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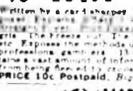
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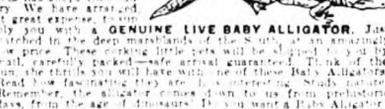
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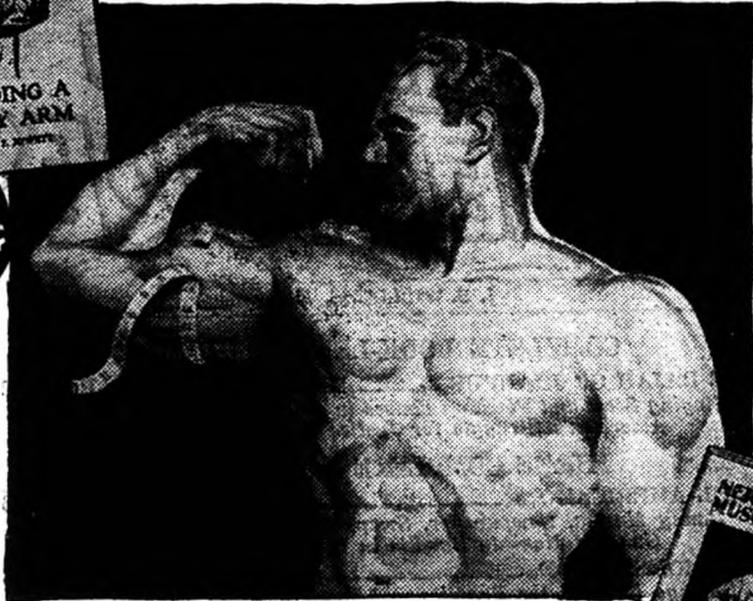
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Vol. XI, No. 3

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

November, 1934

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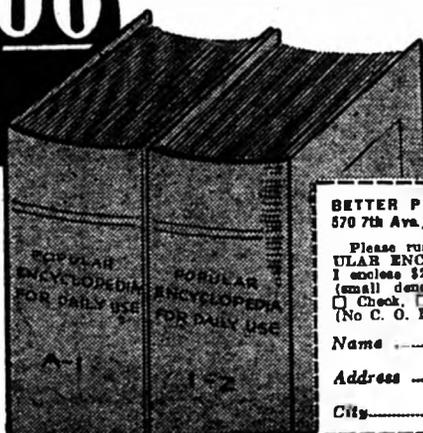
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CHAPTER I

Surprise Attack

THE road, though smooth and well-built, was steep, dusty and narrow. Walter Brock did not urge his plodding "tat"; the poor brute was doing its best, and was hardly accustomed to carrying six-foot Yanks.

The jungle crowded the road close on either hand; above, the merciless sun beat down out of a copper sky.

Mopping his steaming forehead, Brock demanded of a chattering monkey:

"Who said the winters here were

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delightful? Nice cool breezes every night. Right on until April. *Then* it begins to get hot. Oh, yeah? Thank God, I won't be here then. If I win through on this timber contract, I'll be able to take a vacation in the hot weather; if I don't—well, wherever I am it won't be in Jhanpur. Hotter place, maybe."

Ahead, the road bent sharply to the right, following a curve of the hill round whose breast it strove upward

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filled the gorge. Brock acted quickly!

of Jhanpur

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to the forest-crowned heights where the camp had been established.

"Two more miles of this. Hope Hosein's got things humming up above," grumbled Brock. He hadn't passed any ox-carts or elephants moving timber. Not one.

He came to the bend in the road. Here was a gap in the jungle; below, he caught a glimpse of the roofs and towers and domes of Jhanpur City. To the right, a deep gorge

slashed its way into the hills. He heard the murmur of a little river struggling through the masses of fallen stone which choked its course. His horse's hoofs clattered on the planks of a short bridge. It was a good stout bridge, too.

Brock should know; he had built it himself.

He glanced again toward Jhanpur—and toward the broad sheen of the Jhan River beyond the city. There lay his sawmill; there his timber rafts should be collecting even now, some to be cut into rough lumber by his own saws, some to sail down the

of an American Engineer's Mighty Struggle for Justice!



Walter Brock

Jhan till it lost itself in the vast flood of the Sutlej, and so onward to the Indus and the busy industrial tumult of Karachi.

He swore angrily as he thought of the empty road that should have been groaning beneath creaking ox-cart and lumbering elephant.

"That confounded Regent!" he muttered. "He's gyping me—and I can't do a thing. Hey! What in blazes—?"

A dozen ragged figures had leaped suddenly from the jungle. One, a tall cadaverous specimen, aimed a blow with an iron-shod flail at Brock's head, a blow which would have dashed his brains out then and there had it landed. But the startled pony shied, and the flail crashed down on the beast's head instead of Brock's. The tat dropped in its tracks.

Brock, leaping clear, jerked out the Colt .45 which was his constant companion in those trying days. Loaded and locked he carried it; now his thumb came down on the safety catch as his finger squeezed the trigger. The flail carrier spun around, shrieked once, and collapsed across the dead pony.

A carbine cracked; a bullet

whizzed past Brock's head. Screaming murderous hate in half a dozen of the innumerable dialects of India, the gang rushed at Brock, knives glittering in the bright sun. His Colt barked once—twice—another man went down, and the one behind fell over him. Brock fired at the rascal with the carbine, who clasped hands to his punctured stomach and flopped backwards to a sitting position in the dust.

Before Brock could fire again, the others were on him. An ill-smelling arm locked itself about his neck, two claw-like hands gripped his pistol-wrist, a knife flashed forward for his throat, another raked his upper arm.

Maddened by the sting of the steel, Brock went suddenly berserk. He flung out his arms, hurling his puny adversaries right and left. The flail lay at his feet. All heedless now of the shells still remaining in his Colt, he snatched up the flail and charged, swinging the terrible iron club about his head as though it had been a straw. His first blow smashed a turbaned skull as a hammer might smash a rotten pumpkin. A second head splashed into scattering fragments on the return swing.

NOT in India could the men be found to stand before this charging, snarling, raging white devil with his bloody flail and the lust to kill shining stark in his grey eyes.

"Flee, brothers, flee while yet there is time!" rose a cry of panic.

A long swing just reached the face of the speaker. Down he went—and the others were racing for the shelter of the jungle.

They were gone, crashing into the undergrowth in panic flight.

The road was clear—save for five bodies writhing in the dust, and the groaning fellow Brock had hit with his gun, who, on his knees, was alternately moaning for the mercy of Allah and striving to staunch with

trembling fingers the blood which spurted from his smashed nose and broken mouth.

At that moment a yell rose from the vicinity of the bridge.

Brock whirled. He saw a young man struggling in the grip of three or four others, saw a sword lifted to strike.

The battle-madness still held Brock's soul in thrall.

Flail in hand, he charged to the rescue. The sight of this blood-spattered giant charging upon them was too much for the young man's assailants.

One look, one shriek of terror, and they too were gone, running down the road at top speed.

Brock halted, seeing pursuit to be futile. He flung one savage curse after the recreant fugitives—whom he now perceived to be clad in some sort of khaki uniform—then the young man, at his elbow, addressed him in Urud, in a tone of deep respect:

"This has been a great slaying, *sahib!*"

HE was a slender, quick-moving, dark-eyed young native, attired only in a pair of blue-denim shorts and a tight-wound turban. He had already recovered his weapon from the dust of the road—a Lee-Metford carbine of the type once issued to native cavalry regiments. And now out of the jungle crashed three or four villainous-looking fellows, as ragged as those who had attacked Brock, but armed to the teeth with rifles, pistols and daggers.

"You are safe, Lord?" they cried to the young man.

"No thanks to you, pigs!" he retorted. "Where were you when those accursed police seized me?"

"Police!" Brock exclaimed, as the red light of battle faded from his eyes and sober common sense began to reassert itself.



Fraxon

The young man bowed low.

"*Sahib,*" said he, as one who explains all, "I am Sayyid Ali!"

Perfect teeth flashed in a bright smile to accompany this startling announcement.

Brock looked about him. Hardly yet could he believe what his eyes told him. One moment—the peaceful, empty road; the next, this savage attack, death close at hand, then—this incredible youth, and these bodies wallowing in their life's-blood.

"Sayyid Ali—the *dacoit*—the bandit?" he muttered, trying hard to understand.

"Exactly," smiled the young man. "Sayyid Ali, the *dacoit*. And very grateful, *sahib*. You have saved my life!"

Brock suddenly began to realize that all this was true, that it was not a dream, or something that had happened to somebody else.

"Well! This is a fine mess!" he muttered. "If the police come back—in force—"

"They come indeed, *sahib!*" interrupted the *dacoit*, pointing. A score of men in the khaki blouses and blue turbans of the Jhanpur State Police were indeed running up the road, from the direction of the city. "Come



Rev. Mr. Twiggs

with me—quickly!” the brigand insisted.

A shout arose.

One of the police fired, and the bullet whined within an inch of Brock's ear.

Sayyid Ali tugged at his arm.

Brock had no choice. The police would hardly be in a mood to listen to apologies or explanations. Brock leaped the roadside ditch and plunged into the jungle at Sayyid Ali's heels. Behind him clattered a fusillade; bullets clipped twigs and thudded into trees, but in spite of all this, he ran on untouched.

Sayyid Ali gave vent to a wailing cry. Instantly two or three of his followers scattered, turned, and began firing back at the police. The sound of pursuit ceased, was replaced by an uncertain shouting to and fro while “those behind cried ‘forward’ and those before cried ‘back!’”

The Jhanpur police had little stomach, it would seem, for chasing armed *dacoits* too ardently far into the jungle.

“This way, *sahib*,” laughed Sayyid Ali. “I will show you a short cut to your camp.”

The jungle was not very thick, not by any means the real jungle of the

plains. Progress was easy. They stopped beside the stream, presently, and Sayyid Ali deftly bound up the knife-slash on Brock's arm. Some of the *dacoit's* followers came up, reporting that the police had apparently abandoned the chase and seemed very much excited about the bodies in the road.

“If those weren't your men who attacked me, who were they?” asked Brock bluntly.

“*Budmashes* from the city, *sahib*. Gutter scrapings. Bazaar offal. Observe.” He pointed to two of his men, who came up the bed of the stream kicking and shoving a thin-legged stumbling fellow whose wrecked face marked him as the one whom Brock had struck at the last. “We've caught one alive.

“So, thou Forgotten of God!” he went on in the Jhanpur vernacular. “We shall have the truth from thee when the twigs are blazing between thy toes and the decdar splinters swell beneath thy finger-nails. Then, verily, we shall have the truth!”

His plight was pitiful.

The wretched man fell upon his knees.

“Mercy, Comforter of the Unfortunate!” he wailed. “I am a poor man and have done no wrong. Those others forced me to come with them. I meant no harm, O most noble lord of the *dacoits*!”

“Which was why thou carried that great knife which I took from thy girdle!” exclaimed one of his captors, a hawk-faced Pathan. “Ho! Ho! Thou innocent babe!”

“WHERE dost thou come from? In what kennel is thy home?” demanded Sayyid Ali.

“In Jhanpur City, Lord. In the Street of the Perfume-Sellers. Ask any there for Chandra Das, and thou wilt hear that I am a worthy man and no *budmash*.”

“No *budmash*, eh? Then what didst

thou here—on this road—waylaying this noble *sahib*?"

The man looked from side to side as though fearing that trees might have ears. The Pathan murmured to his companion that he might as well be whittling a few nice sharp splinters.

"I will tell," muttered the kneeling man through his swollen lips. "I will tell. There came to my house a villain, one Ram Khallas, to whom I owe much money. And he demanded that I go with him—"

"**M**AKE the splinters long and very sharp, Abdullah Khan," interrupted Sayyid Ali; and so saying he leaned down and struck the kneeling one on the mouth, whereat his victim emitted a strangled shriek.

"Dost think I cannot smell thy lies, dog?" demanded Sayyid Ali. "Now speak the truth. One more lie, and I shall let Abdullah have thee for half an hour before I will listen again."

"O Protector of the Poor—"

"The truth, offspring of maggots! Who sent thee here? Who bribed thee to waylay this *sahib*?"

The man rolled up his eyes to the grim face of his inquisitor.

"It was the Inspector of Police and Bali Lal, the cham—"

Ker-rack! The jungle echoed with the peculiar double report of a high-powered rifle.

A round black hole appeared in the forehead of Chandra Das. His head jerked back under the impact of the bullet, then he swayed forward and fell upon his face.

"Better get out of this! Quick!" snapped Brock.

"This way!" hissed the voice of Sayyid Ali. Brock followed, catching a glimpse of khaki-and-blue through the trees as he did so. The police had received reinforcements—or urging.

But again the courage of the police



Shuja Rao

was not proof against the steady fire that the Pathan and his companions presently opened up in their tree-to-tree retirement.

"Give thanks to Allah, *sahib*," Sayyid Ali murmured as they wormed their way up the rocky valley of the little river, "that the man with the rifle considered it of the first importance to stop the mouth of that *bud-mash*. Or he might have shot—you!"

"Why not—you, Sayyid Ali?" retorted Brock.

"There are reasons," chuckled the *dacoit*. "One being that Shuja Rao is a very careful man who desires to leave no trace behind—"

"Shuja Rao, the Regent, you mean?"

"So he calls himself," agreed Sayyid Ali. "He is, I think, no friend of yours?"

"I should think not," replied Brock. "The Regent certainly hasn't helped me any."

"Perhaps Shuja Rao is worrying about his nephew, His Highness the Rajah Mirrala Khan who is said to be traveling incognito on the Continent," said Sayyid Ali.

"But why worrying?" asked Brock.

"Shuja Rao has many powers as Regent," the *dacoit* smiled. "It is be-

ing said that the young Rajah has reached the age where he should return to India. When he does, his beloved uncle retires to obscurity."

"Yet Shuja Rao might prefer that his nephew did not return," said Brock thoughtfully.

"True, *sahib*," Sayyid Ali nodded. "Such thoughts doubtlessly linger in the mind of Shuja Rao. But perhaps the *sahib* would tell me of his troubles?"

CHAPTER II

A Friend in Need



"I WILL," replied Brock, wondering why he should thus be giving his confidence to a hunted bandit. "I have just been to see Geoffrey Fraxon, the Resident and Political

Agent. Before I signed my timber contract, both Fraxon and Shuja Rao assured me I'd have no trouble about labor.

"They said there were thousands of experienced native lumbermen, to say nothing of coolies and artisans in Jhanpur, who would only be too glad to get work. Lumbermen! They acted as if they'd never seen an axe. I brought in Jats as foreman. They got little work out of what Jhanpur bums didn't desert at sight of 'em."

"Go on, *sahib*," said Sayyid Ali as Brock paused.

"Last night another one of my men was found by the roadside with his throat cut," continued the American. "That makes three in three days. My contract requires that I shall not only cut, but have delivered at my sawmill by noon January first, two and a half million feet of timber.

"I've built a good road, and am using elephants and bullock-teams when I can get them—and every week there are fewer available. Frax-

on says he can do nothing about it. I can't get police protection from the Regent to guard my camp. Fraxon blames you and your gang for the killing of my men."

"And what do you think, *sahib*?" asked Sayyid Ali.

"Somehow," said Brock—they were walking openly now along the stream, climbing over upward through the magnificent grandeur of the gorge—"somehow, despite what the Resident says, I don't think you had any hand in killing those Jats. I'm wondering who did. I'm wondering what's back of all this. And I'm beginning to believe that if I could bust up this puppet show and find out who's pulling the strings, I'd discover none other than that smooth-talking—Shuja Rao."

"There is not much doubt of that, *sahib*," Sayyid Ali agreed. "Thank you for believing I did not kill your Jats. I'm a *dacoit*, of course, and one must live, but killing honest hard-working Jat workmen is not my way of getting a living. Now if it had been that matter of the Regent's tax-collector who was found in a nullah last week—"

"DON'T tell me about it," interrupted Brock. "I've seen something of the Regent's tax-collectors. I don't care what happens to any of 'em; I just don't want to know."

"I wish," said Sayyid Ali, "that I could help you solve your problems, Brock *Sahib*."

"Why?" asked Brock.

"Because if you lose, Shuja Rao gains. If he takes over your concession, his finances, which are bad, will be somewhat restored. He can carry on. If you win, his best hope of filling his treasury is gone. Without money he cannot last long."

"Why do you hate him so earnestly, Sayyid Ali?"

The *dacoit* shrugged.

"I am not a bandit by choice, sa-



Before Brock could fire again,
the others were upon him

hib," said he. "Once I was a gentleman—of noble Rajput blood, moreover." He lifted his head with a prideful gesture. "I had a home—loved ones—riches—and now I wander in the jungles and am hunted by baseborn policemen from every village *thana*. This is Shuja Rao's doing; while he sits on the *musnud* I can never be other than I am, a fugitive, a *dacoit*."

"I see," murmured Brock. He be-

lieved every word of it. The story was not an unusual one in Jhanpur those days.

"And, Brock *Sahib*," continued the astonishing *dacoit*, "I have a feeling here—" he beat upon his breast with clenched fist—"that it is through you that Shuja Rao will come to his deserts at last. The conviction grows upon me that you, in fighting for your rights, will uncover the sinuous paths of that cobra who calls himself the Regent of Jhanpur, so that all men may see the slimy trail of the serpent and know him for what he is."

"All men—even certain Great Ones

from as far off as Delhi, eh?" guessed Brock shrewdly.

"Precisely," smiled Sayyid Ali. "That is why I would help you if I could. I can get you more workmen, *sahib*. There are many *ryots* who have been so ground by the tax-collectors that they till their fields no more, save just for so much produce as will keep their families from starvation, just so much as they can bury in jars beneath the floors of their huts. These know Sayyid Ali for their friend. Gladly will they come and work for the *sahib's* wages."

"That is very fine of you, old man," cried Brock. "But—have they animals? *Bullocks?* *Elephants?* For the problem is now one of transport and not of timber-cutting."

"Not many, I am afraid." A worried frown creased Sayyid Ali's forehead.

At that moment Brock heard a faint sound—a distant yet persistent whine that seemed to come from the head of the gorge. He stopped to listen.

"Do you hear that?" he demanded, after a moment. "That's my portable saw-mill—the one I have up at camp to cut timber for buildings and so on. We must be close to the camp."

"We are," replied the *dacoit*. "Did I not say I would show the *sahib* a short cut?"

Brock looked at the boulder-choked course of the stream; he looked at the towering walls of the gorge.

HIS eyes were shining as with some sudden inspiration.

"Can you really get those men for me, Sayyid Ali?" he asked. "Many men?"

The *dacoit* nodded.

"As many as you like, *sahib*. A thousand—two thousand—"

"A thousand will be plenty. Pick the best; any with some rough knowledge of carpentry will be a help."

"It can be done, easily. During the day, and tonight, I will send out my messengers. Tomorrow the *sahib* will have his men. They will come—and they will work. Ahhh." The *dacoit* stumbled. Brock, glancing at him sharply, for the first time became aware that Sayyid Ali's left arm, about which he had carelessly thrown a bright orange scarf, was swinging limp, that a dark stain was spreading on the scarf.

"Here, my friend! You're hurt—"

"It is nothing, *sahib*. See—I've twisted the scarf tight to stop the flow of blood—"

NONSENSE! That must be looked to. Hm. Bullet went right through—never touched the bone—but you've lost a lot of blood. Why didn't you say something before? Come on to the camp and I'll fix you up. I've some knowledge of gunshot wounds, and a pretty good surgical outfit."

"I do not want to bring you danger, Brock *Sahib*—" the *dacoit* swayed on his feet, his brown face slowly turning grey.

Brock grinned.

"I've taken a liking to you, Sayyid Ali!" he announced. "And besides, aren't you going to get me a thousand workmen? Here, you're all in—"

Brock picked the slender young man up in his arms and strode along easily enough. Odd, he reflected, how little some of these natives of India weighed.

The clean smell of the upland forest swept down through the gorge on the wings of a rising breeze. The tang of fresh-sawn lumber, of pine needles, of wood-smoke from the cook-fires—Brock sniffed it as a war-horse sniffs the battle from afar off.

"By the seven brass hinges of hell!" swore he to Sayyid Ali, who grinned at him rather wanly, "we'll lick this thing yet!"

CHAPTER III

The Resident Pays a Call

H O S E I N, the sturdy Jat who served Brock as general foreman, received "the *sahib*" as the latter came staggering into camp, and relieved him of his

limp burden. Sayyid Ali had fainted. He had lost more blood than he had thought.

His followers had apparently vanished, though once or twice Brock thought he saw the Pathan, Abdullah, hanging about.

In his little dispensary he cleaned and bandaged the bullet-wound, which was after all not a serious one. Presently Sayyid Ali opened his eyes, smiled faintly, and tried to sit up.

"Again my thanks, *sahib!*" said he. "Is Abdullah here? No?" He lifted his face to the screened window and gave that queer wailing cry which Brock had noted before. He had scarcely dropped back again when Abdullah stood in the doorway.

Sayyid Ali gave the man long and detailed instructions, using a dialect with which Brock and Hosein both were unfamiliar. When he had finished, Abdullah salaamed and was gone on the instant.

"That arranges for your men, *sahib,*" said the *dacoit*. "Now—you'd better get me out of this as quickly as you can. The police will be up here looking for me, or I'm very much mistaken."

"Nonsense," snapped Brock, with more assurance than he felt. "The police had better leave this camp alone, or God help them when I see the Resident again. I'll have a pretty story to tell."

"You'll find that Fraxon *Sahib* won't be of much help to you," Say-

id Ali answered. He might have said more, but at that instant the cook entered with a bowl of steaming broth.

"Here, get this into you," Brock bade him, "and then lie back there and take it easy. I'll be in to see you again in a little while, but first I've got some work to do. And what work! If I'm right—boy!"

He was grinning happily as he went out, Hosein at his heels.

Immediately Hosein began his tale of woe.

"No transport animals came up for work today, *sahib!* Not one! We have only the three elephants that we have been using for piling and sorting heavy timber. What shall I do, *sahib?* This—"

"Wait, Hosein. It does not matter so much. Answer me a question. That little river which sinks into the *nullah* over there about three hundred yards from the cook-shack—where does it come out? It falls into the Jhan, doesn't it?"

"Yes, *sahib.* It reaches the plain about a mile from the Lahore Gate of the city, and from there to the Jhan its course is deep and swift."

"**W**HAT would you say to floating our logs down that river?" asked Brock, chuckling.

"I would say, impossible, *sahib,*" replied the stolid Jat. "There are too many rocks; and even with dynamite we could not possibly clear the gorge in less than a month. Whereas we have only—"

"Eleven days," cut in Brock. "I know. Yet there is a way, Hosein, my friend. A way formerly much practiced in my country, but become old-fashioned there since the logging-railway and the tractor have come in. To my shame I had forgotten that such things had ever been done. It will save us, Hosein. Come here."

He led the way into his office-

shack. Jerking down a drawing-block, he began sketching rapidly.

"We'll cut out rough lumber with the portable mill. We can use some of that small deodar for props, just as it is. I'll have plenty of men tomorrow. We'll build this thing just as I've sketched it, right down the gorge. Plenty of good holding ground for the props. We'll turn the water of the stream into it, and it'll shoot our logs right down to the Jhan!"

"But what is it, *sahib*?" Hosein was excited but bewildered.

"In my country it is called a flume, Hosein. It is a sort of river in a box—a long box on legs, with enough water to float a log. What a fool I was not to think of it before!"

"It is marvellous," said Hosein. The honest fellow was delighted. He had hated the thought of failure almost as much as Brock had.

"Now then, we'll get busy. Put all the available men to handling timber as fast as the saw will take it. Cut these sizes—" Brock scribbled rapidly—"and have a dozen men with crosscuts start in cutting the deodar props to these lengths. We'll show India how to deliver timber!"

"We will, *sahib*!" agreed Hosein with as much pride as though he were the author of this new plan; and he bustled out, bawling orders 'ere he was fairly over the threshold.

BROCK followed as soon as he had hastily rechecked his calculations as to the amount of lumber he'd need for his flume.

He was no man to leave everything to a foreman. He jumped in and made things hum himself. The camp woke to unwonted activity. The song of the whirring saw in the little mill was almost never still now; in its intervals could be heard the *wannh-wannhhh* of the crosscuts as they slashed through deodar logs.

A gang of harried coolies were pil-

ing the newly-cut planks under the lashing tongue of a Jat foreman. Another gang were busy slashing a clear road to the head of the gulch, a fortunately sloping road down which the timber would slide easily enough. Three elephants were lumbering about piling timber under the direction of their ragged *mahouts*.

TWICE Brock glanced in on Sayid Ali and saw the *dacoit* sleeping. Probably, reflected Brock, the first chance the poor devil had had for weeks to get a decent rest in a good bed—and in security. Brock thought Hosein knew who his guest was; but the foreman said nothing. He was no man to ask questions, was Hosein the Jat, lately *havildar* in that famous regiment, the 14th (Murray's Jats) Rifles. He did as he was told—and he was true to his salt.

A man to tie to in time of trouble, Hosein the Jat. His short black beard, half-naked, muscled torso and plain white turban were everywhere about that camp, always appearing just when coolies were lying down on the job or a *mahout* had lost his temper or a carelessly arranged pile was about to topple. Very much on the job was Hosein.

And so was Brock. He'd acquired a considerable mastery of Urdu invective; and despite all warnings from British friends about "prestige," he wasn't afraid to jump in and put his shoulder to a stubborn log or to speed up the work at the saw by taking hold with his own hands and shooting a few pieces along at the proper rate.

The piles of rough planking grew. As the afternoon wore on, Brock began to notice that his working force was growing, too. Men came wandering up the road or through the forest, singly and in little groups—young men, middle-aged men, half-grown boys and a few grey-heads. They took hold with a will, where

they were told. And the newcomers worked with a patient industry which soon put the coolies to shame.

Brock could only conclude that Sayyid Ali's messengers were doing their stuff.

"It sure was a lucky day for me when I met that guy," he reflected. "Now everything's easy. I'm on the downhill pull. Poor Shuja Rao—won't he be sick!"

IN this cheerful mood, even the sight of the little missionary from Khusib Mission Station could not depress Brock's buoyant spirits. The Reverend Mr. Twiggs came trotting toward him with an eager smile, his small gaitered legs fairly twinkling in the sun, his green mosquito veil streaming out from the brim of a huge "double-terai" hat that all but extinguished the round, child-like face and mild, pale-blue eyes beneath it.

A bore, a decided bore, this Twiggs, with his interminable questions about the lumbering game and his interminable and pointless tales of his experiences as "curate of Saint Albans, at Market Garling—Shropshire, y'know. The West Country—ah! when I think of Shropshire strawberries and cream—and that reminds me, of the afternoon of the vicar's lawn-party. The Dowager Countess of Bubbleford was there—ah yes, and Mrs. Poke-Sturgis—old Shropshire family, y'know—you must have heard of Sir Reginald Poke-Sturgis—led his regiment in the assault on the Malakoff and served afterward out here in the Mutiny—no, no, what a silly blunder—that was another chap of the same family—Sir Reginald was with Outram in Persia and afterwards entered the Diplomatic Service

"Hmm—where was I?—ah yes, the vicar's lawn-party. And as I remarked at the time to Lady Bubbleford—the dowager countess, of course, not the present Lord Bubble-

ford's wife—alas, *she* would hardly find a quiet country lawn-party especially amusing—her set in London has the reputation of being a trifle fast, I fear—but let me see, as I was saying—"

This being a fair sample of Mr. Twiggs' conversation, varied only by his insatiable curiosity upon the minutest details of Brock's work and progress, it may well be imagined that his frequent visits were becoming something of a nuisance.

Today, however, Brock was only too glad to have one of his own race at hand to hear of his triumphant plan. He wanted to blow his own horn in a European ear. He was still blowing it, to the accompaniment of "Ripping!" and "I say—how extraordinarily clever"—from the beaming little missionary, when he saw Hosein racing toward him from the direction of the road.

"Resident-Sahib, he come!" panted Hosein. "Police come too. Many police. I think there will be trouble now, *sahib!*"

Instantly Brock thought of Sayyid Ali.

"The man in the infirmary," he snapped. "My instructions—carry them out!"

The Jat grinned.

"Understood, *sahib,*" he agreed, and was gone.

"**T**HE Resident is here?" asked the Reverend Mr. Twiggs. "He has come to inspect your labors, perhaps? It is a great honor."

"It's an honor I could do without," grumbled Brock uneasily.

The Resident, sitting his horse well for all his bulk, was now cantering across the clearing, followed by half a dozen of the Jhanpur State Police, all mounted and armed with carbines and swords.

He dismounted in front of Brock. "H'are y', Brock? 'Morning, Mr. Twiggs." His face was even redder

than usual; he appeared to be struggling with some restrained emotion. "Sorry to say I've a serious complaint against you, Brock. Murder. You'll have to consider yourself under arrest."

"Murder!" Brock's quick mind instantly fastened upon the only possible foundation for such a charge. "Is it murder to defend oneself against an attack by footpads?"

"It won't wash, Brock. We have a full report on the matter from eye-witnesses. You came down to Jhanpur this morning to complain about attacks on your workmen, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"AND as a result thereof, at my request, His Highness the Regent ordered a detachment of police to your camp to protect you against further troubles of the sort. They had reached the bridge on your new road when they heard the sound of firing. You were seen in company with one Sayyid Ali, a known *dacoit* leader, and other criminals, making a murderous attack upon a peaceful party of townsmen who were on the way to your camp to seek employment.

"When the police appeared, you fled in company with Sayyid Ali, after firing upon the police and wounding a *habildar*. A policeman who followed you—at the imminent risk of his life—states that Sayyid Ali was wounded, and that you are now harboring that scoundrel here in your camp. Four of the poor fellows you attacked were killed—two at least by bullets from your Colt's pistol, the only weapon of its sort in the State as far as I know.

"The Inspector of Police has filed formal charges with the Regent against you, and I have no choice but to arrest you and report the matter to my superiors, who will arrange for you to have a fair trial."

Brock's head was whirling. There

was no mercy in the Resident's cold eyes. This was the end—just when he was winning out—

"But I tell you the police lied," he heard himself protesting. "I was attacked by a party of about a dozen men. One of them came at me with a flail, and killed my pony. Another took a shot at me; then they all rushed me with knives. Look at my arm, here! I had to defend myself."

"A likely story, indeed," sneered the Resident. "I have the sworn depositions of three members of the Jhanpur Police as to the facts of the case. You will have to think up a better tale than that, Brock."

Yes, this was the end. No hope—

Yet there lived in Brock's soul a courage which could not admit defeat even when all hope was dead.

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Twiggs Plays Up



ALL the suspicions, all the half-formed conjectures which had been seething in his brain for the past weeks, flashed up into a sudden flame of inspiration.

He strode forward until he stood within a foot of the Resident.

His eyes blazed into Fraxon's bloodshot orbs.

"You think you've got me right where you want me, don't you, Fraxon?" he snarled. "You and your precious pal, Shuja Rao! Let me tell you something! You arrest me on this trumped-up charge, and you'll find out that the finish of this business won't be my trial for killing road-agents, but *your* conspiracy and malfeasance in office, before the High Court of Delhi!"

Fraxon stepped back, gasping for breath, his face congested until it resembled another human.

"You'd frame me, would you?" continued Brock, his voice rising with the tide of his fury as he saw his guess had struck home. "You'd help Shuja Rao steal my concession, would you? Why, you dirty thief. I'd not be surprised to find out that those *budmashes* who attacked me were set on by you—or the Regent. The one your police murdered said before he was killed that he was enlisted for the job by the Inspector of Police! And now you're trying to pinch me, hold me in some dirty jail till my contract expires! It'll be the sorriest day of your life if you do, let me tell you that, Fraxon!"

FRAXON suddenly whipped out his pistol.

"Threats, eh?" he roared. "Resistance to an officer of the Crown—well—"

Murder glared from his eyes. But Brock, utterly unmoved by this display of fury, gestured toward the gasping Twiggs.

"You'd go as far as murder, would you?" he said softly. "Before a European witness, too. You'll end on the gallows after all, I'm now quite certain, Fraxon!"

Slowly the menacing pistol-muzzle dropped.

"You're under arrest—anyway—" grunted Fraxon thickly; and there came to Brock the certain knowledge that if he entered Jhanpur Jail as a prisoner he'd most assuredly not come out alive.

Swiftly he played his last card.

"Oh, no, I'm not, and won't be," he retorted. "I've written a report on this little conspiracy of yours, Fraxon, this precious scheme that you and Shuja Rao have cooked up between you to steal my concession. I've named names, Fraxon, and dates, and places; and there are some witnesses that you won't be able to lay your hands on, too. If I'm arrested—or killed—that report goes straight

to Delhi, straight to the hands of your distinguished superior, the Political Secretary to the Viceroy of India. Mr. Twiggs here will see to that. Won't you, Twiggs?"

Desperately Brock's glance pleaded for affirmation.

It came without hesitation.

"Glad to, of course," replied the little missionary very seriously indeed. There was a certain firmness in his tone which seemed to impress the Resident, who stifled an angry curse.

"And that's that, Fraxon." Brock leaned forward, an emphatic finger poking at the Resident's broad chest to lend force to each syllable. "Your little game won't work on me, Fraxon. You—can't—get—away—with—it!"

There was a pregnant pause. Fraxon holstered his gun and swore again, while the missionary looked shocked.

Brock drove home a clinching blow.

"Seems to me that's about all on the subject of my arrest, Mr. Fraxon," he snapped. "You don't dare, and you know it. Especially as I'm not a British subject. Mr. Twiggs will, I'm sure, also send a wire for me to the American Consul-General at Calcutta if you persist—"

"GLADLY!" announced Twiggs, pursing his plump lips in what he doubtless imagined to be an expression of unparalleled firmness.

"So that's that," announced Brock, who could have hugged Twiggs for playing up to him. What a good little scout. And who'd have thought it? "And now," he added, "I'll thank you to remove yourself and your escort of lying cops from my concession, Fraxon. I've got timber to move here."

"Not till I've searched for Sayyid Ali," retorted Fraxon, not bothering to conceal his animus. "If he's here,

if you're harboring a *dacoit*, it'll still go hard with you."

"Show me your warrant!" Brock demanded.

Fraxon produced the document with ill grace. It was signed by the Chief Justice of the High Court of Jhanpur, in a wonderful Persian script, and countersigned by Fraxon as Resident.

"All right—go on!"

Brock had gained all the time he could. As for Fraxon, he seemed unusually well-informed. Shuja Rao was well served by his spies.

