirectly; but when time came that he returned, and found his dynamite had exploded, there was nothing to suggest Joe, of course.

The explosion saved Kerry a lot of time. It cleaned out every speck of ore, leaving nothing but bare borrasco. Kerry took one look and closed up shop.

He had enough money for fair comfort, anyway. He settled down in the house with Belle, her mother and father. He took short prospecting trips, after a while, but was not very serious about them.

Then came the time of horror. He returned from a three-week trip into the Red Chalk Range to find the elder Bennetts dead and buried—and his wife gone!

A POSSE from town had searched for more than a week. All other surrounding towns had been notified, but nothing had come of it. The two store-keeping Bennetts had been stabbed in sleep. And Belle, Kerry's wife, had been carried away! The boy, Jimmy, had not been hurt.

He found her body, did Kerry, but that was nothing but added horror. He brought it back forty miles, and buried it. He was a strong man, so did not go to pieces all in a minute. It might have been better if he had.

That was the tragedy, one to which Kerry Lassiter had not a single clue.

He never spoke of it. He drank, gambled—and did not try to win. For a time, half a year more, perhaps, his brain was kept numb. And his money vanished.

Then when he knew he was broke, down to bedrock, he really began to think of the three-year-old toddler, Belle's son and his. He took a job in the Miser's Nightmare, swore off drinking and cards, and started to earn a living for the two of them.

Three years of this, and then the old restlessness grew too strong to bear. Joyous Ding Lassiter, with his banjo-mandolin, had come back from the Philippine insurrection and the rest of a "hitch" in the Islands, and was at loose ends. Kerry thought a cheerful companion might help him, and be good for the boy. So he wired Ding to come.

GREETINGS were genuine between these two. Ding sympathized. He took Jimmy right to his heart. In a day or two they both were grinning. Sure, Ding would be glad to learn prospecting—great stuff! He had about two hundred dollars, and his banjo-mandolin.

Kerry made up the rest. With fair equipment they started out as prospectors, Ding's resonant baritone starting them on the desert trail:

"Good-bye my Bluebell,
Farewell to you-u-u,
One last fond look into
Your eyes of blu-u-ue!
'Mid camp-fires burning,
'Mid shot and shell,
I will be dreaming of
My own Bluebell!"

The months passed. Ding, in a way, was unfortunate; for on that very first trip out they dry-washed a pocket, gleaning nearly two thousand dollars worth of gold. From that moment onward, Ding was an incurable prospector, luck or no luck.

Since that first strike they had found little—one deposit of a non-metal, antimony, which they were glad to get rid of at a small price. Nothing else that mattered. But with the boy on their hands, both men were dogged.

"It's up to us. We'll get him his stake!" Ding promised with unfailing cheerfulness. "He's healthy, all right, 'cept when he gets a snootful of sun. But he ain't going to be hefty-built, like us."

"No, Jimmy's got to learn things," agreed the usually silent Kerry. "He don't like the idea, but our kid's got to have a real chance—education. We'll send him East, some day. He'll fit in there better'n out here in the desert."

So in a way the West passed judgment upon little Jimmy Lassiter—and found him wanting. Unjust? Well—

UP the gulch Kerry halted. "Hyah, where are you?" he called.

A faint groan was the only answer; but he caught the direction. In ten strides he reached the shady patch back of a boulder upthrust where the gaunt, lemon-eyed derelict of the desert lay, apparently at the last gasp of exhaustion.

There was little need to dissemble, though the man who now would claim the cognomen of Rufe Anderson, was not quite as far gone as he pretended. His first glance at Kerry Lassiter, made through slitted lids, had caused him to shudder as if in pain.

"Nemmind, you're all right now, pardner," said the big man in a gentle voice.

He knelt down, putting the canteen to lips in the most horribly grotesque countenance he ever had seen. Then, when the fellow had

drunk a few sips, Kerry lifted the wasted frame in his strong arms and bore him back to the entrance of the rock tenaja.

There they turned loose mule and burros, rousting through packs for a bottle of whisky, making a rough camp, and tending to the wants of the exhausted man, all at once.

"He'll pick up—but Gawd, did you ever see such a phiz!" whispered Ding later, when they had a tiny fire, and it seemed that the rescued man had dropped off to slumber. "Looks jest like a puddle of mud that's been half-frozen!"

WITH some shaved jerky they made him weak broth, giving him a few swallows of water every hour or so through that night. When morning came he was able to prop himself in a sitting position, and eat a small portion of regular food.

Then he told him he was Rufe Anderson. He gave a circumstantial account of the madness, flight and death of a mythical partner the loss of his outfit, his last bit of luck in coming upon this rock tenaja. It was a not unusual tale. Only the finding of the hidden water, and the rescue, were out of the ordinary. Most times men just died horribly.

Later that day, after he had put himself outside a huge forenoon dinner, Rufe brought forth the map he had. He seemed honestly grateful, though there was a light, and queer, unblinking stare in those lemon eyes which Kerry did not like.

When he offered to share with all of them the rich deposit of conglomerate he had come to find, there was nothing to do but accept, however. This might be a heaven-sent chance to win a real stake for little Jimmy.

So it proved in due course. The strike, which is known today as the Yellow Eye Lode, proved to be a much greater thing than simply a fissure filled with conglomerate, to be divided up between three men. Development would require years.

And all the while the partners worked in the new frenzy of discovered fortune, one of them clicked his false teeth and grinned like a wolf. He had his revenge ready to hand now, but he could take his time.

There was no clue, no suspicion of his identity—no thought that he was the man of all men whom Kerry Lassiter hoped some day to meet. The fiend who had committed a double murder back in Hartnett, Nevada. Who had stolen a girl-mother who had killed herself rather than submit to this lemon-eyed horror with the frozen face.

CHAPTER III

Austin, Illinois—1920

WEST Madison Street, which extends from Chicago's Loop district out through Austin, Oak Park, Maywood, and on into the corn fields, has done some queer things to the automobile business.

Out here in a certain shed, nearly hidden by the shoulder-high white clover, a man named Selden labored on a queer contraption he called an autocar.

In a machine shop in the forty-hundreds, a little later, a man whom others called a crank, built a shiny brown car that actually ran, and made very little noise about it. On the front and rear of this car, as he ran it around the bumpy streets of Austin, or on the asphalt paving of Washington Boulevard, were lettered signs:

THE SILENT KNIGHT

Still later an earnest, blue-eyed young fellow who had been a stu-

dent at Armour Institute until the war, came out in overalls to inhabit a similar shed—perhaps one of the original two, for all that is now known. His name was James Lassiter; and he was so anxious to get back to his mechanical experiments that he wore uniform under his overalls for the first three or four weeks.

In that shed, as time passed, perhaps the queerest-looking automobile ever seen off a racetrack, took shape. It was stream-lined, shaped in front like a sanitary drinking cup with the point of the cone forward. The engine was in back. Passengers' feet rested exactly nine inches above the street, and the seats were very low.

According to James Lassiter, the car, powered at 33 H.P., S. A. E. rating, could travel 110 miles an hour, and would go 20 miles to a gallon of gasoline. There were no fumes from the engine. Riding comfort was superb, all because the passenger load was carried between axles instead of on top of them.

Oh, Jimmy Lassiter was dead in earnest! He had hold of a great revolutionary idea in motor construction, and he darned well knew it!

HIS greatest trouble had come in trying to convince anyone else of the fact. Or at least that was one of his troubles. Of late he had found other ones—mysterious ones!

He was not out there on Madison Street at this hour of early evening. Two other men were, and one of them was his friend. We will come south to Madison Street, from the Crawford Avenue station of the L, with that friend—whose Army name had been Corns Kemble. The nickname was all right. They had never called him Cornwallis, even back on the dry range of Nevada.

Corns, still in the captain's uniform of which he was secretly rather proud, was back from his extra year of service with the A. E. F. on the Rhine. He wanted to see the little fightin' fool, Jimmy Lassiter, for more than one reason.

ONE was enough, though. It was because of Jimmy that Corns was back at all, since the dawn counter-attack of a certain grim day in the St. Mihiel salient. As closely as a captain and a corporal can become friends in a modern army, they had been friends after that.

The ex-captain found the address he sought. It was a dark shed, which had been a livery stable in days long past. It was unpainted now, dilapidated. Corns stared at it, disappointed. He walked up and peered through a dirty pane.

The inside was dark. But wait! Just as he was about to turn away, a flashlight flickered on, and stayed on. It was put down on the floor, thirty feet or so back from the window. Between it and Corns loomed a funny-looking gadget on wheels—yes, a racing car, looked like. Its rear was toward Corns, and he saw the queer knife-edge of the rear streamlining.

That moment a man—taller than his bantam friend—came to the back assembly. He crawled down on his knees, setting a bucket to one side, so it slopped up a little of its liquid contents. The man did something, and a thin stream of gasoline flowed to the floor.

This was nothing to cause Corns worry. He was about to rap on the pane when he saw something further. The strange man hastily lifted the full bucket, slopped a little of the contents so it joined the spreading puddle on the floor, and then sidled around and away from Corns, laying a trail—or a fuse!—of that liquid! Probably gasoline!

Corns was alert, sternly intelligent when it came to handling anything like sabotage or treachery. A sharp sound left his lips. He drew back a step, raised one foot, and kicked in a pane of glass.

"Hey there, you!" he yelled. "What the hell d'yuh think—?"

He was unfortunately just too late. The crouching figure started, but did not flee instantly.

Instead, it swashed the rest of that bucket rearward, then darted back.

A match flickered, a sheet of flame rose on the floor, disclosing the intruder running wildly toward a back door.

The fire ran rapidly along the liquid fuse. It reached the puddle under the car's gas tank—

Whamm!

In the resulting explosion and sheet of flame, Corns dodged back from the window, turned, and ran as tight as he could go around the corner of the shed, and out toward the back.

He was too late. Out there was an alley. Just as he reached it, shouting, a small roadster ground into gear, leaping away westward into the blackness.

The funny-looking car and the tinder-box of a shed which contained it were burning fiercely. Shaking his head dubiously, Corns walked further away, and out to the Madison Street sidewalk again.

HE knew there was no saving anything now.

Could it be possible, he wondered, if his friend had wanted that car destroyed—for the insurance he would get, perhaps.

But he shook his head and snorted in disgust at his own thought. Jimmy Lassiter might be almost anything in the world—*except* a small-time crook!

CHAPTER IV

The Cards

THEY'VE been after me ever since I got back. Well, Corns, they've got me! I'm broke. The car is gone—d'you know building that car cost me six thousand dollars? I still have my eleven basic patents on the rear transmission and drive, of course, but I can't get a hearing with them. Car manufacturers aren't ready to scrap their machinery for a new design, even though it's much better—and they know it!"

"Oh, well," drawled the officer, sympathy outweighing the words he spoke, "hosses are better, back where we live. Buck up, old-timer. Business of any kind is apt to be a dirty game. C'mon back with me an' nurture cows!"

It was afternoon of the day following the fire. Corns and the despondent Jimmy were seated in the cheap bedroom of the latter's rooming house.

"You don't understand!" said the smaller man bitterly. "It's more than just business failure. There's something *wrong*. Corns! It ain't only me—"

He paused, biting his lip. His whole life thus far had been a series of peculiar frustrations. First the West had counted him too much of a weakling to succeed. Now the Mid-West marked him off as a failure.

He supposed that there might be a chance to do worse if he went to New York.

"Take a look at this, Corns!" he said with sudden decision.

He went to a bureau, jerked out a drawer. He brought forth a slim packet of correspondence cards, gilt-edged.

On the top one, neatly lettered in

pale yellow ink, was a series of words:

POVERTY
DISILLUSIONMENT
FAILURE
DEATH

IN pencil, on the back of the card, was a notation:

Sent from Philadelphia, March 2.

"I wrote that. These have come from all around," said Jimmy. "The next one is from San Francisco. It is just the same."

Corns was sitting stiffly erect now, all the easy-going comradeship and liking vanished in an absorbed interest. He handled the next card carefully by the edges. It was identical, as were all the others, except that the first word, POVERTY, was ringed about in blue-black ink.

"Yes, I was poor enough!" said Jimmy with a ghost of a laugh. "That was when trouble started back with Dad and Uncle Ding. I didn't get any money for a long time. And then—"

"Time!" snapped Corns. "I want the whole story in a minute." He went on with the cards. There were two more like the last. Then came one on which the word DISILLUSIONMENT also was ringed!

Two more of the series were the same.

"That was when a girl to whom I was engaged, sent back my ring and presents," said Jimmy in a dull voice. "It hit me pretty hard, then. I never did learn why she did it—though to tell the truth, I'm not broken-hearted about that now. Other things have come into the picture—"

A knock sounded at the door of the bedroom.

"Mail, Mr. Lassiter," said the voice of the landlady. She handed over one oblong envelope.

"Another," said Jimmy, white-lipped. "After that fire, I can guess —what *this* will show!" He ripped the container.

"I was right," he said, passing the card to Corns. On it the word FAILURE was ringed!

"Only one more step!" said Jimmy. "Damn it, I—"

"Where mailed?" snapped the ex-captain.

"New Orleans," said Jimmy.

"Holy cow, ain't I glad I came!" Corns said with emphasis. "Now start way back, you fella! Tell me all you know. I can see we're in for a grand session with this devil who uses yellow ink! This isn't business at all, I'm willing to bet. But go on! Give me a regular autobiog with trimmings. Like the detectives say, we've got to search back into your dark past, Mister!"

Jimmy nodded. A gleam of hope had come into his blue eyes.

JIMMY LASSITER was far from a coward. He had gone as far as the finals in the bantamweight division of the A. E. F.. championship, losing then only because he was knocked cold by a more experienced fighter.

"I don't know much about what happened before Dad and Uncle Ding and Frozen Face made their big strike," he began.

Then he had to explain about Rufe Anderson, who had always been Frozen-Face to the others, his partners. But the story went swiftly from that point.

Gold conglomerate—a fortune in that alone. Then the indications of a big vein which needed development. The three men had agreed to go ahead, keeping the partnership undissolved, though there was not much liking for Frozen Face.

That was where Jimmy left them, being sent to a Wisconsin military academy, later to Armour Institute

in Chicago because of his mechanical bent. Then the War. Now this car on which he spent every cent he could get.

"Your father made you an allowance?" asked Corns.

"Lord, yes—except when I was in the service," nodded Jimmy. "I have a notion both Dad and Uncle Ding are worth millions. But there's something funny—if not terrible—going on with them, too. I'd be out there, looking into it, except I've been fighting this car and the matter of patents, trying to get a hearing—and running up against a blank wall. Now I've got less than two hundred in the world."

"Nemmind money right now," said Corns in his sharp way. "I've plenty. What makes you think your father and uncle are in trouble?"

"Well," said Jimmy, searching again in the bureau. "I used to get quarterly checks—two thousand at a time. Last quarter none came. The time before that the check was two weeks late. Uncle Ding wrote. He sent it, instead of Dad. He was worried stiff, and wanted me to come out. I couldn't do it at the time. Lord, how I wish I had! But here's his letter."

Corns Kemble took the folded sheet. This was what he read:

DEAR KIDDO,

You better hop a rattler and get out here just as fast as you can. Funny doins. I'm not easy scairt, but I'm scairt right now. I'm sending your check.

First off Frozen Face disappeared. We got a letter saying he had to go up to Montreal on account his mother was dying. That was all right, a-course—only there wasn't anybody at Ajo seen him leave. He didn't take a hoss, either, or ride the ore trucks. I ain't seen him since.

Then your Dad went. I got a wire from Carson City saying he had some private business. I took it he meant something in regard to that devil he was always looking for. But he ain't come back, and there ain't any trace of him at Carson. A little place, too, where a fella like Kerry's show up like a trout in a goldfish bowl.

I'm worried stiff. Maybe I'm next. You better come, Jimmy lad. Bring your guns!

DINO.

The face of Corns Kemble was set like granite, and bulges of muscle stood out along his lean jew. This thing was *real!* Here was a chance to pay off the man he loved, the rootin'-tootin' little tyke who once had saved his life!

"What was this—about a man your dad was looking for?" he demanded.

"It was something that had to do—with my mother, I think," he said with a pause between the words. "They never would tell me. But I know both Dad and Ding worshiped her!" he added hastily.

"I can believe that," nodded Corns. "But this—"

A crash of window glass interrupted him. Something small, heavy, egg-shaped and corrugated, flew in, struck the drawn curtain, and fell straight into the hands of Jimmy.

He clutched it, yelled, and with a convulsive movement flung it straight back through the window!

"A bomb!" he cried.

There was no need to say more. From outside came a thunderous explosion, and a smashing of glass as the downstairs windows of the rooming house were blown to fragments!

"Reckon someone was thinking of that last word!" said Corns grimly. "C'mon. Got a gun? Got two guns?"

"Yeah, here. Le's get him!"

Do Corns and Jimmy Capture Their Unseen Enemies? What is the Meaning of the Strange Messages Received by Jimmy? Why Was His Car Destroyed? For the Answer to These and Other Thrilling Questions Continue "Frozen Face" in Next Month's THRILLING ADVENTURES

The Scourge of Islam

The Stirring Adventures of Hugh de Galliard, a Lone Crusader in a Hostile Land, for Whom One False Move Meant Death

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A Complete Novelette

By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

Author of "The Scarlet Killer," "Guarded by Fire," etc.

HIS life was forfeit did he but show himself outside the wall that encircled the Kaid's garden. But night had come and his thoughts were gentle as he sat in the Kaid's summer house with Zoë, the daughter of the Kaid, a perfumed presence beside him.

Outside was the tinkle of falling waters and the rustle of night winds. A low murmur came from beyond the walls where the city rabble hunted for him, around the walls came the occasional cries of the sentinels set in watch, sworn to slay him on sight. But here was momentary peace and sanctuary, grateful after a day of dust and sweat and fighting.

Zoë had hidden him well when he

came, a hunted fugitive, vaulting over her garden wall and frightening her pet gazelle. Deep within the cool marble crypt, the secret chamber beneath the summer house had she hidden him.

And with the coming of night Zoe had brought him food, marveling at the tall, fair stranger with his surtout of fine wool emblazoned with a single red cross, worn over the gleaming links of well-oiled chain mail. Laid aside now was the crusader's great shield and the two-handed sword and the steel cap with its nose-piece as he talked with her in the darkness.

At the magic of his words she forgot the grave and venerable Kaid, her father, in his flowing silk khalat, she forgot the anger of Merkit, the governor of Merv, who had sworn to kill the crusader on sight.

And above all, she had forgotten the soft curly beard and hot eyes of Ali Maruf, the Kaid's nephew, to whom she had been affianced. There existed naught for Zoe but this tall stranger half seen in the darkness beside her.

AND while Hugh de Galliard sat there on the marble bench her voice came from the dark beside him as he ate the food she had brought.

". . . . and now," she went on breathlessly, "the governor's guards are all about the place and you cannot get out!—and—and there is a reward of very much gold to any man who brings your head to the governor and all the rabble in the city are hunting high and low for you!

"And my father, the Kaid, is very angry for Merkit, the governor, has put a great shame upon him by searching his house and grounds. But," her voice became grave, "I think it is very dangerous for my father for, if you should be found here, the governor would use it as an excuse to throw my father into prison and to confiscate all of his property!"

Hugh de Galliard paused with a morsel of food half-way to his mouth and then placed it back in the dish. "Is it true that I am bringing such great danger to your father?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she returned, "you see, the governor is envious and jealous of my father and covets his wealth and would seize upon any excuse to harm him."

"Then 'twere better did I depart from here on the instant," he said, rising from the seat.

"No, no!" her voice became excited. "It is impossible. You will be torn to pieces the moment you appear outside these walls. Here you are safe." She pleaded with him to remain where he was until the guards were removed from around the estate.

IT was perhaps unfortunate that Ali Maruf, the Kaid's nephew, had partaken too generously of too many sweet cups of coffee at dinner with the Kaid. Being sleepless and feeling the need of night air, he made his way to the entrance of the garden finding, rather to his surprise, that the gate was unlatched. Wondering a little at this neglect, he strolled into the garden, hands behind him and head bowed, thinking his thoughts in secret.

Hugh de Galliard finished the dish of food at last and quenched his thirst in the clear cold waters of the fountain near at hand, returning quickly to the lure of that perfumed presence and that soft voice in the darkness.

To himself he reflected on the many women he had seen in his travels from Normandy across France

and by ship to the Holy Land, stopping at Constantinople en route. Never, he admitted, had he seen a girl who possessed the beauty and fire and loveliness of this graceful creature who sat beside him, their delightful intimacy was deepened by the darkness of the night.

It was a weary task that lay ahead of him, fraught with perils and danger to life and limb to be met and overcome each day. Some of these things he told her, informing her of his determination to continue on, single-handed, to the court of Ghengis Khan, that mysterious figure, that portent of war and invasion who had appeared in the highlands of Asia.

"AND you do not fear him, this Ghengis Khan?" asked Zoë, breathlessly. "I have heard it said that he is the new Scourge of Islam come to cleanse our wicked race of its sin and its evils. Some of my father's friends say that he is naught but a barbarian chieftain, but others say that he is as a fiend incarnate, commanding hordes of bloodthirsty and fanatical warriors who are like to rush down from the mountains like a torrent and overwhelm the Shah and all his mighty empire."

"As to that, I know not," returned Hugh. "I know only that he is friendly to men of my race and religion and hath before this received embassies and treated them with courtesy. I hope that he—"

Zoë interrupted him with a warning clutch on his arm.

"S-h-h!" she whispered tensely. "Hark! was that not someone stirring outside?"

Silent and breathless they both listened there in the dark, nor heard any further sound except the soft music of falling waters and the sigh of the night breeze in the trees, and afar off, the liquid notes of a nightingale singing his evening hymn to the rose.

"'Twas naught but a falling leaf or some such matter," Hugh gave as his opinion after a moment or two of silence. Reassured, they continued their whispering, drawn together by the darkness of the night about them and the thrill of danger that hung over them. Nor did they know how near that danger was.

"I have heard said," whispered Zoe, "that the Nazarenes eat little children and commit all manner of excesses, but seeing you, I cannot believe that," she said naïvely.

"NAY, we are as others," protested Hugh.

He drew both her hands to his, no doubt with the intention of proving it better. Nor did she resist, but crept ever closer to him in the darkness, and his voice became a little husky at the nearness of her until at last lip met lip and they trembled together. She gave back, frightened at the strength and vehemence of this thing that had overpowered them. And there was silence for a moment in that summer house.

That silence was broken by the ring of steel against stone. A lantern was suddenly flashed out from under a cloak and its light glittered on steel and was reflected back in the glitter of cruel eyes. The summer house door was crowded with the sword-bearers of the Kaid's household, at their head the portly chief eunuch, equipped with a huge broad-bladed scimitar.

Hugh de Galliard's great sword was out with a dry, steely whirr and his shield settled with a clang against his shoulder, protecting the girl behind him, her eyes sick with dread.

For a second they stood thus, the

opposing swordsmen, and then a passionate, angry voice came from behind the guards.

"Spoke I not truly, O my Uncle?" said the voice of Ali Maruf. "Said I not that she sat here alone in the summer house with the infidel dog?"

"Aye, you spoke truly," came the weary voice of the Kaid, and the sword-bearers gave aside as he entered the doorway and stood revealed in the full light of the lantern.

At sight of him Hugh de Galliard lowered shield and dropped sword point to the ground.

"Come ye in peace or come ye in anger?" asked Hugh.

The gray-haired Kaid looked up, startled at hearing his tongue spoken by this strange figure in its unfamiliar habiliments.

"I come as a seeker after knowledge," returned the Kaid. "It happens that it is my garden that you have invaded and that it is my daughter who crouches there behind you as though needing protection from her own father."

WITH a sob Zoë ran to her father and flung herself to the ground at his feet, clinging to his knees.

"He was sore beset, O my father," she cried, "and I did but give him shelter and food."

"Aye, no handsome stranger need fear for lack of food or shelter so long as there are silly girls in the world," said the old Kaid dryly. But nevertheless, he bent and drew the girl to her feet, giving her a reassuring pat on the shoulder as she clung to him. "And you, O Stranger, what of you?"

"Your daughter has spoken truly," said Hugh de Galliard. "Out of the goodness of her heart she gave me shelter when I was sore beset and gave me food when I hungered. I would wish that no harm comes to her, no matter what evil may be in store for me."

Hugh's voice was grave as he inclined his head toward her, and then he looked the old Kaid full in the eye. "Ye have right to question me and if it be true, as one of your poets hath said, that one acquires merit by answering the questions of wisdom, then would I answer your questions in the courteous fashion that ye have asked them.

KNOW ye then that I am Hugh de Galliard, of noble blood and of rank in mine own country, that I passed through your land as one of a company of ambassadors on its way to the court of Ghengis Khan and that, deceived by the smooth words of Merkit, the governor of this city, we put ourselves in his power.

"How our trust was requited, no doubt ye know by now. It suffices to say that I alone escaped of all that band who were treacherously slain. Thereafter, hunted like a dog by the rabble, I sought sanctuary in your garden and the lady, your daughter, hid me away and brought me food." And Hugh de Galliard stood there very straight and very tall and with no fear upon him.

The old Kaid glanced down at the empty silver dish.

"Ye have eaten my bread and salt," he said, "and there is no talk of evil befalling you while you are under my roof."

Then, turning to his sword-bearers, the Kaid commanded that their weapons be put up and spoke to the men, commanding them on pain of death to say no word of the stranger within their midst.

"For," said he, "if but one of you wishes to encompass my destruction, he need but whisper a word to the governor's guard at the gate, and I

am a ruined man. Do ye hear and understand?"

"To hear is to obey, O most noble Kaid," the sword-bearers bowed their heads. The one dissenting voice was that of Ali Maruf.

I THINK it a great shame, O my Uncle," he cried, "that you should permit this infidel dog to remain in your shelter, risking your life and property every second that he is within your walls!"

"My life has nearly run its course," returned the Kaid, "and as to my property, it will be disposed of as Allah wills. In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate, I bid you into my house, O Stranger."

With that the Kaid motioned his followers on ahead, and with Zoë on his arm, waited courteously for Hugh de Galliard to accompany him into the house.

And accompany him Hugh did, his heart filled with great admiration for this courteous and kindly Persian, some of which he tried to express as he strode beside him, his sword sheathed and his great shield hanging on his back.

"I deem it a poor requital of your courtesy," said Hugh, "that I remain under your roof and endanger your life and goods. Give me but a horse, O Kaid, and I will cut my way through these guards and win through to the open country."

"Ye speak without knowledge of the danger that besets you," said the Kaid gravely.

"Mayhap it is the will of God," said Hugh, "that I should undergo misfortune, but that gives me no warrant for bringing misfortune upon you, who have treated me with such courtesy that my heart is bursting with gratitude."

RAIL not at misfortune, my son," said the Kaid in kindly fashion. "As the poet Sadi hath said, go give thanks that though thou ridest not upon a donkey, thou art yet not a donkey upon which men ride."

They passed into the house by a secret entrance so that gossiping servants should not catch sight of the stranger, and here the Kaid dismissed Zoë, telling her to repair to her bed. She departed, casting a single backward glance upon the stranger, her great eyes melting at him across the room until he was like to grow dizzy with the power of the affection they showed.

The old Kaid, wise with the ripened wisdom of many years, saw this but said naught. One other person saw this, and had either Hugh de Galliard or the Kaid seen the flash of jealous rage which contorted the face of Ali Maruf into a thing dreadful to see, they might have found cause for reflection.

But they did not see nor scarce noticed when Ali Maruf excused himself and withdrew from the small room where sat Hugh and his host.

And while those two talked, discussing the state of Christendom and the strange tenacity of that handful of Crusaders clinging to the coast of Palestine, and speaking gravely of the state of Islam and the threat of Ghengis Khan poised like a lightning-charged cloud above the highlands of Asia, Ali Maruf, twisting his perfumed beard, walked back and forth in the fluted columns of the entrance hall, his mind a seething rage of hatred and evil.

MERKIT, the Governor of Merv, was feasting this night untroubled by any remorse caused by the murder of the Nazarene ambassadors by his order that day. Were they not infidel dogs, and did not

the teaching of the Prophet provide plenty of excuse for their slaying? Although it must be admitted that ordinarily Merkit honored the teaching of the Prophet more in the breach than in the observance. The many silver flagons at the banquet board, filled with the forbidden wine, was evidence enough of that.

The chief sin of the ambassadors had been that they were rumored to have carried many and valuable presents for both the Shah of Kharesmia through whose territories they were traveling and for that mysteriously threatening figure whom men called Ghengis Khan, but whom Merkit considered naught but another infidel dog.

True enough, there were men in the city who warned of the sullen threat of the Mongol host. Merchants there had been who swung upward through the Sungarian Gate, the pass whence all the nomad hordes had come out of High Asia. And these men spoke fearfully of Ghengis Khan and reported that his warriors could only be numbered as the blades of grass or as the sands of the seashore, and that his herds of stocky, long-haired horses blackened the plains to the far horizon.

BUT Merkit scoffed at this and scoffed still more when certain studious ones among his advisors reminded him of Attila the Hun, for even after all these years the thunder of the hooves of the hordes of Attila continued to echo down through the centuries.

Nor had men altogether forgotten that Imperial Rome had crashed to the sounds of the screams of nomad horsemen and to the savage neighing of Tartar ponies.

But Merkit sipped his snow-chilled wine and applauded in lazy approval at the gyrations and posturing of a troupe of dancing boys from Samarkand. They were painted and perfumed, those boys, and their abandoned writhing was not such as to recommend them to the more sober-minded.

But of sober-minded men there were few in Merkit's entourage. Of the forty or so boon companions of the governor there was not one who was not detested and execrated throughout the city. Oppressors of the people they were, these Kankali Turks whom the Shah had seen fit to put in power over the city of Merv.

And because of these powerful and unscrupulous men headed by the governor, no man's daughters nor no man's wealth could be said to be secure. But little did Merkit and his companions care as the zithers twanged and the cymbals crashed and the lascivious little flutes whimpered and pulsed in the banquet hall. That captain of the guard who had invaded and searched the house of the Kaid Abul ben Said, was there among the feasters.

His report to the governor had brought a little gleam of avarice to the piggish eyes of the fat and rather oily Merkit. For a minute or two he had remained silent and then had dismissed the officer to his feasting and had lumbered to his own seat of honor with that thoughtful frown still upon his forehead. Belike the escape of that one Nazarene which had so irked the governor in the afternoon, might end in proving that good can sometimes come out of evil.

For Merkit saw that here lay the weapon that might possibly result in the humbling of the proud Kaid and the sequestration of his wealth. And at thought of the treasure that must be guarded in the Kaid's heavily walled grounds Merkit licked his fat lips.

It was when the feasting was at its height close to midnight that an officer of the guard came to Merkit and dared to break in upon his pleasures by telling him that there was one outside who had information of importance for his private ear.

"Who is this man and what does he wish to see me about?" demanded Merkit, raising himself heavily on one elbow from the soft cushions of his divan.

"It is Ali Maruf, most noble governor," said the officer as he rose from his salaam, "the nephew of the Kaid Abul ben Said. He would speak to you, master, of news of the Nazarene dog who escaped your wrath today."

And suddenly Merkit's sloth dropped from him as a man's cloak drops from his shoulders, and he sat bolt upright, his eyes gleaming.

"And what manner of officer are ye that he was not brought to me immediately?" stormed the governor. "Go, dog from a nameless kennel, and bring this man immediately!"

THUS it was that the revelers who were not too bemused by the wine, saw the white face and burning eyes of Ali Maruf in close proximity to the governor's ear. Merkit listened, his eyes half-closed, nodding now and again. At last he clapped his hands and called for the captain of the guard.