For Fraxon, calling on two police-troopers to dismount and follow him, headed straight for the dispensary.

"Carbines ready, men," he warned. "Remember, this is a dangerous criminal. Shoot him dead at the first sign of resistance."

"I wouldn't be hasty to shed blood, Mr. Fraxon," bleated the Reverend Twiggs. "I'm sure this Sayyid Ali is just a poor misguided soul—and besides, there are two European eye-witnesses. Dear, dear!"

For Fraxon had cursed him with a savage blasphemy which made the little missionary blink.

Fraxon flung open the door of the dispensary.

BROCK was right at his heels, shoving the policemen roughly aside. He didn't know what he could do to protect Sayyid Ali if Hosein hadn't had time to take care of certain matters, but at least he didn't mean to let the man who had befriended him be shot down in cold blood.

But there was no recumbent figure on the cot.

Hosein was behind the little glass-topped table, watching with interested eyes the work of a splendid-looking bearded Sikh, all in snowy white from his immense turban with its keen-edged steel ring to his tight-fitting trousers and pipe-clayed shoes. The Sikh was industriously com-

pounding medicines, very busy with pestle and mortar and spatula and measuring-glass.

"Ah, *sahib*," cried Hosein, "this man Har Singh is indeed a treasure as a dispensary attendant. See, he has done, in half an hour, work that would have taken— Pardon, *sahib*! I did not notice—"

His attention had shifted to the Resident, who was staring about with the eyes of a man whom Fate has wickedly disappointed.

THE Sikh, glancing up, saw the two white men and at once stood at attention.

"Search the camp," snapped the Resident to one of the policemen, who wore the insignia of a *naik*, or corporal. "You know your man. Make sure he's not passing himself off as a workman. Get about it!"

He turned to Brock.

"You've hidden him somewhere! But I'll have him, and when I do—well, it's five years' penal servitude for harboring *dacoits*, my friend."

"You seem blamed anxious to have an excuse for pinching me, Mr. Fraxon," retorted Brock. "I wish you'd conclude your ridiculous search and get out. I'm starting to move my timber tonight, and I'll need all the time at my disposal without being harried by your nonsense."

"You lie!" shouted Fraxon, beside himself with anger at being thus bearded, and at the implications of Brock's words. "You can't move the timber—you told me so yourself. You've no animals for transport—"

"Mr. Fraxon," interrupted the missionary, "I've had to acquire some small knowledge of medicine in my work here, and I assure you—I really do—that unless you control your temper in this climate, it will carry you off one day with apoplexy."

Fraxon ripped open the military collar of his tunic, drew in one or two sobbing breaths and at last con-

trived to answer. His words, however, were not such as ought to be addressed to a minister of the Gospel. Fortunately they were interrupted by the return of the *naik*, who announced that neither Sayyid Ali nor anyone known to be connected with his gang had been discovered.

"There are two or three hundred *ryots* from the countryside here, however, Resident-*Sahib*," the man continued. "A strange thing indeed for *ryots* to be working here instead of tilling their fields."

FRAXON favored Brock with a withering glare.

"You've escaped this time by the skin of your teeth," he snarled. "But I'll see you behind bars yet! You blasted, sneaking, American cur—"

Brock laughed in the man's face.

"No use, Fraxon," said he. "I won't give you an excuse to shoot me. Save your breath. And get out!"

"Oh, I'm going," retorted Fraxon. "But let me tell you this, Brock! You'll never deliver that timber. You're a criminal, a danger to the State, and such people as you are not wanted in India. I'm going to make it my business to see that you get your just deserts!"

The door slammed behind him.

Brock pounced on the benevolently smiling missionary and pumped the little man's hand.

"You're a prince, Mr. Twiggs!" he cried. "I don't know what would've happened to me if you hadn't spoken up like that. You're a man and a brother!"

Hosein had moved to the window and now reported the Resident and his police as riding away—"their dogs' tails between their legs," as the *Jat* put it.

The Sikh grinned cheerfully.

"It is good riddance, *sahib*," said he in a familiar voice—and with a sweep of his hand removed his beard,

revealing the merry face of Sayyid Ali. "It is also a good disguise the *sahib* provided."

"You got into it rapidly enough," said Brock, laughing. "How'd you do it, so quickly?"

"It has been my misfortune to require disguises frequently, *sahib*," replied the *dacoit*. "I like this Sikh dress: the Sikhs are a war-like race, and I too have the blood of warriors in my veins."

"Well, you're safe enough now, and I'd keep that beard handy," Brock suggested. "I think this place is overrun with spies. The Resident seems to know a lot—he came straight here looking for you. Well, his spies will have a lot more to report tonight."

"I thank you for sheltering me, *sahib*," said Sayyid Ali. "If I seem to go away, do not think I have deserted you. I shall be near at hand."

"Okay, Sayyid Ali. And thanks again. Your men are coming in, and working like Trojans. I'm going to get some of 'em started on the dam now."

"On the dam?" put in Twiggs.

"Of course. An earth dam to contain the waters of the little river, to give the flume some headway. Come along and see us get started."

"With all my heart," agreed the Reverend Mr. Twiggs.

CHAPTER V

"An Unforeseeable Accident"



"IT rather looks to me," observed Mr. Geoffrey Fraxon, C. I. E., to the Regent of Jhanpur as they strolled in the garden of the palace, "as though this fellow Brock were doing the two of us in, very handily. I've been over to the river today—that confounded flume of his is

shooting logs down at a most extraordinary rate. I'd estimate he has two million feet in the Jhan already."

"His contract expires at noon tomorrow," growled Shuja Rao into his beard.

"And will be jolly well completed on schedule, unless—" The Resident concluded with a shrug and a sidelong glance at his companion.

"**D**UE to your bungling, when you had the fellow in your power," said the Regent tartly.

"We've been over all that before," retorted Fraxon. "No use in recriminations. I couldn't chance it: it would have meant a Commission of Inquiry to a certainty, with that confounded missionary bleating and squawking to Delhi. They listen to missionaries up there."

"I have heard of many strange things in my life," replied Shuja Rao sententiously, "but never have I heard of a dead man giving testimony before a Commission of Inquiry. However, I am justly punished for neglect of one of my lifelong principles—which is, when anything of importance is to be done, to do it myself."

Something in his tone made Fraxon stop short, eyes a-glitter with quick apprehension.

"Which means—"

"I have taken my measures," smiled the Regent. "As I had occasion to remark to you once before, it has ever been my humble endeavor to pierce two larks with one arrow when possible. And this time I am taking no chances. I am going forth myself to see to it that my lark does not flutter away. With my own hands shall I make sure."

"What are you going to do?" Apprehension was written in every line of Fraxon's face.

"Nothing crude. Oh, nothing crude at all. You should know me better,"

replied the Regent, still amused. "No knife-stabs or bullet-wounds. Nothing for a Commission of Inquiry to shriek 'murder' over. That would never do. But who, my friend, can foresee the chapter of accidents? Regrettable, unforeseeable accidents?"

"I demand to know what you're going to do!" insisted Fraxon. "If you're putting my head in a noose—"

"I'm acting alone—this time," replied the Regent. "You will have to take what comes—as it comes, my friend. You have no choice."

Fraxon held his temper in leash. After all, it was true. He was in too deep. He had no choice but to sit by and let events—including those originated by this unpredictable scoundrel of a Shuja Rao—take their course.

And indeed—

"If you put Brock out of the way," he growled, "you're doing me a favor, at least. He'd very likely ruin me if he sent in that report he was speaking of. Delhi would be sure to send somebody nosing about after that. But, for God's sake, be careful."

"I shall," Shuja Rao assured him, "be much more careful for my own."

WHEN the garden gate slammed behind the departing Englishman, Shuja Rao sat down on a carven bench and permitted himself the luxury of a hearty laugh.

"He actually thinks," he told that safe confidant, a red sandstone lion, "that I'm going to pull *his* chestnuts out of the fire for him at the risk of *my* fingers. Ho-ho! He should know me better. After all, perhaps he will be better out of the way—afterwards. Well, well, the time approaches, and I must be stirring."

It was perhaps half an hour later that Walter Brock, having completed his daily inspection of his precious flume, stood in the lower end of the gorge. Lovingly he looked up at the

rough structure, which was shaking with the violence of the stream which rushed down it from the dam at the gorge's head: the stream which was triumphantly bearing to the broad bosom of the Jhan the endless procession of great logs that were, to Brock, at once the emblems and the essence of victory.

IT was only a trough of planks set on well-braced supports or legs of deodar. Not much to look at, that flume. But Brock loved every plank and prop and post. Only the fact that the winter rains had broken in the hills, ten days earlier than ran the memory of the oldest ryot Brock could find, worried him now.

The long lake imprisoned behind his earth dam at the head of the gorge was rising and spreading with incredible rapidity. Already he had had to open one of the spillways at the bottom of the dam to reduce the pressure and to keep down the rising water, and that meant eternal vigilance along the gorge lest the supports of the flume be undermined.

Only a few hours more—victory was in his grasp.

He looked along the gorge. A dozen working parties were in sight, busy reinforcing weak spots, bracing yielding supports, diverting runlets of flood water to safer channels. Close to where Brock stood, an elephant had just dragged down a load of deodar posts and was engaged in piling them neatly against the farther wall of the gorge till they should be required.

The great beasts were a source of never-ending wonder to Brock. Hosein had assured him that their *mahouts*, born and bred to their trade, could speak a language which the elephants understood perfectly. He wondered if it were really true—

Looking up toward the dam, he could just see the jaunt arms of a crane against the blazing sky. There

he had placed his "skidder" with its powerful gasoline hoisting-engine, which had done yeoman service in handling the vast amount of material needed for the flume. For the rest—the wonderful day-and-night rush job of building dam and flume—he was indebted to the swarm of peasant workmen which the magic of Sayyid Ali, the *dacoit*, seemed to have conjured up out of the very earth.

Even this new elephant who drudged away so faithfully had been brought in by his master, "who had heard the *sahib* might need such a beast." The *sahib* could have used a dozen.

Spray born of the mighty passage of a great log splattered over the side of the flume and fell in cool grateful drops on Brock's upturned face.

He was winning! Only a little longer, and those rafts of timber that his gangs were collecting down on the Jhan would reach the required amount. And then the concession was his. His first big job—his first independent venture—

IT meant a lot to young Brock, this timber concession in the heart of India. More, far, far more, than merely the financial return, considerable as that would be.

"*Sahib*," murmured the voice of Hosein the faithful, at his elbow, "I do not like this new elephant. He has a bad eye."

"Eh?" Brock, recalled from roseate dreamland, was genuinely startled. "But he's working all right, Hosein."

"He works well enough—now. But he has a bad eye. Elephants are like men, *sahib*. They may be judged by the look in their eyes. And moreover, his *mahout* is no local man, but an accursed Mahratta." Hosein snorted. "When," he demanded in the tone of one who puts forward an unanswerable argument, "was a

Mahratta ever anything else but treacherous?"

"Well, if he gets through the day's work, that's all I can ask," Brock answered. "We're making out all right, Hosein." He glanced at his wrist-watch. "Better get along up to the dam and see how things are going. Let me know if the water's rising. I've got to stay here for a few moments!" He lowered his voice. "Sayyid Ali's sent me word he'll be here—wants to see me. And he doesn't care to show himself at the camp."

"I understand, *sahib*," answered Hosein. "I will see to everything. Nevertheless," he added with true Jat stubbornness, "I would watch that elephant if I were you, lest he do a mischief even now."

He trudged away, passing the elephant with a glance of scorn at the *mahout* and a sharp word to the piling-gang. Good man, Hosein, Brock thought for the thousandth time.

Brock, peering down the gorge, wished that Sayyid Ali would hurry along. He wanted to get to the dam himself. Wanted to see the water-level. Far away he could hear the mighty slap and splash as a big log shot out of the flume and hit the bosom of the Jhan.

A TWO-WHEELED "ekka," drawn by an anemic pony, clattered over the wooden bridge where the road spanned the gorge, some distance below the spot where Brock stood. He remembered what had happened one day near that bridge. Even murder went in this game; even that card his enemies had played, and lost.

He laughed grimly.

And the undergrowth which masked the left slope of the gorge parted just behind him.

"This is a happy day, *sahib*, on which we meet again," said the low but cheerful voice of Sayyid Ali.

The young *dacoit* extended his hand with quite un-Oriental frank-

ness, and Brock gripped it heartily.

"Thanks to you, old man," said he, "everything's going fine. By tonight I think we'll be over the mark."

"I'm glad. For you and for myself," Sayyid Ali answered. "I came to speak to you of certain things. Yet there are too many people here. We must choose another time."

He walked over to the nearest support of the flume, put his hand on the rough bark as though to caress it, looked up at the planks above—

HE seemed, thought Brock, as happy as was Brock himself.

A mighty bellow filled the gorge, sudden and terrible and charged with awful menace. The earth seemed to shake. From the piling-gang went up one simultaneous scream of terror and of warning.

Whirling, Brock saw the elephant charging straight at Sayyid Ali, trunk curved back, red triangular mouth open wide, scarlet-rimmed little eyes twinkling with murderous fury.

The *mahout*, clinging to his lofty perch, seemed to be beating the brute vainly with his iron ankus. Yet one glance at his evil face convinced Brock that he was really urging the elephant on. Brock reached for his gun—but his shots missed their mark.

"Look out, Sayyid Ali!" yelled Brock above the thunderous trumpeting of the charging pachyderm.

Sayyid Ali flung one glance at the brute and went swarming up the flume-leg.

Brock hurled himself recklessly at the side of the elephant, caught hold of the rude rope-harness and hoisted himself up, upon the swaying beast, getting toe-purchase on the breast-band and grabbing for the *mahout's* bare ankle.

He saw the elephant's trunk sweep the edge of the flume just too late to grasp the agile *dacoit*. The *mahout* jerked away from Brock's fingers,

struck furiously at him with the ankus. The blow missed as the elephant lunged forward for a second grab at Sayyid Ali.

Brock scrambled to the brute's back, hanging on with one hand while with the other he held his gun. Now was the time for quick action!

The *mahout* plied the ankus on the elephant's head and ears. The elephant, seeing Sayyid Ali perched precariously on the upper edge of the flume's side, beyond reach of that upstretched trunk, suddenly lapped the trunk round the support up which Sayyid Ali had clambered and gave one mighty tug.

At the same instant Brock slammed his pistol-barrel down on the *mahout's* turbaned head. The Mahratta pitched forward and rolled to the ground.

The elephant, all heedless, braced himself and tugged again.

With a splintering crash the support gave way. The flume sagged—broke. A side plank, driven outward by the force of the descending water, swept down in a vicious arc, barely missing Brock and striking the elephant a violent blow on the flank. Water cascaded over man and beast in a mighty torrent.

The elephant, trumpeting with rage, started off down the gorge. Hanging tightly to his perch, Brock yelled at the piling-gang:

"Run! Run for your lives!"

WATER was rushing out of the end of the broken flume, in which there was a long gap where the support had permitted the planks to sag and break. Now a huge three-foot Bhil log came hurtling out of the flume-end. It struck the next support end-on, and brought the structure also crashing down in ruins. Fragments flew in every direction.

A flying splinter a yard long embedded itself in the elephant's rump as he increased speed. Another

log smashed into the ruin he had left behind: its butt struck the sprawling *mahout*, who became a red smear on the rocks. Screams of terror, the howls of wounded and injured men filled the gorge with a symphony of pain.

Crash! A third log! The elephant was in full flight now, trumpeting with rage and pain and fright.

Down the gorge he raced, while behind log after log crashed into the ruins of the broken flume!

BROCK, sitting up, saw Sayyid Ali racing down the swaying flume-structure beyond the break. Another section went down, dragged to ruin by the hurtling logs and the fall of the supports higher up. The *dacoit* leaped to firmer footing, raced on—that part of the flume was dry now.

The elephant saw Sayyid Ali, too. He seemed still bent on killing that young man, for he waved his trunk aloft and emitted a shrill squeal of fury. On he raced, hammering over rocks and underbrush, yet compelled to slow his speed a bit by reason of the bad footing. At any moment he might realize that the man who rode him was not his *mahout*, and start getting rid of Brock.

Still the logs crashed down into the frightful mess at the end of the broken flume. Why didn't somebody shut the flume gate? Brock considered his chances if he jumped from the running elephant. But the jagged rocks, the flume-supports, the piles of timber offered a hundred chances of broken bones to one of safety.

Sayyid Ali was safe. He had reached a point where the flume-structure was not swaying. He checked his pace.

So did the elephant, who was finding the rocks of the gorge-bed a very poor running-track.

Brock saw that they were almost beneath the bridge.

Someone stood on the bridge, lean-

ing over. Brock caught a glimpse of a bearded face beneath a pointed turban. Then a wriggling horror dropped from the bridge to land fairly in the flume.

The *dacoit* stopped short, jerked a knife from his girdle, swiped frantically downward.

Another wriggling thing fell from the bridge, hit the edge of the flume and bounded over into the gorge, brushing the elephant's flank as it fell. A brownish-yellow snake—this was murder—

The elephant lunged under the bridge. Brock stood up on that broad swaying back, balancing himself perilously. His upthrust hands closed on the bridge-support.

There came a mighty jerk as his feet left the elephant's back—fingers, wrists, shoulders shrieked in unison at the agony of that strain. But they held. While the elephant lumbered on down the gorge, Brock drew himself up to the bracing-girder, clung there panting for a moment till breath and strength came back to him, and then set out on the comparatively easy climb to the bridge above his head.

CHAPTER VI

Deadlock



AS he climbed, he had glimpses through the interlaced timbers of Sayyid Ali dancing about in the flume, striking at things which darted toward his bare feet—glimpses also of flying logs which piled themselves ever higher in the gorge above.

He got an arm over the string-piece, lifted his body above the floor of the bridge. Right opposite him, leaning over the rail on the upstream side of the bridge, a man in baggy

brown trousers and a loose robe, such a dress as might be worn by a small landholder or upperclass artisan, was intent upon his devilish task. By his feet rested a large wicker basket, tightly covered.

As Brock wriggled silently over the string-piece, the man stooped and opened a small lid in the basket-top. A flat triangular brown head shot up. With a swift movement of a small forked wand such as is used by snake charmers, the rascal captured the snake, dragged it out—four wriggling feet of venomous hissing fury—and dropped it over.

A LOW chuckle came to Brock's ears, in the interval of the crashing of logs.

Brock gained his feet, charged across the bridge. He grabbed the industrious snake-dropper by the scruff of the neck and flung him away from the rail.

The man caught and kept his balance with cat-like agility. Eyes blazing with a mad rage met Brock's—and the convulsed face of the villain was the face of the Regent of Jhanpur!

So for one second of mutual recognition — and then the Regent snatched out a curved knife and sprang, screaming inarticulate curses. Brock deftly sidestepped the knife and put all his weight and all the power of a mighty anger into one straight-armed blow. His knuckles crashed against snapping teeth—and the Regent hurtled backward to land, dazed and battered and spitting blood, against the farther bridge-rail.

At that instant Brock heard the slap-slap of running, slipped feet behind him. He spun round, to see a plump man in a bright blue robe almost upon him, a knife flashing down to kill.

With upflung left arm he parried that deadly stroke. The knife-point ripped through his cuff, caught.

Brock drove his right fist into a plump stomach; then as the man gasped and staggered, he stepped back and swung a haymaker that, had it landed true, would have stretched the other senseless on the roadway.

But for a fat man knocked half-silly, the fellow displayed surprising agility. He ducked. Brock's fist cracked against the side of his head; down went that head still farther and the fat man hurtled forward with the very evident intention of butting Brock in the stomach.

Brock swung aside just in the very nick of time, one leg stretched out. Over it the fat man stumbled and crashed headlong on the planks.

No, not on the planks altogether, for his head hit the closed basket into which it smashed its way face downward.

There was a wriggling whirl of brown and yellow, one awful scream such as might rise from a damned soul in the uttermost pit; then the fat man twitched once and lay quite still, an inert heap of gaudily-robed flesh. And around his head and neck, like the horrid locks of Medusa, writhed and wriggled three or four speckled yellowish-brown serpents, striking again and again at the senseless flesh, venting their fury.

BROCK, seeing that the serpents made no attempt to leave their victim, stepped back and turned round. The Regent was sitting up, hand in sash, the very picture of impotent but surging wrath.

Brock pounced on the man, wrenched a pistol out of the hand that was in the act of drawing it, and stood back.

"Sit still, Shuja Rao!" he warned. "One funny move and I'll drill you. Now then—"

"Halloo!" hailed a high-pitched voice. "Having a bit of trouble, Mr. Brock?"

Down the road came trotting, quite

calm and cool and collected, the little missionary, Twiggs. His face wore its accustomed deprecatory smile, his eyes were as round and child-like as ever. In his hand, however, he carried an object not usually included amongst the equipment of a peaceful missionary: to wit, a large blue-black Webley revolver of the type used in the Indian Army; a gun which fires a big lead slug of .455 caliber, guaranteed to stop the most fanatical Ghazi who ever charged, sword in hand, seeking the blood of the "infidel" and the soft arms of the Prophet's houris.

"GOOD afternoon, Your Highness," said Twiggs to the Regent. "A bit warm for the season, what? Oh—oh—oh! Shocking! Do you know, Mr. Brock, sometimes one feels the utter hopelessness of trying to elevate the spiritual ideals of a people whose language offers such frightful possibilities of—ah—invective. Dear, dear."

Brock suddenly remembered poor Sayyid Ali. He darted to the rail. The *dacoit* was nowhere to be seen. Two snakes—one alive, the other apparently dying—writhed in the dry flume-bed.

But up the gorge, there, the relentless logs still crashed and thundered out of the broken flume. The gorge was completely blocked, blocked for a hundred feet or more, by a tangled, hopeless mass of timber. A dozen elephants, a thousand men, could not clear that jam in time to complete the contract. Not a hope—

Sick at heart, Brock managed to find brief words in which to explain to Twiggs what had happened.

"I've got to get up there, close the flume gate," he finished. "Then—"

"Never mind!" Sayyid Ali swung himself lithely over the edge of the bridge and hauled his body to the roadway. "I just saw Abdullah in

the trees over there and sent him on that errand. I knew what would be needed. Allah! Those cursed snakes almost had me. Thanks again, Brock *Sahib*."

His eyes fell on the inert figure with its face hidden in that dreadful basket.

"Allah!" he repeated. Then in a queer voice: "Bali Lal—the palace chamberlain. I always said he'd come to a bad end."

He turned and looked at the Regent, who sat quite still, his eyes—twin pools of darkness at the bottom of which flickered the fires of hell—the only apparently living things about him. Blood trickled down his beard and dropped heavily upon his breast.

"So it was you," muttered Sayyid Ali. "You. Well, so be it. Allah alone knows the secrets of men's hearts."

He strode to the end of the bridge, broke off a stout bamboo shoot, returned and with half a dozen swift blows destroyed the writhing serpents in the basket. Then he flicked their bodies into the gorge.

"They are very dangerous, *sahib*," he explained to Brock, who was doing some fast thinking. "The native name for that snake is the *jessur*; a zoologist would say, the Russelian viper. Death from its bite is a matter of minutes—" he gestured toward the lump that had been Bali Lal, the chamberlain.

QUITE a scientific fellow, this *da-coit*.

And as for Twiggs the missionary—

"What," asked Brock of that mild-mannered little man, "are we to do with this murderer? Turn him over to the Resident?"

"I think," replied Twiggs, "that we had better take his weapons away from him and bid him go home. He is, after all, the *de facto* ruler of this

country. Neither the Resident nor any one else, save only the Imperial Government, has the power to sit in judgment upon him. His time will come."

Shuja Rao got to his feet. He fixed eyes filled with baleful promise on Brock.

"Aye," said he in a voice thick with controlled venom. "Aye. My time will come. No man has ever laid violent hands on my person before. You, Brock *Sahib*, will have cause to remember having done so."

HE turned to Sayyid Ali, started to speak, then spread his hands in a strange gesture and strode away across the bridge and down the curving road toward Jhanpur City.

"Was it well to let him go, thus? He was in our power," Sayyid Ali said to Twiggs.

"It was necessary," answered Twiggs, with an odd glance at Brock. "These things are not done by violence; he will dig his own pit. Is digging it, even now?"

Sayyid Ali nodded. He was looking at the utterly choked gorge, the great jam of logs up-ended, twisted, piled and heaped like jackstraws at the hands of some giant child.

"I am afraid that jam will cause you trouble, my friend. You'll hardly clear it today, even with dynamite," said Sayyid Ali. "It is all my fault, too—"

Dynamite! The word was as the touch of fire to fuse. Brock realized now what he must do. He saw his way—

"Dynamite is just what I need," he agreed. "Mr. Grahame, will you help me?"

The innocent blue eyes of the little man widened.

"Who," he wanted to know, "has been whispering in your ear?"

"Nobody," grinned Brock. "I just—guessed. The way you spoke to Fraxon—and to me when I wanted to

sock him. That gun—and your bearing toward Shuja Rao. You're no missionary. You've all the authority of one who's accustomed to rule men, when you face a crisis. And you'll remember that Baranar affair: your assistant was Captain Payson of the 2d Gurkhas? I traveled with him from Calcutta to Delhi not long ago, and he whiled away the time singing your praises, even to the extent of some personal description. It just came to me who you must be."

"Payson is a chattering young ape!" snapped the most trusted agent of the Political Secretary of India. "Very well, then. You know. See that you keep your mouth shut. I'm not here for my health."

"I'll keep my mouth shut—no matter what comes," Brock assured him. "You're on the trail of Shuja Rao and that scoundrel of a Fraxon, I take it, and I'm for you right across the board. Now see here. If I fumble this contract, my concession is forfeit to the State of Jhanpur, which means under present conditions to Shuja Rao."

"The contract between myself and the State of Jhanpur was of course approved by the Political Department, and it must be fulfilled to the letter or I'm sunk. You know what good it would be to offer excuses either to the Regent or to your red-tape artists up at Delhi. Do you want to see Shuja Rao get that concession?"

"I CERTAINLY do not," said Grahame decisively. "But what in the world can I do?"

"I need dynamite," replied Brock. "I've a shipment of dynamite, caps and fuses, down at Jhanpur Railway Station right now, which was held up because of some provision in the Explosives Act about the shipment of such stuff into native states. It's still there, in charge of the station-master. How about pulling strings

by telegraph and getting Delhi to order its release to me? Right away quick? Can do?"

"Can do," agreed Grahame. "But if you get it, can you clear that jam in time?"

A broad grin lighted Brock's lean face.

"And how," said he heartily. "Just you leave that to me."

CHAPTER VII

Preparations



THE Resident of the State of Jhanpur was a worried man.

Up and down he strode on the veranda of the Residency, shielded from the sun and the gaze of the vulgar by a vine and jalousie. All day he had no word from the Regent, since the memorable interview in the palace garden.

His mind was seething with a hundred conjectures, each more alarming than its predecessor. What had Shuja Rao done? Had he succeeded? Or had he been caught in some devilish scheme by that altogether-too-clever Yankee, Brock.

It was, strangely enough, upon Brock's young head that the vials of Fraxon's wrath were chiefly poured. Not only had Brock outfaced one who was finding the taste of deference very sweet in his mouth, but also there was that matter of the threatened report to Delhi; the report which, backed by that confounded interfering missionary, would be bound to start an investigation which might finish Fraxon's career in the Indian Civil Service. He had seen other men sent home, broken and disgraced, to a life of dishonorable poverty.

If only Shuja Rao would send some word—above all, word that this

dangerous Brock no longer lived to write reports.

"This dangerous Brock," meanwhile, was walking slowly away from Jhanpur Station, accompanied by that interesting individual, Twiggs-Grahame. Somebody in Delhi, evidently, was very much on the job. A telegram had been dispatched in a code which evidently worried the *babu* operator, since he could by no means decipher it. Two replies had very promptly come back. The one, in code, Grahame had pounced without remark. The other, in clear English, was addressed to Brock. The surprising message read:

Mr. Walter Brock, Jhanpur:

This telegram will be your authority for requiring from Resident at Jhanpur the unconditional and immediate release of shipment of explosives, detonators and fuses now in your name at Jhanpur Station, detained under provisions of Section 5, Article 9 of the Explosives Act. Resident may confirm this authority by wire if desired.

Basset-Mowbray.

And Basset-Mowbray, as Brock well knew—Sir Denis Basset-Mowbray, K. C. S. I., etc.—was the all-powerful Political Secretary to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

It was with a new respect that Brock glanced at the bland face of the diminutive Grahame. He sure got action.

"**D** YOU still think you can complete your contract, given this dynamite?" Grahame asked. "That log jam looked a fairly tough proposition to my untutored eye."

"I'm mighty hopeful," smiled Brock. "It'll be a great disappointment to Shuja Rao—the dirty dog. Say, Mr. Grahame—"

"Not so much of that name," interrupted the other, gesturing toward the row of beggars outside the station and the coolies trotting by.

"Er—yes—Mr. Twiggs," corrected Brock. "Well—what was the idea of the snake business? And did Shuja Rao bribe that Mahratta *mahout* to destroy the flume?"

"I think so," agreed Grahame, very low-voiced. "He wanted to kill Sayyid Ali, not you. You say the elephant attacked Sayyid Ali first? Quite. Then he pulled the flume down. And who can say it was not the work of an elephant suddenly gone *musth*? As for the snakes, well, hundreds of men die of snake-bite every year in India. Very difficult to prove that such a death is other than accidental. Not like a bullet or a knife wound."

"**S**HUJA RAO, then, foresaw that Sayyid Ali might get away from the elephant's attack, would certainly run down the gorge to avoid the crashing logs—and had stationed himself on the bridge to cut off his retreat?"

"Something like that. The *jessur* is a bad-tempered and agile snake, as well as deadly. Cobras would more than likely have taken themselves off as soon as they hit the ground, seeking only safety. A *jessur*, however, so handled, would certainly fly at the first moving object he saw, with the one idea of venting his rage. Of course Sayyid Ali being in the flume made it difficult—better marksmanship, so to speak, was required. Which is probably what saved his life."

They strode on across the station *maidan*.

"Why," asked Brock after a moment's silence, "did Shuja Rao want to murder Sayyid Ali in such a fashion that it could not be brought home to him? Why should he take so much pains in the matter of a *dacoit*?"

"You ask too many questions," grumbled Grahame. "Not that I don't trust you—but there are some things

that it isn't safe even to think about yet, let alone put into plain words. And speaking of safety—you watch out for yourself, young fellow. Shuja Rao's a bad actor and he won't rest until he gets even for that punch in the mouth you gave him. He'll have your life for that if he possibly can."

"I'll keep an eye peeled," promised Brock.

"See that you do! Well, there's the Residency over there. Go annoy your friend the Resident with that telegram. I'll see you this evening at your camp. We'll have a little talk then—perhaps. Cheerio."

He trotted away toward the bazaar quarter.

Brock grinned and quickened his stride. He had, after all, no time to lose.

The Resident—when Brock was admitted to the Presence—greeted him with a scowl.

Curtly, "Well, what do you want?" he demanded.

"My dynamite," replied Brock.

"Impossible! Anyhow, what d'you want it for?"

"The flume's broken. Crazy elephant pulled it down," explained Brock, at which the Resident's eyes first widened and then narrowed. "Big log jam in the gorge. I've got to clear it."

SO that was Shuja Rao's little trick, was it? The Resident suppressed a chuckle.

"Anybody hurt? You've got to make a report if so," he said in his best official tones.

"Don't know about that yet. I was right there — the flying timbers blamed near got me," Brock answered, nor was disappointed in seeing the expected flicker of regret in the Resident's eyes. "The mahout was killed. My foreman will be checking up on any other casualties, and you'll have your report in due

time. Just now I want my dynamite."

"Sorry. Can't be done," the Resident answered. "I can't alter the laws for your convenience, Mr. Brock."

Brock smiled sweetly and handed over the telegram.

The Resident's face slowly drained of color as he read.

"How'd you get this?" he demanded.

"Does it matter? You can confirm it if you like."

"You've sent in some lying report!"

"I've sent no report!" snapped Brock.

THE Resident started to say something else—hesitated—darted one searching look at Brock's face.

"No report?" he repeated. "Nothing about—er—that unfortunate affair the other morning?"

"Not a line," Brock answered. "I've been too busy. And I'm busy now. No time to waste arguing. Do I get that dynamite, or do I go back to the station and wire Sir Denis Basset-Mowbray that you refuse to obey his order?"

"I shall confirm the wire, of course. If you will be at the station in, say, twenty minutes, the matter can be arranged." The Resident spoke very stiffly indeed. "That is, of course," he added with no small suggestion of a sneer, "if the confirmation comes through in proper order."

"I'll be there," agreed Brock—and he was.

The Eurasian station-master received him with respect and led the way to the small stone building, originally perhaps a tool-house, where the dynamite had been stored for safe-keeping. The Resident stood by the door, scribbling in an official notebook. He tore out a sheet and handed it to the station-master.

"That's your clearance," he said shortly. "Take your dynamite, Brock. G'day." He walked away without an-

other word. His abrupt departure was not so much born of a desire to be discourteous as of the necessity of hiding the unrestrainable glitter that was in his eyes.

"Now, young fella m'lad," said he to himself, "you'll never send in that report. And the verdict'll have to be 'death by misadventure', too. Shuja Rao should be properly grateful, so he should."

But Brock was not interested in the Resident's conduct, though he might have been in his thoughts could he have read them.

The door of the little building stood ajar. Brock stepped into the stifling interior, marveling as he did so that the heat of the place had not set off any of the fulminate caps. Like a blasting oven, it was.

Well, there was his pile of stuff: a pile of dynamite boxes; two coils of fuse, one safety and one instantaneous; and the smaller box containing the detonators. Stored all together—nice idea of safety precautions these railway people had.

Probably never handled explosives before.

Two porters summoned by the station-master carried the boxes and coils to the *ekka* Brock had hired. Brock climbed up beside the driver and the man whipped up his *tat*.

Things were looking up again.

If the scheme only worked!

WELL, he could but try. His last chance—

He didn't forget Grahame's warning. Twice, on the long drive up to the camp, he thought he heard the hoofs of following horses, but for all his neck-craning he caught no sight of any riders. Once, also, something rustled in the undergrowth where the jungle crowded the road. Brock had lost his Colt during his elephant-ride, but he whipped out a Webley which he had borrowed from Grahame.

Nothing happened. A tiger, perhaps. Or more likely wild pigs.

By the time he reached camp he was beginning to call himself a fool for worrying. Shuja Rao had other things to think of than getting revenge for one blow.

The camp seemed strangely quiet. Hosein came hurrying to meet him.

"*Sahib, sahib!* I have been searching for you everywhere!" cried the Jat. "I have most of the men out in the woods, also searching. I feared that some evil chance—"

"Good man, Hosein," cut in Brock. "But get the men back. We may need them. It will be a full moon tonight?"

"Yes, *sahib.*"

GOOD! Have a couple of your Jats unload what is in that *ekka* and bring it to the dam. You come with me."

Hosein gave an order to some of his men, and followed Brock down the steep road to the dam.

Nearby, fifty men were busy filling sandbags.

"I thought of building it higher, *sahib*. I feared lest the water might flow over, and eat the dam away."

"Carry on with that idea," Brock ordered. "The dam's got to hold a little while yet."

The flume-gate was of course shut. Against it, and far back down the lake, long rows of logs floated, as though waiting hopelessly for their turn to pass through on that thrilling journey down to the Jhan.

"Get more men, Hosein. I want more timber in the lake. Twice as much as there is now, at least."

"But, *sahib*—if the dam does not hold—"

"It will hold long enough. An hour will do—though I'd rather it hung on till moon-rise. And I think it will."

Hosein's resigned manner as he obeyed orders clearly indicated that

he thought the *sahib* was suffering from a touch of sun.

Evening was now coming on apace. Yet Brock thought there would be light enough for the work he had to do.

Not daring to trust the dynamite to the tender mercies of the big hoist whose arms overhung the dam, he had it carried down the narrow path cut in the sides of the gorge for the use of workmen. With Hossein and four Jats he went down himself, and set the men to driving long slanting holes into the sloping face of the dam.

And when a box was opened and Hossein saw the greasy dynamite sticks in their bed of sawdust, he understood.

"A *burra sahib!*" he muttered. "A great *sahib* indeed is this one. Aye! He throws his last main like a true gamester—and he will win! It is in my mind that such *sahibs* always win!"

CHAPTER VIII

One Last Chance



IN the last rays of the expiring sun Brock was examining the two coils of fuse. Each bore a wired-on-tag.

One tag was bright red, and printed on it in great black letters was the word: "DANGER." Beneath, Brock read: "Instantaneous Fuse. This fuse burns at the rate of 120 feet per second."

The other coil bore an ordinary manila tag, which, with less ostentation, informed Brock that it was "Safety Fuse. Burning rate, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet per minute. Keep Dry."

In placing several charges which it was declared to explode simultaneously, a single lead of safety fuse

gave the man who lighted it a chance to get away. Beyond the first splice, instantaneous fuse was used for the branches of the various charges, and from that point the fire flashed down to the caps practically and literally in a twinkling, firing the lot at—for all practical purposes—the same instant.

BROCK was used to handling American fuses. In American practice the safety fuse is dun-colored while the instantaneous fuse is red. Both of these coils of fuse were of the color of manila twine; but in the coil tagged "Danger" a thin green thread was woven, while in the "Safety" coil appeared a red thread. "That's funny," thought Brock. Red for safety, green for danger. Make a lot of difference if there was any mistake. He'd better make a test.

With his pocket-knife he hacked off about a foot from each coil.

Laying the two bits of fuse on a dry rock, he touched a match to the piece with the green thread. It fizzed, caught, and began burning steadily away, spitting sparks. He lit the other piece. There was a bright flash as the fire shot through it and spat out the other end. The red-thread fuse, tagged "Safety," was instantaneous fuse!

"The careless fool that tagged those coils ought to be shot!" exploded Brock. He started to shift the tags, but the stout wires resisted his first attempt.

"What's the difference, anyway?" he reflected. "I'm going to do all this fuse-placing myself, and I'm the only man on this job than can read English. I'll remember which is which, never fear."

The holes were almost done.

Atop the dam, a swarm of men were building a sand-bag rampart, raising the top of the dam a little higher as the water lapped at its

edge. The northern sky was purple behind the hills. It was raining up there. Still raining.

"One last chance," reflected Brock. "But a good chance."

"Shall we place the charges now, *sahib*?" asked Hosein.

"No. It's too dark. Take the men out of this; get 'em something to eat. Then split 'em up into gangs, with a Jat foreman in charge of each, and take 'em all down to the river. Take charge yourself. If this thing works, there'll be enough logs coming down the Jhan to keep you busy all night collecting 'em into rafts. Don't let any more get past the mill than you can help. I think there'll be plenty to put the contract over the top."

"Understood, *sahib*. But—you—"

"I'll place the charges, tamp the holes, and fire her off myself. Be quite a sight. Sorry you can't stay to see it, Hosein, but I'll be needing you down below."

"You will be alone, *sahib*. Something might happen—"

"I'll be all right. Don't worry, Hosein. But if anything does happen to me, take this writing to Twiggs *Sahib*. He will see that you have a bonus of two month's pay from my personal account. You've been a good man, Hosein."

"If anything happens to the *sahib*, there will be throats cut this night!" muttered Hosein the faithful, as he turned to go. And for a moment his brown fingers rested on the hilt of his heavy belt-knife.

BROCK moved along the bottom of the dam, testing the length and angle of the powder-holes with a bamboo pole. They were all right. He had only to place his charges and light his fuse. The unleashed power of the flood would do the rest.

Or so he hoped—

What was that? Someone stirring in the brush, down the gorge? No,

he was nervous. Mustn't be nervous now.

He climbed out of the gorge, went to his quarters and ate a hearty meal of cold chicken, bread and fruit. When he emerged, it was night.

The camp was very still; Hosein and the men had gone. The hum of insects, the queer chirping of a lizard and the ceaseless lap of the wind-driven wavelets against the dam were the only sounds.

YES, the water was rising. The moon, just peeping above the ridge to the westward, shone brilliantly on the rippled surface of the dam-held lake, a great sheet of silver that rose now level with the top of the serried ranks of sandbags; even, here and there, worked its way through in little trickles.

Brock frowned as his flashlight picked out those trickles. He didn't want any giving way piecemeal, letting the imprisoned flood-waters out in easy stages. He wanted one terrific rush of power, a charging wave which should sweep that log-jam with it.

Well, another half-hour should tell the story, reflected Brock as he climbed down the path into the dark depths of the gorge. The moon would give the boys on the river some light to work by. Down here, in the shadow of the dam, Brock needed his flashlight.

He lifted out the dynamite sticks and divided them into five groups for his five charges.

While he was busy at this task, he thought he heard something moving across the gorge, where, as he knew, a rocky path used by the natives wound up to the wooded heights on the farther side of the *nullah*.

"It would never do to have somebody caught when the dam lets go," he reflected, on the point of starting to open one of the lead-foil boxes of

detonators. "I'd better go have a look."

He laid down the box of caps with the gentle care which such capricious devils merit, and, swinging the ray of his flashlight before him, started down the gorge at a quick pace. He would, he decided, go down as far as the log-jam and back.

Better have a look at the jam anyway.

He heard a faint metallic clank in the bushes to his left. It sounded like a trace-chain, such as were used for the elephants. Good Lord, there couldn't be an *elephant* down here; no, of course not—

He swung his light-ray toward those bushes nevertheless.

It glinted on something white. He moved toward it—

It was a face—the face of Grahame—eyes staring, mouth distended by a gag—

Without the smallest warning something struck Brock a terrific blow on the head, sending him, sick and dizzy, to his knees. A thick cloak was flung over him, muffling head and shoulders in its ill-smelling folds. He gasped for breath, fought in vain against the wiry arms which pinned him fast and dragged him over the rocky ground—then with a clatter and clanking something else gripped him inexorably round the waist.

"**TIGHTER!**" said a voice, seemingly from afar off. "Tighter yet, you fools!"

His body was squeezed as by a band of steel. Waves of pain darted through his torso; his head still reeled from the blow. He fought for a breath of clean air—and suddenly he had it, as the cloak was whipped away.

He stood in the moonlight a little way up the western bank of the gorge, beyond the stream. To his left the crest of the dam towered

high and black against the star-studded sky.

A few yards from him stood one who laughed and laughed, teeth gleaming in his bearded face.

Shuja Rao, the Regent!

"All three in one cast of the net!" gloated Shuja Rao. "Ah, it was well that I followed you this night on vengeance bent, O Brock *Sahib*—dog of dogs!"

THEN it was that Brock realized what held him so tightly. He was bound, back to back, to two other men; bound by a trace-chain drawn sickeningly tight about the tree, tying them together like a parcel of logs.

"Twiggs!" said Brock, low-voiced. A wriggle and a smothered grunt answered. And by twisting his head Brock could just make out the dark profile of Sayyid Ali over his left shoulder, mouth likewise propped open by a gag.

"All three of my pretty fish in one net!" repeated Shuja Rao. "So you were going to blow up the dam, were you, my fine Brock *Sahib*? And thus wash your timber down to the Jhan. Very clever. Ve-ry clever. So clever that I shall do it for you. And let you wash down-river with it! Yes. At once." Cold horror gripped Brock. He realized instantly what the Regent meant to do.

"It is," continued the Rajah, "an opportunity not to be missed. For your man Hosein knows your intent, and it will be merely an unfortunate accident that has overtaken the so-enterprising Brock *Sahib* and his friends. Yesssss. Perhaps when your bodies have worked free of that trace-chain, they may even be picked up, later, down the Jhan or the Sutlej. No marks of violence, of course. No, no. Just a deplorable accident."

The Regent laughed some more.

Then he spoke to the three vague

shapes that stood there behind him.

"Now to work; let us waste no more time. I know something of explosives. I shall attend to this matter personally."

He strode off toward the dam.

Brock, finding his arms free, reached back over his shoulders and managed to worry loose the knots of the gags that silenced Grahame and Sayyid Ali.

"*Sputt—sputt—*what foul rags—*brrrr*—and what a fool *I* am," choked out Grahame. "Walked right into the neatest little ambush you ever saw. They had Sayyid Ali already. Shuja Rao's getting clever in his old age. Well, looks like our number's just about up."

"It is as Allah wills," said Sayyid Ali. "Is there any means of getting rid of this thrice-accursed chain?"

Their eager fingers examined it. No use. It was wrapped three or four times round their bodies, and locked fast with one of the big locks used for securing an elephant's leg-chain. And so tightly was the chain drawn that its steel links bit into the flesh of their stomachs and sides, holding them in a grip from which there was no hope of wriggling free.

IN addition, the wrists of Sayyid Ali and Grahame were tied, outside the chain of course. Nor could the chained three contrive to shift their position. They must stand—and "take it."

"No use trying to run facing in three directions," said Grahame, with a rueful chuckle. "Listen to our friend the Regent, boasting."

From the dam there came to them the voice of Shuja Rao, talking loudly for their benefit.

"Now here are the caps. Very chancy things, caps. I shall be careful. I am sure my friend Brock would not want me to have any trouble with these caps. I believe

one of them exploding at the wrong time will tear a man's hand off, yesss? Now the fuse. I must cut the fuse good and long, so as to have plenty of time to get up to the bank and enjoy the show. It will be pleasant for my friends, too. They will have a few minutes longer to live. And, perhaps, to say their prayers."

"That's a dig at me," said Grahame. "He knew me all the time, the artful devil. Wouldn't go ahead and tell the Resident."

THROUGH the thin screen of bushes intervening between the spot where the three stood chained at the foot of the dam, they could see the white ray flickering.

"The fuse, now," Shuja Rao continued. "Ah ha! What is this? **DANGER: Instantaneous Fuse! One hundred and twenty feet per second!** Ah, no. I'll have none of such fuse as that. Here we are—safety fuse—two and one-half feet per minute. I'll use that."

A fierce surge of exultation filled Brock's soul.

He instantly repressed a first impulse to call out, born of the tendency of civilized mankind to save a fellow-being from danger.

No! A thousand times no! They must die, he and his friends. But by the decree of an inscrutable justice, their murderers should die with them.

He laughed—so low yet so terrible a laugh that Grahame asked him quite sharply what was funny.

"Steady. Don't sing out," Brock warned him—and then he told the occasion of that wicked mirth.

"The will of Allah!" breathed Sayyid Ali. "Aye, Shuja Rao, thou foul dog! His sword is long—"

"A jolly good job," said Grahame. "Now one can die with some sort of satisfaction, what?"

At the dam, Shuja Rao was supervising—and not at all incapably, as

far as Brock could gather—the “loading” of the powder-holes.

He had discovered, on the back of the “Safety” tag, some printed instructions about splicing fuses, and was applying them with intelligence and loudly-expressed self-satisfaction.

“Splice each pair together, and then the two double-leads into one. So. Then one match does the trick, and we, my industrious helpers, shall retire to the gallery seats above and watch the performance.” His gay laugh echoed in the gorge.

Involuntarily Brock looked up at the sky. It was the last time he would ever see the stars, the beauty of the night—

He drew in a long breath of clean pine-laden air.

Then caught it sharply, on a sort of gasp.

For he had seen, outlined against the sky, the dark fingers of the skidder’s booms.

His eyes picked out the bulk of the galvanized-iron engine house, in which, by night, the roly-poly Jat engineer was wont to sleep lest someone do his beloved engine—a minor god, to that devoted mechanic—an injury by stealth.

Was he there now? Or had he been taken to the dam by Hosein?

CHAPTER IX

The Will of Allah



LOOKING directly up, Brock saw dangling high above his head the heavy iron block which hung suspended by steel cables from the end of the main boom.

That hope which never dies save with life stirred within him.

“Squat, fellows,” he muttered. “I want pebbles.”

They must have thought him mad, but they bent their knees together at his whispered “one—two—three!”

He garnered a handful of round pebbles.

“Now, Sayyid Ali, squeeze yourself as far to the right as you can, to give my arm a swing. Attaboy.”

His target was the slightly darker rectangle on the dark front of the engine-house, which marked the location of the open door.

HIS arm shot out; the pebble flew. Too high! It hit the iron roof and fell with a sickening clatter to the wooden platform before the door.

“What’s that?” demanded Shuja Rao sharply, looking up from his fuse-splicing.

“A stone fell, lord,” said one of the men. “A rat dislodged it, perhaps.”

“Be still. Listen!” commanded the Regent. But there were no more sounds—and after a moment during which the chained trio fairly held their breaths, the Regent snarled something about not liking queer noises at such a moment and went back to work.

“He’ll get something else he won’t like when he lights that fuse,” growled Brock very low. “Well, here goes for the last try, friends. If I hit the iron again he’ll get wise.”

“If you live and I don’t, Brock,” said Grahame suddenly, “I want you to know that this gentleman, whom you have known as Sayyid Ali, is His Highness Mirrala Khan, Rajah of Jhanpur. He has been cooperating with me in securing evidence against Shuja Rao and Fraxon—devils if ever there were devils in human form.”

So that was it.

What issues of life and death and justice hung upon Brock’s aim!

Carefully he selected from his handful a pebble of just the right weight and size for accurate throw-

ing. He tried to visualize the door; he drew back; he threw.

There was no clatter from above.

Five seconds passed—ten—

"There!" said the Regent. "One more splice and we're ready, by the four arms of Kali, Goddess of Destruction!"

A vague shape stirred in that dark doorway. A fat man, silent on bare feet, shuffled forward to the edge of the platform, and looked down into the gorge. Fortunately, this Jat, like Hosein, was an old soldier. He did not immediately give tongue at a night alarm, even when hit in the face by a flying pebble. He reconnoitered first.

And he saw a queer huddled mass down there in the moonlight; a mass, part of which, astonishingly enough, was his employer, Brock *Sahib*, whose face he could recognize clearly.

What was Brock *Sahib* doing? Waving his arms—why, he was giving the regular signal by which the crane was controlled when at work.

Lower away.

The flashlight flickered where the Regent labored over that last splice. It illumined his bearded, evil face and glinted on bared steel in the hand of the rascally cutthroat who guarded him.

SO much the Jat saw. And so used is the native of India to murderous intrigue by night that this man needed no more to make him cautious but obedient.

He stepped back into the engine-house.

There came to straining ears the faint clank of a released pawl, the soft whirr of a revolving drum. Silently, swiftly, the block slipped downward through the moon-silvered shadows toward the waiting three. Thank God for an engineer who didn't spare lubricants.

"It is done!" laughed the Regent, standing up. "Now for a match, and

a rare seat in the Theater of Vengeance!"

The block was almost to the ground. Brock signaled again.

Stop!

The block swung on its cables not three feet away, its great hook within a foot of the ground.

"Sidestep," muttered Brock. "And for the love of Heaven don't fall down. One—two—three. One—two—three."

BY efforts almost incredible, those chained men managed to move that life-giving yard.

Brock reached out for the block, swung it toward him, caught the heavy steel hook under the chain that bound him to his companions.

Again his arms signaled—

Hoist away!

This signal the Jat had anticipated. He had dived into the engine house again and closed the door. They heard the preliminary suck and sigh of a gasoline engine vigorously cranked.

The Regent failed to hear. He was intent upon the murderous work in hand.

A match sputtered—flared into yellow flame—and flickered out at the behest of a vagrant zephyr.

"Kali curse the thing!" swore the Regent. "I grow impatient."

The engine above gave one hoarse cough—another—and died.

"What was that?" demanded the Regent in a voice hysterical with sudden fear.

"My lord does not recognize the sound of a tiger coughing in the jungle?" asked one of the men half-respectfully, half-derisively.

"Thank Heaven for *your* imagination, buddy," thought Brock.

"I am nervous tonight," admitted the Regent.

Again a match flared, settled to a steady flame.

Brock could see through the

bushes the shadowy form of the Regent bending down to the fuse.

The engine coughed again—twice—three times—and was again silent.

"It's all over," muttered Brock, watching for the quick red sputter which he would barely have time to see.

"Stop!" shrieked a voice from the top of the dam.

A man stood there, waving his arms in frantic warning.

"Stop!" he yelled again. "Don't light that fuse, Shuja Rao! Let me look at it first!"

It was the Resident, Fraxon. He had grown impatient to know the results of his treachery, had come to see for himself. And it seemed that he could not for sheer horror—or perhaps for some fear of the consequences to himself—allow Shuja Rao to do the thing he perceived the Regent was about to do.

The Regent stood up, shaking out the match.

"Not so much noise!" he called back. "What is wrong, Resident Sahib?"

There was a ring of subtle iron in his voice.

"Death—it's death—" On that word, the excited Resident took a step too far. His foot slid over the soft and treacherous edge of the dam.

For one instant he struggled there against the sky to regain his balance; then with a despairing cry he pitched forward and came rolling and tumbling down the sloping face of the great mound of earth.

THE engine sucked, coughed, sputtered—died the third time.

Brock heard, but the Regent, intent upon the newcomer, did not.

Shuja Rao moved toward the fallen man with the lithe grace of a panther. His flashlight illumined with inexorable brilliance the dirt-stained, disheveled figure which was

trying to get up, panting out incoherent words of warning.

Brock saw an arm rise, fall in one vicious stroke.

There came the sodden sound of steel on bone.

"Sol!" cried Shuja Rao clearly. "That will teach you to interfere! One less voice to talk of my affairs. It will be said that a log struck him—if the body is found. This goes well, my children."

The third match flared.

AS the Regent bent down, guarding the flame with cupped hands, the engine above barked loudly, then broke into a night-shattering thunder of continuous sound!

Hoist away! signaled Brock's arms.

He felt the chain tighten cruelly about his middle—his feet left the ground—he felt as though he were being snatched up by giant fingers that were pinching the breath from his body—

A thunderous roaring was in his ears, a blast of awful intensity swung him out over a flame-filled void. The crest of a foaming black wave that seemed to boil up out of the bottomless Pit drenched him with stinging spray.

He caught one sight of a bearded face in the swirling grip of that sable flood, a face which screamed and screamed—

Then mercifully a black veil fell over a world which for him held only agony—

He was sitting up. Somebody was propping his shoulders with a trembling arm, while somebody else was trying to get the neck of a bottle between his teeth.

Instinctively he swallowed. Fiery liquid burned him into sudden consciousness.

He ached from head to foot. Agony girdled his body with a cincture of exquisite pain.

The roaring was still in his ears;

he shook his head; the roaring persisted.

"Take it easy, old son," said the voice of Grahame. "You're all right now."

"The engine did well, *sahib?*" came an anxious inquiry in Urdu.

SOMEHOW Brock staggered to his feet.

He realized that he stood on the platform of the skidder, high above the gorge. About him stood Grahame, the young Rajah, and the fat Jat engineer. Upon the latter the Sirkar would presently confer a pension beyond the dreams of Jat avarice, for saving the lives of a Rajah and a Political Agent.

The gorge itself was now the course of a rushing torrent that swept irresistibly toward the great river far below, bearing on its bosom mighty logs that leaped and turned and twisted in its grasp.

"Your contract's safe, Brock, old man. That torrent ripped away the jam like a bunch of jackstraws, so it did," said Grahame in tones of awe. "I didn't go out; I saw it all. The wave that swept down that *nullah* was thirty feet high and it thundered like the trumpet of doom. It was the trumpet of doom—"

"It was," corrected the Rajah, "the will of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful—who yet knows when the sands of mercy have run out."



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Dead Men's Rule



A snarling face with fiery eyes loomed up in the dark before Jim Benson

*Jim Benson and Red Dolliver Plunge into a Seething
Cauldron of Voodoo Horror as They Brave
the Terrors of Haitian Deviltry!*

By **WAYNE ROGERS**

Author of "Pearl Bait," "The Great God Honi," etc.

JIM BENSON rolled and tossed uncomfortably. He moaned in his sleep and stretched his neck taut as he gasped for air. Then, abruptly, his eyes opened and he peered into the blackness that shrouded the cabin like the grave.

Where the porthole should have been was only blackness. Groping, his fingers felt for the light switch; found it and pressed it. There was

a click, but the cabin remained black.

Then Benson's fingers flew to his throat, ripped away the collar of his light pajamas and sought frantically to loosen the muscles of his throat to gasp blessed fresh air into his tortured lungs. He was smothering, suffocating; his head was pounding and reeling dizzily. The air in the cabin was hot and poisonous.

With a mighty effort he seized the

edge of the bunk and dragged himself over the side, to tumble in a heap on the floor. The jar of his fall seemed to clear his head. Along the floor the air was better, too. Benson sucked it into his lungs gratefully.

Then he turned to Red Dolliver, asleep in the lower bunk beside him. The noise of Benson's fall had not awakened the big fellow, but when his partner grabbed his shoulder and shook him violently, Dolliver groaned a protest.

"Snap out of it, Red! Wake up!" Jim shouted against his ear. "We've got to get out of here—*pronto!*"

With another groan Red Dolliver opened his eyes, peered around in the darkness and felt his throbbing head.

"What the devil—" he began to growl.

"Never mind that now. This place is full of gas," Benson snapped. "Unless we get out in a hurry we're—done for." The gas caught at his throat and sought to strangle him.

Now the husky six-footer was on his feet. Together the two men groped their way to the porthole. It was battened down on the outside. There was no chance for air there.

Then Benson reached the door. The key was gone and the door was locked.

TOGETHER they tugged and tore at it, but it did not budge. The gas in the cabin was getting worse. Jim's head swam sickeningly and once he fell dizzily to the floor.

"It's—locked—on the outside," he gasped as he realized that they were making no progress with the door.

A rumbling oath was Red Dolliver's reply as he backed away from the door, hunched his great shoulders like a football player taking the ball through the line, and charged. The door quivered under the impact, but it held. Again he drew back,

dug his shoes into the cabin floor and charged like a bullet.

The door rattled on its hinges; the wood cracked and a tiny sliver of grey light shone through it. Red drew back his huge fist and smashed. In slivers the panel gave way and his arm was out in the passageway, his fingers fumbling for the key still in the lock.

JIM BENSON was first through the door the moment it swung open. A great wave of fresh cool air enveloped him as he pressed into the corridor. Then, before he had a chance to fill his lungs with the welcome relief, a face loomed up there in the semi-dark before him. A snarling, malignant face, with fiery eyes that seemed to gleam like those of a cat.

"Antoine!" Benson gasped, and in that second a club came down with vicious force on his head.

The semi-dark of the corridor turned to purple, then merged into a thick, palpable black which enveloped him. Jim strove to fight it off. Dimly he could see a dark figure running down the corridor. Then the world swam about him and he toppled to the floor.

In a few minutes the haze cleared away from before his eyes and he sat up to find Red kneeling, gasping beside him. As the fresh sea air filled their lungs and dispelled the poison, strength returned with a rush.

With it came sudden remembrance for Jim.

"Antoine!" he grated savagely. "We've got a score to settle with that doublecrossing yellow devil."

With that he was on his feet and striding determinedly down the corridor, his fists clenched savagely and hot rage in his eyes.

"You're all wet," Red grumbled, as he followed his partner. "Why in blazes you keep pickin' on Antoine I dunno. I didn't see a sign of him."

But Jim Benson wasn't arguing.

Grimly he turned the corner of the corridor and pounded on the door of Antoine Lebeau's cabin.

THREE days before, Jim Benson and Red Dolliver had been kicking their heels impatiently in a barn-like room of the Hotel Nacional at Vera Cruz, while they waited for the Mexican Government to grant them a mining concession.

That was when they made the acquaintance of Antoine Lebeau. Antoine was a mulatto of medium build, perhaps forty years of age, well dressed and well spoken, his Haitian French accent hardly noticeable. The most impressive feature of his round yellow face was his sparkling black eyes, which had a way of darting from side to side flashingly.

"Monsieur Benson?" he inquired, as he stood bowing in the doorway.

There was something about the man that antagonized Jim from the start. Even as he reached out to take the letter of introduction from the mulatto's hand, he felt a vague suspicion of the fellow.

Immediately that was forgotten as he glanced at the curious letter and read:

Dear Jim:

This note, if it reaches you, should be brought by Antoine Lebeau, my plantation superintendent. I have tried every other way to get word to you. Every attempt has been blocked. Antoine is my only hope.

Jim, I'm trapped here in an incredible hell. Unbelievable intrigues—things that could happen nowhere else on earth—are going on all around me. I'm caught up in the thing but can't stop it.

Alone I'm helpless. With a little help I could break up this devilment and save a whole nation from howling savagery. Without it I'm afraid they will kill me and make me president.

Jeff Calhoun.

Jim Benson blinked and reread that last line. Then he turned to the inscrutable face of Antoine Lebeau.

"When did you start out with

this?" he snapped, while Red Dolliver scanned the note.

"Seven days, *monsieur*. The boat, it took five days, and two days to reach Cap Haitien."

"Did you have any trouble in getting through?"

"There was trouble, yes—but I am here."

The fellow was not very communicative and Jim's distrust grew. He might have doubted the genuineness of the letter, but at the bottom of the sheet was a code word which only Jeff Calhoun would have used: a word that guaranteed the note's authenticity and at the same time sounded a desperate call for help.

IT was five years since he and Red had parted company with Jeff Calhoun. In a lovely valley in the interior of Haiti the ex-Marine Corps captain had settled down. The rolling stone became a coffee planter and prospered.

Now he was in trouble. Desperate trouble, or he would not have appealed for help. Jeff Calhoun was not the sort to holler unless the odds against him were overwhelming.

"What's it all about?" Red Dolliver wanted to know, but Antoine was chary with his information.

"Nobody knows, *monsieur*," he shook his head. "The men on the plantation, they die from fever. The others, they leave. The drums, they beat in the hills, and *Monsieur* Calhoun can do nothing."

"Humph—voodoo deviltry, eh?" Red snorted. "How did you come here?"

"On the *Carib Queen*, *monsieur*. The steamer sails again at noon tomorrow. It will not return for two weeks." Antoine's tone was urgent, his eyes anxious.

"That gives us almost twenty-four hours to get ready," Jim considered.

"Plenty," Red agreed.

While Antoine arranged their pas-

sage on the *Carib Queen* Jim and Red packed their bags and bought the necessary additions to their outfit. The mulatto's sparkling black eyes watched every move of their preparations with absorbed interest. When two of the latest model automatic rifles, with a plentiful supply of ammunition, joined the equipment his excitement was intense. Nothing would do but that their operation must be explained to him.

"You, *messieurs*, were soldiers, too, like *Monsieur Calhoun*?" he hazarded. "Officers, perhaps?"

When informed that his guess was correct Antoine grinned satisfiedly.

"That *hombre* will bear close watching," Jim cautioned as soon as he found an opportunity to draw Red aside, but the big fellow was not impressed.

"There you go again with your suspicions," he scoffed. "Me, I take a man at face value until he shows up different. Antoine looks okay to me."

Nevertheless, Jim's suspicions of the mulatto had continued unabated after the *Carib Queen* pushed her rust-encrusted nose out into the Caribbean.

NOW Jim's fist banged resoundingly on Antoine's door, but there was no response from within.

"The keyhole's stuffed with rags," Red discovered, as he pulled the packing free.

Faintly from the keyhole came the same gassy odor that had filled their own cabin. Red waited no longer after that. Bracing himself against the opposite wall, he threw his weight across the corridor to crash against the door. The lock snapped and the door flew open.

The porthole of Antoine's cabin was not darkened. Daylight streamed in through it and fell on the lower bunk where he lay stretched out, partly dressed. In a second Jim was

at his side, his fingers probing beneath the mulatto's shirt front.

"He's dead," he announced as he looked up to meet his partner's questioning gaze. "We're just a bit too late. His heart's stopped beating but his body's still warm."

"Poor devil," Red commiserated. "Guess I'd better get the captain."

CAPTAIN GABRIEL, when he could be dragged from the comforts of his cabin, was appalled at this tragedy. His wide eyes were round pools of apprehension in his shiny black face as he stared down at the corpse. Although he promised an immediate investigation, it was apparent that he had no idea where or how to begin.

Red picked up the body of the mulatto and carried it forward to the peak, where the sailmaker fashioned a canvas sack which would serve as a shroud. Morosely Red watched while the sailor weighted the sack and proceeded to sew it up.

When the ship's bell struck noon the engines stopped and the steamer lost momentum, to lie quietly on the barely rippling sea. While the solemn-faced crew grouped around the rail, Captain Gabriel read the burial service and the canvas sack slid down a plank runway into the blue waters of the sea.

Keenly Jim studied each member of the crew, but nowhere could he detect a sign of guilt on their dark faces. The murderer, if he were among them, was a master at deception.

"It's just a matter of luck that there aren't three of us going over the side instead of only Antoine," Red commented grimly as they turned away from the rail.

After that the partners split up their sleep, one always standing guard; but the rest of the trip was uneventful. And, although they searched the vessel from stem to

stern, they found no clue to the murderer.

It was late afternoon when the *Carib Queen* steamed into Cap Haitien, late afternoon of a hot summer day. Beyond the town the jungle-cloaked mountains reared their crests in the gathering blue of the twilight. The town itself seemed to simmer and steam in the heat.

IT looked so tiny there along the shore, so helpless against the immensity of its jungle-wrapped background, that Jim Benson felt, depressingly, how futile were its attempts to cope with the power of those hills—how inadequate its efforts to build up a civilization against the deviltry that made its stronghold behind those peaks.

Cap Haitien was tense; that was apparent as soon as they landed and made their way into the town. Curious eyes regarded them as they passed along the streets and on all sides they sensed a feeling of expectancy, of waiting.

"What's the matter with this place?" Red demanded. "It gives me the creeps."

Not until they lined up against Dutch Charlie's bar did they get an inkling of what was causing the uneasiness.

"Somethin's brewin'," the bartender confided, out of the corner of his mouth. "I ain't sayin' how much I know, but I hear plenty. You'll hear it tonight yourself. Every night the drums up in the hills get goin'. It ain't the usual drummin', either. Devilish sort o' racket that gets into your blood and scares the daylight out o' you.

"That's what you can hear yourself. An' there's lots more they're whisperin'. Four big shots—important fellers—died sort o' mysteriously during the past five or six weeks. There's them who say the bodies have disappeared. Of course

the government denies that—but they would anyway."

"Some more voodoo deviltry, eh?" Red blurted contemptuously.

But the bartender paled and froze up like a clam. Apprehensively he glanced up and down his bar, and busied himself with his glasses. After that he gave them no opportunity to draw him into conversation.

"These voodoo devils have them all scared stiff," Red spat disgustedly, as they left the saloon and walked toward their hotel.

It was still early in the evening, but the streets were strangely quiet and deserted. Suddenly, as they passed a little court, Jim grabbed Red by the arm and dragged him into the shadows with a warning to be quiet. In a few moments a burly Negro passed their place of concealment, hurrying his footsteps as he glanced anxiously up and down the block.

"That bird's been following us for the last six blocks," Jim said quietly as they doubled on their course and turned down a side street a few doors away.

"Somebody's mighty anxious to keep track of us."

AN automobile took them from Cap Haitien, through the fields of corn, millet and cotton, then into the jungle, where plantains, banana trees and cocoanut palms vied for supremacy. As they climbed into the mountains these in turn gave way to great sablier trees with their spiked trunks, mahogany and towering pines.

Over the crest of the mountains their way led down into the interior and soon a mule pack train replaced the automobile. A wild country this, with steep canyons, narrow mountain ledges and precipitous cliffs.

From scattered little villages and lonely isolated cabins dark faces peered out at them. Everywhere their appearance provoked excite-

ment and jubilation. It was almost as if they were expected.

But when they finally reached Jeff Calhoun's valley there was no sign of welcome or expectancy. It was early afternoon when they rode up to the long, low bungalow set on a little elevation above the coffee fields.

Nowhere around the plantation was there a sign of life and nobody appeared on the wide porch at the sound of their coming.

IN a rear room they found Calhoun lying on a disordered bed. One glance at his flushed face and unnaturally bright eyes told the story of fever. Calhoun was a very sick man. His face had thinned and his hair was greying. Worry was stamped plainly on his features.

At the sight of his friends wild excitement leaped in his eyes and he propped himself up on an elbow to greet them.

"Take it easy, old man," Jim urged as he tried to make the sick man more comfortable. "Easy does it."

But Jeff Calhoun seemed not to hear him.

"I'm glad you came, Jim," he whispered. "You're too late to save me—I've got the fever. It's taken all my best men—it'll have me soon. But you can save Haiti—you can save thousands of white men and women and kids, Jim—from these devils. In a few days it will be too late and the dead men will rule."

"Dead men, Jeff?" Jim asked.

Calhoun's voice had risen and gained strength.

"The living dead," he babbled on. "Men without brains. A dummy president and cabinet—just puppets for these voodoo devils to turn the country into a hell hole. They've been working for years, building and building. Their organization is perfect. All they need is a military leader to direct their armies."

"Where are these armies, Jeff?" Red prompted.