"It shall be as you wish, O Ali," he assured the Kaid's nephew. "A full half of the treasure and the Kaid's daughter to you."

But Ali did not notice that the small pig-like eyes of the governor flickered as he spoke and that there was the trace of a derisive smile on the governor's face as he issued swift orders to the captain of the guard, who thereafter departed silently upon his appointed task.

Back in the house of the Kaid a single hanging lamp glowed within the entrance hall. The rest of the house was in darkness save for the small private room of the master where the Kaid still sat with his guest, their voices rising and falling.

HUGH DE GALLIARD had divested himself of long shirt and coif of chain mail and it lay with the steel leg-and-thigh armor heaped by his sword and shield and helmet against the divan. Hugh was laboring under some excitement, and no little amazement and disbelief.

"And you say that my own horse and its housing is stabled here within your walls?" he asked, incredulous.

"Even so," nodded the Kaid, and nibbled at sugared almonds from a silver platter.

"God and St. Michael!" breathed the Norman knight in his own tongue. "It is a sign from Heaven!"

"I did not understand," remarked the Kaid politely, and his eyes widened as his guest rose to his feet.

"I said naught," explained Hugh, "save that God has sent me a sign to make me set about my task." And he moved toward his weight of weapons and armor.

"Ye would depart at once?" asked the Kaid, a worried note in his voice. Hugh nodded as he started to array himself in his body armor and to fasten his gilded spurs.

"But it is impossible!" cried the Kaid; "the gates are beset with guards! You could not win through them!"

"But give me my own horse between my knees and I will win through hell and back again," said Hugh simply.

The old Kaid looked at the great

frame of the Crusader and the girth of his chest and the breadth of his shoulders and sighed a little wistfully:

"It may be that you are right," he said. "It lacks a few minutes of midnight and the guards will have relaxed their watch. But ye would go as ambassador and ye bring no gifts!" The Kaid shook his head and rose to his feet. "While ye are arming yourself I will bring a little gift that will soften the heart of Ghengis Khan toward you."

And with that he was gone, leaving the Crusader alone to finish the buckling on of his harness and the slipping on of his sword belt.

The Kaid, moving quickly for a man of his years, first went past the stables, where he commanded the slave on duty to saddle the Nazarene's horse and bridle it and hold it in readiness. This done, he provided himself with a lantern and made his way out to the garden, his light concealed under his cloak until at last he came to the small summer house.

Entering this, he strode to the jutting wall behind the fountain, moved a certain section of copper pipe, swung open the door and descended to the rock-walled room beneath. The flickering rays of the lantern showed the room to be high-piled with objects wrapped in silk and linen, but the Kaid paid no heed to these.

HE went to a great chest and, with a key he held on his belt, he unlocked the outer hasp and successively opened two inner covers and drew aside a covering, whereat the lantern light sparkled from innumerable jeweled facets and gleamed on gold and reflected back blood-red, from rubies, and made pearls glow like solidified moonlight, and scintillated from diamonds. Selecting some object from among this collection, the Kaid carefully relocked his boxes and returned whence he had come.

HUGH DE GALLIARD was striding impatiently back and forth across the polished floor when the Kaid entered the room.

"Look you," said the old man and brought from under his cloak some object wrapped in silk. Uncovering it, the light from the hanging lamp shone blood-red on a great Badakshan ruby which graced the hilt of a dagger of fine Damascus steel, its gripe studded with star sapphires and its pommel encrusted with diamonds. It was sheathed in a scabbard of gold and ivory, set with gems, and the whole thing made a gift fit for an emperor.

Hugh was astounded at the richness of the gift and demurred strongly at taking away with him a present of such great price in addition to all the kindness he had received.

"It is of no moment," the Kaid shrugged the protestations away. "My years are not long in the land and if there is one thing certain in this vale of uncertainty called life, it is that one cannot take his wealth with him to the hereafter.

"How can the falcon fly to the sky when the stone of avarice is tied to its wing? Take it, my friend, and go, and Allah be with you. Here, tie it within the inner side of thy shield so that it shall not be in thy way in the midst of combat. And here is a woolen *khalat* and hood that will cover thy great frame.

"Wear it and mayhap it will be possible to pass through the guards unobserved, especially," added the Kaid dryly, "if I sent out my servants with a little gold beforehand."

But Hugh stood uncertainly for a moment, and then blurted out what he had to say.

"But thy daughter, O Kaid, my heart is heavy within me at parting without saying farewell to her—"

"It is even thus after the manner of youth," the Kaid nodded his head. "Never fear, I shall tell her. And if mayhap you should return scathless, perhaps you yourself can tell her what is in your heart.

"Whether the love of a true believer and a Nazarene can ever be blessed by the Prophet I know not, but in these troublous times I would see her wedded to a strong man, one who can protect her from the evil that even now, I feel, is slowly beginning to descend upon us."

THE horse was waiting in the shadows of the courtyard, a slave standing at its head.

"Heed now what I say," advised the Kaid, "and ride straight to the western gate. Its guard is careless. Once outside take the road down the river. After ten minutes trotting you will come to a hamlet. Ride past the smithy at the end of that hamlet for so much time as it takes a man to breathe the first ten names of Allah, and then turn to the right to where a small country house is set among the plane trees with white gate posts fronting the road.

"Knock there and show this ring and my servants will give you shelter. Remain there throughout the day, which is even now almost upon us. At dawn I will send you a trusty swordsman to care for you and your horse and to ride with you. Go, my son, and thank me not. Seldom have I been drawn to a man as I have been drawn to thee."

There was some whispering at the gate as they talked, and one of the sword-bearers came into the shadow and stated that all was well. Leaning from the saddle, Hugh de Galliard grasped the hand of the old Kaid and rode toward the gate.

Scarce had he firmly seated himself in his saddle and felt of the great war mace which hung there than he raised his head sharply at a new sound coming from the direction of the citadel.

The gate started slowly to swing open, but then halted, irresolute, as the sound grew louder and resolved itself into the clink of steel on steel and the trample of many feet.

Hugh de Galliard, under the folds of the voluminous *khalat*, edged his shield around to his left arm and silently drew his long sword from its war-worn scabbard.

On a sudden he clapped both spurs to his great war-horse and drove at the partially opened gate. Catching one of the portals with his shield, he shoved it backward. A shout went up from near at hand and the sound of running feet.

Steel flashed in the light of lanterns. There was the twang of a bow-string and an arrow whirred past and broke its point against the stone wall behind him. Suddenly the road boiled with men. The black shadows of two horsemen drove at him. Hugh, his heart exultant within him, rose in his stirrups and slashed at the nearest, feeling the blade bite into flesh and bone so that the interloper coughed and leaned sideways out of the saddle.

IN its return sweep the great blade thudded heavily into the second horseman, biting home as though endowed with a lust to slay. A rabble of footmen swarmed about and thirsty lance-points were thrust out of the darkness.

Again the great sword swung,

sweeping in a circle backward to the right and forward again over the horse's head in another slashing circle that drove men back, screaming with pain, as the great horse thundered down the street, scattering men out of its way like chaff.

There was a shout and a clamor dying down behind him, but Hugh's great horse thundered through the silent streets, coming at last to the western gate where several sleepy guards staggered out in time to see the sparks cast from the steel-shod hoofs and Hugh was in open country at last.

As the Kaid had directed, he kept on down the river bank, coming at last to the hamlet and to the smithy at its far end, seeing no living thing stirring abroad and the scattered houses on the side of the road darkened and their inhabitants deep in slumber. It lacked yet an hour of dawn.

The blows of his mailed fist against the gates of the country house brought three men running, armed with a lantern and two spears. A single look at the ring which he drew from his purse and they bowed low and swung open the gates, clanging them shut behind him.

Hugh was well served by these servants of the Kaid. His horse was led to the stables and unsaddled and fed, while he was given a comfortable room and food and water offered him until at last the house grew silent and he slept.

IT seemed to him that he had but closed his eyes when a knocking on the bedroom door brought him up with a start and for a moment he stared around him, stupid with sleep, not knowing where he was nor how he had come there. But the sight of the man who entered, one of the burly sword-bearers of the Kaid's household, brought him to sudden wakefulness.

THE man was pale and showed the signs of great strain and suffering.

"What has happened?" demanded Hugh.

"Allah's curse on the governor, and may he rot in hell!" cried the man.

"Quick, tell me!" demanded Hugh impatiently.

"Oh, my master," the fellow half-sobbed, "scarcely had you disappeared last night when a captain of the guard forced an entry. He dragged forth the Kaid, whom Allah protect, and his daughter, and led them off in chains. My master's house was given over to looting, and now the governor has put his seals upon it and a guard stands before the gates!"

"The Kaid and his daughter!" cried Hugh. "What does the governor intend doing with them?"

"The governor has condemned the Kaid to perish at the hands of the executioner thirty days hence at the close of the Feast of Ramazan. Until that time his daughter will be held in prison. After the Kaid's death she will be an orphan and the governor can give her to whom he pleases or thrust her into his own harem!"

Hugh stood like some stricken thing as he realized to the full the weight of the terrible vengeance wreaked upon his friends. Then he was like some raging animal, calling for sword and horse to ride back and die fighting if need be in defense of the man who had befriended him and the girl whom he loved.

It was the sword-bearer, Mustapha, who dissuaded him, explaining sensibly enough that it were better to remain alive and plot the rescue of the Kaid and his daughter and see that

justice was done, than to die fighting against hopeless odds with nothing gained by his death. There was some reason in this, and a plan began slowly to form itself in the mind of the Crusader.

The rumors were that the Mongol horde was even now on its way to invade the country. For thirty days at least, the Kaid and his daughter were safe.

Might it not be better to join the Mongol horde and ride back with them, meanwhile attempting to lead a force of Mongols against the city of Merv? It was a fantastic scheme, but he could think of no other.

His face grim and showing lines of suffering and worry, he mounted his horse at last, and, after leaving Mustapha with instructions to do all he could to aid the two prisoners, Hugh de Galliard set his horse down the river and started on the long trail that was to lead him to the court of Ghengis Khan.

Far behind him, in the city, the muezzin's call to prayer came floating down from the topmost minaret of the mosque, hard by the governor's citadel.

"There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet!" spake the voice of the muezzin, and his words drifted down to an iron-barred window set in the wall not twenty paces from the main gate of the governor's stronghold.

In the dark recesses of the cell behind the barred window a shadow stirred and a voice murmured the morning devotions. It was the voice of the Kaid.

"IN the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful . . ." whispered the old man as he made shift to perform his ablutions. Despite the seizure of his person and his family and his property the night before, the face of the old Kaid was serene and untroubled.

It was still as serene and untroubled when an hour later there was a clank of steel and the tramp of feet in the corridor outside. The door of his cell was flung open, admitting two guards with drawn scimitars, who stood on either side of the entrance, while the heavy form of the governor entered the door.

"So ho, old crow bait, you have become my guest at last!" jeered Merkit, his heavy-lidded eyes red with the night's debauch.

THE Kaid made no reply, but regarded his enemy steadfastly. Merkit grew fretful under the calm, unimpassioned eyes of the man whom he hated. And then the Kaid spoke.

"Why have you done this thing to me and mine, O Merkit?" he asked quietly.

"Why! He asks why!" Merkit flung his hands wide. "You know well why, old bag of bones! As if 'twas not enough to openly harbor an enemy to the Shah and to defy my authority, you increase your crimes by conspiring against the peace of the realm." Merkit's face contorted into an assumption of righteous rage.

"It is not the veins of the neck which should stand out in argument—but the proofs which should be full of meaning. And where, O Merkit, are the proofs?" asked the Kaid, steady-voiced.

"Proofs! The dog asks for proofs! Know, then, Unfortunate One, that it was from the mouth of your own kinsman, your nephew, that I have the proofs!"

"Ali Maruf has told you this thing!" The Kaid's face was expressionless.

"Aye, Ali Maruf and none other. What think you of that, old crow-bait?"

"I think that to do good to the evil is evil: only a fool plants trees on barren soil, and a grateful dog is better than an ungrateful man."

"Even so," grunted Merkit, "but you are bold in your evil doing, O Abul ben Said, and prate wise proverbs and show no sign of fear. But will you be brave on that day, soon to come, when the executioner brings out his scimitar like the tongue of a thirsty man? Will you not tremble then and plead for mercy?"

"Every man's burden is suited to his strength, O Merkit, heavy to the ant is the foot of the locust. . . ."

But Merkit's brow was knitted in thought and he broke in on the words of the venerable old Kaid.

"Look you now, O man of ill omen, as required by the laws of the Shah I have sequestered your property and put my seals upon it. But it is reported to me that there is very little treasure to be found and that of your great wealth naught but a few dirhems has been seized by my servants. Where, O Kaid, have you concealed your great treasure of gold and jewels?"

"Where indeed," murmured the Kaid, and clasped his hands. "Where indeed, but in a place safe from hungry jackals and prowling dogs."

"There are ways of making you talk," growled Merkit, a cruel light in his eyes, "the torture of the bowstring and the hot pincers, and the rack have drawn words from braver men than you."

PERHAPS," admitted the Kaid, and brushed a speck of dust from his *khalat*, "but by the grace of Allah, O Merkit, here is one that hath no fear of your tortures. Should I die under the bowstring and hot steel, I die with my lips sealed.

"And I am old, Merkit, and my bones are brittle and Allah would give me merciful and quick release from your tortures."

MERKIT frowned. There was truth in the old man's statement. His aged body would not long survive the torture and once dead the secret of the treasure would be lost irretrievably. The avaricious governor grew cold with rage at this weak old man who defied him. But out of his rage came an idea, and suddenly the fat cheeks of the governor smoothed themselves.

"True, old crow bait, but there are other tortures than those of the flesh. You have a daughter whom I am keeping under lock and key with the negress Fatima to guard her. What say you, unfortunate one, if I throw her dainty person to my soldiers to do with as they will? Ha! Now you blanch and your hands tremble!"

"Dog! You would not dare!" the old man's voice quivered and he threw out a hand as if seeking for support.

"I do not dare? Ho, Merkit does not dare?" The fat governor was studying his victim speculatively. "In any case," he continued, "thy portion is death at the hands of the executioner, at the rising of the new moon thirty days hence.

"In any case thy daughter will be given to one of my captains for his harem. But, and mark well my words, should you remain stubbornly silent concerning the treasure, know that, as that gray head of thine rolls in the dust, thy daughter is being made the sport and plaything of my Kurdish soldiers!"

And with that, Merkit turned about and waddled out of the cell,

leaving the old man leaning weakly against the walls of his prison.

UP in the hall of the citadel a messenger wearing the golden chain of the service of the Shah awaited the fat governor.

His message was brief. The Shah sent word to all his governors to hold themselves in readiness to send him warriors should the need arise. For word had come of the appearance of bodies of Tartar horsemen to the north and the country people, fleeing toward the cities, reported that Ghengis Khan was leading a mighty force against Islam.

The Shah did not wish his subjects to be unduly alarmed, for his splendid troops would make short work of the barbarians, but he desired his governors to be in readiness to provide levies of men and horses and supplies.

Merkit frowned at the message. He had grown fat and heavy and the thought of war filled him with distaste. But when he thought of the mighty towers and walls of the great city of Merv he dismissed the matter from his mind with a shrug of his fat shoulders.

"What of those swordsmen I sent in pursuit of the fleeing Nazarene?" he asked irritably of one of his captains. "Have they not yet brought me his head?"

"Nay, my master," replied the captain, "as yet there is no word from them."

Even as he spoke that troop of lean Turkoman horsemen, carrying sharp scimitars and small round shields and wearing black *khalats* over their chain mail and pointed conical helmets of Damascus steel, were coursing along the caravan trail, out across the desert of Karakun.

The sands were hot and the water holes were few and far between on the desert. It seemed to Hugh de Galliard that he had spent weary weeks riding his tired and stumbling horse up one sand dune and down another, following a trail that was liberally marked by the whitened bones of dead camels and horses.