"All around us. Just waiting for the call to strike. I am right in the middle of them here. They know I've been an officer and they've been at me to do their dirty work for them. Because I've refused I've been a prisoner here for months. They've killed off my men and now they've got me. I couldn't write or get a messenger past them—not until Antoine managed to get through."

The frenzied light in his eyes flamed high and his flushed cheeks burned with the fever. Then he glanced around wildly.

"Antoine—where is Antoine?" he demanded. "They've got Antoine!"

With a mighty rallying of strength he struggled to his feet and started for the door. It took all of Red's bulk and brawn to block the way and turn him back. Then, suddenly, the false strength snapped and Jeff lay limp in Dolliver's arms. Tenderly Red laid him on the bed and bent over him. There was a catch in the big fellow's voice when he straightened up.

"It's better for him like this," he muttered grimly. "He was as mad as a hatter. Armies all around him and dead men ruling. This place drove him stark crazy."

THE sun had almost set when Jim and Red finished shaping the little mound that looked out over the widespread coffee fields Jeff Calhoun had planted. Dusk settled briefly over the valley. Very soon the tropic night would descend swiftly and completely.

In silence they walked back to the bungalow. There Jim dropped into an easy chair on the wide porch and sat moodily looking out over the plantation, while Red went inside to throw together a bite of supper. A strange air of melancholy brooded over the place. There should have

been workers in those fields, servants around the house. Without them the plantation was eerie and deserted.

Yet, despite this disturbing emptiness, Jim had the uneasy feeling that he was being watched; that unseen eyes were trained upon him from the fields, from the surrounding jungle, even from the house itself. Angrily he shook himself. He was as bad as the superstitious blacks, getting the wind up because of a lot of foolish chatter.

Still, Jeff Calhoun had always been as level-headed as they come. He wasn't the sort to fly off the handle without plenty of provocation. Perhaps, after all, there was something more than feverish raving to what he had said.

"HEY, Jim!" Red suddenly whooped from within the house.

His tone brought Jim on the run, to find him anxiously searching the living room in which they had stacked their outfit.

"The guns are gone!" he announced as he surveyed the litter of opened bundles and boxes. "Every round of ammunition, too. They didn't miss a cartridge."

Systematically they went through the gear again. Nowhere was there a sign of the automatic rifles or their ammunition.

"Whoever it was knew just where to look for the stuff," Jim pointed out. "Even that extra box we packed in my suitcase. They didn't bother to open the stuff that wouldn't interest them."

"By God—you're right!" Red whistled as he lifted puzzled eyes to his partner.

In the next instant his eyes widened, and his right hand flew to his holster, but before he could draw his automatic the house lights snapped out. With the darkness came an avalanche of hot, perspiring

bodies. From every direction they poured into the room.

Clutching hands fastened about Red's arms, grabbed at his legs. Uselessly the automatic fell and dropped to the floor to be trampled underfoot.

Savagely the big fellow flailed about him with his heavy fists. Time after time they connected crushingly with flesh and bone.

Groans and curses filled the room, but the odds were overwhelming. Red knew that the fight could not last. Already he was reeling from the terrific beating he was taking. Then one of the attackers leaped onto his back. A powerful arm locked around his neck, forced his head back—back—

Soon it was all over. He was down and hundreds of bodies seemed to be piled on top of him, pinning him to the floor and squeezing the last bit of air from his gasping lungs.

When the light snapped on again the room was filled with Negroes, great brawny fellows naked to the waist. Half a dozen of them clustered around Red, dragged him to his feet and lashed a rope around his wrists.

Across the room slumped the battered figure of Jim Benson, blood smeared and semi-conscious.

His head hung exhaustedly on his chest. Then suddenly it snapped erect as an ear-numbing booming reverberated through the room.

Boom! Boom! Boooooom! On the porch of the bungalow a big voodoo drum throbbed out its message, sending it echoing out over the valley. From the hills came the response as the hidden drums boomed their measured tempo into the night.

UP—up—up. Endlessly the trail led up into the hills, Jim and Red stumbling along in the darkness between their captors. And endlessly

the drums throbbed out their pulse-stirring call.

At last the trail debouched into a great natural amphitheater, a level stretch of ground fringed with mighty sabliers. Jim gasped at the magnitude of the place and at the multitude of blacks in it.

AT one end of this outdoor cathedral a huge bonfire blazed, throwing its flickering light eerily over the savage assemblage. Halfway between the fire and the farther end of the clearing their captors lashed Jim and Red firmly to trees half a dozen feet apart.

It was this farther end of the clearing which riveted their attention. There a wooden dais had been erected beneath the widespread branches of a giant sablier. Seven chairs were arranged in a semicircle on the dais, six of them occupied by well-dressed and distinguished-looking Negroes. The seventh chair, in the center of the formation, was empty.

The six occupants of the chairs sat like statues, seemingly entirely oblivious of the throng around them or of the huge six-foot drums that were throbbing out their regular beat at the foot of the dais.

"What's the matter with those fellows?" Red asked curiously as they studied the unnatural looking semicircle. "They're clothes dummies or I miss my guess."

"No," Jim noticed. "That fellow on the left end just raised his hand. They're alive, all right, but that's about all."

Simultaneously their eyes left the barbaric spectacle before them and sought each other. Understanding and disbelief struggled for supremacy in that exchange of glances.

"Remember what Jeff said about the 'living dead'—about puppets for the voodoo doctors?" Jim reminded. "Of course I've read that sort of

stuff—how these fellows poison a man with drugs that suspend life and then bring him back by administering an antidote. But I never took much stock in it."

"And there's that army business Jeff raved about," Red added. "Do you notice that these fellows, behind that front row of freaks, are lined up in columns and seem to have some sort of uniform?"

"That row of freaks are the witch-doctors—the *papalois* and *mamalois*—of the outfit," Jim identified the inner circle of fantastically garbed old men and wrinkled hags.

Red's observation was correct. Behind this ragamuffin circle the lines of gazing blacks were drawn up in regular order, the firelight reflecting on row after row of shiny faces and wide-staring eyes.

In the center of the clearing a wild, bestial dance was in progress, two of the *mamalois* striving to outdo each other in their senuous and hideous gyrations, but their performance was receiving only cursory attention from the multitude. All eyes turned continually to the dais and to a large stone table and three empty chairs at the foot of the steps.

JIM had been testing the ropes which bound him while his eyes were cataloging the spectacle before him. The knots were securely tied and the ropes were tightly drawn.

Red, he knew, had a knack of bulging his great muscles to almost twice their size when he was being roped so that when he relaxed they loosened and gave him an opportunity to work on the knots. Jim had never been able to manage that, but years of knocking around in the far places of the earth had prepared him for emergencies such as this.

"Hell may start popping at any minute," he whispered to his partner. "Better get ready for it."

Red's head nodded and immedi-

ately his arms and shoulders started to wriggle as his muscles came into play. Where they stood, the light from the fire lit up their faces and the front of their bodies, but their backs were in darkness. After the first interest occasioned by their arrival Jim and Red had received little attention. Their part in the performance would evidently come later.

SLOWLY and painfully Jim's hands, bound behind his back and between the rest of his body and the tree trunk, worked their way up to the top of his trousers. There his fingers felt along the waistband, behind his belt. Soon a thread was loose, a few stitches pulled out. The space between the khaki and the lining widened.

Then his fingers stopped their work and he stared at the latest arrivals in the clearing. From a black tunnel in the trees came a curious figure. Of medium height, the newcomer was garbed in a frock coat and a high silk hat. A scrawny beard fringed the yellow face. From the waist up it was a man, but under the black waistcoat it wore a flaming crimson skirt and a pair of woman's shoes.

"Papa Nebo! Papa Nebo!" the black throng chanted in voices tinged with awe. On all sides of the clearing the solid ranks were kneeling and bowing while a great moan went up from their throats.

"Papa Nebo—that's the top-kick in one of these death-worshipping voodoo cults," Jim whispered. "Now I begin to understand those dummies up there on the platform."

"Yeah, and look at those two bozos behind him," Red contributed. "Now I understand what became of our guns."

Behind Papa Nebo came two fantastically garbed figures, evidently women. Each bore triumphantly in her arms a shiny new automatic rifle

which she placed on the table at the foot of the dais. Every eye in the place was turned on those deadly weapons and the ammunition piled up behind them, and now the moaning turned to a frenzied cheer which filled the amphitheater with its hysterical cacophony.

The arrival of the guns was the signal for stirring that savage throng to fever heat. All over the clearing *papalois* and *mamalois* pranced and gyrated before their followers. The drums pounded away faster and faster, and the howling and moaning made the place a diabolical inferno.

Desperately Jim worked away with cramped fingers behind his back. At last his efforts were rewarded and, bit by bit, he drew from his waistband a little three-inch long blade of razor-sharp steel. Carefully he maneuvered it between his fingers, knowing that if it slipped and fell to the ground his last chance would be gone.

AT last it was in position. Then it was biting into the ropes that bound his wrists, severing them one by one. Grimly he clutched the precious blade in numbing fingers as the blood rushed back into the constricted veins and filled his hands with stinging torture.

Now that his wrists were free it would be an easier matter to cut loose the ropes which bound him to the tree and then it would be the work of only a few seconds to free his ankles. At least now he would have a chance to meet these devils hand to hand.

Papa Nebo had mounted the dais and with him he had brought the occupant for the seventh chair.

"*Monsieur le General!*" the frenzied mob howled. "*Monsieur le President!*"

The torches stuck into the branches of the sablier trees flickered on Papa Nebo's face and made diabolic

the triumphant grin that contorted his yellow features. But the newcomer seemed impervious to the pandemonium about him.

"My God—it can't be!" Red Doliver gasped. "Jim—it's Jeff!"

JEFF CALHOUN was dressed in a military uniform. The flush of the fever had gone out of his face and was followed by a deathly pallor. Unresistingly he allowed himself to be led to the chair. Vacantly he looked out over the clearing.

"The dirty hellions—they've propped up his corpse!" Red grated with a bitter oath. "If I could only get my hands on that Nebo devil."

"You keep away from him; he's mine," Jim snapped with surprising sharpness. "Jeff is just as much alive as you or I—physically anyway. Those devils doped him—produced suspended animation—and then dug him up as soon as we had him buried. He wasn't crazy at all; he knew what he was up against. Don't you hear that president business they're howling? These voodoo devils have a revolution plotted. There's their president and cabinet—poor dummies who can do nothing for themselves and will be at the mercy of this gang."

"They'd never get away with it. The United States would step in," Red objected.

"And by that time they'd have the whole country looted and— Watch that bird!" Jim shouted suddenly.

The din was terrific and nobody paid the slightest attention to the prisoners. All eyes were turned to the dais where Papa Nebo was advancing with a metal goblet.

"That's the antidote they're giving Jeff," Jim called excitedly. "They need him in his right mind to lead their army. When he drinks that we'll be up against the show-down. All set, Red?"

The goblet was held up to Jeff's

lips. Obediently he drank its contents—while Jim Benson hacked through the ropes which bound him.

The razor-sharp blade made short work of the ropes, and a few seconds later Jim sprang free and leaped over to Red's tree. The big fellow's face was crimson from his exertions, as Jim started to cut through the ropes binding his ankles.

Suddenly a new note sounded through the clamor. Alarm and warning. One of the watching blacks had discovered that Jim was free and was calling to his companion.

WITH a final slash at Red's bonds, Jim leaped to his feet and raced across the clearing to the foot of the dais.

Howling pandemonium raged in the amphitheater. Frenzied cries and weird yells went up from hundreds of throats. But for a few startled moments none of the blacks made an attempt to stop him.

Those few moments were all Jim needed. Once he had reached the foot of the dais his eager hands swept the rifles and ammunition off the heavy stone table on which they had been displayed, and up-ended it. In the next second he had dropped behind this impromptu barricade and the deadly barrel of an automatic rifle was trained over its edge.

Now a semblance of order was restored in the clearing. The shrieking *papalois* and *mamalois* had given way to a straight line of ebony stalwarts who were charging toward the dais on the run.

Grimly Jim pressed the trigger and death started to spout from that muzzle, death that cut great gaps in the advancing line.

Behind him on the dais Jim could hear the noise of footsteps, but he dared not look around. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Red's big figure loom up beside him. There was a short scuffle on the dais, and

then the other rifle nosed over the barricade and a second stream of death poured into the howling blacks.

That was too much for them. The orderly line broke and rushed for the protection of the trees. Again a leader rallied them and tried to cover the distance up to the dais, but this attempt was shorter-lived than the first one.

A GAIN the line broke and the company, now a panic-stricken mob, ran wildly for the protecting blackness of the trees. A miraculous hush settled down over the clearing.

"They've had enough," Red grunted as he surveyed the empty clearing and listened to the echoing sounds of distant flight through the forest. "There's not a devil left."

Only then did he realize that he was talking to himself. The other rifle lay there against the table, but Jim Benson had gone. Startled, Red turned to look for his partner and beheld a curious sight.

The clearing was deserted. Of all those who had taken part in the voodoo ceremony only the six men on the dais remained. They still sat unmoved, staring out at the emptiness with lack-luster eyes.

But where was Jim? And where was Jeff Calhoun? Then Red saw them. Off at one side of the clearing Papa Nebo was racing frantically for the dark tunnel into the forest. Over his shoulder he had thrown Jeff Calhoun, but Jeff's weight was a bit too much for him. It slowed him up and enabled Jim Benson to catch up.

With a shout of satisfaction Jim threw himself at the devil priest and brought Papa Nebo to the ground with a perfect football tackle. Jeff Calhoun rolled clear and sat up dazedly. Reason had returned to him but he was too weak to take a hand in the struggle.

Jim Benson needed no assistance.

Although the Negro fought desperately to break away he was no match for the avenger who pinned him to the earth and hammered away mercifully at his bloody face. Over and over they rolled. Papa Nebo lost his hat. His shirt was ripped off and his frock coat in tatters.

Still Jim pounded away at him, until his fingers fixed themselves in the yellow throat and squeezed until the voodoo priest gasped for air.

"Take it easy, Jim," Red shouted into his partner's ear when he came up to the struggling pair. "That guy looks like an old man."

"Old man, eh?" Jim growled as he grabbed a handful of the fellow's whiskers.

RED DOLLIVER gasped in complete amazement. The whiskers had torn loose from the yellow chin and now despite the gaping mouth and bloody distorted features, he was staring down at a face he knew well.

"Antoine Lebeau!" he gasped unbelievably, as the mulatto fell back limply on the ground.

"Yeah, Antoine Lebeau," Jim agreed dryly. "He's the answer to all Jeff's troubles and all this hell. I never had much use for him, but the slick devil fooled me on the *Carib Queen*. He took a dose of his own drug—enough to fake death—and then left it to his pals on board to look after him."

"But I saw him sewed up," Red protested. "We saw him go overboard."

"Yeah—we probably watched the impressive burial of a sack of coal or ballast," Jim agreed.

The angry fire in his eyes smoldered at memory of that morning on the *Carib Queen*.

"Antoine would have gotten away with that trick," he conceded, "but he made the biggest mistake of his life when he banged me over the head in the corridor."

Fool Americano

Banny Martin, Cowpuncher, Swaps Lead With a Desperate Gang of Mexican Bandits in this Rip-Roaring Yarn of Bullets and Bad Men!

A Complete Western Novelette

By TOM CURRY

Author of "Solitary," "Love's Prisoner," etc.

CHAPTER I

Failure

BANNY MARTIN rolled his Stetson brim in his strong young hands as he awkwardly entered the darkened sick-room of his boss, Lew Davis of the Curly L Ranch. His silver spurs clinked as he stopped by the bed, looked down at Davis, who turned a white face to him.

Banny gulped; he was terribly sorry for his stricken employer. Davis had been good to him, taken him on as a cowboy when Banny was down and out. Banny would ride through hell for the boss.

"Banny," Davis said weakly, "I'm sendin' yuh to town with twenty thousand dollars—cash. I sold the lower section of the ranch, for to save the rest, savvy? Luis Gasca, who bought it, paid me this mornin', in American dollars. Take it to the bank, deposit it in my name at once. Trustin' yuh to git it there safe. Take two men with yuh. That's all."

"Yes, boss," Banny replied quietly.

A stocky man rose from an arm-chair on the other side of the bed, picking up a padlocked leather case from the side of his chair. This was George Shippers, the ranch foreman.

"Here yuh are, Banny," he said,

passing the case to the puncher. "I got to stay on hand here. It's up to yuh."

Banny gravely accepted the case, murmured how he hoped his boss would soon be out forkin' 'em agin, and clanked on tiptoe from the shadowy room.

At the bunkhouse he picked up his pal Dave Morse, a smiling kid with quick, reckless eyes, and as his second man chose another friend, Shorty Williams. The trio, armed with rifles in saddle holsters, six-guns at belts bristling with .45 cartridges, saddled up in a hurry and rode northeast toward the Texas town, forty miles away. To the south a few miles was the Rio Grande, across it old Mexico.

Banny's shoulders were thrown back; he was proud of the responsibility placed on them. His face was placid, grave, for twenty-two. He let Morse do the kidding as they broke onto the dusty trail through sagebrush covered prairie, heading for town.

An hour's fast ride brought them to an arroyo which cut across their road, its edge lined with cottonwoods. And, as Banny's pony dipped his head to take the drop, a weak groan sounded from his left.

Banny pulled up sharp, Morse's pony bumping against the flanks of Banny's chestnut mare Winny.



Banny kept that doorway bathed in lead

"Watch it," he cautioned, hand flicking to his gun butt.

A MAN lay in that dry river bed, just a few yards from where the trail crossed. As Banny, who was taking no chances with his master's money, stared suspiciously at the prostrate figure, he saw that it was an old fellow with a white beard and white hair, evidently too weak to move.

"Gee," Banny exclaimed, "it's Gasca, the old guy who bought the lower half of the ranch, boys." Age always excited compassion in the rough-and-ready cowboy heart, and Banny was no exception. Sympathy flooded his breast now, as, after a look around, he dismounted and knelt beside the groaning white-beard.

"Water—water—held up—they hit

me—" The old fellow rolled red-rimmed eyes up.

Banny turned to his mare, unhooked his canteen. Morse and Shorty, still mounted, watched as he started to unscrew the metal top. Suddenly Banny swore, dropped the canteen, reached for his pistol crouching. A hail of bullets sang over him. He heard his pal Morse cry out in mortal agony, saw him reel in his saddle, his swift hand on the way to his gun dropping limp halfway there. Shorty managed to draw, fire one shot up at the high arroyo bank.

Banny was partially sheltered by Winny, his mare, but the shooting stampeded the horses, and they went galloping wildly down the arroyo. Explosions of the menacing lines of rifles that hemmed him in from both banks burst in his ears. He fired

from his crouched position, one-two-three on one side, turning to rake the other, his slugs ripping the edges. Several of the guns were withdrawn, as their owners ducked from Banny's accurate fire.

To Banny's ears, amid the din, came the jingle of silver bells and the frightened snorting of a horse. A black stallion, a huge, magnificent beast, bridle ornamented with the tinkling bells, dashed into view, broken from his place of concealment in the nearby cottonwoods. Banny glimpsed a smeared brand on the sleek flank as the stallion thundered past.

"GOT to beat 'em," he murmured desperately. He knew he was trapped, trapped right. He hadn't a chance. But he kept firing till he'd emptied both his pistols. As he paused to reload, the rifles came up again during the brief lull, bullets biting the sand all around him, some passing through his clothes, one knocking off his Stetson.

The battle had lasted but a few seconds, though a hundred shots had been fired. Banny hadn't quit yet, and didn't intend to, not till he was laid out. His guns were hot, smoking from rapid fire. Suddenly, just as it seemed Banny might fight his way out of that death hole, somebody fired almost in his ear; he felt the sharp sear of a bullet that plowed along his scalp. Hot blood spurted from his head, running down into his eyes, blinding him. A terrific pounding in his ears confused him, and the whole scene shimmered before him.

He tried to turn, fired again, fingers closing on his triggers; but that was pure fighting instinct, for he was already out. His knees buckled and he crashed in the sand, face burying into the pebbles. He was down.

Next thing Banny remembered he was coming to, trying to sing a

crazy song. His eyes were open, but he couldn't see anything. Weakly raising his hand to his forehead, he found it thick with clotted blood, to which clung sand and even small pieces of rock from the arroyo bed. Dizzy, mouth burning, body hot from the sun, which was high now—he must have been out for hours—he sat up. His whole head was a mess. Still, though it was aching, he couldn't feel anything but that scalp crease on it.

Everything was quiet. He wiped some of the dried blood away from his eyelids, looked around. The bodies of his two pals were near, Shorty close at hand, head smashed by bullets. Dave Morse's mount had carried him several yards down the stream bed before Morse's dead body had been hurled off, doubling up grotesquely. Both of them had been dead for hours.

"Damn 'em," growled Banny, shaking his fist up at the arroyo sides, now deserted. "Damn 'em!

The leather case which had been entrusted to him was gone. The old man was gone. The canteen lay close at hand; it had been propped up by the loose sand, and there was still a pint of warm water in it. Banny drank a little, wet his handkerchief, washed some of the blood away from his face and scalp.

BUZZARDS wheeled overhead, black specks in the molten sky. A stab of sorrow for his dead friends struck the cowboy. Then, remembering that his boss had said he trusted him to get that money through, Banny felt terrible shame. He'd been diverted, ambushed as neat as pie. They'd left him for dead; that slug which had plowed through his scalp had messed him up so they'd figured he was done for. A quarter of an inch lower, and they'd have been right.

He shook his rangy body, rising, feeling out his legs. Yes, he could

stand, even if he was weak. He swore, shook his fist up at the circling vultures. "That's what yuh are," he snarled. "I'll git yuh, damn yuh!"

The boys were dead. And he was shamed, shamed forever. He'd been trusted, and he'd failed. No alibis would do.

He stood a moment, and then began to cast around. There was nothing but death in the arroyo. He climbed the sandy bank, picked up a dozen empty rifle shells, standard makes; there was no chance of identifying them. But his keen desert eyes spotted a dark object some distance away. Peering at it, he decided it was a horse, grazing.

The red sun flashed on metal close at hand. He thought it was another shell; then he saw it was silver, not copper. He stooped, picked up a tiny silver bell. He remembered that stallion. He set his mouth tightly, started to walk toward the horse to the west. He noted that the robbers' trail led that way, too; they'd ridden bunched together for a few hundred yards. But, as Banny slowly followed along it, the trail broke up, disappeared in the dry, sandy land.

HE intended walking down that grazing pony, simply walking toward the horse until, after many dashes from him, it would tire and let him mount. He could see now it had a saddle on its back. The killers had rounded up the others, but this one had eluded them and they hadn't dared linger too long at the scene of the murders and robbery.

As he silently approached, Banny's heart bounded, and he knew why they hadn't been able to catch that pony. It was Winny, his own mare, and she was shy of everyone but Banny, wouldn't allow another man to touch her. Instead of run-

ning from him, she whinnied happily, stood lashing her tail, as he softly called her name. She made only one or two short moves before he caught the reins. A moment later he was mounted on one of the best ponies in Texas.

He looked over his shoulder, back at the Curly L, miles away. There lay his sick boss. Davis had been driven to the limit when he'd sold half his property. Banny knew that the loss of the purchase money would ruin him.

And then, the boss had trusted him. That meant a lot to Banny. With a curse he swung southwest, face grim.

CHAPTER II

The Black Stallion

IT WAS after dark when Banny, after a long ride, silently pulled up at the S-Star-S outfit, a border ranch many miles west along the Rio Grande from the Curly L. Loosening his guns, he surveyed the place. There were the barns, the bunkhouse, the frame ranchhouse. People went to bed early in that land, for they had to be up with the dawn for work, and no lights showed now. Banny touched his mare's soft lips—that meant to keep quiet. He left her with her reins dragging so she'd stand and wait for him.

Mouth set in that grim line, he strode up on the veranda and tried the ranchhouse door. It opened, and he stepped inside.

The room was dark. Suddenly a man cried out at him from a couch. Banny drew his six-gun, ordered, "Lights up." His trigger clicked, emphasizing the order.

The other struck a match, touched it to a candle by his cot. He was a middle-aged man with a long black mustache. Banny knew him as Haley, owner of the S-Star-S.

"Why, howdy, Banny," exclaimed

Haley, and there was relief in his voice. "I thought I knew yore voice. That's why I didn't come up shootin'—we've bin havin' trouble hereabouts lately. What's up?"

BANNY kept his eyes on Haley. He knew the rancher well, had always looked on this neighbor as an honest man. Only right now he felt he had been fooled once too often, and he wasn't taking any chances. So he held his gun ready for instant action, though he didn't point it at Haley.

"Yuh got a sleek black stallion, with a white right foreleg, Haley—I've noticed him in yore pasture."

"Say, hev yuh seen him?" demanded Haley, rising quickly.

"I seen him—today," Banny drawled. "Yore brand's bin smeared over, but I'd know that hoss anywheres."

"Where 'was he? He was stolen from the south pasture two weeks ago. I allus used him fer breedin'—he's got a fine strain. Best hoss I ever owned, too. Wuth a coupla thousand."

There was keen regret, honest sorrow, in Haley's voice, and some hope, too, that he might recover his blooded stock.

Banny scratched his head. "I seen him," he repeated. He wasn't ready to confess what had happened, how his boss had trusted him and how he'd failed. "Any idee who rustled that there stallion?" he demanded.

Haley stuck out his underlip. "Got a good idee, Banny. On'y it don't do me no good. A Mex named Colonel Mendez—yuh know him, I'm sure—owns a hacienda 'crosst the Rio in Mexico. 'Bout fifteen miles from the Border. It'd be no surprise to me to be told my stallion's home is in his barn now. We're purty sure Mendez' men bin raidin' us. We lost plenty hosses, a bunch of work

mules, and a few steers—fer eatin', I suppose."

"Guess I'll be ridin' now," Banny said. "I know Mendez, seen him a few times, sure." He started to back out.

Haley shook his head. "Git yuh in trouble, boy, if yuh cross the Border. The sheriff hems and haws 'bout goin' into Mexico, says they gotta extradite, see? And he won't do nuthin' on suspicion; we got no sure proof. This here Mendez has his Mex cops all fixed up, too.

"I bin hopin' to ketch 'em red-handed, stealin' my property; then I could shoot 'em down. Fact is, I on'y got a coupla men in the bunkhouse now. The others are campin' by the river ford. Bin watchin' fer them rustlers fer a week."

"Right," Banny said. "We lost some stock ourselves, same gang, I reckon. Well—I'll be ridin'."

"Y' ain't goin' over?"

"Maybe. *Adios*."

Haley caught his arm. "But they'll kill yuh over there, yuh young fool. What yuh so anxious to trail 'em fer?"

"Oh, jist this-and-that." Banny pulled away, said "*adios*" again, and strode out.

Haley came out on the porch, still trying to dissuade him. But Banny leaped on his mare, and rode south.

APPROACHING the Rio Grande, shimmering in the moonlight, he went more cautiously. Soon he heard a gruff order to halt, saw a camp of men before him alongside the narrow trail. Three of Haley's punchers rose, rifles ready. Banny hailed them, and they recognized him.

"Seen anybody cross earlier?" Banny asked, pausing to roll himself a cigarette.

"Nope. No one used this here ford."

"Okay. There's another ford, though, a few miles down—on Curly

L land. Mebbe they could use that."
 "Mebbe so. But who yuh after?"

Banny expelled a huge cloud of smoke, slowly remounted before he replied. "Nice night," he said quietly. "Adios, boys." A man need not answer questions if he didn't wish to.

He turned east, rode along the bank, the punchers watching him silently out of sight. After an hour's ride he crossed the pile of stones marking the line between the S-Star-S and what had been Curly L property before Davis had sold his southern section. The river cut through sandy banks, winding in and out, shifting its bed when it willed, swelled from the flooded mountain streams miles above in the spring thaws.

Presently he came to the second ford. He paused, dismounted, examined the wet bank. Even in the moonlight he could make out hoof-prints on the American side, pointing toward Mexico.

Banny pursed his mouth, splashed into the water. Extradition was just one of those words he didn't understand at all.

On the Mexican side the country grew suddenly wilder, covered with prickly pear and other varieties of cactus. He rode along in the silver light, alert. The first grey streak of dawn was on his left hand as he came in sight of a 'dobe hacienda rising from the plains. He left Winny tethered in a grove of scrub trees a couple of hundred yards from the hacienda and crept forward in the dim new light.

HE approached from the rear, climbing into the stable by way of an open half-door. He could hear the animals in there, hear them stamping, breathing. Quickly and quietly he went along the rows of stalls. And in a box stall he came on the magnificent black stallion.

He could make out the white foreleg, and the smeared brand.

He patted his gun, turned back toward the doors. A rack full of bridles and straps, saddles underneath, attracted him, and keenly he began to look them over. Several were ornately trimmed, with bangles and bells dear to the Mexican heart. Searching more carefully, he finally found one with a missing bell. The little tinkler he took from his pocket, which he had picked up at the holdup scene, fitted perfectly. With a satisfied grunt, Banny realized he was in the right place.

SUDDENLY he whirled. A Mexican wrangler had crept up on him, shining knife in hand, teeth clenched and gleaming as he raised to plunge the weapon in between Banny's spine and shoulder blade. Banny's thoughts ran like lightning. He was alone and didn't want to advertise his presence by shooting. Instead of pulling up his gun, he threw himself in, head down, under the extended arm.

The blade tore through his leather vest, scratching his ribs. The Mex's hissing curse was lost in a gasp as Banny's fists rammed home to his stomach, knocking out his wind. The Mex fell back, Banny landing on top of him, knee coming up to drive into the vitals. The knife clattered on the stone-lined floor. Banny seized him by the throat, and squeezed off all chances of cries for help.

"Juan—Juan, *que—*" A second stable man came around the corner, stopped in amazement when he saw Banny beating the first wrangler's head on the stones. He swore, opened his mouth; Banny drew his gun, cocked it menacingly.

"Quiet," he snapped. The gun silenced the second Mex, who stood fearfully staring at the muzzle.

Banny rose, stepped toward him;

the Mex watched. Suddenly Banny hit him alongside the head with the gun butt, and he went down in a heap.

It took Banny several minutes to tie both men and gag them. He left them lying side by side near the rack. Then just to make sure, he hunted through the barn and found a third Mex, asleep on a pile of horse blankets up in front. Banny had him tied and gagged almost before he fully awoke. Picking up one of the bright-colored cloaks belonging to the Mexes, Banny swathed himself in it, borrowed one of the drooping straw hats, and pulled it over his eyes.

Gun held ready under the cloak, a couple of extra ones he'd brought over with him stuck conveniently in his holsters, he started silently for the hacienda.

THE low, rambling structure loomed before him. He found the door into the patio. It was closed, and, when he quietly tried it, Banny found it was bolted. He was looking for a way over the wall when the bolt slid back and a pair of dark eyes looked out at him.

"Juan, is that you? What you want now?" asked the inside guard in Spanish.

Banny hit that door hard. He drove his shoulder against it, and it gave before his powerful body, bowling the guard back into the flag-lined courtyard.

As Banny looked straight at him, the guard realized his error, and, cursing, reached for a .45 pistol and whipped it up. His shot tore past Banny's ear, burying itself in the wall. No use holding fire now; the alarm had been given. Banny fired through the cloak, once, twice, and the Mex fell flat on his back, his arms stretched wide.

Banny started for the entrance, in under a little balcony. Windows

were opening, men shouting, roused by the firing.

"Americano—gringo!" came the cry. Someone had spotted his face in the new light of the dawn. They began firing at him from windows, and bullets tore all around him, ripping through the flowing cape.

CHAPTER III

The Raid

LIKE a battering ram, Banny hit the door, and it splintered, gave way so easily that he catapulted into the dark interior with hardly a break in his stride. It was lucky he did so, for there was a man with a knife crouched waiting for him right by the entry, who struck at him, slashing a gash in the cloak as he sped past. A whole mob of men—Mexicans, renegade Americans who worked for Colonel Mendez—all armed with pistols, rushed from the right wing, coming through a wide doorway. They shouted when they saw him, began shooting.

In the van Banny saw the white-bearded man who'd played possum, lured him down that arroyo into the deadly ambush, stolen the money entrusted to him and shamed him. He knew now that his hunch had been right: the white beard had been a faker, and had actually risen up and sent that bullet clipping through his scalp, shooting him from behind.

Swiftly his eyes sought a vantage point from which he might conduct a battle with at least a hundred-to-one chance of success. Out in the open it was only a question of seconds before they plugged him, by sheer force of numbers. Bullets were tearing around him, the hot lead whistling past his ears. He leaped for the opposite wing, backed through the door there.

Immediately a high squealing began, and figures rushed about like

frightened chickens, jabbering in a strange tongue. They screamed, they ran here and there, trying to get away from the bullets. Instantly Banny realized they were much more afraid of him than he was of them, scattering like rabbits as he moved into the room. He saw a yellow face, slant eyes wide in fear.

"Chinese!" muttered Banny. But he had no time to figure anything out just then. The mob was at the entrance, was beginning to fire in at him. Banny knelt behind a large table, and started to demonstrate his superior marksmanship. He picked off two of the attackers, who fell in the door, blocking the way. Bullets tore big chunks off the table, but Banny kept that doorway bathed in lead. The Chinamen cowered in a far corner, out of range, crying for mercy.

Banny paused to reload two of his guns, the third ready at his knee. He could hear the mob in the hall excitedly talking it over, figuring how to get him out of there without losing any more men.

"*Fool Americano*," he heard several times.

SPECULATIVELY and coolly he looked around. There was a window behind him through which he might climb, but then, he didn't care to retreat. As he started to swing his eyes back to the door, a head appeared at the window, and an arm holding a silver-trimmed Colt pistol was thrust through the opening.

A slug tore close over Banny's ducked head, lodged among the Chinese, who scattered again, running wildly around the room. Banny whirled, fired, saw the surprised look on the window gunman's face just before he dropped, a bullet neatly placed between the eyes. A second head took the place of the first, and Banny heard them starting in the door. His guns blared again as

he tried to cover both rear and front at the same time.

"Gittin' warm," he drawled to himself, to steady his nerves. He leaped toward the Chinamen, flourishing his pistols, yelling at them to scare them. They ran from him for the exit, met the incoming gunmen, fought frantically to escape. The mob, thrown back by the stampeding Chinamen, scattered; and Banny, following with the crowd of Orientals, was protected by the yellow bodies.

HE saw a half a dozen men, among them the white beard who had made a sap of him at the arroyo. He turned his hot guns on them, sent two to the hall floor. Bullets thudded into the yellow men close by him; blood spurted and the Chinamen broke in confusion, dashing out the doors, trying to squeeze through windows.