His steel coat of mail was hot to the touch and his face was streaked with sweat and dust as he rode along through the silent wastes. It was after he had left a muddy water hole and toiled up a new slope that he looked backward and caught the distant gleam of steel reflected in the glare of the desert sun.

For a moment his heart sank within him and for a moment he knew all the sensations of the quarry finding itself in full view of the pack. But it was only for a moment. Resolutely he put spurs to his jaded mount and rode forward. He was grimly determined to keep on going as long as fate would permit, and then to turn and sell his life as dearly as possible.

BUT in his heart of hearts he knew that the fleet, light, Arab coursers of his pursuers would inevitably draw near. Even now his backward glance showed them to be more plainly in view so that he could see, now, that they were all of fifty men and horses, sweeping toward him like a black cloud of ill omen.

Turning to gaze to the front, he checked his horse on a sudden. Ahead, the trail ran through a narrow valley between hills, high piled with sand and tortured and riven rock. At the mouth of the valley stood a single hawk-faced horseman in a white *khalat*, his lance at the carry, his eyes shaded as he watched the approaching Crusader.

The lone horseman motioned to someone behind him and Hugh de

Galliard saw the gray shadows of many mounted men well-nigh filling the small valley.

AND Hugh de Galliard, the lone Crusader in a hostile land, loosened the sword in his scabbard, thought a little wistfully of the sweet face and the low voice and great dark eyes of Zoë and rode on, ready to face whatever Fate should hold in store for him.

Behind him an outjutting hill cut off view of the pursuing cavalry from Merv. But he well knew that they were hot on his trail. Ahead of him was a large force of robbers, cruel and desperate men. Nevertheless, he rode on.

When he had approached the lone horseman within twenty or thirty paces he was suddenly surrounded by lean, desert riders, their spears raised threateningly.

Sword in hand, Hugh held up the great blade in sign of parley and those desert men marveled at the bulk of him and the strength of his armor, which was as no armor they had ever seen, and the exceeding length and heaviness of his two-handed sword, which he handled as though it were naught but a feather in weight.

"Hold!" cried the lone man, speaking in their own tongue, and the foremost of the desert riders lowered their sharp-pointed lances and listened. "Hold! ye men of the desert!" called Hugh in a firm, authoritative voice. "Ye would attack me as I ride alone. Mayhap you will overcome me, but not"—and here he raised in his stirrups and whirled that great blade singing around his head so that all men marveled—"but not until I have smitten many of you to the earth and caused much sorrow in your tents.

"And what will it avail ye to overcome me at the last? I will be but poor picking and no sort of reward for the death that I will deal out to you."

The desert men murmured among themselves. He spoke truly, this iron man, and they liked not the looks of that great blade glittering thirstily, and they liked not the ease with which he handled its exceeding weight.

"But hark ye, men of the desert, behind me not a thousand paces is rich loot to be had for the taking. There comes a troop of fifty Turkoman horses, carrying weight of treasure in gold and silver ornaments and damascened weapons and armor. Ye are three to one and can overcome them. Seek ye out that prize and let me pass on my way in peace."

THERE was a muttered word from the hawk-faced leader of these men. All eyes were fixed now on the point where the trail rounded the low-lying flank of the hill. Even now the dust from the hoofs of the Turkoman horses were rising above the hill. The lean faces of the desert men lighted up.

"Go in peace and may Allah guard you," said their leader to Hugh de Galliard, and the Crusader rode forward into the valley, looking neither to the right or the left as the desert men drew back and hid themselves against the coming of the troop of horses.

A wild, exultant shout rose from far in the rear and Hugh smiled grimly, knowing that he had been sighted and that even now his pursuers were putting spurs to their mounts and galloping after him in wild disorder.

With head half turned to the rear, he listened for that which should happen and the sound was not long in coming. But Hugh de Galliard

kept steadily on his way, drawing farther and farther from the wild confusion of that fight behind him. And ever as his horse trotted onward, the sound of weapon play and the screams of wounded horses and the battle cries of frantic men, lessened in the distance, until he was alone again on the face of the desert.

Thereafter he proceeded more cautiously, hiding out by day and traveling by night, feeding his horse sparingly from the grain sack which the Kaid's servants had tied on his crupper and eating but sparingly of the food which they had packed in his own bag. He came at last to a river at the borders of the desert and drank deeply of the clear water as his horse gulped from the same stream.

He was approaching Bokhara now and moved circumspectly, for bodies of armed horsemen were appearing and moving to the northward, and hurried messengers, their horses lathered with sweat, were galloping to the southward, rousing up the Amirs and Atabegs and their levies, against the great tidal wave of Mongol horsemen which was rolling down from the mountains of high Asia.

ANXIOUSLY he counted the days, thinking and dreading the rising of the new moon which would herald the death of the old Kaid, his benefactor, and the condemning of Zoë to a living death in the harem of the governor or one of his officers.

The roads now began to be filled with fleeing peasants. They drove their flocks and herds before him, hurrying toward the shelter of the city the while they cast many apprehensive glances over their shoulders. They didn't even take time to stare at the strange figure of the tall Crusader on his great horse.

One morning Hugh saw the smoke of burning villages and before noon he caught his first sight of the Mongol invaders.

They came upon him suddenly, those Mongols. Strange figures they were, squat, bony-faced men, riding shaggy horses and carrying slender, tufted lances. They wore lacquered armor over which was flung coats of wolf skin, and their helmets were light and strong. Bows they carried, strengthened with horn and powerful seeming, and sharp, bright axes and coiled ropes which they were skilled at casting.

HUGH halted at sight of them and they galloped around him silent, studying him with bright, inscrutable eyes. Their leader spoke to him in some tongue which Hugh had never heard, but he replied by repeating the name of Ghengis Khan and pointing to their rear until at last they understood and a handful of the warriors rode with him.

Hugh gazed about him to right and left, seeing groups of these same warriors scattered out in long lines that extended as far as the eye could see, moving forward swiftly and methodically, like the advance guard of a swarm of locusts.

Out of the dust in the rear came larger bodies of a hundred men each, formed in squadrons, while still farther in the rear came the regiments, each of a thousand men. And then came the main horde itself, stretching as far as the eye could see, until the earth seemed covered with warriors and a mighty forest of lances ranged to the far horizon.

They moved in vast bodies of ten thousand men each, and Hugh marveled at their perfect order and silence and discipline. He halted at the side of the road with his escort, thinking that these torrents of men would never cease as *tumen* after *tumen* swept by, the leaders wearing

armor of gilded lacquer and riding close behind yak-tail standards.

At last, toward evening, there appeared in the distance a black garbed force, its horses encased in lacquered leather. At the center of these men were a thousand picked warriors riding black horses and carrying black shields. Above them floated a huge nine-tailed yak standard, and Hugh realized that he was near Ghengis Khan himself.

Great horns blared forth on a sudden, their echoes being repeated for miles to front and rear on either side and the horde halted in place and broke ranks and the smell of cooking fires rose on the air, and a huge white tent was put up by the black-clad horsemen, who posted themselves around it and at its entrance.

At last Hugh de Galliard was led forward and halted before this high pavilion, made of white felt, lined with silk. Here his horse was held and he dismounted, passing into the entrance where there was a long table made of solid silver upon which were set out fruits and meat and honey and mares' milk so that all might be refreshed.

HANGING lamps showed a throne-like seat set upon a dais at the far end of the pavilion. Upon it sat a heavily-built Mongol of middle age, his keen eyes peering out from under an up-tilted felt hat with long streamers. His powerful frame was draped in a white wadded coat and his waist was encircled by a broad belt of gold, while a sword lay at his feet.

Instinctively Hugh de Galliard recognized, in the vast calm of that face and in the intensity of the eyes, that here sat the leader.

Ghengis Khan himself it was, and Hugh de Galliard knelt on one knee before him and tendered the gift of the ruby-hilted and gem-encrusted dagger, while a grave-faced Oriental, the Prime Minister, Chutsai, translated his speech.

"The Kha Khan welcomes you to his court and gives you thanks for his gift. He has listened to your story of the murder of the ambassadors sent to him and promises you that vengeance shall be exacted upon the city."

AND with that Hugh was dismissed and an official took him in charge and provided him with a felt yurt and with a servant, and with provender for his horse and food for himself.

The next few days were full of wonder for the Crusader, as he rode with the Mongols in their onward course. He found himself attached to a *tumen* under the command of Tuli, one of the sons of Ghengis Khan. And with that *tumen* he rode forth to battle, riding up forward, near the advance guard and, with it, watching for the first sight of the great Persian host that was forming to dispute their march. Two days later he saw the sun sparkle on the steel of the Moslem host.

The Mongols swept toward the enemy in five great *tumens*, fifty thousand men all told, but to Hugh de Galliard it seemed as though the Persian force outnumbered them ten to one. As they neared the Moslems, Hugh saw the sunlight flash from silvered mail and jeweled helmets, from spear-points and scimitars, and from the ruby and emerald ornaments of the *emirs* and *atabegs*.

White silken *khalats* and white silken turbans, the green banners of Islam and bronze war trumpets, slim desert-bred horses and lean-faced, desert-bred men, made an array that must have filled with pride the heart

of Jelal-eddin, the Shah's own son, who commanded this great array.

As the Mongol force came on, a sudden blast of sound went up from the Shah's army when the great trumpets and gongs and cymbals crashed into music. It was a signal for a mighty shout to go up from the Moslem host.

To these richly-clad Turks and Persians the dark mass of nomads must have seemed contemptible.

But the nomads were masters of the art of war.

Flanking *tumens* swung off from the main body. The center *tumens* went through some swift formation. These shifts and changes were executed in the terrible silence of the Mongol battle movements and one wondered where the orders came from, and would not have known, unless he had seen the dipping of the great yak-tailed banners.

Nearer and nearer advanced the Mongol horde with something so ominous in its silence that the Moslems grew puzzled. Then suddenly a great crowd of javelins shot forth against the Moslem host, whizzing and thudding into horse and man.

Scarcely had the javelins been hurled when there came the deep, twanging note of bow-strings and the air was filled with arrows, which searched out the Moslem men and horses and buried themselves deep in exposed faces and armor joints and in the throats and chests of the mounts.

THE Moslem front ranks were thrown into confusion, while the Mongol bowmen wheeled aside and unmasked their solid ranks of armored warriors, who rushed in, plying lance and sword and lariat, men and horses screaming in the rage of battle as they tore into the Moslem force.

When the fight was at its height, the flanking *tumens*, which had disappeared from view, came suddenly into action on the flanks and rear of the Moslems and the Shah's men began to pull their horses out of the mêlée and to turn away from these savage, screaming warriors.

HUGH DE GALLIARD, shield fastened to his left arm, rode forward on the flank of the *tumen* commanded by Tuli, the son of Ghengis Khan.

At the first onset of the Mongol warriors, Hugh charged into the press of Moslems, shouting aloud the Crusader's battle cry.

"*Dieu lo vult!*" his voice rang out, as his terrible swinging sword bit deep into the Turkish ranks and cleared a space about him, filled with wounded and dying men and horses. Scimitars and javelins, arrows and spears rattled against his mailed armor and fell harmlessly from shield and helmet as his great sword rose and fell.

The Mongols fought to his right and left, but Hugh saw them not until in a lull in the fighting, Tuli, the son of Ghengis Khan, rode into the cleared space about the Crusader and marveled at the slaughter he had committed.

"Well done, Iron Man!" he shouted as the Moslem host began to give way.

By nightfall the Mongols were masters of the field.

What followed is history. After the breaking up of the Shah's great force, the Mongol armies converged on Samarkan and Bohkara and captured those places.

To Hugh the days passed all too swiftly, for he dreaded the sign of the new moon, only five days away, that fatal new moon which would look upon the death of the old Kaid and

the loss of Zoe, the girl he loved.

At last, no longer able to stand the strain of waiting, he again sought audience of Ghengis Khan, only to be told by that grizzled old leader that the city of Merv would be taken in due time and vengeance exacted for the murder of the ambassadors.

Hugh became desperate, pacing the ground in front of his *yurt* until at last toward midnight, unable to stand the strain of waiting, he had his horse saddled and rode forth alone into the night, heading toward the walls of Merv.

To the old Kaid, still locked in his prison cell, the days had passed all too swiftly. Each setting sun marked the nearer approach of that fatal day when he should be led forth and his head struck off. To this he was resigned, but the thought of the horror that Merkit intended for his daughter was another matter. To this he could not resign himself, and he paced the floor.

At last there came the day when he knew but one more night stood between his own death and the shame that was to be visited upon his daughter. His philosophy and his self-control broke down and he sat huddled in the corner of his cell, wringing his hands and plucking at his beard. All day he had sat thus with the sounds of the city floating up to his prison window.

IT was at dusk that he heard a new sound, and he ceased his lamentations to listen for a moment, puzzled. He had already made up his mind to send word to Merkit that he would disclose the hiding-place of his treasure, for by now the Kaid despaired of any hope of rescue.

But again that voice from outside fell on his ears and at last he went to the window and looked through the iron bars down upon the street below. Someone sat on the curbstone—a cobbler plying his trade and singing.

And lo, the voice was the voice of Mustapha, his trusted sword-bearer! The Kaid coughed to let his man know that he was listening. But the cobbler paid no heed and went on with the snatches of song.

But there was something in the wording of those songs that attracted the attention of the man above.

He sang, did the cobbler, of Rustem and Sohrab, the epic heroes of ancient Persia. But mixed with that song were snatches of other songs.

"And the Nazarene is here," sang the cobbler, "and awaits nightfall before entering the city." The cobbler changed his song then as the sentry passed on the ramparts above.

"He has the courage of Sohrab and the strength of ten men," sang the cobbler," and like a lion he fears not to enter the city with a handful of thy servants. It is well to be ready, to be ready . . ." sang the cobbler.

And the heart of the Kaid lifted itself within him and he coughed again after the manner of old men, to signify that he had heard and understood.

But there was a certain Abdulla, a servant of the governor, who was quick to seize all things that might advance him in his master's favor, and as the Fates willed it, Abdulla was leaning against the ramparts above, idly gazing out over the city, when something strange about the song of the cobbler attracted his notice.

AND Abdulla gave ear until he had learned the purport of the message that floated upward from the street below. And before the cobbler had gathered up his tools to depart there were two men lurking

in the shadows, two men who followed hard upon his trail.

They followed him out through the western gate to the river road, where he turned to the right and kept going until at last Mustapha came to that country house with the white gate posts where Hugh de Galliard had rested that first night.

But the gates were sealed, as the place had also been seized by Merkit. The spies followed Mustapha around to the rear of the grounds where a small garden gate was opened from the inside and Mustapha disappeared from view.

While one man remained in hiding to watch, the other posted back to the city and the citadel to report the presence of the Nazarene in his hiding-place. Within the house, in a small room off the kitchen, Hugh de Galliard rose from the pallet on which he had been resting as Mustapha entered.

"All is well, my master," reported the sword-bearer. "I passed word to the Kaid, may Allah protect him, that you were coming this night."

"And the ladder of rope?" demanded Hugh.

"Aye," nodded Mustapha, "it is safe at the house of my cousin, the dealer in ropes, hard by the citadel."

"And the negress who guards the master's daughter?"

"Aye, master," nodded Mustapha, "ten pieces of gold have I given her and tonight at midnight she will unlock the door of her house where the master's daughter will be dressed and waiting. The negress is fearful of the wrath of the governor, and I have promised her that we will leave her bound and gagged.

THE city is filling with the fugitives driven before the Tartar and men are busy repairing their walls and furbishing weapons and storing provisions against a siege, so that in the confusion our task should not be hard."

"You have done well, Mustapha. When darkness descends we will depart on our task."

The plan they had worked out was simple enough. Mustapha, with a rope ladder concealed under his *khalat*, was to enter the citadel, a matter not difficult to do in these troublous times, as there was much coming and going of soldiers and dealers in provisions.

He had already been on the ramparts directly above the cell occupied by the Kaid and had found a staircase there giving into the corridor below. It was his duty to lower the rope ladder down a dark angle of the wall and to wait until Hugh de Galliard and some four or five desert-bred men, ex-servants of the old Kaid, should clamber up the ladder and assemble among the shadows of the platform.

THE sentinel made his rounds at intervals of seven or eight minutes and between his appearance they hoped to assemble the men up there, unobserved.

This once done, they were to slip down the staircase, overpower the jailer on duty, unlock the cell door and lead the Kaid back up the rampart with them, whence they would descend to the street by means of the rope ladder.

From thence they would go to the house of the negress on the farther side of the citadel, secure her and move on foot through the crowded streets and outside the wall, where horses were waiting.

Due to the turmoil caused by the influx of refugees from Bohkara and Samarkand and the preparations going forward for the defense of the city, their plan stood a good chance

of success by its very boldness. But they had not counted upon Abdulla, the servant anxious to curry favor with his master.

When the starless night had enveloped the countryside in a velvety mantle, the small garden gate creaked open and several shadows came forth.

The first to come was Mustapha. He was followed by the tall figure of Hugh de Galliard, his head and figure concealed in a heavy desert cloak, underneath which he carried his long sword in the crook of his arm. After him came the handful of faithful servants of the old Kaid, and the garden gate was closed.

The group moved toward the main road leading to the city, and did not note the furtive shadow which slipped along behind them.

Even at that hour the traffic was heavy, for the peasants of the surrounding countryside were driving in sheep and cattle to provide meat for the garrison, while others brought creaking wain loads of grain.

Interspersed with these were the pale faces of the refugees from Samarkand and Bokhara, men, women and children who had fled before the Mongol horde. The little group, headed by Hugh de Galliard, moved along with this current and passed through the city gates.

None noticed Hugh de Galliard save perhaps to note his great height and width of shoulders, but naught of his armor or his face could they see, so well was he muffled in the great cloak.

A MESSENGER from the governor came galloping down the largest street, scattering the crowd before him. Hugh de Galliard pressed close into a wall as the messenger missed him by a hair's breadth.

A troop of Turkoman cavalry clattered in from a side street and jingled on down through the gate, nor did Hugh nor any with him know that they had been sent to bar the escape of the Kaid and his would-be rescuers.

IN due course of time Hugh and his party arrived in the small street under the citadel walls. Mustapha left to get his rope ladder and enter the citadel. With his rope ladder under his cloak he found no difficulty in getting up to the platform behind the ramparts.

So it was that Mustapha found himself very quickly at his post, and, fastening the ends of the ladder, during one absence of the sentinel, he lowered it to the street below. Putting his hand out, he felt the ladder tighten under the weight of someone and stepped backward into the shadows as he heard the footfall of the sentry approaching.

The shadows behind him suddenly stirred into life. A heavy hand was placed over his month. His arms were seized and he was jerked backward and out of sight and the rampart became deserted again.

The ends of the rope ladder swayed now and again as someone climbed up and at last the head of a man appeared over the top of the parapet. As he stepped on the platform his great height showed plainly that it was Hugh de Galliard. Turning, he tested the ladder, which again swayed to the weight of someone coming up.

And at that second he was jerked backward and a swarm of men clung to his arms and legs while others gagged him.

It was all over in a second and Hugh de Galliard had scarcely time to struggle before he was bound and helpless. His captors in turn

seized each man as he came on to the platform until every one of the party was gathered in.

Then they were led down the staircase at the sword's point and into the hall where fat Merkit, despite his worries over the imminence of the Mongol attack, laughed gleefully at sight of his captives, while Abdulla, his servant, stood smirking.

HO, ho, neatly done," and the fat Merkit slapped his thighs, "and so we have captured you at last, O infidel dog," he addressed Hugh de Galliard.

"Unbind that man's mouth!" he commanded, and someone removed the gag from the Crusader's lips.

"And do you know what I am going to do with you and your companions?" asked Merkit. "You have no idea," he continued unctiously. "Well, I will tell you. Within the next ten minutes you'll be taken to the north wall of the castle and flung downward upon the Hooks!"

Two or three of the bound men turned pale and trembled. They had seen men die upon the Hooks, large, sharp steel affairs set in rows along the wall above the street. A man was flung on these hooks, and caught willy-nilly and might hang there five or six days before dying.

"But time is pressing," continued Merkit. "Tomorrow morning I had set for the time for executing that stubborn fool whom you came to rescue. To show ye how vain it is to fight against Merkit, I will have him led into the hall and his head struck off now!"

And Merkit clapped his hands and the captain of the guard came swiftly to him and in another five minutes the Kaid was led in while a huge, black negro, naked to the waist, stood near-by, thumbing the edge of a broad-bladed executioner's sword.

"I have grown tired of your stubbornness, O Kaid, and I've come to believe that you have no treasure! Therefore, I have decided to make you pay the penalty of your treason."

Merkit signed to the executioner, who strode forward, while two men seized the Kaid's wrists and bound them behind him and forced him to his knees.

The executioner took position.

"Wait!" commanded Merkit. "I had come near forgetting something."

He waved the executioner back, while men went forth, returning shortly with Zoë, whose white face and staring eyes grew even whiter and more staring as she saw her father there bound and on his knees with the sharp glitter of the executioner's sword so near at hand. Her eyes swept around among the faces until aghast, they rested upon Hugh and a glad flush of relief shone for a second as she impulsively flung out her hands toward him. But Merkit's harsh voice froze her.

"I was near to forgetting your daughter, O Kaid. I had promised you that she should be thrown to the soldiers so soon as your head fell in the dust. It is my custom to keep my promises, O Kaid!"

TURNING, he beckoned to several bearded Kurdish soldiers who lounged near the walls. "Here, you, and you, and you, take this girl. So soon as the head of that dog falls from his body you will take her with you. She is the property of your company to do with as you will!"

The eyes of the savage Kurds gleamed avidly and they closed in on the shrinking girl. Merkit turned to signal the executioner. It was then that Hugh de Galliard spoke.

"Hold!" The word rang out with such resonance and power that Merkit turned, open-mouthed, and stared

at the interruption. "Hold! Merkit! Did I not hear you speak of the treasure belonging to the Kaid?"

The word treasure was the one word that had power to move the governor.

AYE, and so I did, but what have you to with it?"

"Only this," said Hugh quietly. "I know where the treasure is hidden!" Merkit turned his fat bulk on the divan and stared at the Crusader standing there, trussed up in his great cloak like a package wrapped in parchment.

"You! You! How know you of the treasure?"

"It is of no moment how I know," retorted Hugh, "the fact is that I do know. And I will lead you to that treasure for a price."

"And the price?" asked Merkit.

"The lives and freedom of the Kaid, his daughter and we who tried to rescue them."

"You demand a heavy price!" grunted Merkit; "eight lives for one treasure!"

"A heavy price for a heavy treasure," answered Hugh, "chests of gold and rare rubies and great strings of pearls and sapphires, without count and all manner of beautiful things."

"How do I know that you are not deceiving me and simply delaying the inevitable?" asked Merkit. Hugh shrugged his shoulders.

"If I do not speak truly, we are still in your power and our deaths can be encompassed just as easily half an hour hence."

Merkit nodded. "And this treasure, where is it?" he asked.

"That I will show you after you have sworn to give us liberty when once it is disclosed to you."

"It is a bargain," said Merkit, licking his greedy lips, and one could almost see the man privately resolving to be held by no such bargain the minute the treasure was in his possession. "Tell me where it is and I will send my officers for it," he said. Hugh shook his head.

IT is necessary that you go with me and that the Kaid and his daughter accompany us and these men who will assist in bringing it forth, for know, O Merkit, that the guardians of the treasure will destroy it utterly if we come with too many strange faces." Hugh went on enlarging upon that point until at last Merkit agreed.

"Is it within the walls?" asked Merkit as he rose.

"No, it is but a short distance without the walls."

Merkit took with him two of his officers and some ten guards and commanded that Hugh be freed from his bonds to lead them.

It was thus that a strange procession wended its way through the crowded streets toward the gate. Merkit and his two officers were mounted.

The guards and their prisoners trudged along on foot, including Hugh, his bonds released, who marched in the lead, still holding that great sword of his in the crook of his arm, under the cloak, from where his captors had failed to remove it in their haste.

The Kaid walked along quietly, somewhat mystified, but Zoë's eyes were shining as she stole a glance now and again at the powerful Crusader in the lead.

In due course of time they came to the small gate in the country house. Merkit's eyes gleamed and there was some chagrin in his mind in that he had not thought to seek the treasure in this place.

At the gate Hugh insisted that the soldiers be left outside and that none

but Merkit and his two officers enter, but to this the governor demurred strongly and the upshot of the matter was that Hugh gave in and all of that party filed in through the narrow gate, which was shut behind them.

"I MUST warn the guardians of the treasure," said Hugh, and standing there he raised his voice, calling in the direction of the garden which stretched dark and silent toward the river.

"O ye who guard the treasure," called Hugh, "I have brought here the Kaid and his daughter, also the governor and two of his officers and ten of his men. We are come to yield up the treasure to Merkit in payment for the lives of all of us. Make ye ready to receive us."

No sound came from the garden for a minute, and then a voice replied:

"To hear is to obey, master."

"All is now ready for us," Hugh said. Then suddenly he had flung off his great cape and his sword was at Merkit's fat throat. At the same instant dark figures seemed to spring up out of the ground all about them and there were shouts and the clang of steel on steel as Hugh pressed Merkit toward the house.

It was all over in less than two minutes. Both officers and half the governor's men had been cut down and Merkit was a captive.

But the task was not yet finished. The Kaid started to protest his gratitude, but Hugh cut him short.

"We must haste. I saw this dog," and Hugh pointed to Merkit, whose eyes were full of dread, "as we left the council chamber—I saw this dog signal to an officer to follow with more men. We must mount and flee."

'Tis a pity to leave behind all that great treasure of mine," said the Kaid wistfully.

"'Tis no pity, for 'tis not left behind," said Hugh. "Mustapha and I, with the aid of some of your loyal servants, have broken through the garden wall at a secluded spot and removed the treasure from the grotto at night, and 'tis now packed on sumpter mules and waiting for us near-by.

A LITTLE of it I took to pay these desert men whom I hired to aid us. Take me this fat pig," Hugh ordered, two of the servants who were now unbound and armed, "and tie him into the saddle; we will lead him out with us as hostage."

* * * *

Late the next afternoon the cavalcade of horsemen with its ten baggage mules and its guard of twenty of the Kaid's armed men, rode to the west, far from Merv and its abominations and far in advance of the horde of Mongol horsemen who leveled that city to the ground a few weeks later.

Zoë, veiled in a fine woolen riding cloak, rode between the Kaid and Hugh de Galliard.

"My son," the Kaid was saying, "while the salt of your friendship has opened the wounds of my gratitude, and while my back is bent by the burden of your favors, still I cannot understand your freeing that dog of a Merkit to return to Merv."

Hugh laughed shortly. "Great misery and a painful death are in store for Merkit, and with him, your treacherous nephew, Ali Maruf," he said. "Tuli, the son of Ghengis Khan, has promised to take care of those two, O my father."

And as he spoke Hugh's hand stole out and met that of the girl at his side, and they rode ahead, toward Damascus and the Holy Land, beyond where Hugh's stout castle awaited their coming.

Further Adventures of an American in the Orient Who Becomes a Symbol of Power and the Answer to a Prophecy

The Green Shiver

Another Captain Trouble Story

By PERLEY POORE SHEEHAN

Author of "The Leopard Man," "The Bugler of Algiers," etc.

1

NO one would have taken him to be an American, as he stood there in the thick of the Chinese mob. His wrinkled skin was brown and dirty. The dank hair that fell over his swollen and gummy eyes was black. So were his eyes black—as much as you could see of them.

There are a number of ways of turning eyes that are blue or gray to a dark, unguessable shade. Lemon juice is the best—squeezed right in if you can stand the pain. But the juice of bitter sage, a common weed of the mountains, will also perform the trick. It hurts worse, too. The root of the same plant will also furnish a sticky brown stain for the fair Caucasian skin.

While it dries it wrinkles. Mixed with ashes, it not only makes the skin look "native" but it also takes on the appearance of encrusted dirt.

In his heart, Shattuck — Pelham Rutledge Shattuck, sometimes of the U. S. A.—laughed a little. He wished that certain friends of his could see him now—and smell him! Even the smell was right. He could distinguish it even here in the crowd. He was an offense even to himself.

But this was the fault—or the virtue—of the clothes he wore.

He was dressed in a combination of soiled sheepskins, of greasy yak-hair felt, and tattered silk.

On his head was a Tibetan felt cap —a sort of pointed skull-cap with ear-laps.

As for his race, he might have been one of several things: Tibetan, Mongol, or for that matter, just wild Chinaman—*shan jin*, a man of the mountains. A robber, in any case. Minchow, just now, was full of such.

Minchow was one of those old cities the outside world never hears about. It lay far up in wild Kansu, where the frontiers of China, Mongolia and Tibet meet. A great place for caravans. Caravans had been making this their headquarters for centuries — caravans from Turkey and Persia, with opium and tobacco; from Tibet with turquoise and gold and musk; from China with silk and ivory.

In the gossip of desert and mountain, Minchow stood considerably higher than Peking.

NOW a new war-lord had taken Minchow and made it his capital. All day his men had been going about the tunnel-like streets of the old city with red paddles in their hands as signs of a military requisition. They took whatever they wanted—from turnips to women; for which they sometimes gave a "chop" —the war-lord's seal on a bit of red paper, which passed for money—and sometimes they didn't.

In any case, the soldiers had rounded up some twenty-five or thirty small merchants, too poor for "squeeze," who'd protested overmuch, and the war-lord was about to make an example of them.

SHATTUCK could see the victims. He was taller than most of the straining crowd about him. He was taller than most of the war-lord's soldiers who formed a triple hedge about the place of execution.

Shattuck had an eye for everything—the discipline of these troops, the way they were uniformed and armed, the expression on their faces.

Good fighting-stock, he judged. Mountaineers and Northerners, husky, browned and hard.

A little ragged in their quilted cotton, Chinese-style; but that would pass. Their rifles were modern and looked well cared for. Natural fighters who didn't know what they were fighting for, beyond those perquisites the red paddles brought them; fighting, as some men work, for what it brought in grub and fun.

"Great stuff, though," Shattuck was telling himself, "if they once went crazy for some great cause!"

There was a shrill of hysterical bugles and a crash of gongs.

The war-lord was coming.

The place of judgment couldn't have been better chosen.

It was a broad, raised terrace, a platform about a hundred yards long and as many wide. On one side of this was the long façade of a temple, on the other, the long front of an old imperial palace. The temple had been made a barracks for the war-lord's personal regiment, which now stood on guard. The palace had become his headquarters.

Both buildings were ornate with red lacquer and gold, heavy green tiles and flamboyant carvings. They were like the wings of some tremendous theatre. The terrace of polished stone was the stage. Mountains and sky made the backdrop.

In the middle of the terrace, facing the palace, the prisoners were kneeling at spaced intervals, each stripped to his waist and his hands tied behind him. Old and young, black hair and gray, skinny backs and backs that would have looked well in the prize-ring, here and there an old-fashioned queue dangling to the pavement.

At the left and right of this kneeling file were two squads of soldiers standing at ease. Between these two groups, the war-lord's executioner strolled—a pachyderm of a man, a professional wrestler, also stripped to the waist and proud of what he had to show in the way of well-fed brawn, carrying what wasn't so much a sword as a colossal butcher knife.

He didn't look at the prisoners. The prisoners didn't look at him.

There came another blast and jangle from the trumpets and the gongs. And the crowd went a little more tense.

THE war-lord had passed the Number Two court of the palace. He was evidently taking his time—stopping to light a cigarette, pausing to admire a fountain.

The prisoners had been waiting so long, some of them had begun to sag. The executioner lost his smirk for a frown as he prodded this one and that one up to a position of greater respect. Here and there kicking knees back into a more perfect alignment.