Banny fired some more, winged the white beard who sat down hard, face red as a beet, cursing as he held his wounded arm. The three still up suddenly lost nerve, turned with wild yells, and ran for safety back into the other side of the hacienda. In a moment Banny stood victor, alone in the outer hall save for the fallen ones.

When cleaning out a wasp nest it's always good to get them all—Banny knew that, in spite of his tender years. He started to chase up the three who'd disappeared into the western wing. The white beard picked up a gun with his left hand, fired pointblank at Banny. Banny felt the sear of the bullet as it tore along the fleshy part of his side.

He whirled, dove through the air, and landed on the other, knocking the gun from his hand. Reaching for the throat, Banny got hold of the white mane—and most of it came off the sharp chin. The man screeched in pain as the false hairs,

tightly attached with spirit gum, tore away from the skin.

"Doggone," gasped Banny, momentarily stunned, "if it ain't Mendez!" That white beard was phony. The hair on Mendez's head had been dusted white with talc, which flew out in clouds as Banny shook him.

"Don't, don't kill me," cried Mendez.

BANNY surveyed him narrowly. "So yuh fooled the boss, huh?" he growled. "Put on them false whiskers, an' bought half his ranch. Then yuh stole back his money which I was takin' to the bank. Mebbe yuh think I can't guess what them Chinks is doin' here, Mendez. Yuh're runnin' 'em acrost the border. That's why yuh need so many hosses and mules, to mount 'em fer the ride. So yuh bin stealin' stock from Haley and us. Well—all I want is twenty thousand cash, Colonel. Git it up, and I'll let yuh—"

A shot crashed from the doorway, ripping past them. Mendez screamed a harsh order to his men to quit firing.

"I haven't the money," growled Mendez. He was a powerful man of Mexican extraction, in his late thirties. Now that most of the disguise was off, his sharp chin could be seen, blue with stubble. His head was round, eyes black, fierce.

"Say, I found the S-Star-S stallion in yore barn," Banny said, with a short laugh. "I reckernized that hoss when he stampeded durin' the holdup, and he dropped a bell. I got yuh right. Yuh stole the boss' money, and yuh made a fool outa me. Well, the tables are turned, so pass over the mazuma."

"I haven't got it, I tell you," insisted Mendez, eyes rolling.

Banny kicked him to his feet, rammed a six-gun into his short-ribs. "Git goin', pal," he drawled. "We'll see kin we find it. If the

twenty thousand yuh stole ain't around, mebbe yuh got some I kin use as well. I got to admit yuh fooled me back at the arroyo; 'twasn't till yuh creased me back there I realized I'd been led into a trap by yore fake white hair, yuh old scorpion. My ears is still burnin', realizin' how yuh fimflammed me."

"I haven't more than a few hundred in the house, *señor*," protested Mendez. "I'm telling the truth."

Banny laughed again, shoved him along through the entry into the west wing of the hacienda. As Mendez crossed the threshold ahead of him, Banny noticed he hesitated the fraction of an instant, so the cowpoke was ready as one of the colonel's followers jumped him with a knife, driving for his heart. Banny's six-gun blared, and the man who'd been hidden by the door doubled up with a bullet in the stomach.

"Yuh take me to yore quarters," Banny ordered coolly. "I'll look fer that money myself."

Mendez shrugged. "You won't find it."

BUT he led the way to a large chamber down the hall. Once Banny saw a twisted, fearful face peer from another turn, but a bullet placed at the edge, tearing out a chunk of plaster, sent the gunman scurrying for cover. Banny shoved Mendez inside the big room, looked about. The sun was higher now, the light better.

"Git out the money," ordered Banny determinedly.

"It's not here, *señor*. See, there's the case we took from you."

Banny saw the leather case which he recognized as the one which had been given him in Lew Davis' sick room. With a cry of victory, he jumped for it. His attention diverted by the case gave Mendez a

chance to snatch up a gun from an open drawer of the bureau. But Mendez's gun arm was wounded. He couldn't take fair aim swiftly enough, firing with his left hand. He shot twice, but Banny was on him, had twisted the pistol from his grip, flung it against the wall.

Then, keeping Mendez with him, he opened the case. It was empty.

"See, you've made a mistake," Mendez said quickly. "You came here, killed a dozen of my men, raided my hacienda, on a mistaken idea."

"The hell yuh say," snarled Banny. "I seen yuh! Yuh skunked me back at the arroyo. I traced the stolen stallion here, and this is the case that had the money in it. The money must be round somewheres. I'll give yuh two minutes to bring it out; then I beat yore lousy head off, yuh rat."

Mendez shrank back as Banny stood menacingly over him. "I haven't got it. I'll have the police on you for this."

BANNY hit him in the teeth, hard knuckles connecting square. Mendez collapsed, down and out. Swearing, Banny began to search the room. His ears caught the thud of hoofs, riding hard away from the hacienda. His spurs clanked as he ran out and looked from an east window, to see two of Mendez's men pounding away southeast, toward the nearest Mexican town. He sent a couple of shots after them, but they only bent low in their saddles and sped on. The range was too far to bring them down save with an extremely lucky shot.

Returning to Mendez, Banny searched the colonel's person. He found a small roll of American and Mexican money, but not much, and some papers which he examined curiously. He finally put them in his pocket. Now in complete charge of

the hacienda for the time, he practically tore Mendez's room to pieces, hunting for the stolen money. His main idea was to locate it and get out of there before the riders returned with the Mex police, with whom Mendez was on intimate terms.

HE worked with method, leaving no hiding place he could think of unturned. It took some time, and the hacienda was a big place, as he realized too well as he worked from room to room. Those who could walk or run had fled; the wounded and dead lay as they'd fallen. The Chinamen had run off into the southern bush.

Hearing riders again, Banny looked out and around. Down from the American border came horsemen, hitting it up for the hacienda. Banny loosened his guns, but recognized Haley and two of his boys, pounding down. They drew up within a fifty-yard range, and yelled out a loud halloa.

Banny answered. Haley came in slowly, sighed with explosive relief when he saw Banny.

"Thought yuh'd be dead by this time, Banny. I found yuh'd headed fer Mendez's hangout, as I figgered yuh would, so we come to pick up yore pieces. Where's the mob?"

"Dead, wounded or scattered," Banny said. "But if yuh want yore stallion, Haley, yuh'll find him in the stable. The Mex cops'll be back soon, so yuh better hustle."

"What the devil was yore idee in comin' here?" demanded Haley.

Banny stared at him. Then he whistled a few bars of a little song. He found it impossible to confess. When a man's proud at twenty-two, he doesn't like to tell the world he's a sap.

"Oh, jist a little hunch I had. But I'm beginnin' to think I made an error."

They entered the hacienda. Haley

looked over the remains of the battle. "Some error," he drawled.

Banny just couldn't bring himself to tell his real error, losing that money for sick Lew Davis. His heart dropped lower and lower as his search went on and he couldn't discover any traces of it. "Must've passed it to someone 'fore they come here, or else them guys that rode off took it," he murmured to himself.

Haley returned from the barn. His men were leading the black stallion and half a dozen other mounts. "All my property, Banny, so I'll take 'em."

"Okay. Yuh kin extradite them hosses yourself, Haley."

Haley grinned. "You comin' with us, boy?"

"Sure, in a few minutes. Yuh go ahead. I'll be ridin' fer the Curly L, so we'd have to split anyways."

"Yuh say Mendez had a bunch of Chinese here?"

"Sure. He's runnin' 'em over."

"H'm. I was talkin' to some Border Patrol men a few days back. They say there's bin hundreds of Chinese leakin' through. Mendez has bin doin' it, then."

"Yep. But yuh better git goin', Haley, 'fore the Mexes come back with the army."

"Adios, then. Don't hang around here too long yourself, Banny."

BANNY nodded, poker face set. Haley and his men, with their recovered horses, rode northwest toward the Haley ford. Banny returned to Mendez, who was sitting up holding his head in his left hand, right helpless at his side.

"Now, listen," began Banny sternly, "I want that money."

"Let me alone," whimpered Mendez, all the fight gone out of him. "I'll tell you—"

The heavy thud of many hoofs came to them. Banny swore; this time the riders were approaching

from the southeast. New hope shone in Mendez's eyes, and he shut his lips determinedly. Banny gave him a final kick, ran out into the patio. A cloud of dust from which showed the flashes of the sun on gun barrels, the figures of uniformed men, told Banny he'd have to vamose, and fast. He could never clean up that army. They might bring cannon up.

Bitter disappointment in his heart, he ran for the spot where Winny awaited him. The van of the Mexes was within a few hundred yards of the hacienda as Banny leaped into his saddle, stuck spurs into Winny's flanks, and turned toward the Rio Grande.

THE mob spotted him as he rode out from behind the walls, and, with shouts and shots, swerved and started in pursuit. They were heavily armed, with rifles and pistols, and fired at him from long range. Again he heard the whang of bullets intended for his hide, but the distance was too great for accurate aim, and everyone was moving fast. Only a chance shot could bring him down.

Low in the saddle, he rode as only Banny could, keen eyes watching for holes in the prairie—should Winny step in one and go down, it would be just too bad. He didn't bother to shoot back. But the pursuers, strung out in a long line, fired now and then. Once a bullet cut up dust a few inches from the swiftly moving pony.

Banny himself was about through for the day. Every muscle in his lithe frame ached. Blood was crusted on his face from the wound, which had broken open again, and he had a dozen sears and rips in his flesh. He hadn't slept for a couple of nights. Luckily his pony had had a rest while Banny operated in the hacienda, and she carried him to the river. Banny looked around again

at his pursuers, then pushed the mare into the warm water.

Finally reaching the American side, he turned and saw that the Mexes had drawn up on the other bank, gesticulating excitedly. The leader shook his brown fist at Banny, who made the appropriate gesture before starting for the line of hills beyond which lay Lew Davis' Curly L. The Mexicans made no attempt to chase him beyond the line.

Chin on his chest, hardly able to stay in the saddle, Banny came to the rising ground. There was bitterness in him at having failed his boss. He'd done his best and it wasn't good enough.

"Got to sleep," he murmured. He didn't want to go back to the ranch, anyway. Not yet.

He turned off the narrow trail, up through a gap. His mare he hid behind a large outcropping of rock, and, throwing himself down out of sight of the road, he fell asleep with Stetson over his face, shaded by the rocks and scrub trees.

CHAPTER IV

One Against Many

BANNY awakened once or twice through the day, only to fall asleep again. His utterly weary body didn't want to stir. It was near sundown when he finally rose, stretched, went to his saddle bags and took out some scant provisions. Cold biscuit and dried beef, washed down with warm water from his canteen, made his meal.

Then he sat on a rock and put his head in his hands.

"Sure are outa luck, boy," he soliloquized. "Banny, yuh missed fire that time. Now yuh gotta go back an' tell a sick man yuh failed him. Some fun."

He'd been proud of himself, too. Not stuck up, but quietly capable, looking on himself as fit to be

trusted. The boss had accepted him at that—and he'd not come up to scratch. He told himself severely there was no use hunting alibis.

The sun was low over the hills. He shook his head. No longer could he delay his return, to tell Davis what had occurred. He saddled Winny. With a long face, he returned to the trail, leading her carefully over the rough spots. Mounting, he jogged toward the Curly L. Immersed in his thoughts, he rounded a bend past the bluff which protruded out on the trail, and came face to face with a lone horseman heading south.

BANNY'S hand traveled to his gun. He drew, cocked it, had it up before he recognized the rider, whose pony had shied as his master, too, dug for his .45.

"Shippers!" cried Banny.

George Shippers, the stocky foreman of the Curly L, stared at Banny as though seeing a ghost.

"Banny! S' help me, I thought yuh was dead."

"I nearly was," Banny said quietly.

He rode close to Shippers. He'd never been a favorite of the foreman's, and didn't like to confess what had happened to him. But the iron in his soul forced him to do it.

"How'd yuh git away from that ambush?" asked Shippers, pulling himself together. "We found Shorty and Dave killed."

"Why, they left me fer dead, too, George. It was pure luck I wasn't. Just happened to duck when they give it to me. They thought I was plugged right, but 'twas just a crease." He braced himself. "I lost that twenty thousand."

Shippers inhaled deeply, stared at Banny. Banny's expression was unfathomable, made the foreman nervous. "Oh, yuh did?"

"Yeah, I lost it. Now what'll the boss do?"

Shippers shrugged. "Go bust, I

guess. When I left—he told me to ride this-a-way to see could I find yore body, Banny—he was ravin' 'bout it all. Talked a lot of yuh, said he was sorry he'd sent yuh with that twenty grand, yuh bein' just a kid. He blamed hisself fer yuh git-tin' killed, see? Didn't hold it against yuh at all, jist said yuh was young, and mebbe had got fooled."

"He did, huh?" Banny's tone was colorless. It was impossible to guess what he was suffering. He clipped his words, that was all, eyes steadily fixed on Shippers. "I follered them robbers to Mexico, cleaned out the whole roost. I figgered out the story, too. I got fooled, Shippers. I seen that old white beard who bought the ranch, sufferin', lyin' in that arroyo. Pity threw me off guard."

Shippers bit his lip. "'Twasn't yore fault, Banny," he said quickly. "Quit worryin'. How was yuh to know that old guy and Mendez was one and the same *hombre*?"

Banny's eyes widened an instant, then turned to narrow slits. Shippers' fingers twisted at his reins. After a moment, Banny said. "What was that yuh said?"

SHIPPERS cursed, started for his gun. Banny reached across the three-foot space separating them, caught Shippers' wrist, shoving it aside as the foreman pulled his trigger. The slug burned across Banny's chap leg. As the foreman jerked back against Banny's pull, his pony cavorted, and Shippers slid off, carrying Banny out of his saddle with him. They fell on the trail, heavily crashing on the rocks. But neither took heed of the fall, reaching for each other's throat.

Shippers rolled out of Banny's grip, jumped to his feet. He struck at Banny's face as Banny came up on his knees, caught Banny a clip alongside the ear that made his

wounded head ring. As Shippers fired a second time, Banny was in under his guard, planting a hard fist in an uppercut to the foreman's chin.

Shippers' head snapped back, teeth grinding together. Banny snatched at his gun, got it, twisted it back so Shippers' fingers were caught and bent in the guard.

"Ow—quit," cried Shippers.

BOTH Banny's mare and the foreman's pony had shied off, down trail, from their fighting masters. Banny hit Shippers again, in the nose, bringing blood spurting from the man's nostrils. Now he stepped back, drew his gun, covered Shippers.

"Yuh let yore tongue slip when yuh said that 'bout Mendez an' that old phony bein' the same, Shippers," Banny drawled. "I guess yore conscience must be hurtin' yuh, huh? No way fer yuh to have knowed that since the holdup, an' if yuh knowed it before, yuh must've bin in with Mendez."

As he glared at Shippers, chin down, two Mexicans rode around the bluff. The riders pulled up short as they saw Banny covering the foreman. Banny, over his shoulder, recognized them as the Mendez men who had ridden for the police.

"That fool *Americano!*" one of them screamed, jerking his rein. The second fired a wild shot from his rifle, which tore past Banny's ribs, buried itself in Shippers' hip. The foreman groaned, lost his footing, fell flat on the trail, twitching.

Banny looked hurriedly for his mare. She'd run off, out of sight. Swiftly he leaped up the side of the bluff, took a look along the back trail. It was jammed with riders coming through the long gap. There were at least thirty, several Mexicans, renegade cowboys from the Texas plains, but over half were

Chinamen, mounted on mules and stolen horses, chattering in fear at the shooting ahead.

Those at the rear pushed to get forward; the ones in front wanted to retreat, away from the firing. Near the back Banny saw Mendez, arm in a sling, gun in his left hand. Dark-skinned gunmen surrounded him. Mendez, pale under his brown skin, had washed off the beard.

"Surrender!" howled Banny, sticking his head over a rock.

MENDEZ cursed wildly, tried to turn, found himself blocked in the narrow defile. Banny saw he meant to run, and, taking careful aim, put a shot into Mendez's horse. The animal leaped high, sunfished, tried a back throw. Caught against the wall, the horse tossed the colonel from his saddle, and whirled in a circle before falling.

This made the whole affair a riot. Madly snorting horses fought their riders. Mules, cool in the confusion, began to defend themselves from what they considered aggression, kicking out viciously. Chinaman after Chinaman fell to the trail.

The gunmen sent a hail of lead across the bluff, at Banny's head. Banny ducked splinters of rock.

"Get him—get that fool gringo," howled Mendez. But he was in danger of death himself from the flying hoofs. A clip from a hoof caused him to scream in pain, and he ran halfway up the bluff. Banny crept silently that way, suddenly stuck his gun out at Mendez.

"C'mere, kid," ordered Banny coolly. "I wanta talk to yuh."

Mendez paled, raised his free hand. His black eyes were fascinated by Banny's smoking gun.

"Come on, walk," shouted Banny. "I'll put yuh away fer good this time, if yuh don't obey."

Mendez came slowly forward. "Don't shoot," he said. He waved

his men back, ordered them not to fire, for he was between them and Banny. Banny reached out, seized the pallid man's wrist, jerked him down behind the bluff. He took away his guns and knife.

"Siddown," ordered Banny. "I want to hear what yuh was gonna tell me when we was interrupted. I'm powerful anxious to hear it. Where's that money?"

A bullet whammed against the rock, coming from Banny's rear. Banny whirled, fired, plugged a man between the eyes. But this was only one of several who'd come up behind him. Bullets hummed all around, and Mendez was scrambling for safety. Banny was caught between two fires. He leaped for Mendez, seized the colonel's neck and pulled him between the men at his back and his own body. These sang out to their pals on the other side to attack.

BANNY had to do some swift figuring. In a few moments they'd have him right. There was a crevice running some feet into the rock nearby. Holding Mendez, Banny jumped for it, crammed inside, protected from three flanks. They couldn't get at him in there.

He kept Mendez before him as a shield, though the colonel sagged down on the rocks. A couple of Mexes sent shots in, high, at Banny.

The day was failing now. Banny could see the pale moon in the sky as the sun's rays faded. Stars showed above his deep crevice. He could hear the men talking in excited Spanish, figuring how to get him out. He knew it was only a question of time. When it grew dark, they could creep in on him.

Minutes passed. Banny cautiously peered over Mendez, and a bullet spat past. He drew back; he was trapped for fair. He figured they'd get him from above as soon as it

darkened enough. In a lull he heard shouts toward the Border side, shots.

He cocked his hot guns. There was another volley. Cries of wounded sang out. The men behind the boulder, ready to riddle Banny when he came out, began retreating toward their horses. Banny came out, both guns spitting. He winged two men, and, taking charge of the bluff, began picking off ponies.

A tall man with a star on his shirt-front suddenly rode into Banny's view, leading half a dozen Americans armed with repeating rifles. They were driving Chinamen and Mexes before them.

"Hey, Youngman!" shouted Banny, recognizing the captain of the Border Police.

"Hello, Banny," sang out Youngman. From then on he was busy making captures.

After a sharp, short battle, Youngman returned, a couple of dozen prisoners in tow. Banny held tightly to Mendez, dragged him along.

"Here's the leader of the outfit, Cap," he said. "He's got a hacienda in Mexico where he's bin keepin' the Chinese till he could run 'em over and hide 'em in Texas."

"Yeah, I know," drawled Youngman. "Haley sent a man to our camp, said yuh'd figgered how they was smuggling in yellow men. We bin after this mob a long while."

Mendez was unconscious from injuries. Banny searched him again, still hunting that money.

"Yore foreman, Shippers, got wounded," Youngman told Banny. "He's lyin' back there a ways."

"Yep. I want a word with George," Banny replied.

BANNY stepped awkwardly into his boss' room. "Banny," Davis cried. "Thought yuh was kilt, boy."

"Come purty close to it. But I banked that money."

"But—they said yuh'd bin robbed."

"I was. But not of that twenty thousand, boss. I never had that. We took Mendez and George Shippers to the town jail last night, boss. Seems Shippers was workin' with Mendez, runnin' in Chinamen. Mendez wanted the lower half of yore ranch, but couldn't see payin' good money fer it. So he fixes hisself up with a beard and white hair, come here, handed yuh twenty thousand cash. Yore room's dark, and yuh're sick, so yuh didn't spot him. The money was okay, but Shippers switched bags on yuh, and handed me a bag of blank papers.

THEY made a sap outa me, boss, I wantin' to make it look like I'd lost yore money. When I come to, I trailed Mendez, found that old guy and him was the same. Couldn't find the money. On my way in I met Shippers; he made a slip of his tongue that started me thinkin'.

"To make it short, boss, Shippers had that twenty thousand on him, so I jist took it and banked it when we went to town with the pris'ners. I found that deed where yuh signed the land to Mendez—so I burnt it up. It ain't been recorded yet."

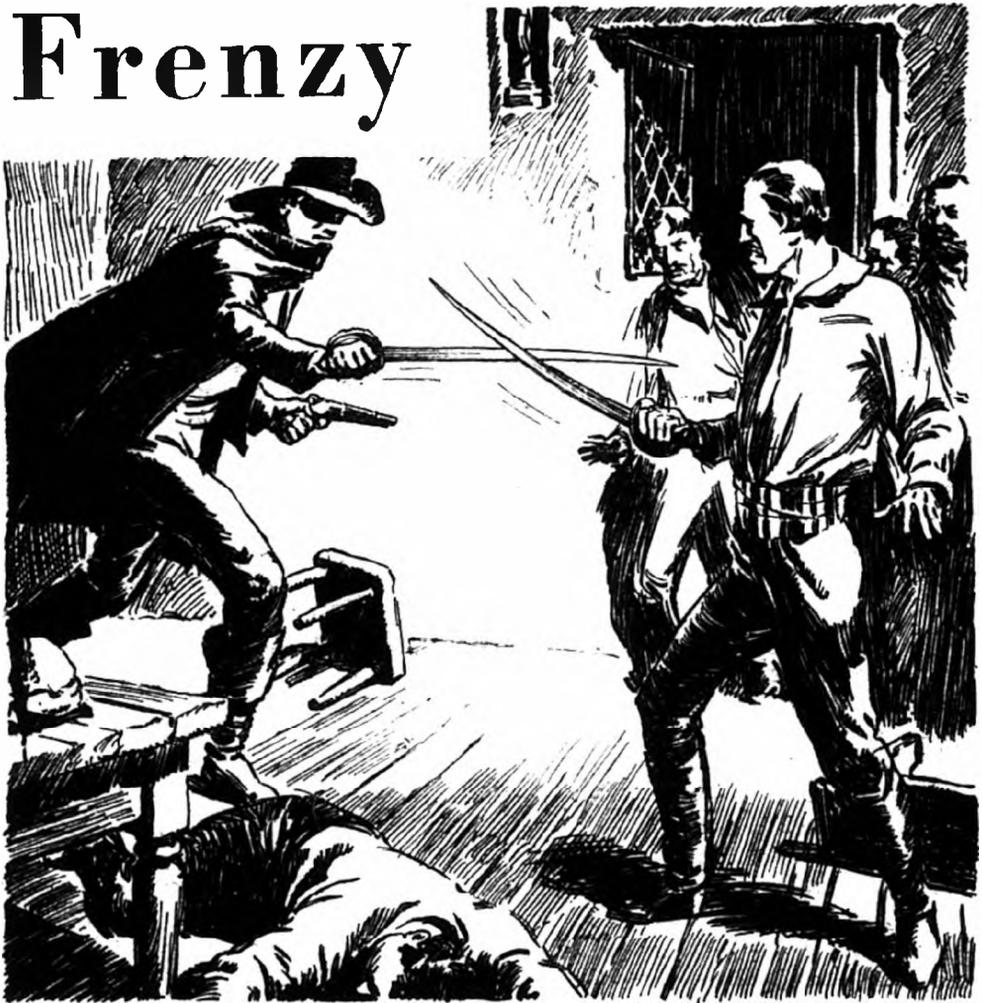
"But, Banny. We can't keep the land and money, too."

Banny shrugged. "Boss, Mendez ain't in no condition to buy no land now. And Youngman says fer me to keep the money, 'less we happen to find who he stole it from. Anyways, I git a reward for each Chinaman that was taken, and a big chunk of cash fer that mob. Boss, yuh need a new foreman—I'd like to pay off what yuh owe and take the job."

"You're it, Banny, Boy," Davis cried, pressing his hand. "I'm gonna git well soon, and we're partners now. Yuh saved me every way."

Banny sighed happily. "Well, boss," he drawled, "they made a fool outa me. But they had a swell party doin' it!"

The Whirlwind's Frenzy



Back and forth across the room they fought

Stirred to Mad Rage by the Foul Deeds of Two Vile Impostors, El Torbellino Again Makes Swords Resound in Senor Lazaga's Inn!

By JOHNSTON McCULLLEY

Author of "Alias the Whirlwind," "The Mark of Zorro," etc.

DOWN the dusty highway known as El Camino Real, and into the little pueblo of San Diego de Alcalá, two horsemen rode in the heat of the day.

The blue waters of the bay were shrouded with a haze, and black billows of heat radiation rippled across the land. The presidio baked in the merciless sun, with the troopers doz-

ing in the semi-cool barracks room, the adobe walls of which had been drenched with water.

The hot breeze sent swirls of dust and litter around the little plaza. The scattered shops, the fine houses, the huts of the natives—all seemed lifeless. Few humans of any station were to be seen. It was *siesta* hour.

A STRANGE hour for any to be riding the highway unless it were a native servant on a wild mule going about an errand, or some one forced to travel by emergency. Yet these two riders came down the slope and into the town, their fine mounts lathered and themselves dripping perspiration that ran down their faces through a film of dust.

They slackened speed when they came to the corner of the plaza, and guided their mounts to the inn, owned and operated by Lazaga. The long, low, sprawling adobe building cast some shade over the hitching blocks in front.

"We are here!" one man said, dismounting stiffly.

"A pest of a journey," the other remarked, getting out of saddle also, and preparing to tether his horse.

"When there is a journey to be made, 'tis the part of wisdom to have it over quickly," the first rejoined. "A moment more, and we wash the dust down our throats with wine, and bathe our bodies in cool water, and have our fill of food."

"And, after that—amusement," the second added, laughing a bit as he glanced around the sleeping plaza. "Such amusement as this town—"

"Have a care!" the other whispered. "There may be some who are not asleep."

There was one—*Señor* Lazaga, master of the inn, a gentleman who never slept if there was chance of business and profit. He was alone in the inn's big room, dozing on a stool against the wall. Hoofbeats had awakened

him, and the voices had brought him a quickening of senses. Here were unexpected travelers off *El Camino Real*, and *Señor* Lazaga made haste to welcome them.

He peered from the window to make an estimation of them, a mental appraisal of possible profits. Their horses were splendid mounts, and their gear was expensive. The two men appeared to be leaning toward middle age. One was short and fat, the other tall and lean. Both were dressed well, and each wore blade at side and pistol in belt.

"Welcome, *señores!*" Lazaga intoned, as they strode into the place, half blinded by the sun glare, blinking rapidly to get eyes fitted to the inn's semi-gloom.

One growled an answer which meant nothing. They stalked to a table, dropped upon a bench.

"Your best wine!" the short one demanded. "We require bathing water after we have had wine—water properly warmed and scented. After that, food. And look you, landlord! We are accustomed to the best. When our wine is not red enough, we use our blades to let out human blood, that its ruby flow may recompense us for the lack of it in the wine."

L AZAGA bobbed his head and grinned. He cared not how much a man might jest, if there was profit forthcoming. He disappeared into the kitchen, to return promptly with wineskin and goblets.

He did not awaken his fair daughter, Juanita, who was taking her *siesta*, nor did he call Pedro Garzo, his man-of-all-work. Time to do that later, with a great show, when their services were actually needed. Water already was heating on the stove, and Lazaga would have opportunity to prepare food while his guests bathed.

"I," said the fat man, "am Don Marcos Pulido, and this is my good friend, Manuel Gonzales, who is

known in the north country as a man with great skill at handling a blade. No wise man will duel him."

"I am honored," Lazaga replied.

"There is no question of that," the one who had called himself Don Marcos Pulido replied. "You are named Lazaga, are you not?"

"That is correct, *señor*."

"It may be what you call yourself here in San Diego de Alcalá—but do not say that it is correct." Don Marcos Pulido smiled knowingly as he spoke.

"I do not understand the jest, *señor*," Lazaga said. But he had started visibly, and his face had grown a tinge paler.

"Once, in the vicinity of San Francisco de Asis, there was a man who, getting in his cups, quarreled with a gambler about the fairness of his dice," Don Marcos Pulido narrated. "They fought, and the gambler was slain. Not content with slaying him, the other took the table stakes and fled. Murder and robbery, *señor*! The man was not found at the time, and the thing blew over."

"And how does this concern me, *señor*?" Lazaga asked.

"I thought such an entertaining tale might interest you, *Señor* Lazaga. Alas, I seem to be a failure as a teller of tales."

"**H**OW long ago did this all occur, *señor*?"

"Some fifteen years ago, *señor*. The man had a girl child he carried with him in his flight. Regardless of the hindrance of that, he escaped. The child's mother had died a short time before."

"And what—what became of him?" Lazaga asked.

"He dodged the soldiery in some strange manner, and traveled to the southland. He used the money to start himself in business. He opened an inn, *señor*, to be precise—and changed his name to Lazaga!"

II

NOW, *Señor* Lazaga paled in earnest, and his eyes bulged, and he trembled until his fat body shook. His past had come to terrorize him, as it had haunted him these years. He had slain a rogue and thief, and he had taken the money because he realized the gambler had stolen money from him on several occasions, by way of crooked dice. Yet the law looked upon his acts as murder and robbery.

"Are you accusing me of being the man, *señor*?" Lazaga asked.

"We know you are the man," Don Marcos Pulido replied. "We have made it our business to know."

"The man was a scoundrel and thief. He deserved to be slain. Moreover, it was self-defense. The money I took was in place of that he had stolen from me. My one offense is that I grew frightened and ran away."

"A confession of guilt," Don Marcos declared.

"I was thinking only of my daughter, that she would be alone in the world, without relatives, if aught happened to me. And now—"

"Be assured of one thing—we are not officers of the law, not in the service of His Excellency, the Governor. We are not here to expose you and possibly send you back to be hanged—unless you drive us to such a thing."

"But how did you learn—" Lazaga began.

"Enough for the present!" Don Marcos Pulido interrupted. "Serve us, and hold your tongue!"

They guzzled Lazaga's best wine, then went to quarters he assigned them, a fine room on the patio, and bathed in scented warm water. Then they returned to the big room, and to the best meal Lazaga could prepare.

He was glad that nobody came to the inn, for he wished time to com-

pose himself. He did not understand the situation clearly. These men off the highway seemed to hint at something sinister which might happen.

He did not awaken his daughter, Juanita, for she would sense his confusion immediately, and demand an explanation. He was not a stern father, this *Señor* Lazaga, not the sort to hush his child's questioning. He had adored her mother, and adored the daughter in turn, and denied her nothing.

Nor had he called Pedro Garzo, his man-of-all-work. The latter also might sense something wrong, if he saw Lazaga before he could get his breathing and facial expression back to normal. But Pedro Garzo had heard.

Pedro Garzo had been awakened by the hoofbeats. He had been dozing in the patio, and thought it strange that Lazaga did not call him to help with the work. He listened, and he heard, and he sensed the truth of the matter.

He was a strange young man, this Pedro Garzo, who had wandered into the pueblo some months before to get a place at the inn. Though he acted a menial, he was from Spain, a scion of a noble house, who had quarreled with his father and taken to travel. He had great difficulty at times curbing the hot blood in his veins.

NOW he wandered into the big room, stifling a yawn with the back of a hand, then rubbing his eyes as though just awake.

"Guests," Lazaga hissed at him. "Are you always asleep?"

"I did not hear you call, *señor*."

Lazaga gave a glad sigh. That meant, he thought, that Pedro Garzo had heard nothing. He motioned toward a broom of twigs, and Pedro Garzo seized it and began sweeping the hearth of the big fireplace.

He watched the newcomers from the corners of his eyes as he worked,

listened to their boasting, watched Lazaga also and remarked his nervousness.

"Landlord!" Don Marcos Pulido howled.

Lazaga ran to the table.

"We may spend some time in your hostelry," Don Marcos said. "We insist on the best of wines and food."

"You shall have it," Lazaga said.

"Care for our mounts."

"My man shall put them into the corral."

"Let him carry the gear to our quarters and stack it there. Those saddles and bridles are valuable."

PEDRO GARZO hurried out to take the horses to the corral behind the inn. He inspected the mounts carefully, looking at their markings. He carried saddles and bridles to the room Lazaga had assigned the guests, and swiftly inspected the contents of the saddlebags. His eyes gleamed strangely, but his face was inscrutable again when he entered the big room of the inn.

Don Marcos Pulido and Manuel Gonzales had taken much rich wine, and were growing loud and bold. Some of the townsmen were at the inn now, for the evening bowl, and the card and dice game was opened at a table in the corner.

The new guests decided they would play. They gambled recklessly, and lost, and paid. Presently, Don Marcos Pulido laughed raucously, and revealed that his money pouch was empty. He called Lazaga.

"Good *Señor* Lazaga, you know me and my station," he said. "Your townsmen are having rare luck with the dice. They have emptied my purse. Replenish it, good landlord, and put the amount to my account. Twenty pieces of gold."

Lazaga grew cold. Twenty pieces! And this man mentioned the sum as though it were nothing. And Lazaga understood now. This was a gentle

sort of robbery. Don Marcos Pulido was demanding payment for keeping a silent tongue in his head. Lazaga saw Manuel Gonzales leering at him, and took the pouch and hastened away.

Out into the patio he went, and to the well. Reaching down inside it, he loosened a stone in the curb, removed it, and from an aperture brought forth a leather pouch. From this he took the twenty pieces of gold, his eyes misty with tears. This was his life's savings, gold with which he had hoped to assure the future of his beloved daughter.

"So this is where you hide your hoard!" It was a soft voice behind him.

Lazaga gave a cry and whirled, to find Manuel Gonzales standing a few feet away, leering again, fingering the hilt of his sword.

"Put the twenty pieces in the pouch, *señor*," Gonzales said, "and hand me your big pouch with the remainder."

"Mercy, for the love of the saints! It is all I have in the world!"

"You do not even have that," Gonzales said, reaching for the pouch. "But you have life and liberty, and may make more money. If the soldiery knew what we know of you, they'd deprive you, soon enough, of both liberty and life, and take the gold also."

MANUEL GONZALES took the pouch, and motioned Lazaga toward the end of the patio. Pedro Garzo, watching from behind the kitchen door, saw that also.