Then he was smirking again as he resumed his stroll.

"Him I'll kill," said Shattuck in his heart, as he gripped the sword concealed under his ragged sheepskin coat.

Just then, there was a third ripping blast and jangle as the war-lord, followed by his staff, sauntered through the great pai-lo, or entrance-gate, of the palace.

II

HE was a short but powerful man—bow-legged from having passed most of his life in the saddle. A Mongol habit. That he was more Mongol than Chinese was stamped on his face.

It was a face that was large and almost perfectly round. The cheek-bones were more prominent than the large but bridgeless nose. A moon-face. It was like a platter of hammered brass, the hammered brass effect deriving not only from the color and shine, but the thousand small-pox pits that covered it. Also from the fact that the expression of it never changed.

Only the bead-like eyes of it were quick and alive, incessantly alert, every glance like a little black dart that traveled far and never missed its mark.

For an instant, Shattuck had an almost painful impression that he himself had been looked at.

The war-lord didn't even move his lips or change his expression when he laughed or talked. You could watch him closely, and you wouldn't see the quiver of a muscle.

His lips were always a little open. They gave that platter-mask of his a fixed, inscrutable smile. It was a smile that gave all those who looked at it long enough a strange invasion of terror, especially if they found themselves looking overlong at the great man's teeth.

These teeth were small and pointed and spaced apart, very clean, but uncanny and not quite human. They

were like the teeth of certain rapacious fish. And the report was current—just one of many about this man of power—that he'd come by these teeth through a certain habit of feeding, once every new moon, on forbidden flesh.

HE was familiar with all these stories, of course. There wasn't a war-lord in China with a more efficient, or harder-working corps of spies.

But the stories pleased him. He encouraged them. They were right in his line.

He was General Yu.

Now, *yu* is the Chinese word for jade.

Jade, in Chinese common thought, is green; and from this and that the general had come by a nickname. It was: *"Yu, the Green Shiver."*

He came strolling out through the great pai-lo and stood there for a while leaning on his sword, knowing the sort of impression that he made and enjoying it.

All eyes were on him now, and the black eyes in his moon-disc of a face shot a million tiny black darts back at the crowd.

In the collapse of all sound, following his appearance, you could almost hear the packed mob translate that nickname of his with a single, chattering breath:

"Yu! Yu! Yu!, the Green Shiver!"

Finally he glanced at the kneeling prisoners, from one to the other, his examination beginning at the left of the file and proceeding to the right—an instant glance for each of them.

And as each was touched by that glance, it was as if the victim had been touched by the point of a needle—a poisoned needle, perhaps. At the touch of it, something in each of them died—a flutter of hope, an excuse, a plea.

MEANTIME, that elephant of an executioner had been standing there, also swaggering a little, swelling his chest, flexing the muscles of his arms, playing his big butcher knife in little oscillations somewhat like a prize-fighter showing off and limbering up after he has cast his dressing-robe aside.

The Green Shiver glanced at the executioner, and the yellow Hercules stiffened. There for a moment, was a whiff of fright on the executioner's own face. It was known that the Green Shiver cared to have no man steal his act.

But the mood of the war-lord was tolerant.

Some sort of signal must have been shot from his ferret-eyes. Or perhaps he spoke—there was no telling from any movement of his lips. There was a swish and a thud. It was as if there was a tiny explosion of red mist over a spouting red fountain, and a head had jumped away and rolled.

AGAIN that gasping breath from the crowd:

"Yu! Yu, the Green Shiver!"

The war-lord must have heard it. He appeared to smile. But on his face there was no change of expression. Only his eyes were active as the executions followed.

One after the other. Without disorder. Now and then the executioner had to get his subject into a better pose. He did this with his foot. The slash followed afterward so lightning-fast, there'd been no time for the victim to sag again.

Twice the big man showed good-natured patience—one of the elderly and one of the younger prisoners being too far gone, having to be coaxed to a balance by an ear. But, even then, no disorder, no loss of more than a dozen seconds.

And now that original little red cloud had become a faint but clearly discernible mist in the westerning sun—a faint pink cloud, like that which might overhang a pool or a cataract at sunset.

The residents of Minchow and the surrounding country had long called this valley of theirs the High Cloud Place, or Cloudy Garden—because of the rainbow-tinted clouds that hovered about the numerous cascades coming down from the hills. But now they were calling it something else.

Since the Yellow Shiver had come this way, the Cloudy Garden had become the *Feng-ti-yu,* meaning "the Valley of Hell."

III

THE executioner had just finished his work and there was a surging movement in the crowd toward dispersal when the war-lord raised his sword in a signal that the show wasn't over.

Instantly there was a smashing attack of noise again as the buglers and gong-beaters got to work. The noise swirled up in a crashing roar, like a house afire, and this time lasted longer than it had before. At the same time the spies and military police scattered through the crowd, shouting for everyone to remain where he was.

Here and there a head was cracked, someone was collared, thrown and kicked.

Shattuck took advantage of the disorder to work in closer to the hedge of soldiers.

The blare and hammer of trumpet and gong had as if set a new tempo for the beating of his heart and the pulsing of his blood.

He always felt like this when some new excitement was impending.

It was as if his heart took voice. It was as if his boiling blood became the blood of some older, more primitive and, perhaps, a better self.

He wasn't Shattuck, any more. Not Pelham Rutledge Shattuck of the U.S.A. He was Captain Trouble, the Fighting Fool. Shadak Khan, the heir of Kubla Khan, whose sword he'd come by, whose empire he'd unfurl again up and down and around the world!

Before he could push his private reflections further, he was once again engrossed by what was unfolding before his eyes.

The war-lord, still followed by his staff, having neatly skirted that lake of blood in the center of the terrace —a lake of blood in which the dead were hunched or sprawled, like ornamental islands—was now pacing his leisurely way around the limits of the terrace, like a general inspecting his troops.

BUT it was the gaping crowd as well as the banked regiment that he looked at. The stone-paved terrace was two or three feet higher than the level of the rest of the open square. The Green Shiver could look down on all these people. They shivered all right at the touch of his eyes.

For a second—the fraction of a second—Shattuck felt the touch of those eyes on his own. There came to him the penetrating thought that he had been discovered, that the war-lord knew who he was—knew that here was a rival down from the mountains—knew that back there in the mountains were horses and men, armed with machine-guns stolen from an arm-running caravan, captured far away at the other end of the Gobi.

What didn't the Green Shiver know, with all those spies of his?

Long ago he must have heard the gossip that was now going the rounds

of a thousand—ten thousand—campfires.

Shadak Khan! The name had caught on! Chinese-Mongol for Captain Trouble. A Captain Trouble come to conquer the world. Like Kubla Khan, his great predecessor. And already this Captain Trouble, the Fighting Fool, had gone to Kara Koto, the ghost city of the Gobi. There he had met and defeated the Chud and allied himself with the Agharti—two of the great Subterranean Peoples, as they were called.

The Chud were slaves. They'd been set to work digging Kara Koto out of the sands.

The Agharti had acknowledged Shadak Khan as their chief. They'd put at his disposal all their buried treasures of gold and magic. Shadak Khan! Kubla Khan come back after all these centuries!

WHETHER by intent or accident, the war-lord had come to a stand not far from where Shattuck himself stood wedged between the soldiers and the mob.

All this time the bugles had been squalling and the gongs rolling out their tumbling thunder — a barbaric incantation to turn any man to thoughts of blood and fire. Now the war-lord again made a quick signal with his sword and the racket ended.

Even after it had ended, the air kept throbbing for a minute or so, and during this interval the Green Shiver still looked about him. As he slowly turned, that big face of his caught the sun and reflected it like hammered brass.

This time Shattuck had a yet stronger impression that the war-lord had looked at him—looked at him as a snake might look, seeing, knowing, appraising, but itself a sphinx.

A hard, metallic voice was heard —a small voice, but needle-pointed, carrying far, like those black darts of the war-lord's eyes. And although there was still not the slightest quiver or change of General Yu's bright face and grinning lips, everyone knew that the voice was his.

IV

HE spoke a variant of the Peking dialect and he didn't speak this very well. But it was good enough. Minchow, as a caravan center, had been brought up on strange accents.

The voice came in a drawling, choppy snarl, almost plaintive, at times, like the menacing talk of an offended tiger.

"I don't want to go on killing you," the Green Shiver said. "I like this town. I want to stay here and have people around me. I'm going to make it my capital. I'm going to protect you. I'm telling you this for the good of us all. I don't want to do to you what I did to the people of Holy-Way-Town down there in the South. They thought they'd keep their women and their rice for themselves. Now they don't need either."

As an orator he was highly successful, regardless of his accent. The people were listening. The haze of sunset was like a haze of blood. There was a scent of blood in the air stronger than all the other compact taints that drifted here and there—of sweat and incense, of unmentionable things; the faint but far-traveling perfume of sesame.

The Green Shiver, still with his darting eyes at work on the crowd, made a slight movement with his hand. One of his younger staff-officers leaned close, listened to some whispered command, and started off at a trot toward the palace.

"Speaking of women," said the Green Shiver—and now Shattuck's heart leapt with a premonition—"speaking of women, I suppose

you've all heard that I have a certain little *taitai* of my own just now —a white one, a maiden, daughter of a keto-jin (hairy foreigner), daughter of a cursed missionary and his wife, I found down there in Holy-Way-Town — Meikuo-jin (Americans) — and worth their weight in gold. Them I killed. I sent them to hell. That shows you that I'm not after money.

"But as for this daughter of theirs, this little *yang-kwei-tzu*—"

He paused.

"As for this little foreign devil—"

He'd heard that patter of feet. He waited. A dozen palace-servants in long purple robes—eunuchs, most likely—were coming on the run, bearing an elaborate sedan-chair, on long poles. It was an imperial chair, screened and veiled and ornamented, fit for an emperors' favorite, for which it might have been originally intended. It was carved, jeweled, lacquered. It was further ornamented with swaying tassels and little bells, like the wind-bells of a temple.

The servants put the chair down, bowed to the ground, and pattered into the background.

THE Green Shiver had a great sense of theatrical values. He was absolutely motionless as he scanned the crowd. Shattuck was conscious of those watchful, snakey eyes and controlled himself. But his heart was beating high.

Then it was true—the rumor he'd heard in the hills! It was this that had brought him here—an American girl in the hands of the Green Shiver.

He even knew her name. It was Macon. The Chinese convert — a fugitive from Holy-Way-Town that they'd found dying in the hills—had called it Ma-kong. But he'd been able to write the name: Laureen Macon.

The crowd strained, holding its breath. Most of the people here had lived their lives thus far and had never seen a foreign devil before, even a man. And now, a *taitai!*—a woman! a girl!

One of the officers in the warlord's suite, acting on an inaudible and invisible order, had stooped toward the chair and jerked a carved screen aside.

"Get out!" he ordered, in correct Chinese.

The girl stepped out.

At sight of her, the crowd let out a sound that was half-howl, half-shriek. They were looking at the apparition of their lives.

It was as if they'd seen a spirit.

She was, literally, white and gold, an ivory statue come to life.

SHATTUCK read details of her tragedy as he looked at her. She'd been wakened from her sleep. She'd been carried off before she'd had a chance to dress herself. All she wore was her nightdress and a Chinese coat of embroidered silk, grass sandals on her feet. Her head was bare and her long yellow hair was loosely plaited.

But the tragic note was principally in her face. A young face. She was, perhaps, eighteen, or even younger. A face that was lean and delicate, very beautiful, with wide eyes filled at once with terror and challenge.

"Hi-ee!" cried the crowd.

"Ee-ya!"

Shattuck was smothering his heart as he looked up at her.

The girl was frightened to death, but was standing firm. And that—was courage!

"Stand forward!" said the officer, curtly—the one who'd commanded her to leave the chair. "Quickly!"—and he gave her a prod with his finger-tips.

"And you also, I'll kill for that!" Captain Trouble choked in his heart.

Shattuck was Captain Trouble

again. He was Shadak Khan! He'd kill! The world was in need of a purge! He was the Fighting Fool. The world was in need of Fighting Fools just now!

The girl—like a girl in a dream—had stepped forward. She was looking out over that ocean of straining yellow faces—not all of them bad—not many bad; but strained, gaping, shot with wonder, lust, superstition.

"Hi-ee! Eee-ya! Ai!"

Then the droning snarl of the Green Shiver was snaking out over their heads again, commanding silence, as a coiling lash would do.

"Look at her!" he cried. "Silver and gold! Who wants her?"

The question was so amazing that it held the crowd in suspense.

The Green Shiver took up his menacing complaint:

"So far, Minchow hasn't been so very generous! Who wants her? I'm going to sell her to the highest bidder!"

Shattuck could control himself no longer. He hadn't tried to. It was something else controlling him.

"Me!" he howled in a choked voice. "I want her!"

He thought of it only after the last word was out—he'd spoken Chinese, thank God!

V

SOME of those nearest Shattuck—those who could see him—began to laugh and jeer. They referred to his rags and his smell.

But he turned on them with a curse so deadly and foul that they quailed, and, satisfied, he turned again toward the war-lord.

General Yu was looking at him. Even the girl was looking at him. And some of the nearest soldiers also had lost their fixity of attention on the war-lord and were glancing around at him.

At the same time, as if through the back of his head, Shattuck was aware of pushings and scufflings, and he knew what the meaning of this would be. These were the bravos and gorillas of the war-lord who'd been scattered through the crowd. They were headed his way.

Had the Green Shiver given some secret signal that would fetch him—Shattuck wondered—a knife in the back?

In any case, as well to be damned for a sheep as a lamb!

SHATTUCK again addressed the Green Shiver direct:

"You made your offer! I take you up!"

He and the war-lord were looking at each other. While they looked, there was one of those moments when the fate of the world seems to be hanging in suspense—all things suspended—ready to fade into nothingness or come back into solid reality again: those mountains in the background, the blue Nan Shan; sun and air; this crowd; that white wraith of a girl.

He didn't dare look at her again, as yet, but he knew that again she had turned and was looking down at him—just another figure in that nightmare of hers.

What could she be thinking of him? Had she grasped something of what was going on? The Chinese refugee back there in the mountains had spoken of her as not having been long out of America. How much could she possibly understand of what was going on.

The Green Shiver had kept his grin. But that meant nothing. Through his small-pox-paralyzed lips, his small pointed teeth were gleaming. He was something very, very hard to look at, vaguely terrifying even to a man with nothing on his conscience, nothing to fear. To

face him now was like facing a tiger in a world of tigers.

"Who are you?" came the cold steel of his voice.

"I'm an ambassador," said Shattuck.

It was a bold stroke. He'd made it boldly. This was no time to cringe. He'd bawled his answer.

There was a guffaw, a howl.

"He stinks!"

"He's lousy!"

"He's smoked a green pill!"

But the Green Shiver had seen nothing nor heard anything to laugh at. He looked away from Shattuck for a few flashing seconds, spreading a chill and a silence wherever he looked.

"An ambassador!" said General Yu, in his droning voice; and his eyes were drilling into Shattuck again.

Yu was no fool. He'd spent a lot of his life among men who'd looked no better than this clotted and squinting beggar down there. Some of these men had been kings in their way, the masters of strange secrets, wide flocks.

"Ma-lai!" Shattuck growled. "Make way!"

AND he clawed at the shoulders of the nearest soldiers.

There was something of terror in the way they tried to stop him. Was this an assassin—a crazy man at that—bent on killing the Green Shiver here before their eyes?

For a flickering moment it seemed as if the same question had found its way into the war-lord's brain. He took a half-step backward. As he did so, two of his staff-officers jerked out automatics and switched the muzzles toward Shattuck.

But it was the war-lord himself who repeated the order that Shattuck had given.

"Mai-lai!"

And Shattuck, who'd been elbowing the soldiers aside, found the way open before him.

The world seemed large before him as he emerged from the crowd. He was breathing again and looking about him as he came up to the stone-paved terrace.

He was close to the girl, close to the war-lord, close to those tense young officers who stood just back of the war-lord still with their revolvers drawn.