The newcomers to San Diego de Alcalá resumed their gambling, and now their luck seemed to change. They were so fortunate that the townsmen might have grown suspicious, did they not think these men were gentlemen of quality, *caballeros* who would not stoop to trickery. Pedro Garzo, watching closely as he

busied himself in the room, knew the truth, however. Tricks were being used.

But he said nothing to expose the men, nor did he whisper the truth to Lazaga. It would not be the thing to antagonize these men now, Pedro Garzo knew. It might react upon Lazaga.

DUSK came, the game went on, and the strangers drank more wine, and grew louder and bolder still. They ordered Lazaga around as though he had been a flea-bitten dog of the pueblo. The townsmen marveled that Lazaga did not resent it, and believed anew, since he did not, that these visitors were men of high standing and their visit a credit to the community.

The torches were ignited, casting a flickering light around the big room. Other guests ate and drank. Lazaga and Pedro Garzo were busy, and the *Señorita* Juanita toiled at the stove in the kitchen.

"Who are these noble guests?" she asked Pedro Garzo.

"Not so noble as they sound," he whispered in reply. "It were best if they did not see you."

"Indeed? Am I not pretty enough?"

"You are too pretty, which is the reason."

Her eyes flashed at him.

"Am I to hide myself always? Can my father's man-of-all-work be jealous of his employer's daughter? Perhaps you are a fine gentleman yourself—no?"

Pedro Garzo glared at her. That she had guessed certain secrets about him, he did not doubt. That she knew he loved her, he did not doubt, either. But whether she loved him in return—that was a big question.

He hurried into the room with a fresh wineskin, and for a time was busy aiding Lazaga. Don Marcos Pulido lurched away from the gaming table, his friend with him, the

both laughing because they had taken all from the other gamesters.

"More wine, landlord!" Don Marcos called. "This is a rare place, this San Diego de Alcala. We may remain a fortnight."

A fortnight! That meant ruin, Lazaga knew. These men would mulct him of everything, squeeze him dry.

"And what have we here?" Don Marcos cried, suddenly.

L AZAGA whirled, and Pedro Garzo turned quickly also. *Señorita* Juanita, overcome by her curiosity, had entered the big room.

"My daughter," Lazaga said. "Juanita, get back into the kitchen, to your work." There was sudden fear in his voice.

"A comely maid," Don Marcos declared. "Tell her to come here to me."

"She smells of cooking pots, *señor*. Juanita!"

"Am I to be disobeyed?" Don Marcos thundered, looking at Lazaga meaningly.

He beckoned Juanita, and she approached timidly. Thinking that perhaps she was making an impression on rich guests, and that it might aid her father, she smiled and dimpled, and Lazaga and Pedro Garzo almost groaned.

"Sit on my knee, *señorita*," Don Marcos ordered.

"No!" Lazaga thundered. "Juanita, go to the kitchen!"

"Did I understand you correctly, *señor*?" Don Marcos asked, his eyes narrowing and flashing. "Girl, come here!"

He laughed and grasped her wrist, and pulled her down to his knee. Juanita grew frightened now. This man almost stifled her with his hugging arm, and bent to kiss her, and she felt his hot, wine-tinctured breath on her face.

She struggled to get away, pounded

at his breast with her little fists, while both Don Marcos and Manuel Gonzales laughed. Pedro Garzo started forward abruptly, but Lazaga gripped his arm and held him back.

Don Marcos was still trying to claim his kiss. Pedro Garzo lurched forward again, and pretended to trip, and the contents of two wine goblets he carried dashed upon Don Marcos Pulido's fine clothing.

"*Dios!*" Don Marcos screeched, as he sprang to his feet.

He released Juanita, who glided away and ran into the kitchen. Pulido sprang to his feet, and caught up a whip somebody had left on a bench, and lashed out with it. Pedro Garzo, suddenly playing his part again, covered his head with his arms, and howled and begged.

"Lout!" Don Marcos screeched. "Clumsy idiot! Out of my sight! Landlord, let me not see the fellow's face again."

"Get out!" Lazaga barked. But he flashed Pedro Garzo a look of gratitude.

THOSE in the inn had laughed, and now they turned to their own pursuits again. Don Marcos Pulido beckoned Lazaga to him.

"Your daughter, *señor*, is dainty and fair," he whispered.

"She is a good girl—all I have left in the world."

"What would become of her, think you, if you were deprived of life? With no relatives, and being the daughter of a man executed for murder and robbery—"

"Have mercy, *señor!*"

"Then do not oppose me in any wish of mine," Don Marcos warned. "I wish to see your daughter again, later, perhaps in the patio. There will be a moon."

Crushed, Lazaga went back into the kitchen. These men had taken his gold, and were working their will with him. But they were going too

far. He would save his daughter, though it cost his life.

Perhaps, if he shot down these men with his brace of pistols—

"Señor Lazaga." It was Pedro Garzo. "Should I not take salt to the big black horse in the pasture?"

"Take it," Lazaga replied. "And return swiftly. I may have an important errand for you to do." He stepped closer, and whispered. "I may want you to escort the *señorita* out into the country, to the *hacienda* of a friend."

III

LAZAGA owned a monstrous black horse he had taken in trade, and which refused to be tamed. He was kept in a pasture a short distance away, waiting for the day when Lazaga could dispose of him. Pedro Garzo took salt to the animal at frequent intervals.

Unknown to any, Pedro Garzo had broken the magnificent black. And on this moon-drenched night, when he came to a certain place and whistled, the horse came rushing toward him.

Pedro Garzo gave him the salt, and slapped the sleek neck and talked in soothing tones. Presently, he led the horse, fingers in mane, down into a coulée and to a jumble of rocks. From behind the rocks he brought forth gear, and made the horse ready for the trail.

He brought forth garments, also a hat, a long black cloak which shrouded his form, a black mask which obscured his face. He buckled on a blade, loaded and primed a pistol and put it into his sash.

He mounted, and rode slowly and cautiously out of the coulée and through the deeper shadows. Pedro Garzo, the menial, was gone; in his place was El Torbellino, the highwayman.

Far north of the town, he sat his big black in the shadows and waited.

From the distance came soft hoof-beats and the creaking of carriage wheels. Don Juan Sebastiano, a wealthy man, was returning to his town house after a visit of business to the big *rancho* he owned.

Don Juan was dozing as his native coachman kept the horses going. But suddenly the native stopped the team and gave a squawk of fear, and Don Juan came alert and sat forward.

Across the highway was a huge black horse, and in the saddle a masked man who held leveled pistol.

"Your purse, *señor!*" the highwayman demanded. "Resistance would be folly. I am El Torbellino!"

"The accursed Whirlwind!" Don Juan Sebastiano cried.

"The same, *señor*. Your purse, quickly!"

He urged the big black forward, held the pistol in his right hand ready to fire, and extended his left for the purse. His eyes glittered through the slits in his mask. His voice was low and menacing.

WHATEVER Don Juan Sebastiano thought about it, he knew that this was not a time to fight. This highwayman had the better of him. Moreover, the amount of gold the Don carried was light. He took pouch from girdle, and handed it up.

"'Tis a brave thing you do," Don Juan said, sneering a trifle. "When the troopers run you down, and put a noose around your neck, you may not be so brave."

"Drive on!" the Whirlwind ordered the frightened coachman. "Lash your horses!"

The carriage disappeared down the highway through the moonlight with a huge dust cloud rolling behind it. The Whirlwind chuckled a bit, and turned his big black down into a depression, and circled back toward the town. From a secluded place, he watched.

Don Juan Sebastiano's carriage

went directly to the presidio. A moment after its arrival, a bugle blared. Lights flashed in the barracks as more torches were ignited. Don Juan's carriage went on to the inn, and there was commotion there as the news quickly spread. El Torbellino, the Whirlwind, was abroad again!

Out of the presidio and up the highway rode the troopers of San Diego de Alcalá, with burly Sergeant Juan Cassara at their head. The Whirlwind watched from a distance as they rode past on their fruitless quest of him. When they had disappeared, he urged his horse on toward the town.

In the coulée behind the inn, he stopped his mount and left him there, tethering him to a clump of brush. Through the shadows he went quickly toward the inn. Crouching against the wall, he listened.

Don Juan Sebastiano was there, telling of what had befallen him. The two newcomers were talking loudly also, and Manuel Gonzales was relating what would happen to this bandit could he but come face to face with him.

The Whirlwind went to the half-opened kitchen door and peered inside. Nobody was in the room. He could hear Juanita Lazaga weeping softly out in the patio. Lazaga was in the big room with his guests.

RAGE burned in the Whirlwind's breast. There were several accounts to be settled against these newcomers. Lazaga, though he had slain and robbed, had been justified in doing so. His had been a life of rectitude since. And here were scoundrels threatening his safety and peace of mind—and also threatening the little *señorita*.

The Whirlwind's rage became a frenzy. He strode through the kitchen, pistol held ready. He stepped into the big room and stopped at the

end of the fireplace, unnoticed. And suddenly he spoke:

"Attention, *señores!*"

"'Tis that highwayman! 'Tis the Whirlwind!" Don Juan Sebastiano cried. "At him!"

"El Torbellino!" Lazaga gasped.

"Careful, *señores!*" the Whirlwind warned. "Don Juan Sebastiano, here is your purse." He tossed it down upon the nearest table. "I but pretended to rob you, so you would come here with the tale and the troopers ride out of town and not be present to bother me now. I have no wish to rob you, Don Juan, nor any of the respectable men of San Diego de Alcalá. My business is with these strangers."

HE strode forward a few steps, and those in the room retreated against the walls. Don Marcos Pulido and Manuel Gonzales were upon their feet, half crouched and bending forward.

"Drop your pistols out of your sashes and to the floor, *señores,*" the Whirlwind ordered. "Instantly, or I fire! I have a second pistol prepared. One of you will die at once, and the other will have small chance."

They dropped their pistols, going about it slowly, and plainly enough with the intention of using them if an opportunity afforded. But none did. The glittering eyes of the Whirlwind were watching too closely.

"You, who call yourself Don Marcos Pulido, toss your money pouch on the table!" El Torbellino commanded.

The pouch was tossed.

"And you, Manuel Gonzales, do the same with the one you carry. I mean the large one you have beneath your sash."

Cursing, Manuel Gonzales tossed down the pouch he had compelled Lazaga to give him.

"Don Marcos Pulido," the Whirlwind said, "you are no Don, nor are

you a Pulido. There is but one pure-blood Pulido, and he is a man of eighty and lives in Spain. You are but a mean trickster. You and this companion of yours, who fancies himself as a master of fence, go up and down El Camino Real and prey upon unfortunates.

"You compel men to give you gold, and are not above forcing fair ladies to give you their jewels to prevent scandal. Scum of the worst, you are!"

"Give me chance at you!" Manuel Gonzales cried.

"That, precisely, is my intention," the Whirlwind replied. "Both of you shall have a chance! I ask you all, señores, to stand back and hold your hands while I deal with these men. Come forward, you who disgrace the name of Pulido, and draw blade!"

This man who called himself Don Marcos Pulido once had possessed some skill with a blade, but had allowed his arm to grow soft. And now fear was upon him also, because this unknown highwayman knew his secret. But he could not act the coward in the faces of these men of San Diego de Alcala, since he had named himself scion of a noble family.

"You have my purse—" he began.

"And I desire your foul blood also," El Torbellino interrupted. "On guard, señor, or be termed the craven that you are."

"WHY not cross blades with me?" Manuel Gonzales cried. "Can it be you fear to do so?"

"With you presently, when I have finished with this man who befouls a gracious name," El Torbellino replied.

Thinking that the Whirlwind was off guard, Don Marcos Pulido rushed, not caring whether he committed a foul. His blade was whipped out, and he slashed wildly, a cut intended to maim. But El Torbellino sidestepped neatly, took his pistol in his

left hand, and got out blade with his right.

"Now, señor—" he cried.

In the uncertain light cast by the reeking torches, they fought. It scarce could be termed a fight. That the stranger was at El Torbellino's mercy, those in the room could see plainly. The Whirlwind played with him, while fear came over the features of the impostor, and great globules of perspiration popped out upon his face, while his eyes bulged and his tongue protruded.

AND finally the Whirlwind drove him backward toward the fireplace, made a quick thrust, and he who had called himself Don Marcos Pulido sank with a sigh, his blade clattering to the floor, his life blood ebbing swiftly.

"Now, you, señor—"

Manuel Gonzales had blade free of scabbard, and gave a glad cry as he lunged forward. This was to be a different sort of battle, for Manuel Gonzales had skill with a blade. Those who crouched against the walls saw swift swordplay that thrilled them.

Back and forth along the room they fought, the light flashing from their darting weapons, the steel ringing as it clashed. The Whirlwind was silent now, giving all his attention to the combat.

Manuel Gonzales began to tire first. His footing became uncertain. His movements grew slower. The tip of the Whirlwind's blade slit the fellow's sleeve and brought a bit of blood. He advanced to an attack furiously, calling upon his reserve strength.

From outside the open window came a cry:

"The troopers are coming back!"

An expression of relief came into the face of Manuel Gonzales. Perhaps this highwayman would take instant flight, and the duel end

abruptly. But the Whirlwind only bent closer to his task. His blade became like a live thing, darting swiftly in an attack that confounded Manuel Gonzales, bewildered him, drove him ever backward.

A slight pause, another furious advance, and the blade of the Whirlwind flashed forward and up suddenly. He sprang backward and lowered his point. Manuel Gonzales had thrown wide his arms, dropped his blade, and was dropping to the floor—dead before he struck it.

The Whirlwind darted to the table and scooped up the two money pouches. He dashed to the kitchen door.

"Señores, á Dios!" he called.

And just then the troopers, with Sergeant Juan Cassara at their head, came rushing into the inn from the plaza.

IV

THERE was no time for explanations. Sergeant Cassara and his men beheld before them El Torbellino, the highwayman with a price upon his head. The burly sergeant bellowed orders, and the soldiers surged forward.

The Whirlwind fired his pistol, sending the ball over their heads to strike the hard adobe wall and whine in a ricochet. Then he was gone. Through the kitchen he fled, almost crashing against *Señorita* Juanita Lazaga, as she came hurrying in from the patio.

He brushed her aside and rushed on. The *señorita* ran to look after him, and managed to get in the path of those who pursued and deter them a moment.

The kitchen door spewed angry and determined soldiery. They beheld El Torbellino fleeing through the shadows toward the coulée. Pistols barked, but on he went unscathed.

"Horses!" Cassara bellowed. "No doubt he has a mount—"

They ran back to the plaza for their horses, intending to get to saddle and pursue. The Whirlwind ran on, panting, to where his big black had been left.

Working swiftly, he stripped off bridle and saddle. He slapped the animal on the rump, and down the coulée the black rushed, to get out at the end and crash through the dry brush as he fled. Coming around the corner of the inn, the troopers heard. The Whirlwind was escaping again, they thought, and took up the pursuit.

In the darkness of the coulée, hidden in the rocks, the Whirlwind smiled. The big black would outdistance them easily, vault the stone wall around the pasture, and be at home. The troopers would ride on toward the hills, searching for a horse with bridle and saddle and rider.

In the darkness around the rocks, the Whirlwind stripped off mask, hat, long cloak, and removed sash and blade and pistols. He put them away in their hiding place. El Torbellino, the Whirlwind, had disappeared again. It was Pedro Garzo, Lazaga's man-of-all-work, who crept carefully through the shadows and to the back door of the inn.

HE entered, his eyes bulging and fear evidently upon him. Lazaga was in the kitchen, comforting the weeping *señorita*. There was a look of joy on the landlord's face. The two men were slain, and his secret was safe. Juanita was safe. He had lost gold to the highwayman, but more gold could be earned.

Then he whirled at sound of a footfall, and saw Pedro Garzo standing there.

"Dolt!" Lazaga cried. "There is work to be done. Two dead men in the big room to be removed, and the

floor to be cleaned and sanded where it is wet with blood!"

"*Señor Lazaga*—here," Garzo said.

He was holding out Lazaga's money pouch, and also the one the Whirlwind had taken from him who had called himself Don Marcos Pulido.

"Where did you get them?" Lazaga cried.

"From the Whirlwind. We met by the coulée. He told me to give them to you and tell you he knew your secret and that it is safe with him. And he sent his respects to *Señorita Juanita*."

"My gold!" Lazaga cried, tears springing to his eyes. "And those foul men slain! *Juanita* safe! What a man is this El Torbellino! I wish I might meet him one day and thank him personally."

Lazaga rushed away to hide his gold again, in a new and secret hiding-place. Pedro Garzo started toward the door of the big room. He

felt a touch on his arm, and turned to look down into the shining eyes of *Señorita Juanita*.

"Thank you," she said, "for everything."

"A rogue who does a good turn now and then, possibly. I do not get the entire meaning of it."

"If I could meet him, I'd tell him something."

"That you are in love with him?"

"Oh, I'd not tell him that! He would have to find that out for himself. I'd tell him to change his boots. Across the toe of the left one is a long cut, probably made by some sharp rock. That might serve to identify him."

She laughed a bit, musically, and rushed out into the patio. And Pedro Garzo went toward the big room. He glanced down at his left boot as he did so. There was the long cut. But he knew, thinking of the expression in the *señorita's* face, that this secret was safe also.

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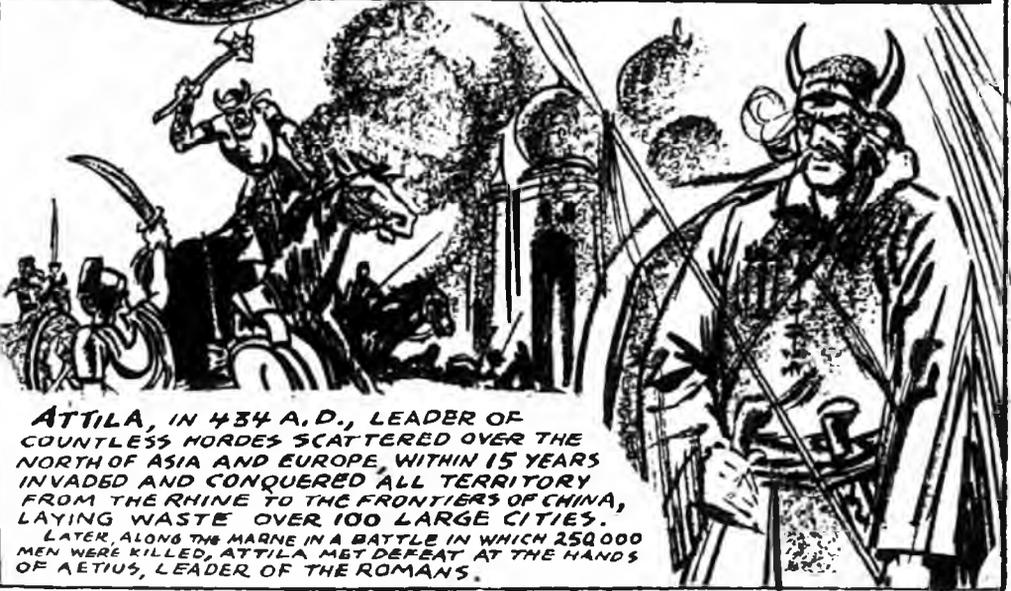
ONE OF THE GREATEST OF ALL WORLD WAR AIR FIGHTERS, WAS BORN IN CONNECTICUT AND LEAVING HOME AT THE AGE OF 17 HE SOON ENLISTED IN THE U.S. ARMY. IN THE PHILIPPINES HE BECAME FAMOUS AS THE ARMY'S "CRACK-SHOT RIFLEMAN" AND WAS NOTED FOR HIS FEARLESSNESS IN BATTLE.



SIR HENRY STANLEY, FAMOUS BRITISH EXPLORER OF AFRICA. DURING THE CIVIL WAR FOUGHT IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY, THE UNION ARTILLERY AND THE UNION NAVY.

SEVERAL YEARS LATER IN CHINA HE LEARNED TO FLY A PLANE WHILE SERVING MARK POURPE, AN AVIATOR, AS A MECHANIC.

DURING THE EARLY PART OF THE WORLD WAR POURPE WAS SHOT DOWN. LUFBERY, THE AMERICAN, SWEARING AN OATH OF VENGEANCE, SOON BECAME ONE OF THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE FAMOUS LAFAYETTE ESCADRILLE AND PILED UP A SCORE OF 18 PLANES. MAJOR LUFBERY WAS THE FIRST AMERICAN ACE.



ATTILA, IN 434 A.D., LEADER OF COUNTLESS HORDES SCATTERED OVER THE NORTH OF ASIA AND EUROPE, WITHIN 15 YEARS INVADDED AND CONQUERED ALL TERRITORY FROM THE RHINE TO THE FRONTIERS OF CHINA, LAYING WASTE OVER 100 LARGE CITIES.

LATER, ALONG THE MARNE IN A BATTLE IN WHICH 250,000 MEN WERE KILLED, ATTILA MET DEFEAT AT THE HANDS OF AETIUS, LEADER OF THE ROMANS.



**GENERAL
JOHN A. LOGAN,**

ORGANIZER OF THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, WAS ITS FIRST NATIONAL COMMANDER AND THE MAN WHO INSTITUTED MEMORIAL DAY, WHICH IS NOW OBSERVED WIDELY AS A HOLIDAY.

AS A BOY LOGAN SERVED IN THE MEXICAN WAR AND BY HIS DARING AND BRAVERY IN COMBAT, GAINED A LIEUTENANCY. AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR LOGAN, THEN A CONGRESSMAN, RESIGNED HIS SEAT AND RAISED A VOLUNTEER REGIMENT,

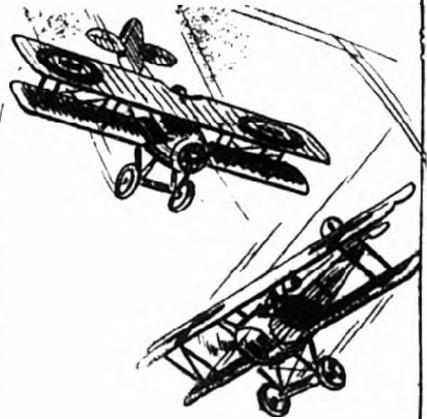
SOON FIGURING CONSPICUOUSLY IN MANY BATTLES, LOGAN LED THE CHARGES WHICH BROKE THE ENEMY'S LINES AT BELMONT. WHEN HE WAS MADE MAJOR-GENERAL HE WAS WOUNDED TEN TIMES BUT TOOK PART IN EVERY BATTLE OF SHERMAN'S MEMORABLE CAMPAIGN FROM MISSIONARY RIDGE TO ATLANTA.



**GENERAL
DOUGLAS MACARTHUR,**

PRESENT CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY, IS THE MOST RECENT ONE OF THE NINE MEN WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE RANK OF FULL GENERAL OF THE ARMY OF THE U. S. SINCE 1776.

THE NINE ARE, IN ORDER: GEORGE WASHINGTON, U. S. GRANT, WILLIAM T. SHERMAN, PHILIP SHERIDAN, JOHN J. PERSHING, TASKER H. BLISS, PEYTON C. MARCH, CHARLES P. SUMMERALL, AND THE ABOVE DOUGLAS MACARTHUR. FOUR OF THESE HELD THE RANK BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD WAR.



**ONE OF THE MOST UNUSUAL
COMBAT RECORDS OF
THE WORLD WAR!**

THREE GREAT FRENCH ACES, GUYNEMER, FONCK AND HEURTEAUX, WERE EACH CREDITED WITH BRINGING DOWN ENEMY SHIPS WITH BUT A SINGLE SHOT FROM THEIR GUNS.

The Secret of

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*An Exciting,
Amazing
True Experience
Story by*
**CAPTAIN
FRANKLIN
HOYT**

THIS is the remarkable, true account of an expedition to little known Easter Island, far out in the Pacific, with its age-old mysteries which still defy modern science.

Captain Franklin Hoyt, world adventurer, stumbles across an account of Captain Gregory Tighe's fatal attempt, in 1891, to pierce the secrets of Easter Island.

Hoyt decides to have a look at the island himself. He buys the *'Frisco Lass'*, hires Captain Jacob Stegin as master, recruits a crew and sets out.

Trouble sails with them! First an attempt on Hoyt's life. Then Jimmy Slavin, a toxicologist aboard, is poisoned.

Olaf Johnson, an unusual looking seaman, is suspected. After Slavin's murder, Johnson disappears! Then another sailor

falls victim to the same devilish poison that killed Slavin.

Reaching Easter Island, the crew starts up toward one of the tallest monoliths. A bullet cuts down one of the landing party, but the rest press on. They find no trace of an attacker. Danger is in the air.

They dig at the foot of the great stone image. Hoyt envisions a fabulous treasure to be unearthed.

Suddenly a red-headed sailor stands upright and exclaims: "*Mene, mene, tekel upharsin!*"

It is the old Biblical warning from the Feast of Belshazar: "You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting!"

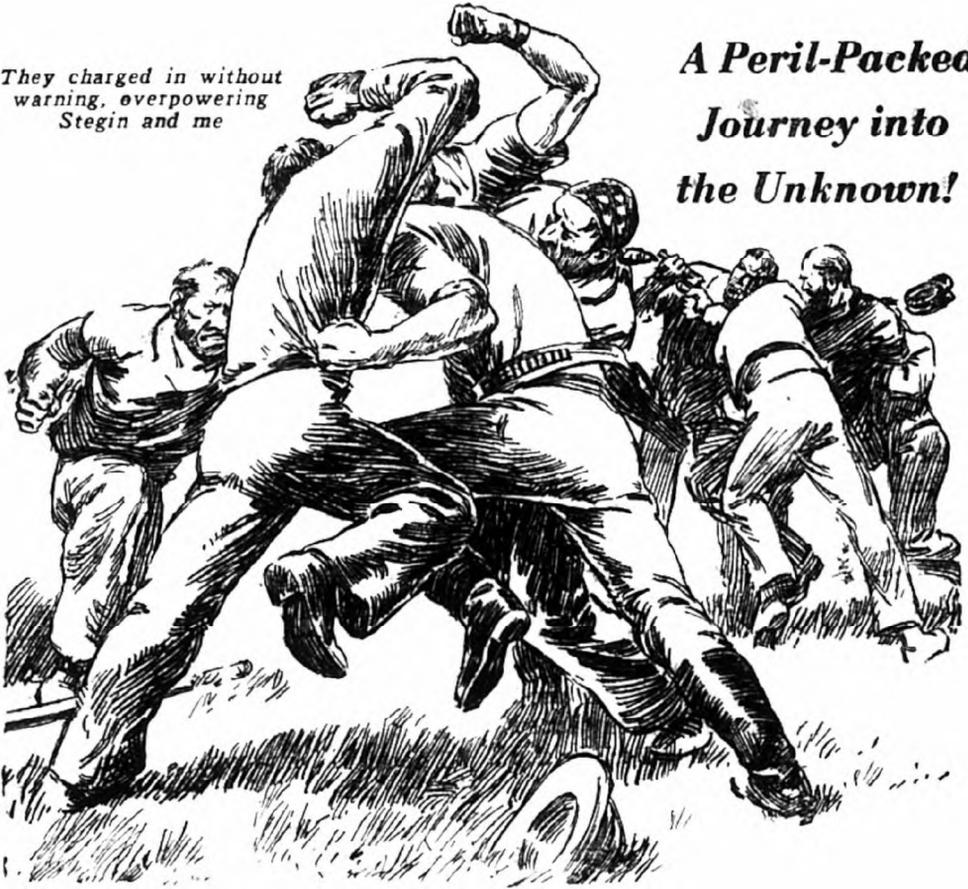
But the uneducated sailor, terrified, has no idea what the words mean; he has never

Concluding the Pulse-Stirring Record of a

Easter Island

They charged in without warning, overpowering Stegin and me

A Peril-Packed Journey into the Unknown!



heard them before and cannot understand how they came from his lips. They are a grim warning. But why? From whence?

(Now go on with the story)

CHAPTER IV

Sword of Damocles

THIS feeling of terror, that came over us all, wouldn't do. Our own thoughts were betraying us. Stegin, at my nod, ordered the sailors against the face of the monolith to work.

Nothing happened, save the crashing of picks and shovels, for almost

an hour. Then the picks struck solid rock, which seemed to extend out from the base of the great stone face. I got down on my knees to study it, and discovered that the flaring rock base was part of the whole—part of the monolith itself.

"Move back ten feet and dig straight down," I suggested, but Stegin vetoed that.

"Turn your back to the rock face and work away from it to the edge of the foundation," he said. "It will save time."

The sailors worked with a will,

Fateful Voyage to the Land of the Monoliths!

clearing the rock entirely as they went. They perspired freely. And their courage was coming back. They even laughed and told a few stories.

Then something happened which cast a damper over the outfit. It was a simple thing, that might have happened anywhere, at any time, but, coming on top of the sailor's mysterious death, it filled everyone with superstitious awe.

The redhead struck downward heavily with his pick. It struck stone and glanced off, and its gleaming bit drove into the sailor's leg, just above the ankle, burying itself in the flesh for almost two inches. He screamed. Someone yanked the pick out; air rushed into the wound, and the man fainted.

That ended work for the day, eager as I was to go on.

We went back to the schooner.

Next morning the redhead was dead—swollen as Slavin and MacKenzie had been. There was a brownish stain on the cloth we had used for bandage, where it had been placed to seep through the wound while the victim slept.

THAT from the very beginning some agency had been trying to scare us away from Easter Island, I thoroughly believed. But for a bit of luck it might have succeeded, too. If the knife, that first night, had struck my throat instead of the bulkhead above it, Stegin would never have gone on. But it hadn't, and I was becoming daily and hourly more determined to go ahead with what I had started.

Let's see—how many dead were there now, not counting Olaf Johnson, whose fate and whereabouts were a deep dark mystery? Slavin, MacKenzie, the sailor who had died on the island, and the redhead. They had all been murdered, no doubt about that. But by whom?

I was more anxious than ever to

locate Olaf Johnson. He had become the ogre of the piece somehow. And what had moved against the great stone face so soon after we had landed? What had launched that deadly arrow at the sailor? What foot had left that sandal print? It somehow suggested remote antiquity. But how?

COULD it be possible that in some hiding place of utter mystery, some descendants of the people who had carved out these great stone faces still lived? It didn't seem possible. Scientists and would-be scientists had tried to unravel the mystery since the faces had first been discovered by mortal men.

I started to build a theory of it all of which may sound fantastic, even preposterous, but for want of a better explanation it must serve for a time. There were so many things which were never explained, so many things which, it seems to me, cannot be explained in any scientific manner.

Therefore I took this tentative theory, wild as it may seem—fool as it may seem to make me—and talked it over with Stegin. He agreed that it was goofy, but could offer nothing in its place.

My theory was that Johnson wasn't Johnson at all. He was a White Indian from northern South America, perhaps from Dutch Guiana. Or he might be from back of Darien somewhere.

Stegin and I pooled our knowledge of the White Indians. Many of them had gone out into the world, according to wild stories, and traveled all over it as members of crews of various of the world's navies. Many had gone to school in the States.

Johnson had probably been inside plenty of missions in San Francisco. I was trying to find an explanation, you understand, for the repetition by the redhead of the words which had

been written on the wall at the Feast of Belshazzar. Johnson could have picked them up at a mission somewhere. Or he might be a Bible student.

But how had he influenced the red-head to repeat them?

Here I had to go far beyond the bounds of proven knowledge for an explanation. The White Indians were said—a legend which had come down even from the Conquistadores—to be able to see things at a distance. Certain members of the strange group had reported, in detail, wrecks at sea. Others had reported things happening near and far, only to have their "visions" authenticated in every detail later by eye-witnesses.

A far cry, you may say, from Easter Island. Well, I don't know. Where did the White Indians come from? Nobody knew. Might they not be the remnants of inhabitants left by the waves which had swallowed Mu and Atlantis? If Johnson were a White Indian—well, that great stone face resembled him more than it did any human being I could remember.

BUT how had he, if this guess were true, or even remotely true, horned in on our expedition? Was there a fable among them referring to some prehistoric treasure, let us say, whose location had been lost? Were there signs and portents handed down through many generations, which they would recognize when they saw them? Were the great stone faces part of their legend?

They *might* be, simply because there was no other accepted explanation—though this was my own entirely, which I have not since entirely cast aside. It wasn't beyond the bounds of possibility that the present-day lands of the White Indians had once been connected by vast areas of land, with the land below water about Easter Island, and

that what was now Easter Island had been one of the mountain peaks of that land. Or was it?

Having no other explanation, I accepted that one.

Johnson, then, reading about my expedition in the newspapers, had joined with me, taking a Scandinavian name because it best fitted his type. He had gone along for the avowed purpose of preventing me from unearthing a secret which should belong to his people alone, and which he would somehow manage to utilize, or about which he would return to tell his people, who might find a way of doing something about it.

THE whole theory, wild, impossible and imaginative as it was, I clung to for want of a better one. It gave me plenty to think about, and filled me with even greater eagerness to get going.

We buried the sailor who died from the poisoned arrow wound on the beach during the early hours of darkness, posted double guards on the schooner, and got what sleep we could.

Johnson, I was sure, had merely managed to elude us during that part of the voyage following the attempt on my life. He had swum ashore as soon as Easter Island had been sighted. Probably to find out what he could; perhaps to locate signs which would mean nothing whatever to us, and then to obliterate our crew, one by one.

Perhaps it was his idea to get away somehow on the schooner by himself, or perhaps—for all we know—with some members of our crew he might have taken into his confidence. This latter didn't sound reasonable. White Indians, if there were any such, were reputed to be utterly self-contained, to refuse in any manner to fraternize with "foreigners."

Johnson, according to my spa-

ciously developed theory — which Stegin accepted tentatively — was playing a lone hand, and had been the figure we had seen beside the great stone face.

The redhead? Well, I could explain that, too. And I may say here that my theory never was entirely disproved, nor was it ever fully proved, one way or the other. Accept or reject it as you will, but bear with me for the rest of the chronicle.

The redhead had an open wound under his bandage. Johnson had soaked the bandage with the venom which had gone into the wound, killing him of synthetic snake bite. Some snake had reached out of Darien to slay the redhead—just as a human hand was reaching out of Darien, or Dutch Guiana, to slay the rest of us, one by one.

A veritable sword of Damocles hung over our collective heads.

THE next time we went ashore—which was right after we had disposed of the dead redhead, next morning—every man was armed with a rifle.