"Kungyeh," Shattuck said as he faced the war-lord "—Duke, you at least know a man when you see one. So do I!"

The crowd had fallen deathly silent again. The only sound in all Minchow, just then, was a faint and as if reluctant murmur from the wind-bells, suspended from the temple roof. It sounded like a tolling—a knell for those already dead and those about to die.

VI

"WHAT'S your name?" came the query from the war-lord's motionless lips.

"I have no name," Shattuck answered recklessly.

"What's your business?"

"Ba, ha!"—a strolling minstrel.

Shattuck felt a sort of drunkenness upon him. He always felt like that when his danger was great—it was like some subtle ether distilled by the nearness of Death. Yet it left him fearless, poised, his brain abnormally clear.

He looked at the girl.

She was gazing at him as if with sightless eyes. One horror more or less at the present moment meant nothing to her.

Shattuck, rolling slightly on his feet, took time to look out over the crowd. His look was one of contempt and defiance. He made the

gesture of spitting at them. Then, once more, he confronted the war-lord.

"If you are a strolling minstrel," said the Green Shiver, "you'll know some poetry. Recite us something."

Shattuck quoted:

May you mount the Sacred Mountain
And find yourself as a god;
Eat jade-pure sky and quaff the sunrise cloud,
Yoke up the hornless dragon—
The White Tiger of the clouds—and so,
Ride on to heaven!

Had any of those tense young officers back of the war-lord—or had the Green Shiver himself—detected anything wrong in his recitation of the verse? It was a poem he'd learned as a child, down in Tientsin. Had the girl caught the message he'd woven into it? One English word to a line he'd woven into the recitation:

"Laureen!
"Laureen!
"You
"Have
"Help
"Near-by!"

Shattuck had the pose of a man who has acquitted himself well, and isn't ashamed to acknowledge it himself. But he wondered—wondered!

DEATH was very near, and now this meant not only his own death but that—and God grant nothing worse than that—of the girl. He looked at her again, taking his time about it this time, as any man might—especially when he was expecting to buy her. This time, when her eyes crossed his, he saw—he was sure—a glint of understanding.

General Yu cut in with a purring query:

"So, Mr. Minstrel, you are an ambassador, are you?"

"Duke, I have that honor."

"And what's that you've got hidden under your coat?"

This was death—it flashed through Shattuck's mind. But that other self, his Genius, came to his aid.

"That, Duke," he said, "is my testimonial—the sword of him who sent me!"

AND before the frozen stare of the officers and the crowd, and for an instant, the alert suspicion of the Green Shiver himself, Shattuck carefully, slowly, brought out the sword he'd been keeping concealed. He brought it out unsheathed, gleaming white—the perfect sword.

There was no disguising it. This, unmistakably, was the Perfect Sword. As compared to other swords, it was as a thoroughbred among crowbaits—the beautiful lines, the perfect balance, but above all, that ancient seal on the gold pommel of the hilt. It was a seal cut into a thousand rocks, in the secret places of the mountains.

"Who was it that sent you?" the war-lord purred.

"Shadak Khan," Shattuck replied. "He has sent me to inquire about this maiden."

As Shattuck said this, he saw a glint of such black poison in the eyes of General Yu, that he knew that the girl's fate and his own would be sealed, unless he thought quickly.

Quickly he added in a whisper that only the Green Shiver could hear:

"And I alone, O Duke, can deliver Shadak Khan into your safe-keeping."

"Hm-m-m!"

The seconds ticked off. Looking up, Shattuck saw a dozen carrion

eagles in the sky—circling lower, circling lower, while the Green Shiver toyed with plans and speculations in his crafty brain.

"I think," the war-lord said, at last, as much to the others as to Shattuck, "that the honorable ambassador would like to refresh himself with a bath and a change of raiment. We'll talk things over afterward in private."

As Shattuck joined the procession that now started for the palace—trumpets screaming and the big gongs rolling again—he noticed that the executioner was walking at his side.

There lay the score or more of headless bodies in their blackening pool—most of then in an attitude of prayer. He took a last glance at the sky. The sky seemed very beautiful. The sun was going down.

VII

SHATTUCK, that morning, had left his people well back in the Nan Shan. They'd been on their way through the mountains, headed for Tibet, when they'd come on the dying Chinese who'd told them of the murdered missionary and his wife, and their daughter, Laureen, and then of that grinning horror of a war-lord, General Jade, the Green Shiver.

Just over the mountains from China, and Minchow, in the Tibetan highlands lay Koko Nor—Koko Nor, the Blue Lake. It was at Koko Nor that Kubla Khan had established one of his capitals. Where Kubla Khan had passed, there Shadak Khan would follow.

Shadak Khan was already at the head of a growing horde.

Juma, the old Kirghiz chief, was calling in his people to join the new movement. Why not? Fighting for those who wanted it; new grazing lands for those who didn't want to fight.

Then Champela, the mystic, the only lama in Tibet with an American father, had decided that now was the time, and his friend Shattuck the means, to bring about the long-predicted reformation of the Lhassa government and Lamaism in general.

It was the dream of many another fighting-priest in the Tibetan highlands. They'd come drifting down to the Lamasery of the Soaring Meditation ready to join the movement. For them it was the launching of a new Crusade.

SO with the Agharti, that tribe of the Subterranean People who'd kept alive during the centuries the legend that some day the Great Khan would return and when he did it would be to clear the way for Maitreya, the new King of Peace and King of the World.

Shattuck had given them a sign. He himself was the Great Khan come back—Shadak Khan, the Trouble Captain, Captain Trouble.

The Aghartis, master astrologists, all of them, had cast Shattuck's horoscope. It was as they had known it would be. The "eight signs of his birth" were all signs of war and the sun over all, meaning that he would succeed.

Now some of the Agharti were going with Shadak Khan to Koko Nor while others remained at Kara Koto, the black ghost city of the Gobi, now arising again from the sands after more than half a thousand years. . . .

"Dak, my son and my chief," old Juma had said, stroking his beard, "you can't risk all this by going down into that Chinese city alone. Say the word, and we'll all go."

But Dak—Juma's first rendering of Shattuck's name—must have his way. His friends had seen him

on his way. Strange are the ways of a man possessed! The life on which may hang the turning of the world—that life a man will risk as he might risk a coin.

BUT the thing that is written can't be changed. Kismet! Karma! Fate! Still, there had been certain arrangements, in case things did go wrong. That also would be an affair of Karma, the invisible tissue of cause and effect that shaped men's lives.

Should Shadak Khan fail to appear again outside the walls of Minchow before the setting of the sun, the Agharti, singly and in scattered groups, were to make their way to the city in the dark.

The main gates of the city would be closed by that time, but they'd have no trouble in finding the entrance of the opium-runners—the *t'u fang-tze*.

Minchow had been in the smuggling business—opium included—for upward of a thousand years.

Great guides and travelers were the Agharti, especially at night. Which wasn't surprising. From father to son they'd spent their own centuries going about Asia in secret. They had secret trails through mountains and mountain-caves, known only to themselves. They had allies in widely-scattered cities.

All these centuries they had been storing up this knowledge and their wealth against the coming of the Great Khan. And now the Great Khan had come: Shadak Khan, Captain Trouble.

There was a cave in the Nan Shan overlooking Minchow called the Fur-Girl cave. It was a hiding-place that could be reached only by the Gorge of the Grasping Fist.

In the cave itself and the folds of the mountain that could be reached only through the cave, there was room enough to hide away an army—an army with horses and camels.

It was here that the two chief lieutenants of Shadak Khan, Juma and Champela, one the fighting chief and one the spiritual chief of the rising horde, took up their watch after the Agharti had taken their leave.

Sunset! And in the glow of the West the faint slim ring of a new moon! The moon was gone and the stars came out.

Dogs were barking now, and down in the darkening valley Minchow was like a moored ship gleaming with ten thousand yellow lights. The lights grew rarer as the stars swung over.

"And still no Shadak Khan!" breathed Juma in his beard.

Champela, the mystic, was at his side. Champela had been sitting, cross-legged as was his custom, like a man in a trance. His eyes were open, but they appeared to be unseeing. One would have said that Champela was seeing by some other eye.

"There's a signal!" Champela suddenly spoke up.

"Where?" gasped Juma.

He had the eyes of an eagle—or a nighthawk—and he'd been watching dark Minchow as if it held his only hope of heaven.

A full two seconds passed—seconds of darkness; then, from a corner of special blackness in the city's mass Juma saw a flash of bright red flame.

It was the signal they'd been waiting for.

VIII

THE palace was as large as any that Shattuck had ever seen—courtyard after courtyard and all of these guarded by soldiers. He was a prisoner. He had no doubt about that as he followed the lead of the executioner back into the far interior of the palace. Very

wonderful! Painted and gilded rafters, jade and porcelain, vast old carpets of yellow and black, plum-color and mountain-blue, silk hangings.

"The honorable ambassador will drink tea with me—after his refreshing bath," said General Yu, and he was gone with the members of his staff.

Had the Green Shiver meant it for a joke?

Whether he did or not, Shattuck didn't care. He was busy, busy. His brain had developed as many feelers as a cuttle-fish.

He believed that he could find again the court where the chair-carriers had turned aside with Laureen Macon. He could find again the court where the war-lord had just now left him. This was a game and the loser in it would lose his life.

The palace was getting dark, and a swarm of servants were going about the place lighting paper lanterns and oil lamps, some of which were old and some of which were modern. Even to Minchow the American Oil King had found his way; and by some occult twist of his mind Shattuck found the fact encouraging.

BUT the thing that arrested him most was the sight of all these servants. Manifestly they were not newcomers. These were Minchow people. These were servants that had been left here by the old régime.

He took note of the fact and no longer felt alone. He was on the side of these people, and if he could prove it to them so also would they be on his side.

Then—the crisis was on him like a springing tiger.

There'd come a push from behind. As he plunged forward, unable to turn, he was caught in what seemed to be a giant spider-web. The web had been spun across the door of a shadowy room. The room was suddenly filled with men in uniforms.

Shattuck had heard about these man-trap spider-webs before—heard about them vaguely. They were good to take men alive and uninjured. Like that the prey could be left in full possession of his capacity for pain. An old invention—old as China. The real, exquisite perfection of torture could be indulged in only when the victim was taken unblemished, unstunned, wide awake.

TORTURE! Shattuck could see it now. He'd be tortured while the Green Shiver was drinking his tea. There was the finger-nail torture? The ten-thousand little tap torture!

All this simultaneously, in the very act of sprawling.

And other things simultaneously. A warning in his brain not to struggle—it was by his struggles, sudden and wild, that the victim tied himself up the more securely in these silken nets. A foot in his back—and there came to Shattuck a memory of the executioner footing like that a man he was about to kill.

And all in this same instant there came to Shattuck the memory that he'd promised himself to kill the executioner for doing just that.

At his first contact with the silken mesh he'd started to turn. He'd kept his arms hunched and close to his sides.

Before he'd come to the floor he'd pulled an automatic from the left sleeve of his sheepskin coat and sent a bullet through a mass of flesh that was all he could see.

Shattuck came down on his side all but paralyzed so far as free movement was concerned.

The next time he fired he came within an ace of shooting himself in the chin. He'd fired with his two hands against his stomach, up

past his own head, at some one plunging toward him from the room.

Two shots, and he didn't know—he didn't even try to guess—the result of either of these. But the fools were giving him time. Why didn't they pile on to him?—smother him?

Carefully, swiftly, knowing that a single false movement and yet also the loss of a second, might mean slow death—for himself, for the girl—while a Green Jade Devil drank his tea—Shattuck's two hands found his sword. If ever a fighting man made a prayer to his sword—back through strangling dark annals of unwritten history—he made one now.

But this also must have been happening all at once. The blade had turned. An invisible harper had begun to play as taut silk strings were severed.

He was quick as a cat, quick as a snake, as the web dissolved about him. He didn't suspect until then how quick he had been.

A glance behind him and he saw the big executioner in a final paroxysm—kneeling, kowtowing. Still on his spraddled knees, the executioner ducked head down to the floor and remained there in the attitude of one of his own beheaded subjects.

A GLANCE into the room, and Shattuck saw that he'd shot another man. The comrades of the man were just easing him to the floor.

The look of consternation on the faces of these comrades brought him a further flash of discovery. Not one of these men was armed. They were the kidnaping crew, meant to trap rich merchants and such others as General Yu might invite to tea. If the men were armed, they might injure the guest before the war-lord himself got to work—the bloom would be gone from the peach, the torture-luxury would have lost its quintessence.

Shattuck was on his feet, sword in one hand, pistol in the other.

He addressed them softly.

"Have you ever heard of Shadak Khan?"

They had. Not a caravan had come into Minchow since they'd been here that hadn't brought stories of Shadak Khan. Caravans were Minchow's newspapers, its telegraph and radio.

"I'm Shadak Khan," said Shattuck. "And you may take your choice. It's me—or death!"

IX

KILL! Kill!"

It was the old cry of the Chinese mobs.

In Chinese it went:

"Dah! Dah!"

"Kill! Kill!"—and the hard-pressed, long-suffering people of Minchow were shouting it now. The Agharti, Shadak Khan's new followers, had fired them to it. But Minchow's people were already human tinder just waiting for the match.

They'd seen their men murdered and their women abused, their temple defiled and their palace—to which emperors had come to write poems—turned into a laboratory of luxury and pain.

But now they dared rise. Shadak Khan had come to save them.

General Yu, the Green Shiver, must have heard those cries at last. For some time he must have been hearing them—but strained fine, as through a seive of silence—back there in the depths of the yamen where he was taking his repose.

He lay on a divan of purple satin splashed with a rich embroidery of yellow dragons and bright green willow-trees. Before him, kneeling on a cushion, was Laureen Macon.

"Are you still resolved to kill yourself," the general was asking, "if

I honor you by making you my wife?"

She stared at him, but did not answer.

"You saw that lousy beggar—that crazy man from the hills?"

No answer.

"Would you prefer that—I marry you—to him?"

The general might as well have been threatening a ghost.

"Um-m-m!" he purred. "No answer! Did you ever hear of someone dying under the fifty-thousand cuts? That generally makes them talk. And my good people of Minchow would enjoy the spectacle—"

He reached over and touched a suspended gong.

"Dah! Dah!"

The shouting from the street had taken on a ponderous rhythm.

The girl herself heard it and tried to straighten up from her kneeling position, but her knees were tied and she almost fell.

General Yu, with a curse, struck the gong with his fist. No one had answered that earlier summons.

"Dah! Dah!"

It was rolling thunder, drawing nearer.

The Green Shiver came to his stockinged feet. He'd had his boots pulled off and his sword-belt unbuckled when he'd entered the room. The boots were gone, apparently, beyond recall. But he found his sword.

He'd just unsheathed it when a dark figure lurched through the doorway also armed with a sword.

IT was the sword that the Green Shiver recognized first—the sword of Kubla Khan—the sword of Shadak Khan—of Captain Trouble, the Fighting Fool.

Yu, the Jade Green Shiver, was a wily fighter. It was characteristic of him that his first movement should have been to seize the girl as a guard, as a possible hostage, a piece to be ransomed. With her he might still ransom his life.

"DAH!"

It was Shattuck who shouted it.

It was as if the sword had acted of itself. It was like a shot arrow as it sped through the Green Shiver's throat. . . .

Shattuck had brought the girl to her feet and cut the silken cords that bound her knees. He scarcely dared touch her himself. But he could speak to her. He was telling her not to be afraid, that she was safe, that he'd give her an escort down to the Coast.

THREE or four of the palace servants came in, swiftly, armed with daggers. The daggers were red.

When they saw Shattuck—Shadak Khan—they bowed low.

"Go quickly," he commanded them, "and seek out the best women in the palace—the older ones—and let them care for this lady. Tell them she's—Holy!"

He turned to the girl.

"Who are you?" she whispered.

She was as beautiful as an artist's dream of a holy wraith. Shattuck felt a pang of regret at the thought of never seeing her again. But he had work to do.