The crew kept together in a compact group, eyes alert for every unexplained movement, with orders to shoot on sight. Four times, on that climb back to the monolith, one or the other of the sailors fired at something that caught his eye. But there seemed never to be any result of this firing. Bullets merely whined out to sea and were lost in the immensity of the deep.

The men were firing at shadows. Stegin did nothing to stop them. It was a release for their feelings, though I couldn't get over the fear that the rifles might be turned on us at any moment.

I felt relieved when rifles were stacked and picks and shovels took their places in the hands of the crew. They fell to work. They were cognizant of the fact, of course, that

this rock face was the work of human hands, as was the foundation below it which had been buried for ages. They were feverish in their search.

The foundation, two feet from the face of stone, shelved sharply downward, taking on a rounded shape, burrowing deeply into the soil. It was as smooth as though it had been polished.

FINALLY one of the crew uttered an ejaculation. I stepped into the excavation, first making sure that Stegin had a position whence he could guard me, and found what the sailor had seen.

Strange hieroglyphics, not even remotely resembling anything I had ever seen in any book, were cut into the rock of that foundation! They were the work of human hands, but I knew in my heart that no scientist would be able to decipher them without some key to their meaning—which he would not, I believed—find in anything yet recorded about prehistoric peoples.

I knew that some authorities spoke of "cycles" of life; that they believed that everything we possess today had existed in previous cycles, back and back to the beginning of time—if time had ever had a beginning. If this were true, then these prehistoric ones probably possessed arts and sciences, and engineering ability which had been entirely lost to us for ages. Only this would explain the existence here of the great stone faces.

In my notebook I copied the hieroglyphics as best I could, tucked the notes away in my pocket.

Then my thoughts went back to the redhead's curious exclamation:

"Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin!"

By what strange hypnosis had Johnson—if it had been Johnson—influenced the redhead to speak those words? Well, to the devil with it! I

wasn't going to be warned away because one Olaf Johnson had weighed me in the balance and found me wanting.

There came a spitting sound, then, and a scream. I jumped to the lip of the excavation as one of the sailors fell, clawing at his throat—in which a tiny arrow was imbedded. In a few seconds he died as Slavin and the others had died—by which time Captain Stegin and I stood over the rifles with rifles ready in our own hands.

Stegin took command again. He called off the names of half of the force which stood so terrified in the excavation.

"You men come out," he ordered. "Take rifles and scatter over the island. Climb to the tops of all hills, and shoot at anything that moves, except us and one another."

They started off. Now and again the sound of a shot came to us. The rest of the crew worked like Trojans, as though, knowing protest futile, they worked against time in the hope that success would see them safely away from here.

TWENTY feet from the stone face they uncovered a massive ring set deeply in the stone. Simultaneously one of their number fell with an arrow in his throat—and the rest charged us without warning, overpowering Stegin and me and gaining possession of the rifles.

"We won't hurt you," said their spokesman, a man named Margot, "but we're leaving you here to stand this stuff to your heart's content. We're going. Try to stop us, and we shoot!"

And they started. We followed at a safe distance until they had pushed out from the shore. Then, acting on a hunch, I yelled something at them which made them turn around and row back faster than they had rowed away.

CHAPTER V

Men Go Mad

"FOOLS!" I yelled after our rapidly retreating men. "Don't you know that we are looking for enough gold to ransom all the kings of the world since the beginning of time? There will be enough and more than enough to last each of you all his life, and for three or four generations to come."

My voice went out to them clearly. They rested on their oars.

"Is this straight goods?" Margot yelled back.

"I swear it!" I yelled at him, and I believed my own words, suddenly, with a conviction I couldn't put out of my mind.

So they came back. Stegin and I stood and waited for them with our arms folded. It wouldn't do for them to go gold crazy right away. I had to make sure of that.

"But the captain and myself are the only ones who know the secret of the stone faces," I lied—because to say that *anyone* knew their secret, was a lie on the face of it. "Do anything to us and you get nowhere. Stick with us in spite of hell and high water and we'll get what gold there is. If any of you die, just remember—his share will be divided among those who remain."

I offer no apology for this out and out appeal to the piggishness of men. I was desperately intent on carrying out what I had started, and it seemed to me that the end justified the means. So I used the means which came to hand.

Their eyes were bright as with tropical fever as they beat both Stegin and me to the excavation at the base of the stone face. They were pitifully eager now to obey our every command.

I got them busy at uncovering more of the foundation of the monolith. We uncovered its edges in all

directions, and when we had done so the top of that foundation looked like part of the back of a hippo of antedeluvian proportions.

"Now," I said, "test the ring. Pull on it. Here, fasten ropes in the ring, stand on either side of the excavation, and pull. Let's see what happens."

Their hands trembled as they obeyed me. They were waiting for a miracle to place untold wealth at their feet. I confess that I was holding my own breath; that I was as eager as they were to run my hands into forgotten stores of unlimited wealth.

The pulling on the rope did nothing. Then Stegin suggested something else that would take time, but would bring into play everything we had in the way of engineering skill. Stegin proposed that our booms and winches be brought here, together with a motor of some sort, and rigged up on the hillside to pull at that massive ring set in the solid stone.

We could add the comparatively puny strength of the crew to the task. The crew demurred. This seemed too slow. It promised to keep them too long away from sight of gold whose very existence I could not prove. But that we were being warned away on the eve of some discovery, I was sure.

EVEN if we discovered only the history of a forgotten race and forgotten continents, we would all be rich beyond the dreams of avarice. The men who found the stories of Mu and Atlantis could command any prices for merely showing themselves to the public of the world.

But I didn't tell the men that. Gold—gold and precious stones—that was the sort of thing to keep them working. They insisted on tugging at that ring in every way possible, from every conceivable angle,

before they gave up and went down to the ship to bring the booms and winches ashore.

It took us five days to set up the gear. During that time five men were snuffed out by the poisoned arrows, and never once did we locate the person who had fired them. We scoured the island in relays, but got nowhere. Either Johnson—if it were Johnson—knew hiding places hidden entirely from the eyes of all of us, or ghost hands had fired the weapons. The last, of course, was a silly supposition which even the sailors soon foreswore.

I WONDER how the sailors would have behaved had, on the fifth day, the booms and winches failed to work? I was never to know the answer to that one.

If I had even guessed what was going to happen I would have ordered every man jack aboard the ship, and we would have sailed away from Easter Island, never to return. But, even so, the men would not have obeyed me. They wanted to see the thing through now, as desperately as, before, they had wished to escape. They wouldn't have gone, even if I had known what was going to happen and had warned them.

Gold was reflected in their eyes, and gold has driven men mad since it was first declared precious to mankind. No, I can't blame myself entirely for what happened afterward.

We had adjusted the booms and the winches, so located as to furnish the most effective fulcrum for the job of lifting we had to do—and our gear was modern, the best that traveled on any ship. Again we were amazed by the engineering mystery these great stone faces presented. How had the monoliths been moved to their present locations?

Present day gear could not handle them, take them aboard and lower them from any ships that floated. If,

back there in the dawn of time, the inhabitants of this place had transported the stones by vessel, what monstrous vessels, equipped with what monstrous cranes and winches, they must have used! Ours would have been pygmies beside them.

Stegin held his right hand high, ready to give the signal. His face would never be whiter when he was dead. If he failed—well, I thought I saw in his face that he hoped to fail, but I may have been mistaken—perhaps that was my imagination.

THAT we were about to open the door of the dim and dusty past, I knew very well, as Stegin must have known. Maybe it was a forbidden door which would exact a toll, in lives, of all of us, as lives had already been lost to gain the secret of Easter Island.

The motor groaned. The winch strained. The boom almost bent double with the strain.

But the foundation began to move! I studied the great stone face. It did not move. There was a cleavage somewhere, where the foundation and the monolith met. Up and up, slowly, slowly, came the foundation. From below it came a creaking sound which may have been a warning voice from the very soul of time.

I began to laugh hysterically. Stegin whirled on me.

"Cut it, Hoyt!" he snapped. "You can't go crazy at this stage of the game."

"I was just thinking how this door—or whatever it is—resembles the lid of a rumble seat on an automobile," I said. "But what an automobile it would need to use *this* lid."

The lid came up easier and easier as it lifted higher and higher, and I was glad we had a good crew at work on the winch. The winchman knew his business. His eyes were almost popping from his head as he bent to peer under the foundation,

or what must be part of the foundation of the monolith.

Finally the upward motion stopped. The winchman gasped.

"Look!" he said, and pointed.

The chains which had borne such unbelievable strain, hung slack between the end of the boom and the ring. The trapdoor had risen at least four feet on its own power, without the aid of the winch! That seemed to indicate that it had been set on a fulcrum of some sort.

I let my breath out explosively. But I was afraid of traps set by long dead hands. The crew gathered about, before the black opening which, under that trapdoor, led down into ebony darkness.

"We've got to give good air time to circulate in there," I said, amazed at how tiny my own voice had become. "Meanwhile, to make sure of everything, get poles from somewhere, even if you have to unstep masts and saw them into the proper lengths, and prop up that piece of stone. The thing must weigh tons. If it drops back into place while we are down below, we'll never get out."

This didn't frighten the sailors. Nothing frightened them now. They believed that they were soon to dip their hands into untold wealth. They would have gone into that hole right now, even if they knew they would be trapped by the door's falling into place.

I LOOKED up at the great stone face.

Was it fancy, or did the mighty eyes of the thing regard me with malevolent intentness? I studied them for a long moment and decided that they hadn't changed in the slightest.

Then, while the sailors were hurrying away for poles to hold the door in place, I carefully circled the monolith to see whether or not our efforts had moved it at all. But the

ground around it was unbroken, save where we ourselves had broken it.

I did note one thing—that the width of the trapdoor exactly equalled the width of the base of the monolith. A good engineering job had been done here. These people of the past were folks with whom to reckon. My respect for them was growing by leaps and bounds.

Poles were not available on Easter Island, but it was found to be unnecessary to unstep the masts of the *'Frisco Lass*. The crew found some pieces of rock which, by dint of much labor, they dragged to the excavation, and placed as braces under the trapdoor.

IT was now nearing sunset on the most eventful day we had spent on this expedition. Stegin and I exchanged glances.

"Shall we wait for morning?"

I considered for a moment. The sailors were wild with excitement, all the wilder because they were silent—like pent-up powder magazines. Even Stegin had lost his usual reserve.

Another poisoned arrow came from somewhere to kill another of our men. He fell into that black hole without a sound—and we gave him scarcely a thought. We were too deeply intent on something else, the secret of Easter Island.

Were we about to find it? And if this stone face hid such a secret, what might be found at the bases of the other great stone faces? It staggered the imagination. But somebody in this outfit had to act with good judgment.

"We won't go in until morning," I decided. "The air in there, if it is very deep, must be foul beyond comprehension. We've plenty of time. We can't risk our lives to get at the treasure I believe to be here, merely because we are impatient to get to it. There isn't a chance in the world

that anyone will come here to take it away from us."

But the sailors insisted that the excavation be guarded during the night. They cast lots among themselves, and six of them, with two rifles each, took up the task of guarding the place against chance marauders—and against the agency of the poisoned arrows.

Funny about those arrows—men who knew they might be struck at any moment did not now worry about them; and I'll wager the last man struck was thinking only of untold wealth when he died.

We went back to the ship.

Bright and early next morning we returned to the excavation. It was exactly as we had left it, save for one important circumstance: the six sailors had vanished! Not even their rifles remained.

Where had they gone? There were now fourteen of us left, besides two left aboard the schooner—sixteen all told. I stepped into the excavation, tested the air from the opening, to find it fresh.

"Let's go," I said, and we started down under the stone trapdoor below the great stone face.

CHAPTER VI

A Door Closes

THE sailors pressed closely after me. Stegin had assigned two to remain at the lip of the excavation to make sure that we were not interfered with from the rear. We had flashlights with us, together with many extra batteries. I had gone into caverns before in my time, and had spent seventeen days in one. I knew what it meant to have batteries run out. I was taking no chances.

The last thing I saw as I stepped into the black opening under the stone door was the broad, ancient face of the stone monolith. I wasn't

sure even then but that it stared at me with plainly evident malevolence.

My light found an incline, a sort of ramp, shortly after a brief set of spiral steps, clinging to the sides of the pit, took me below the surface of the earth. I noted, with some misgivings, that the ramp, or incline, led directly down the face of the hill in a straight line from the base of the monolith.

"We're going down under the sea toward the *'Frisco Lass!'*" Stegin, at my right, said dryly, his words echoing in the place like trapped thunder.

That, of course, was pure chance, but in real life chance plays a far more important part in men's lives than would be allowed in a story of fiction.

The ramp went steeply down. I cast my light about. The walls of the tunnel-like ramp were of black stone, absolutely dry as with the dust of ages. There was some dust on the floor, but in it there were no footprints. The last footprint must have vanished a thousand years before the first Norseman landed in Newfoundland.

MY heart hammered with excitement. A cool breeze seemed to play across our faces from the unexplored depths ahead. But it might have been merely the circulating of the wind from the heights we had left. The sailors were walking on tiptoe down the ramp, whispering among themselves. They were close on my heels because of fear.

I looked back once to see that they also were looking back, their eyes wide with fear, as though they expected something to attack them from the rear. This was absurd to my mind, for there were no side-tunnels and we had placed a guard at our rear.

The incline was so steep that we had to be careful of our footing to make sure that we did not slip and,

perhaps, slide off into some infinite abyss. I marveled at the hands which had cut this ramp from the living rock of Easter Island. But hands that could have set the great monoliths should have had little trouble with this.

I noted the size of the tunnel, and there was something about it that clicked in my brain; it struck me that it was about as big in its breadth and height as the stone monolith which had so intrigued us. But I set no importance on this at the moment, though I was destined to remember it to the end of my days.

WE went on down. The air became colder. Once I shouted, while we paused for a moment, and my voice seemed to roll down the incline like a rock dropped at its top and allowed to catapult into darkness. I had a sense of some deep cavern yet unplumbed.

"We're about under the sea now, Hoyt," said Stegin quietly. "At a guess I'd say something like four hundred feet under it."

I glanced upward. There was no seepage, if what Stegin had told me was true. The long dead engineers had labored prodigiously to produce this place which the sea had not been able to penetrate through all the centuries.

I hurried a little. We were all eager. Even the whispering had stopped.

I judged we had been scrambling down the smooth incline for twenty minutes, when we came to the lip of the abyss. We had been throwing our lights ahead to make sure that we did not step off into nothingness, and I gasped when I saw what lay under our feet.

It was an abyss. The stark simplicity of it was breath-taking. It was just a vast cavern in the living rock, big enough to have held the massed companies and battalions of

a regiment. The incline broke off short, here, but leading around to the right was a flight of stone steps, also cut from the living rock.

I decided that this place had probably been dug by the sea even before Mu or Atlantis, whichever this had been, had sunk beneath the sea—at some time long before that, when, during one of the world's cycles, this place had previously been underwater. The vanished artisans had merely smoothed out and made perfect the work of the sea.

Our footfalls echoed hollowly on those stairs as we went down. The sound crashed back and forth between the circular walls. I judged the amphitheater-like place to be about two hundred feet deep. The steps led around to the right, circular, down to the floor level.

I marched down without hesitation. The sailors followed me. Stegin was still at my right hand. No Columbus or Magellan had ever so thrilled to the glory of discovery.

We were unraveling the secret of Easter Island. I was sure of that now, and the realization could not come to me all at once, because it numbed me with its majesty, and I had to realize it a little bit at a time.

FINALLY we reached the floor of the place, and stopped to listen to the silence. When the echoes of our footfalls died out—and we waited until they did—the silence was so thick—Well, never before had I experienced a silence so deep, so pregnant with the calm of the ages, so filled with the indefinable odor of long vanished mortality.

"God Almighty!" said Stegin.

It wasn't an oath, but a prayer. I felt like saying it myself. The two words, spoken here I was sure for the first time since the world was born out of chaos, went rocketing back and forth about the vast room

in which we were dwarfed to ant-size.

Then we got busy with our flashlights.

The walls were piled high with boxes. No, on coming closer, I saw they were not boxes, but niches in the wall, a countless number of them, into which the stone boxes had been thrust. It struck me that these ancient people, who must have been here long before China was even dreamed of, had stolen the centuries on China.

TODAY the world knows that a skilled Chinese artisan can take a solid ball of ivory and so carve it that any number of little balls result, one inside the other.

These ancients had done that with the living stone. They had literally cut boxes out of the living rock, leaving the niches out of which they had cut them as receptacles in which they might move back and forth like drawers.

Set in the front of each box—for want of a better name—was a ring of stone. I looked at Stegin as I put my hand to one of the rings.

He stared at me for a long moment. Then he shrugged, and I pulled out the box.

It was empty!

Startled, I went to the next box in line. There were so many of them that it would have taken one man hours to have pulled all of them forth. They came out with such ridiculous ease. I pulled out the next box. It was not empty!

It was packed to the top with ornaments of gold the like of which this world has not seen since the great continents vanished. There were breastplates of gold. There were bucklers of gold. There were, marvel of marvels, golden coins, or so I judged them to be, so massive that I could scarcely hold one of them in my hands.

There were heads on the coins, and the faces resembled the great stone face we had passed under to get here. Gold! Mountains of gold!

I spoke the fatal word: "Gold!"

I think I really intended to close the boxes, after I had opened them one by one, and return here later with a larger expedition of several ships. But the one word had set the sailors off.

THEY rushed on the boxes. They yanked them forth as far as they would come. They grabbed out the contents and—how could one describe them.

I saw instantly that we could never take away even a tithe of all this wealth, which went beyond my wildest dreams.

The sailors, even Stegin, had gone mad with the age-old lust for gold. They dribbled the bright glowing stuff through their hands. They drooled over it. They fondled it. They were mad with greed for its possession.

I knew, studying them, that not one would have heard the roaring of a cannon exploded in the cavern. Each was intent on himself. Each was building his dreams for the future. Each was thinking of what he would buy for himself.

Each wished somehow, anyhow, to procure all of this gold for himself—yes, even though each must have realized that in even one box of all the scores and hundreds there must be more than he could spend all the remaining days of his life.

Yet they fought and snarled at one another as they hurried, madly panting, to find gold and more gold—when the place was filled with it, under our hands for the taking. It could not vanish, yet each man behaved as though there were urgency for speed; each man showed fear of the rapacity of his neighbor because he knew his own greed for the yel-

low metal which for so many ages men have regarded as precious.

The sailors were piling it high in the amphitheater. There was no cloth, I noticed, and knew that age had erased any cloth there might have been. Only the gold was imperishable.

In one box I found a vast number of golden figurines, no larger than a man's thumb, which I believed to be the forerunners of our chessmen of today. I believed them to be part of a game of some sort.

Absentmindedly I thrust one of the figurines into my pocket. It seemed a strange thing to do, to take but one little figure when here was enough gold to disrupt all the money markets of the world.

The sailors had gone mad.

And then, in the midst of their madness, screams came down from the incline, down the way we had come. I looked up, startled.

Stegin, as bad as the rest, didn't even hear the screams, nor did the sailors. They were sliding the baubles of a continent through their hands. I looked up, as I say, and saw the two sailors we had left above come catapulting over the rim, to break themselves to bits among us.

I GLANCED wildly around. Then for the first time I saw the sailor who had been the last to feel the poisoned arrows—who had plunged into the black pit the night before. I don't know why I missed him before.

He had been smashed out of human resemblance by his fall, and had remained up to now, just outside the circles of our lights.

Now the ghastly sound which came down after the sailors was like nothing ever heard on this earth! It was like an avalanche, like a snowslide. Wind whistled down the ramp, rising to a wild, shrill crescendo. I

heard a grinding, a crashing, a sliding sound.

I raced madly for the steps, shouting to the sailors and to Stegin. But they didn't hear me. I was halfway up the steps, beyond the direct line of the ramp, when the horror struck us. It was the great stone-faced monolith.

IT came shooting out of the tunnel-like ramp as though hurled from some mighty cannon. The earth shook as it came. I could feel the stone roof falling upon us, shaken down by the ghastly projectile.

I knew what had happened. Somehow the great monolith had been catapulted into the opening, to slide down the ramp I now knew had been built for just that purpose.

The monstrous thing came out, with a rush of air that pinned me against the wall like a fly against a windowpane. The air ahead of that sliding thing had been compressed beyond all imagining. My lungs seemed to have flattened out. My heart stood still, then drew together and became small.

The monolith shot out over the lip of the abyss—and it was then that the sailors looked up. That was the last I ever saw of them, merely that they had looked up. The great monolith obliterated them, and the vast cavern was filled with it. No sounds came up. No lights showed after the monolith had crashed into the place.

The earth swayed and rocked as though an earthquake had possessed Easter Island—and the sea came in like an avenging demon. The bottom fell out of the ocean. I knew that the ocean beyond the reef would rush in to fill the space, and it did.

How much of this is actual fact, how much my own imagination, I cannot say even now for certain. I only know that at the time I was positive I saw what I am telling.

Debris poured out of the ramp into the vast hole—and I knew that all trace, as had been planned in the beginning by the builders, of the monolith was being blotted out.

I could tell what had happened. Had I been a better engineer I might perhaps have prevented it. But I hadn't been.

When the winch had lifted the foundation at the base of the great stone face, the fact that the foundation had risen the last few feet of its own accord was proof of its delicate balance. Balanced by what? The only other thing which could have balanced its terrific weight—the great stone face itself!

Yes, I knew what had happened. Something behind the monolith had toppled it forward onto the door. A locomotive could not have done it when the trapdoor was down. When lifted and balanced, the hands of one man could have—and had, undoubtedly—done it.

The monolith had fallen onto the door, breaking it into fragments. Then—as had been intended when the monolith was set in place—the great statue, figure, call it what you will, had slid into the tunnel.

So mighty was the monolith that, fitting the tunnel almost exactly, it compressed air in the tunnel and the cavern to the breaking point as it slid into the abyss, filled with air which could not escape past the sliding stone monster but must somehow escape.

HAIL to the long vanished engineers who had accomplished the task! A million—who knew how many?—years later, it proved a success. I saw it, and I live to tell the story. The compressed air blew out the roof of the cavern, and the roof was the floor of the sea on whose bosom rested the *'Frisco Lass*.

No wonder land and sea went mad with the might of it. Tons upon tons

of sea-water rushing into the breach, pouring into the abyss, covering it from sight, drowning sailors, and secrets and gold beyond all redemption.

This much I saw in a flash—as though lightning had spun across my mind—and wondered if, somehow, in the maelstrom, fate would leave me a way of escape to the surface of the sea.

Then the air caught me, and the swirling waters of the sea itself. They seemed to hurl me skyward, snatching me off the ramp, out of the abyss, upward through tons and fathoms of raging green waters.

And then, oblivion. The world rocked and churned. The ocean was turned upside down. The end of the world came. The cataclysm.

God knows how it ever happened, but I came to my senses on the surface of the sea. Near me was a floating spar, all I could see of the 'Frisco Lass. I grabbed at it, dragged myself atop it, looked toward Easter Island.

STANDING on all that remained of the hill where the great stone face had stood, was a single man, with his arms folded as he looked out to sea, a lonely figure.

He was Olaf Johnson, the man who had—who must have—tumbled the delicately balanced monolith into the tunnel.

All about me was churning water. The reef had vanished. It had, I knew, fallen through the ocean floor, into the cavern. I clung until the

sea had died down. Across the face of the hill was a great black stain where, I knew, a tidal wave had rushed in to erase all remaining trace of the monolith.

How long I drifted I do not know. When I was picked up by a wandering schooner and told my story, and showed the figurine as proof, they pitied me; said that I was delirious from my sufferings.

I DIDN'T tell them any differently when I was myself again. I didn't want anyone, ever, to try again to wrest its secret from Easter Island.

And Olaf Johnson?

He was part of the secret. Scandinavian, White Indian, or whatever he had been—and whatever had inspired him to guard the island's secret—should be his own secret forever afterward.

And what was one stone face among so many? Nothing.

There are still enough on Easter Island to puzzle the scientists, and I leave them to the puzzle. For the engineers who created that great stone face which destroyed my expedition, had labored so truly to their own ends that not even science can prove the truth or falsity of what I have here set down.

And I wonder, if they had lived to tell it, what Captain Gregory Tighe and his daughter, and their crew, could have told of still another stone face on Easter Island? I'll never know, for they too have become part of the island's secret.

May they rest in peace.

Next Month: A Breath-Taking Colorful Novelette of Cairo

The POISONED CHALICE

An Action-Packed Complete Novelette

By MAJOR GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

—who wrote "The Sacred Fire," "Trails of Treachery," etc.

Suicide Special



His car swerved around Hilliard's rear wheels and swept up abreast

*Clark Handley, Auto Racer, Bucks Up Against
Dangerous Obstacles as He Hits a Fast
Pace for Victory and Honor!*

By KENT SAGENDORPH

Author of "Winged Victory," "Hell-Bent for Heaven," etc.

THE crowd was restless and noisy as the pit crews began lining up the twelve slim race cars for the start. This race was only a late-season hundred-mile event, but because of the fame of its drivers and their intense rivalry and

jealousy of each other, it had drawn a capacity gate. The long concrete stand was rated at twenty-five thousand, but there were nearly thirty thousand in it.

They were moving impatiently, and making a whirring sound which

swept across the stand in a sort of wave. Whistles and stamping feet only intensified the nervousness of watchers and drivers alike. Suddenly they began applauding, and yelling in a mighty chorus. Down on the track a big, raw-boned driver with a shock of curly black hair had stepped from behind a white truck into view of the stands.

The tension was relaxed into an uproar. They loved this man. They were proud of him. Most of them had come to the race purposely to see him in action. He was the speedway sensation of the year, and the sport's best-known personality.

"Handley!" they roared. "Handley! Handley!"

In a glass booth on the judge's tower, a radio announcer was talking softly into a microphone.

"He's taking his position in his famous white Handley Special now," he recited. "No; he's been stopped. Somebody wants his signature. There, that's over. Now he's stepping into his little underslung Number 4. The starter is giving the drivers their final instructions.

"There's the flag. They're off, folks, around the first slow lap of this hundred-mile elimination race to determine which shall compete in the finals to be held in Syracuse two weeks from today. Hear that crowd roar! There's no question but that Clark Handley is the big favorite today, and he should win easily."

DOWN on the track there was a rumble of subdued thunder. The twelve cars were gliding slowly up the backstretch in close formation, waiting for the chance to dart across the starting line. Handley, in Number 4, was on the pole—inside position in the front row. While he eyed the cheering crowd, his mechanic looked backward and sized up the competition.

"Hilliard's right in back of us,"

he reported. "And there are two or three other birds that would like to take us for a ride."

"Where's Johnson?" barked Handley.

"Ain't here. Saw him sitting in the stands."

"Then watch Hilliard," commanded Handley.

AT some invisible signal, the field broke for the starter's swishing flag. The subdued roar erupted into a wave of noise that flooded the whole mile track. From a smooth, slow pace the cars seemed to leap onward like springing animals. Above the thunder of unmuffled motors rose another roar—the roar of the mob for action.

Handley grabbed the rail and fled along the grandstand stretch in a long, smooth surge. The little starter in his checkered coat was snapping his flag in quick jerks as the cars rocketed past. Immediately, Handley knew something was wrong. He had a battle on his hands. This race was going to be no walkaway.

Hilliard, behind, was driving a brand-new, lemon-colored car that had taken second place at Indianapolis. It was half again as powerful as Handley's four-year-old Number 4, and had a lot of new improvements that helped him. But it was heavy, and had not been engineered for dirt tracks. Handley's little car, in contrast, had been designed for just such races as this, and had been winning them ever since it had come out of its West Coast birthplace.

In the third lap Hilliard began a monotonous series of challenges for Handley's lead. He would roar up almost abreast and then fall back. He would dodge over behind Handley's car and then swerve across the track abruptly, to throw Handley off his pace and create an opening for him to dodge through.

But Handley kept rigidly to his

pace, refusing to jump at the bait. His car was tuned up like a fiddle. He had been racing on this track for years. Most important, he had the crowd with him. When he felt that impulse of encouragement radiating out from a packed grandstand, Clark Handley was supreme on dirt tracks. And when he felt that they were against him, he folded up and wilted.

In this race he was unable to pile up a lead. At the fortieth mile he ordinarily was two or three miles ahead of the field, but Hilliard, behind him, gave him no peace. He worried Handley like a hunting dog running down a rabbit. But Handley managed to keep ahead.

In the forty-sixth mile he came in for fuel and water, and the crowd broke out into a cheer. He raised his gloved hand in salute. Cameras turned their lenses toward him.

Then he was away again. The score-boy was kept busy. Sixty-one; sixty-two; sixty-three — the total rolled up like one of those automatic counting machines.

In the seventy-second mile, Handley surged around the turn and took the grandstand stretch in a steady flow of speed. His eyes roamed the reaches of the grandstand as he swept by. He saw a blur of faces. His friends—his fans! He waved.

HILLIARD had caught him napping while he was looking at the grandstand. He grabbed the inside of the track and literally nosed Handley out of the lead. He snaked around the turn and took the backstretch a length ahead, while Handley settled both hands on the wheel and determined to catch him on the next turn.

But Hilliard wouldn't give him room. He was holding the lead by the illegal trick of skidding and sliding and wobbling all over the track so that Handley couldn't pass. As the two cars zipped down the main

stretch the crowd saw the starter unfurling his red disqualification flag and pointing to it for Hilliard's benefit. And Hilliard, to save himself, grudgingly edged over to give Handley room to pass.

Handley's knee moved; his foot went down hard on the pedal. The tachometer needle jumped. His car swerved around Hilliard's rear wheels and swept up abreast. Then Hilliard skidded.

THE last thing Handley remembered was staring at Hilliard's wheels. All four of them were locked fast in the grip of big brakes. It flashed across his brain that Hilliard had ditched him.

There was dust—a thick wall of it. There was a quick bang and a ripping crunch. A thousand veins shot across Handley's shatter-proof goggles. Splinters gouged his cheeks. The thick steering wheel broke off into his hands. The car flipped over on its back.

"Mike!" yelled Handley. "Duck! Roll with her!"

There was another crash, and the dust rolled away. Out from underneath the wreckage crawled Clark Handley, dragging a dazed Mike by the collar. The wheels of the wreck were still spinning crazily at odd angles. Handley pulled up his goggles in time to see a tire drop off the rim, its tube flattened and torn, and plop to the sod.

Men were running. Crowds converged upon him the way they do in dreams. Handley swayed dizzily, shook his head and collapsed into the arms of a man who had just come running up, panting.

Later, with his face covered with strips of adhesive plaster and burning from swabs of iodine, he sat down on a car's running board to think things over. Mike was sitting alongside. A press cameraman with a big black box of a camera looked

downward into its hood. A shutter clattered. Handley shuddered. He must look like the devil with a face like that.

“WANT to make a complaint?” demanded the man in the checkered coat. “That was pretty raw stuff, Clark. There’s no doubt that he pulled that fake slide to ditch you. We all saw it.”

“Oh, no,” Handley shook his head. “Don’t do that. Why, Harry Hilliard’s just a kid. He didn’t know enough to keep his hand off that brake lever, that’s all. I don’t think he did it purposely. Crack-ups like this are just part of the game.”

Mike, beside him, grunted. “And it’s a hell of a game,” he said.

“He never pulled anything crooked before,” Handley went on.

“In a pig’s eye!” retorted Mike.

Handley gave him a quick glance. “Forget it!” he commanded.

The crowd, now jammed tightly around the group, cheered.

“Well, Clark, you may get knocked through a fence, but by gosh you’re the same square shooter you always been!” bellowed a voice.

There was a roar of agreement.

“I try to be, folks,” said Handley. “I try to be.”

The crowd opened up like a gate to make an aisle for him to walk to the ambulance. Mike tagged along at his heels, feeling of bumps on his head and cuts on his chin, and cussing fluently.

When the race was over and Hilliard was gloating over the three thousand dollar check the judge had just handed him, there was a furtive tug at his white jumper. Beside him stood a little wiry man in an incredibly stained and dirty suit, a long scar on his face and the mark of goggles around his cheek bones. Lee Johnson had come down from the grandstand and had been waiting at Hilliard’s pit.

“You dumb cluck!” he rasped. “You’re hopeless. Gimme back that hundred bucks. Why didn’t you do what I told you, stupid? On the backstretch, numbskull, on the backstretch! Not in front of the starter!”

“Keep your shirt on,” suggested Hilliard. “I win more dough by workin’ for myself than I do takin’ bribes from you. Anyways, we got two more chances. Denver next week, and Syracuse. If I see I’m going to get beat, I’ll ditch him for you. I’ll keep the hundred. Maybe I can pull it next week.”

“You got to!” snarled Johnson. “The big stiff! He didn’t dare make a complaint today—did you notice? Boy, we got him where we want him. Anything goes. Only crack him up plenty. Like me.”

Pushing a crutch under his ragged arm, he hobbled away. Harry Hilliard shut his eyes and held his breath. He was trembling.

“Poor devil!” he thought. “To have to go on living—like that. I don’t blame him. Anybody that cracked me up like that—well, revenge would be all that I’d have left.”

THERE was no sleep for either Mike or Handley that night. The remains of the sleek Number 4 were on the eighth floor of a downtown garage in a locked room. Sandwiches and thick bottles of milk stood unnoticed on a shelf. Both men, their shirts off, were working hard on opposite sides of the damaged car. It had been in crack-ups before. They knew from long practice what to do.

“Well, Clark,” grunted Mike, bending his aching back lower over the motor, “I guess this is the finish. She’ll run, but she won’t show up against that gang at Syracuse. You know the whole first rank on the drivers’ list will be there. In-

dianapolis winners and West Coast champions and dirt track stars. The car'll need about a thousand bucks to get back in shape."

Handley straightened up and wiped his hands on an old towel marked "Hotel Pennsylvania, Indianapolis." He threw it into a bucket containing oily waste, and fingered the bandages on his face.

"Wrong again, son," he growled. "We aren't licked—yet. If we win at Denver—even third place, that's a thousand bucks. Then we have a week more to work on her before the Syracuse race. All we have to do is to win at Denver. That won't be hard."

"Suppose we lose?"

"Well, we'll have to quit, that's all. You go back to the factory in your home town, and I'll take that job in New York for the winter. Maybe we can start again next spring."

Mike lifted his sweaty torso and wiped his hands on the same towel. He reached for a sandwich and bit a huge semicircle out of it before gazing down at his handiwork on the motor.

"Hilliard's entered at Denver, you know," he hinted. "What are you going to do—let him ditch you again? How much longer are you going to stand for that? Who's paying him—Johnson? And what, may I ask, has Johnson got on you?"