He knew what was happening in the town. The Agharti had stirred up the people. The people would be butchering the soldiers of the Green Shiver as the Green Shiver had himself just died. And even now Juma and Champela with the Tibetan force would be headed this way.

He had work to do, all right.

"Me?" he said. "I'm no one."

"No one? You've been an angel to me!"

So Shattuck let it go at that and shepherded her out and away from the thing that lay there sprawled on the floor.

Diamonds *and* Death

A Man is Kind to His Betrayer—with Strange Consequences—in this Tense Story of the African Jungle

By JACK D'ARCY

Author of "The Sacred Scimitar," "Lake of Flaming Death," etc.

CARSON stared across the camp fire at his companion and the expression he saw in Maynard's eyes worried him vaguely. The latter sat perfectly still gazing steadily at some small pebble-like objects in the palm of his hand. His little eyes gleamed avariciously as he stared. The hand that held the objects trembled slightly. Carson cleared his throat and spoke.

"You're very fond of diamonds, Maynard," he said softly.

The other started and looked up in the manner of a man who has been awakened from a dream. He chuckled nervously.

"Why not?" he countered. "They're worth money, aren't they? Worth a fortune."

Carson nodded idly. "True enough," he answered. "But some things are worth more. Some things are beyond price. There's friendship, love and the knowledge that you've shot square with the world—"

Maynard dropped his eyes hastily,

so that the other could not see the fear that suddenly sparkled in his eyes. Carson had just spoken as if he knew what he was contemplating, as if he knew what treachery was at that moment hatching itself in Maynard's mind. They did not speak again until they rolled up in their sleeping bags an hour later. Then after an interchange of "Good nights" they relapsed to another long silence.

Yet it was a long time before Carson slept. He was worried, and the worry was no less acute because it was engendered by vague and indefinite things. He had known little of Maynard when he had offered him a partnership in his diamond mine. The man seemed a decent sort and he had the money to finance the expedition. That, at the time, was enough for Carson.

BUT now, now that they had come here, loaded their packs to the top with the precious stones, Carson began to have his doubts. The greedy avid look in the other's eyes as he counted up the day's prize. The cold calculating glances that were cast sidelong at him by his partner. The miserly joy in the other's face as he figured with a pencil stub, the profits that would accrue from this trip. The casual remark that if the mine was owned by one man, he would be twice as rich as they were. Then the forced laugh that followed this comment.

To say that Carson was afraid would not have been true. He had stood eye to eye with Death too often to know fear again. But yet some sixth sense, which comes to men who have spent the best part of their lives facing peril, told him, that Maynard was plotting against him, plotting a means to take the mine to himself. Very well, there was but one thing to do. Watch carefully. Keep an alert eye on the man. Then, with that precaution taken, let Fate deal the cards as she would. Carson sighed heavily and at last went to sleep.

TWO days later they started back to civilization. The half dozen natives they had with them were loaded down with diamond ore, as they made their way through jungle and veldt toward the Cape.

Carson was grim and serious as they began their journey, and it made him no happier as he noticed the excited nervousness of Maynard. The latter crashed through the foliage ahead of the natives and talked nervously all the time. Carson replied to him in monosyllables, but never took his steady gray eyes off his partner.

For Carson was waiting, waiting for the uncontrollable greed of the other man to take hold of him and force him to terrible things. And the events of that night proved that Carson had read his man correctly.

The soft pat of a bare foot being put carefully down upon the grass awoke him. He slept lightly and alertly and even that faint noise sounded like the crash of thunder in his ears. However, Carson did not move.

He lay perfectly still, his eyes half open, striving to pierce the gloom. Then standing above him he saw a shadow. It moved slightly. A hand drew back and up over the figure's shoulder. Something glittered for a moment in a moonbeam that filtered through the trees. Then the hand descended.

But when Maynard's knife ripped its way into the sleeping bag of his partner, Carson was no longer there. With the speed of lightning, he sprang from the bag even as the other's downward blow was under way. *(Continued on page 120)*

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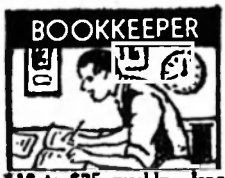

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Maynard could not stop that downward sweep now. The knife ate its way into the sleeping bag with every ounce of Maynard's strength behind it. Then Carson sprang upon him. A firm hand gripped the wrist and twisted it until the steel weapon dropped from the hand.

A strong arm twisted itself around Maynard's neck and tightened until he gasped in agony. At last he was roughly thrown to the ground. He raised his eyes to find himself staring into the non-winking eye of Carson's automatic.

Maynard's eyes were glazed with fear. His throat was dry, and for a moment the words he would utter stuck in his throat. His hands shook violently, and he waited for the death which he had failed to deliver, to come to him.

At last Carson spoke, quietly and unemotionally.

"You're a double-crossing dog, Maynard. Nothing I can say or do will ever change you, so in order to protect some one else, I should kill you, even though I desire no revenge."

The fear in Maynard's eyes grew. His face was white and drawn. The other's very calmness filled him with apprehension. If Carson had been angry, he felt, he might have had a chance. But the man was ice. He spoke of killing him dispassionately, as a duty to society.

FOR a moment Maynard fought for control of his nerves, then abruptly he lost the battle. He turned to Carson, tears running down his cheeks and a frenzy of terror in his voice as he spoke.

"For God's sake, Carson," he said, "don't kill me. Don't—I promise I'll never try it again. I'm sorry. Oh, for God's sake—"

A sob suddenly shattered the words and he broke down, weeping incoherently.

Carson regarded him with mingled pity and contempt. This was not a man. This was a creature so utterly dominated by greed, by lust for gold, that he had forgotten how to be a human. Carson slowly replaced his weapon. He could not shoot a helpless weeping creature like this. As well slaughter a child.

"You can stop crying, Maynard," he said. "I'm not going to hurt you. When we return, I'll give you a fair price for the interest I gave you in the mine, and we'll split."

MAYNARD lifted his tear-stained face. An eager light shone in his eyes.

"But," continued Carson, and for the first time his voice was hard and threatening, "remember, I sleep lightly. You've already found that out. One more trick, one more attempt on my life, Maynard, and you die. All your tears won't save you!"

He returned to his slit sleeping bag, leaving the other sitting there weeping softly in the night.

For the next two days of the trek Maynard's devotion to the other was dog-like. It seemed that he could never do enough for him. He attended him like a nigger boy. He cleaned Carson's rifle and did a score of other small duties. Carson watched him with a tolerant pitying smile, but said nothing.

Then on the third day something happened. This far they had taken turns bringing down whatever wild animal they came across in their journey. Following the laws of the hunt they had been scrupulously fair about this. If Maynard shot the next animal, be it a leopard or elephant, it belonged to Carson. Late in the evening of the previous day, Carson had shot a frightened gnu.

(Continued on page 122)

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Hence, when they started out the following morning, the next jungle victim belonged by the laws of the hunt to Maynard.

About ten o'clock in the morning Maynard caught his foot in a treacherous root and pitched heavily to the ground. His rifle flew from his grasp, struck a huge tree trunk then clattered to the ground. Carson picked him up, then examined the rifle.

"The sight is bent," he commented. "And there's a slight dent in the barrel. One of the boys can fix it. I'll send it back."

HE raised his voice and called to the natives who were following about a hundred yards behind. A boy appeared and listening to Carson's instructions, raced back to his comrades bearing Maynard's rifle.

The white men continued on through the foliage, their eyes looking keenly ahead for game. At last Maynard spoke in a weak voice.

"I—I'll go back with the boys, I think."

Carson looked at him. Since the episode of the other night he had felt sorry for the man. He tried to treat him as if nothing had happened, to put him at his ease.

"Don't do that," he said. "Don't forget the next shot is yours."

He thought he saw a flicker of fear in the other's eyes. Maynard answered hesitantly: "But my rifle. I'll wait till it's fixed. I'll—"

"Rot," said Carson. "You can use mine. Look—quick!"

Maynard's eyes followed the other; and there, some twenty yards ahead of them in the jungle, there flashed the tawny coat of a leopard. A throaty roar rang in their ears.

Carson didn't hesitate. Whatever the faults of the man at his side, he was at home in the jungle. He was a good shot and kept his head. Knowing these things, it never occurred to Carson that Maynard should miss his turn at the leopard.

Swiftly he thrust the rifle into the other's hands.

"Here," he said breathlessly. "You lucky dog, he belongs to you. I'll find a tree."

HE shouted a warning to the boys behind and sprang for the nearest tree to be out of the way when Maynard took his shot. The leopard thrust his head out of the bushes and roared. Maynard stood stock still. His face was ghost-like. The hand that held the rifle trembled violently. Carson watched him with puzzled eyes from his perch.

The leopard roared its death cry and sprang to the kill. Still Maynard made no move to bring the rifle to his shoulder. Carson yelled frantically at him. What on earth was the matter with the man?

Maynard watched the leopard hurtle through the air like a man transfixed. He paid no heed to Carson's shouts. He stood like a man hypnotized. Then when the beast was almost upon him, he uttered a terrible scream and turned to run.

But too late. The animal finished its spring on his back. Those terrible claws ripped through his tunic and tore the flesh. The wicked teeth bit deep into the nape of his neck. Carson shouted at the top of his lungs for the native boys back on the trail.

But when they arrived and drove the beast from its prey Maynard was already dead. Carson stood surveying his mangled body with a puzzled expression in his eyes. Maynard was hunter enough to have overcome his buck fever. This certainly could not be the explanation of his conduct. He shook his head in a bewildered manner, then bending over, picked up his rifle.

(Concluded on page 124)

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(Concluded from page 122)

Then a sudden crazy hunch flashed to his mind. Rapidly he opened the breech of the gun and took the shells out in his hand. For a moment he stood, stock still, staring at them, overwhelmed with the irony of the situation, grateful to the Fates which had saved his life.

For the shells in the palm of his sunburned hand were blanks! Maynard had loaded his rifle. Maynard had intended to wait until it was his shot, then let some charging beast tear him to pieces.

If it had not been for that root, if it had not been for the damaging of the other's rifle, he, Carson, would be lying, ripped to pieces, in the other's place.

Quietly he watched the blacks bury his former partner. It was late that afternoon when he resumed the trail. He walked slowly and silently, and wondered, if now, wherever he might be. Maynard realized that there were things in Heaven and earth, more valuable than the glittering shiny baubles that man digs from the ground to satisfy the vanity of other men.

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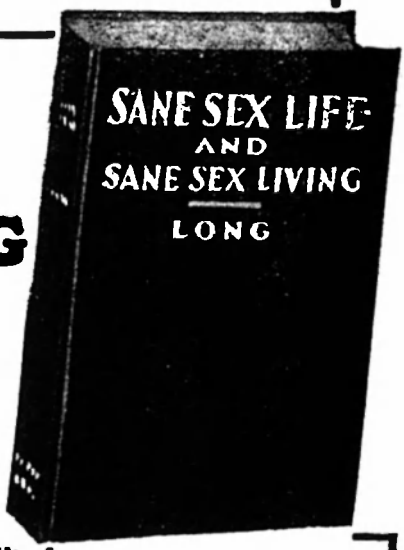

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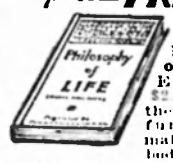

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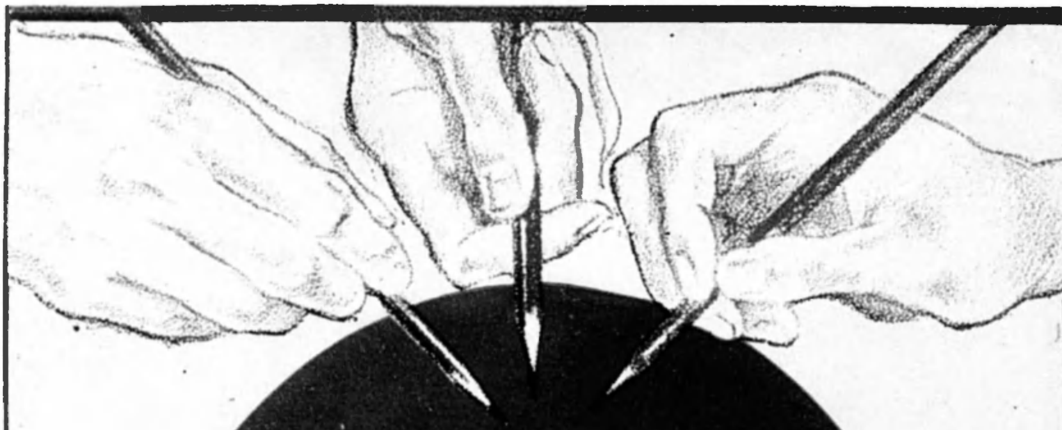

Amazing Chart FREE

Send your letter today—without delay—and I shall send you, also, FREE a chart that will make it easy for you to learn the most astonishing things about your friends. This chart is exactly like the one used by Dr. Bunker in reading your handwriting, and you will be astounded by the truths it tells about your friends. This chart is absolutely FREE—Write today.

I Will Pay [illegible]

For the Most Interesting [illegible]

Can you write? Are you over [illegible] sixteen? Can you use [illegible] If you can say "yes" to these three questions, you may [illegible] this wonderful Cash Prize [illegible] they are the only conditions [illegible] write a short sentence [illegible] or less, in your regular handwriting. Use the coupon, [illegible] or write a letter. Style does not count. What you say does not [illegible]

Your Report FREE

Just as soon as I get your letter I shall submit it to the American Institute of Grapho-Analysis (directed by Dr. M. N. Bunker, D. C. S., Ph D., N. D., for a brief report on what your handwriting says about you. This will surprise you—fairly amaze you—in the way it reveals traits of character which you have. This report is FREE to everyone, over 16, answering my advertisement.

Is this pri[illegible] [illegible]ours?

Just Writing These Few Words Qualifies You For Opportunity To

Win $3,500.00 Cash

Or a Studebaker 8 Sedan and $2,000.00 Cash Besides

This [illegible] prize is extra and separate from the Cash Prize offered for the [illegible] interesting specimen of handwriting. Picture for yourself $3,500.00 to [illegible] as you like—for education, home, furniture, clothes, family, to pay [illegible] you CAN [illegible] it. Rush your handwriting to me now. Yours may be the winner. All replies become the property of Richard Day, Manager.

RULES

$250.00 Cash will be paid for the most interesting specimen of handwriting. Send me a specimen of your handwriting today for a brief character analysis and, in addition, a FREE Character Analysis Chart. Style, neatness or legibility mean nothing, for the American Institute of Grapho-Analysis may find the poorest specimen to be the most interesting. All replies must bear a postmark not later than January 20, 1933. Duplicate prizes will be awarded in case of ties.

Hundreds Have Won

During the past year we have given financial help to hundreds of people all over the United States—we have given away hundreds of thousands of dollars. Bremer won $3,700.00. We paid Lutz $2,000.00. Harriet Robertson won $1,100.00. Mrs. [illegible] over $500.00, and hundreds of others have been made happy with big prizes and cash awards. This is YOUR CHANCE. Perhaps you may be the happy winner this time. Write me today!

BE PROMPT! I WILL SEND YOU A $100 Cash Certificate AT ONCE!

To make it worth your while to be prompt in sending in your handwriting analysis—if you will see that your letter is postmarked not more than three days after you read this offer, I will send you a Cash Promptness Certificate entitling you to an extra $100.00 in Cash should yours be the most interesting specimen of writing submitted.

RICHARD DAY, Mgr.

909 Cheapside St. Dept. BW-701-K Cincinnati, Ohio

$250.00 PRIZE COUPON

RICHARD DAY, Manager,
909 Cheapside St., Dept. BW-704-K, Cincinnati, O.

Here's my handwriting for a brief character analysis:

Name ....

....

....

....

Address ....

Town .... State ....

Date I Read Your Offer ....

I am to receive FREE a brief character analysis from my handwriting and a FREE Character Analysis Chart.