HANDLEY said nothing, but what Mike could see of his face was very red. The inside story of that affair, Mike knew, was being guarded by both parties. But Mike was risking his neck and getting cracked up week after week; working all night to repair the damage caused by that fear of Handley's—Mike thought he had a right to know. Handley, after a careful look at him, thought so too.

He spoke in soft, apologetic sen-

tences. He gestured, and hinted. But to Mike's loyal mind the scene came back in perfect detail. He began to understand Handley a little more.

THE story went back to the years when Handley was trying for a start in the difficult profession of race driving. Lee Johnson was captain of a motor manufacturer's team, and to him Handley looked as if he had a future. Johnson gave him a job.

Handley soon learned that Johnson's method of winning races was to frame disasters on those drivers who threatened his victory. He tricked Handley into doing the dirty work a number of times before the youth discovered what was going on, and for those efforts Lee Johnson paid Handley handsomely.

The break-up came after a famous road race. Handley had tangled wheels with the leader thirty miles from the finish and allowed Johnson to win. Johnson made fifteen thousand dollars out of that race, and gave Handley five of it. Handley's accident had been unavoidable. He wouldn't purposely do anything like that for fifty thousand dollars. But after Johnson had paid him money which Handley thought he had earned as salary, Johnson began blackmailing him for a crime he hadn't committed.

Handley explained to Mike, haltingly, that he had one great fear. That fear was that the public would turn against him. He had seen great careers on the stage, and in pictures, and in politics, ruined because veiled hints of some past mistake had leaked out. Whether or not there was any basis for these charges, the fickle public had turned against these persons and cast them out.

The result in Handley's case was an almost morbid fear of public indifference. He made a living out of the public. He had to have them

cheering for him every minute he was on the track.

If Johnson had accused him publicly of driving crooked races, that would be the end of Clark Handley. The public wouldn't take the trouble to investigate. Johnson could build up quite a convincing case against him. It would sound like his death-knell in print. Therefore, Handley had been afraid to take action against Johnson and his troubles had multiplied.

IN the year when Handley was national champion and Indianapolis winner the same season, a Hollywood film company had lured him there to make a race picture. Johnson, a used-up driver who had been driven out of the sport, came back with the same old threat. He had made Handley create a driving job for him in this picture.

The plot of the picture was about the same as the fateful road race of years before. Johnson was to lock wheels with Handley and the star of the picture, driving along behind, was to pass them, and win. But the scene was so realistic that Handley, instinctively, had recoiled from it. At the fateful moment he had corrected his car's mad dash for the ditch, spun around and roared on. The picture star, behind, had banged into Johnson and his car had thrown him fifty feet.

Thereafter, Lee Johnson was broken in body and mind. He wore a strait-jacket for seven months. Afterward, he hobbled about with his wasted body confined in horrible steel braces, leaning on a crutch and a cane. His insane hatred of Clark Handley had taken the form, not of blackmail, but of torture. He craved the sight of Clark Handley, hopelessly crippled as himself, cut off at the height of his career and enduring an endless succession of pain-racked days.

And there were always drivers who would accommodate him—for money. There was always somebody like Hilliard, who for a hundred dollars would consign Clark Handley to a life of agony.

The only way to solve the situation was for Handley to have Johnson haled into court and the whole mess publicly aired. This was just what Handley, frightened of the fickle public, was afraid to do. And, as he explained lamely to Mike, there he was.

"If I had money enough to retire on, or to get started in some other business," he said, "I wouldn't care what the public thought. If I could only thumb my nose at that grandstand and tell 'em to go to the devil I'd have all my troubles licked. Some day—I will."

"I hope I live that long!" answered Mike.

He stood for a moment, gazing at the shell of the man who had been Clark Handley. Sympathy welled up in a flood within him. He knew Handley's character as well as any man living. He had shared the dangers of big-league races with him for three years. He had slept with him, faced death with him, worked with him. And he knew that no more honest man than Handley had ever lived. If he ever got a chance to help, Mike promised himself, he'd grab it.

THEY repaired the car as much as they could from the supplies on hand, and loaded it into their truck, Denver bound. Handley was still limping from a badly-bruised knee. His face looked like the aftermath of a blind barber's first attempt. The car was full of groans and rattles. At the track, everybody stopped to stare.

There was a parade of veterans going on in the city, and Handley was given a flag and asked to march

in it. He didn't want to. The line of march was five miles long, and with an aching body made all the more painful by the altitude of the city, five miles was no pleasant jaunt.

He begged off, but the committee was firm. All his fans would be lined up along the streets, they said. And so he marched anyway.

"OH, boy!" commented Mike when he staggered back to the track. "You look as if you're all in. What do you care what they think? I figured you were going to quit worryin' about your public for a while."

"Well, it might have taken a few bucks off the gate receipts if I'd refused to carry that flag," Handley apologized.

"Get in the truck and stretch out flat," ordered Mike. "You need rest bad. And all for your picture in the papers!"

While Handley lay there, breathing hard, Mike finished preparations for the race. He scolded, complained and grew sarcastic. But he was doing two men's work himself and feeling no better than Handley. He started the race-car's engine and warmed it, still talking.

"There's Hilliard again," he pointed. "Now, get this. I'm tired of fixing up this wreck after he ditches it. You stay out of his way this time, get me? If he comes over on my side I'll bean him with this ball bat!"

He waved it menacingly. Handley tried to grin.

"All right, all right," he answered. "Forget it. Let's put on a good race."

"Let's put on a safe race, you mean!" Mike countered. "We need dough this trip. Let's get it."

The echo of roaring motors disappeared into the thick pine forest adjoining the track. In the practice warm-up, Mike found that he had to

richen the four carburetors a bit to compensate for the altitude. That, said he to himself, gave him an idea.

Handley barely survived the qualifying round, and placed sixth in the starting list. Before half of the hundred miles was over, he knew he was licked. That altitude doesn't look harmful, but if you've been through a fast spill a week before and aren't used to it, it does peculiar things to your wind. Handley, puffing and panting before the race was half over, was tiring fast.

Hilliard was far out in front, leading a fast field of cars. He had his eye on the top money, but he wasn't overlooking a chance to win a hundred more on the side. The Denver crowd, which had greeted Handley with roars of welcome, cooled off with surprising suddenness. When he came in for his pit stop at the fifty-sixth mile there was no hand-clapping, no yells of encouragement, no cameras turned his way.

"See that?" he yelled to Mike when they were away again. "Any little thing starts 'em. Look at the way they fold up and die on me. What's the matter with those boobs? Don't they see I'm doing the best I can?"

"Never mind the boobs!" roared Mike. "Watch the track!"

HANDLEY tried. But with a crowd coldly aloof, and tired arms wrestling with a flat track, he made a pathetic showing. When the race was over and the money positions were filled, the starter flagged Handley in so that the crowd could go home. He finished eighth in a field of ten.

Mike sat in the car, elbow on the padded rim of the cockpit, his head wearily in his hand. He said nothing, and said it with great eloquence. He just looked—looked at Handley accusingly.

"Now what?" he demanded, at length.

"Well, let's eat and get started," Handley suggested. "I used to be a big drawing card here, anyway. That's something."

"How come?" Mike was irritated.

"Got two hundred bucks appearance money before the start. Hey, let's get out of here before they want it back."

They got out. They loaded the hot car into the truck and clattered away through the steep Denver streets, eastward bound.

Handley's own thoughts, as he drove into the teeth of a Kansas wind that whistled across the bleak prairie that night, were in the depths of pessimism. The car was in bad shape. That crack-up the week before had wrenched and strained the whole frame. It ought to be taken down and gone over in a well-equipped shop. It would cost five hundred dollars that he didn't have.

And at Syracuse, where the first-rank speed stars were grooming their glistening chariots, they would laugh outright. They would say he didn't have a chance.

That crowd at Denver had gone to sleep on him. They had ignored him, put him out of their minds. He might just as well have never been there at all. That was a bad sign. The Syracuse crowd, most of them old-time fans, would jeer and whistle at him. He groaned.

HE held counsel with himself, thinking fast. Should he make the attempt or not? What had he to gain? He couldn't win. Why not go on to New York, get a job in some experimental laboratory and settle down for the winter?

He wanted to show his fans that he wasn't a quitter. Oh, he'd take a beating. But he wouldn't run away from one. He remembered the man who had bellowed across the heads of the bystanders at the time of the wreck: "By gosh, you're the

same square shooter you always been!"

There was one man who thought well of him. There might be more. Perhaps, even in defeat, he could win back some of the prestige he had lost at Denver. Then, with a fresh start next season, he would once again be Clark Handley, the big name of the speed world. Clark Handley, square shooter! Clark Handley—winner!

At Cleveland he had to make his choice. It was the cross-roads. There was one sign reading: "Erie, Buffalo, Rochester, SYRACUSE." There was another reading: "Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Newark, NEW YORK."

He took the Syracuse highway.

THINGS began going wrong as soon as he arrived. In the first place, he was late. He and Mike had stopped the truck on a narrow side road near Erie and worked over its motor in the cool shadow of the overhanging trees. Added to the lateness was the recognizable limp still dogging Handley's footsteps from the spill two weeks before. The adhesive was off his face, but it was criss-crossed by jagged red scabs that looked as if he had been playing with a wildcat.

There was no clean laundry, and no immaculate white track suits and helmets for the big race. When the time came to qualify, the battered Number 4 got them around the track just one mile an hour above the minimum acceptable limit. That put the great Clark Handley sixteenth in a field of sixteen starters.

"Here's where he gets it," said the other drivers.

Mike's fiery Irish temper began climbing the pole. Whenever these other drivers began to razz the once-famous Handley, Mike yearned for his ball bat. Ever since Handley had told him the story of his youthful

mistake, Mike had been fantastically loyal.

Whereas the rattling car had been merely an irritation up to now, it suddenly assumed the proportions of a disaster. Last place on the qualifying list! That looked like *his* fault, Mike reflected.

SECRETLY, while Mike was up at the office having his registration card okayed and his entry checked in, he began taking desperate measures. The car would *have* to perform! It *must* make a showing! He mixed up a fifty-gallon drum of fuel, containing sixty percent high-grade ethyl gasoline and forty percent chemically pure benzol.

When he started the motor with this devilish mixture, it back-fired with a terrific bang that raised Mike's red hair straight up on his head. He cut the switch, turned her over by hand a few times to get a different timing combination, and tried again. The vibration of the highly explosive fuel shook the weak frame like a flat-wheeled flivver.

But the tachometer needle swung slowly, reluctantly, around the dial farther and farther until it touched 5800. Mike, badly scared, shut her off. The room reeked of raw benzol fumes. Handley came in and stopped to sniff.

"What are you burning there—gunpowder?" he demanded. "Hook on your tow-bar. We'll tow her to the track behind the truck. I hope this race is going to look better than I think it is."

"Get goin'," answered Mike. "Don't worry about the looks."

Mike knew that if the car held together at all during the race, this dangerous fuel mixture would dope it up to the point where it would travel. He did not dare tell Handley about it.

At the track, the other cars had been warmed and were taking their

positions in the line-up. Just after the drivers' huddle broke up and they were climbing into their cars, Hilliard stopped to talk with a man on crutches. Mike prodded Handley's arm. Lee Johnson!

Mike got there just in time to hear the last of the conversation.

"And do it this time or gimme back the hundred!" Johnson was saying. "And not in front of the starter, either!"

"Johnson," growled Handley, thrusting his bristly chin into the cripple's face, "I'll give you ten minutes to get off this track. Give him back his hundred, Harry."

"Hurry up," added Mike, "or I'll sign that complaint myself."

"Huh!" shrugged Hilliard. "All right. Here, take it. I'm gonna win the five thousand bucks top money today, and if I do, I can't stop to pull any tricks for a hundred bucks."

"Well, I'll get yuh!" screamed Johnson, grabbing his heavy cane. "I'll do it some way! I'll put you where you put me, you crook! I'll find somebody to crack you up! You've been drivin' crooked races ever since you were a kid! If I was to tell what I know—ugh! Ouch! *Let go!*"

ONE of the gate policemen had him by the elbow.

"I'll have you thrown out of organized racing!" howled Johnson.

"Go over there and sit down," growled the cop.

Handley took his place in Number 4 with a sense of impending disaster. How many people had heard that threat? As the field of cars rolled away for the start, he felt like hunching down under his wheel, out of sight. He felt the crowd staring at him, hostile. He felt the officials reaching for the telephone to check up on the charge Johnson had screamed at him.

A crook! He, Clark Handley, who had held the admiration of the racing world for eight years!

Around the final turn, there was the usual roar into full power. Hilliard's low-hung Number 8 seemed to dive down the straightaway and skim around the turn. The field dashed helter-skelter across the starting line. Being last, nobody passed Handley.

He concentrated on gaining ground. He fought hard to throw off his fear of some coming tragedy. At every grandstand stretch he stared at the starter, hoping he wouldn't see the fatal red flag that means: "Get off the track!"

HE turned his entire energy into the business of gaining ground. One way to get his mind off Johnson was to try for the lead. Years of dirt-track experience had given him a sort of sixth sense of wheel positions. He could tell without looking around just how much room he had to pass, or to scrape by the fence.

The local youths and the would-be drivers fell by the wayside early. Within ten miles he was in twelfth position, and at twenty he was sixth.

The car was behaving queerly. It bucked and jumped when he throttled down. Its long tail pipe was cherry red. Its exhaust smelled phony. But it was going like a scared rabbit.

He was making a better showing than he figured. At the thirty-fourth mile he was in fourth position. Hilliard was far in the lead. If he could get up to third place, Handley figured, and finish there, he would make a thousand dollars.

The track was rutted, bumpy and unpleasant. The springs on Number 4 were loose, and the whole landscape quivered when he sat back against the cushion. Sitting up

straight, the wheel prodded him in the stomach. Great Scott, the buggy was vibrating!

"We're still fourth!" yelled Mike. "Forty-two miles!"

"How far ahead is he?" Handley roared.

"Four miles."

They shot into the dust blanket which had appeared over the turn. It was so thick that it didn't settle at all—just hung there. Four miles! Maybe, the way she was rolling now—

Flashing past the grandstand, he eased up on the pedal to avoid taking the dust in too much traffic. Four cars were in the dust screen at the time. The moment he took his foot off, the motor began barking through the exhaust pipe. When he stepped on it again, the barking stopped. He tried taking his foot off again.

"R-r-r-r-ow!" growled the exhaust pipe.

"Hey, Mike!" he yelled. "What percent benzol are you runnin'?"

"Pretty heavy," shouted Mike. "She needs peppin' up."

Handley frowned. This was something more to worry about. But he was still in fourth place, with a fast average, too. He would have to come in for his pit stop within a few laps, and he would find out all about it then. If the benzol content was too heavy, the car was liable to catch fire at any time.

HE shut her down a bit on the north turn and glided to a fast stop, using his brake lever sparingly. He leaped out and yanked up the hood. While the temporary pit boy was upending the big fuel drum into a funnel, Handley slapped a wet finger against the motor's block. There was no hiss. Evidently the cooling system was all right. He tested all the copper tubing fuel lines leading to the carburetors. They were tight.

As the boy set the fuel drum down

Handley caught a few drops of the liquid on his fingers. It evaporated so fast that it chilled the flesh. By that time he had taken on twenty gallons of it, the radiator was full of cool water, and Number 4 was ready to go. A minute and twenty-one seconds! Fast work, the fans remarked.

"Mike, you bonehead, you've got nearly half and half in her!" complained Handley as they rolled away. "If that fuel line ever comes loose and drops that stuff on a hot motor—blooey! We'd be cooked alive."

"Fuel lines don't come off motors I work on," Mike reminded him.

Just the same, Handley didn't like it. He tried a smoother, calmer driving pace, wherein he did not accelerate and brake so fast. That would save the motor from sudden changes in temperature, and also protect the fuel lines from vibration.

Seventy miles and he was still fourth. This smooth technique was panning out. He concentrated on Larry Bross, driving the car ahead. By smooth driving and a steady pace, he began cutting down Bross' headway a few feet at a time.

ONLY superior skill could do that—it was nothing a beginning driver could attempt. In the middle of the seventy-eighth lap, Handley caught him.

"Hurry! Hurry!" Mike pleaded. "Hilliard's still three miles ahead! Twenty-two miles to go!"

The crowd had suddenly awakened to Handley's presence. They yelled at him when he came moaning down the grandstand stretch and eased into the curve with his old-time smoothness. He was too busy to notice it. In his mind was the image of a burning race car.

Hilliard was running now, fearful of his three-mile lead. Handley consistently gained more and more ground, and twenty miles from the finish he swept into second place.

Now the mob got on its feet and howled—and Handley didn't hear. He was spurred into showing a touch of pure genius, for the first time in his brilliant career deaf to the frantic yells of his fans.

HE found more power flowing to his command. Astonished eyes stared at the tachometer needle, quivering and trembling at the figure 5900. Impossible! But there it was!

Hilliard, on the inside, swung over sharply toward the fence and started his usual wobbly tactics to keep Handley from passing. Behind him, Handley corrected in a flash and kept his course well toward the middle. As they took the north turn nearly wheel to wheel, both skidded in the loose sand and threw up a sheet of thick dust. Instinctively Handley took his foot off the pedal.

"R-r-r-r-ow!" barked the motor.

And then it happened.

Black smoke billowed up around his feet. In a twinkling the whole car seemed enveloped in flames. Handley's shoes were scorching and Mike's yell of terror brought him face to face with tragedy. Here he was, like so many other brave men—trapped in a speeding, flaming race car! It was clocking a hundred miles an hour. He couldn't stop it in less than half a lap at best.

Hunched down over the wheel, he escaped the worst of the smoke. He thought he knew what had happened. A fuel line had come loose, deluging the hot motor with that volatile mixture! He heard a screaming and shrieking and pounding from the stand as he fled past. That was the mob—getting their sadistic thrill, watching two men burn to death before their staring eyes.

Suddenly Handley hated mobs. He hated people who would cheer at a time like that. He came to a quick decision—he'd go around again and stop on the backstretch. He'd be

damned if he'd let those thrill seekers see a doomed man struggling to escape from burning alive!

Why was he making all that speed? Why didn't the flame zip back through the copper tube and blow the tank sky-high? Why didn't something explode?

"Blow up, blow up!" he yelled. "Let go! Do something!"

BUT the motor's only answer was a smooth moan of power. He was driving entirely by instinct, his brain whirling crazily with a dozen jumbled impressions. One of them was that the smoke was thinning out. Hilliard, ahead, was frightened half to death by a look at that burning specter behind him. He didn't argue about the lead then—he didn't want to get close to the Suicide Special on its blazing way to hell. Suddenly Handley was in the lead.

Finally there was another wave of sound from the stand. He was in the grandstand stretch and there was a blur of checkered muslin before his smoke-bleary eyes. Men were dancing about, throwing hats into the air, pounding each other on the back. He'd won!

Gradually and with great care, Handley slowed Number 4 down. By the time he had completed the slowing-down lap, the smoke had died away to a mere trickle. Thousands of parked cars in the infield oval blared a raucous applause. Handley sneered.

It was quieter. The motors had stopped roaring, and the stands were quieting down from their painful excitement. The hundred-mile gale no longer flattened his goggles across his nose, nor forced that smoke into his eyes. Cameras were waiting at the finish line.

He brought the blackened car to a halt in a roped-off square. Fifty thousand fans in the applauding grandstand stood up on their feet.

They did not cheer. They applauded. The sound of thousands of clapping hands swept over the stands like the sound of wind in the forest leaves. Even the starter was doing it.

"Acknowledge it," pleaded the officials, as cameras whirred.

Handley did. He stood up, placed his hand gracefully to the tip of his nose and wiggled his fingers rapidly.

"Whoa!" barked the sound man on the news-reel truck. "Hey, quit that. Say something we can release."

"I've been wanting to do that for years," barked Handley. "My fans. My friends! *My pals!* Phooey!"

Mike had the two-bar connected to the truck, and the last derisive sound was blurred as Number 4 silently rolled away.

THEY stopped in front of the speedway office to get their money. On his way out, Handley saw Mike's feet projecting out from beneath the car's mid-section.

"What happened?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing much. The universal joint was packed with some old rags. We didn't have nothing better. Well, the going got too fast, and they got hot. Burned up. When they burned up, the fire stopped. That's all, exceptin' that the bolts on the housing got twisted from the heat and interlocked. That's how we could keep going. We had a direct drive, using the bolts as a universal joint. How's that for a lucky break?"

"Did you see Hilliard move over?" chuckled Handley. "Didn't want to go to heaven in a flaming chariot, like he figured we were. Now we've got five thousand bucks cash. We've got rid of Johnson. We're set for next season. And if anybody says I've got to make a race look good—I'll wring his neck!"

"I never thought," said Mike, "I'd live this long."

The Monkey God

*Savage Rites of the Pygmies and Mysterious Jungle Murder
Confront Jeff Westman and Scotty Macrae in
the Weird Depths of the Congo*

A Complete Novelette of African Adventure

By JACLAND MARMUR

Author of "Double-Edged Mutiny," "Watch-Mates," etc.

CHAPTER I

Sudden Death

AT the same instant, Kilimi, the giant Wambuba black, and the white man, Jeffrey Westman, in the lead of the safari, froze in their tracks. The ivory hunter was a veteran of the sinister Ituri forests. The Congo jungle was dangerous territory, full of lurking death. He knew it. Behind them the porters crouched instinctively, tense and alert.

The two leaders looked at each other in silence. The same sound, harmless to the ordinary ear but unnatural to their keen senses, had startled them both—an approaching rustle of dank leaves, the crackling of tangled vines. The faithful black turned his glowing face to his master.

"*Watu!*" He breathed the word in Swahili and plucked his precious tarboosh from his head. Then he said again in a tense whisper: *Watu, bwana!* People."

Westman nodded. Kilimi, sensing danger, tucked his red fez for safe-keeping into his monkey-skin belt. In silence he snapped the heavy gun he carried from "safety" to "ready" and exchanged it for the light Winchester the ivory hunter carried.

"Quick, Kilimi! *Pesi-pesi!*"

Kilimi darted from the trail, swift as a flash of vanishing light. Westman gestured with his free hand to the frightened blacks of his safari. A moment after their ears had caught the first warning of danger, the elephant trail was completely deserted.

In the dense growth, Kilimi crouched by the side of his master. Two flaps of his cartridge belt were open now, ready in an instant to feed fresh shells to the gun Westman held in his hand. The rustling came closer, like the slithering progress of a snake. They could see nothing. Suddenly a piercing shriek shattered the stillness of the jungle.

Kilimi tensed. The white man clutched his ebony arm restrainingly. Behind them the Wambuba porters grasped their spears more tightly, white eyeballs rolling.

Again it sounded, a blood-curdling human shriek of terror that ended in a horrible gurgle. It mingled harshly with the enraged chattering of monkeys—and then died to a dreadful silence.

Kilimi swayed his giant torso on his heels. Westman peered through the mangroves. His lips were set in a hard bar.

"*Chui!*" the Wambuba whispered fearfully.

The ivory hunter shook his head



Death had pounced on him swiftly, silently, suddenly—and disappeared

grimly. "The forest leopard does not hunt in daylight, Kilimi!"

He gestured with his hand. His heavy rifle in readiness, the pair crawled through the tangle of growth in silence, Kilimi's naked feet and Westman's mosquito boots making no sound as they circled to

come upon the clear trail, ahead of whatever danger threatened.

Suddenly the Wambuba sprang to his full height. He flung one arm out.

"Bwana, look!"

In the center of the open trail lay the body of a man. His disfigured

face was upturned to the brassy Congo sky, his arms outstretched at his sides, one hand still tightly clutching a rifle. The shape lay motionless, with sightless eyes opened. Jeffrey Westman did not need to be told the man was dead. Yet he was armed—and they had heard no shot fired in his own defense. Only that shriek of horror; then silence and death.

A SHUDDER swept Kilimi's giant frame, for a man does not let himself be killed with a loaded rifle in his hands unless—Tribal superstitions and dread of *dawa*—the jungle magic—was strong in his aboriginal soul.

"*Wazungi!*" he whispered in awe.

The ivory hunter nodded. There could be no question of it. The dead heap there was a white man. Death had pounced on him swiftly, silently, suddenly—and disappeared. The jungle swallowed all things.

In grim silence Westman stepped into the open. The blazing Congo sun had yet an hour in the heavens. But in the depth of the great Ituri forest the feverish African dusk was already deep on the ghastly festoons of interlacing creepers; and the age-old elephant trail was splashed with weird shadows. The throb of signal drums started, faint, distant, and invisible—the mysterious heart-beat of the land.

Westman, tall and powerful and youthfully erect with his .475 elephant gun in the crook of his arm, had pressed through the jungle from Murumwa at a speed that showed plainly that this time he was not in search of that eternal dream of the ivory hunter, the father of all the elephants, whose tusks trail the ground. The summons of his friend, Scotty Macrae, of the Congo Concession Company, had been as imperative as it had been enigmatic.

Macrae was not a man to scare

easily, yet he had sent a black runner through the jungle to his friend in Murumwa. And now death met this friend as a sinister proof. Westman's sun-scorched face showed his anxiety in drawn jaw-muscles.

Staring down at that fellow in the middle of the trail, he saw a face lacerated horribly and twisted in the agony and the terror of his death. They had heard his death shriek not more than a few moments before. His rifle was still in his hand. He had not fired so much as a single shot in his defense. Murder had leaped upon him mysteriously, swiftly.

The ivory hunter's trained eye passed quickly over the ground, then along the wall of the jungle for some sign, animal or human, to betray the cause of death and its perpetrator. He saw nothing. What did it mean?

JEFFREY WESTMAN dropped to one knee. The flesh of the dead man's face was torn, bleeding, the blood not yet coagulated. And as the ivory hunter bent closer, he cursed softly under his breath. It was George Craig, a Congo Concessions man sent out recently from Boma as Scotty Macrae's assistant.

Westman had met him once in Murumwa before the man went into the jungle to join the Scot on the smelling back creeks of the Ituri River. There was no mistaking his identity. There was the strong, stubborn jaw and the shock of dust-colored hair. Westman hadn't thought himself so close to Macrae's compound.

What was the fellow traveling the jungle alone for? That in itself was suicidal. Was it a warning to him, Westman? By whom? And for what reason? What had caused Craig's sudden swift death? Men don't just drop dead that way. And sudden and violent it had been, there hadn't been time for him to so much

as fire a single shot in self-defense!

The ivory hunter's brow contracted in a frown. Very carefully he turned the body over. As the back came into full view, Westman's teeth ground together.

Between the shoulder blades were several slashes.

Native spears? He dismissed the thought instantly. There was no spear anywhere about, and native killers *threw* their weapons. These slashes were clean stabs. One of them had penetrated to poor Craig's heart at the first thrust. No native weapon could have made them.

In spite of his flame-red hair and the scorched skin of his face, Jeffrey Westman, Congo ivory hunter, was a young man. But a veteran to the jungle. And studying every sign, he knew at once that those thrusts in the back that had brought death to George Craig could have been made only by a razor-sharp blade of civilized steel.

But a white man's knife in the heart of the Ituri jungle must have a white man to wield it! Yet other than Scotty Macrae, there were no white men within twenty miles of the Congo Concession's gold and diamond workings on the crocodile-infested streams of the Ituri Valley.

WESTMAN came quickly to his feet, barking an order in Swahili to his men to remain where they were without stirring. Carefully, with his eyes glued to the ground, he went over the terrain of the clearing, working slowly from one side to the other, back and forth. Meticulously he searched. He found—nothing. There was not so much as a single track of man or beast other than a single trail made by Craig himself. Bordering the elephant trail his trained eye spied broken vines and torn creepers. The dying man had clutched at these, no doubt, in his brief agony. But on the ground it-

self there was—nothing! Yet even a leopard leaves a track.

Baffled, Westman dropped again to one knee beside Craig's body. The shock of sand-colored hair seemed in spots to have been literally torn by the roots from the scalp. Jeffrey's gaunt face frowned. He recalled for a moment the gruesome tales he had eked out from the lips of Scotty Macrae's runner, the black who had brought to Murumwa his plea for Westman's help. Tales of mysterious, unaccountable deaths; of the dread superstitions that swept the natives like wildfire; of jungle magic.

AND now, almost under his very eyes and not a mile from Macrae's compound, without any explanatory tracks or marks on the soft jungle floor, George Craig lay stabbed to death!

As he rose deliberately to his feet, Kilimi bent eagerly toward him. "You find marks, *bwana*?" he whispered softly in Swahili.

Westman shook his head. "No marks, Kilimi."

"*Dawa lutala. Watu lutala.* The magic of the accursed people!"

Jeffrey looked at him sharply, reclaiming his Winchester from the shaking hand of the giant black.

"Nonsense, Kilimi!" he barked shortly. "Kilimi no run away! Understand? We fight together before, no?" he went on levelly in guttural Swahili. "We fight together again."

For an instant the black's eyes wavered to the body lying at their feet and darted swiftly to the blackening walls of the jungle on all sides. Then he squared his splendid shoulders. His free hand came up clenched, and he struck his bare black chest a mighty thump.

"No," he growled, "Kilimi no run away. My master fight—Kilimi fight!"

"Good man," Westman replied

simply. "Tell your Wambubas to make a litter for the dead *Wazungi*. We camp tonight with Scotty Macrae in the ancient village of death. You remember, Kilimi?"

The black's face split in a savage grin of pleasure at the remembered battle in which he had partaken at that place Westman called the village of death.

"*Ndio, bwana,*" he growled. "I remember."

Westman and his faithful gunboy took the lead again. With their grisly burden coming directly behind them, the little safari pressed onward through the dark ominous jungle.

CHAPTER II

"*The Accursed Magic Again!*"

THE westering sun dove abruptly beneath the jungle fronds in a bombshell of color and light. Several moments later Westman heard the cries and noise of many men crashing toward them. Dominating the native clamor, he recognized the periodic bass hail of Scotty Macrae.

"Craig! Darn ye, where are ye? Craig!"

A bitter smile flitted across the ivory hunter's face at the Scot's naïve manner of search. In a moment Westman and his safari burst upon the rim of a large clearing.

To the right the short, stocky form of the Scotsman could be seen, returning at the head of his search party of half-naked blacks.

The huge compound was entirely surrounded by a high stockade. Behind the pointed stakes and through the open gates the wattled native grass huts reared their cones. Ahead of Westman rose the administration building, a rough hut of thatch with a narrow *stoep*; and directly behind it a gigantic banyan tree sent its

drooping creepers weaving ghostly in the twilight.

Suddenly Scotty Macrae spied the newcomers and, mistaking the Wambubas for his own blacks and the white man for the man he was in search of, he let out an angry bellow:

"Craig! Ye bloody fool! Don't ye know better'n to run off at night into—"

"It's not Craig, Mac."

The Scot, coming forward on the run, stopped dead in his tracks. Then he let out a joyous shout.

"Jeff!" He sprang forward eagerly, rifle in hand. "Westman! God, and I'm glad you're here. Didn't even know whether my black'd ever live to reach you in Murumwa."

"Your runner came in five days ago. I left at once."

"Knew you would, Jeff."

"He brought some pretty gruesome tales with him, Mac. Now what's all this black magic nonsense?"

The stocky Scot sobered instantly, letting his huge hand come away from Westman's which all the while he had been clasping in hearty welcome.

"IT—it's a rotten mess, Jeff," he bit off between clenched teeth. "Talk it over later. Right now I'm worried about that kid they sent out from Boma. Went off by himself into the jungle an hour ago and—"

"Craig?"

"Yes, he—"

"Don't hunt him any more, Scotty."

"You— What do you mean, Jeff?"

"He's dead."

"Dead!"

"My Wambubas have got him on that litter. Stabbed through the back. Kilimi will bury him, Mac," the ivory hunter went on quietly, "like one of his own tribe. Standing upright with his rifle at his side like a warrior ought to be buried."

"My God! Another!"

The Scot said this with savage bitterness. For a moment the two friends stared at each other. Then in silence Macrae led the way to the administration building. Behind them the door flap of *kasai* cloth fell back in place without a flutter. Outside, Westman's Wambubas mingled with Macrae's blacks, Kilimi growling orders, his brilliant Mus-sulman tarboosh the envy of all the savages.

Scotty Macrae fell wearily to the rattan settee and turned up the grease lamp. In its light his square face showed itself set in stony ridges. Westman dropped to a camp stool facing him, his long legs before him. For a moment the pair listened intently to the faint, maddening beat of distant signal drums; until suddenly the Scot's clenched fist came down with a thump on the narrow teakwood table. He swore savagely.

"I TELL you, Jeff, it's enough to drive a man crazy out here. Blackness—the jungle—clammy heat and snarling blacks. Them drums going all night long. Death ready to jump on your back any minute!" He leaned forward.

"Westman," he barked fiercely, "I can stand the sight of blood drawn in a clean open fight as good as any man. I'm not squeamish, God knows. But this stinking back-sticking! It sends shivers up my spine. They don't know what a man's up against here, them company directors on the coast at Boma.

"Gold and diamonds, that's what they want! And they send a poor kid like Craig out here. Why, he didn't have a chance! I'm beginning to think I haven't, either. But I tell you this, Jeff!" His fist pounded the table again. "I'll get to the bottom of this if it—"

"Suppose you tell me about it,"

Westman interrupted him softly.

"You saw as much of what it's about as I know, Jeff," the Scot replied, more soberly, "when you found young Craig."

"Who—"

"I don't know."

"What was he doing in the jungle alone?"

"I'VE warned him a hundred times, Jeff. But he was a kid, full of fight. Only he didn't know how to fight—out here. He was looking for a black who skipped out with a few raw diamonds from the diggings."

"Has that happened before?"

"The blacks making off with the stuff? Yes, before I sent for you, Jeff, half a dozen lit out." The Scot leaned forward, his eyes ablaze. "And every one of them was found murdered in the jungle! Every one!" he repeated. "Stabbed and lacerated and torn, those we were able to find, with handfulls of their kinky hair yanked out by the roots as if—"

"What?"

Westman barked his interruption fiercely, coming abruptly upright in his chair.

"The savages hide the small stones in the kinks of their hair. You know that, Jeff. Some one's laying for them out there in the jungle. Whoever it is, after murdering 'em he hunts their scalps for the looted stuff. It's bestial, I tell you! Doesn't just pick the pebbles out of their hair. Blast him, he fairly rips the scalp off! Why, what's the matter, Jeff?"

Westman relaxed slowly. "Mac," he breathed, "that's exactly what I noticed about Craig's head when I found him."

"You—"

Macrae stopped short. A moment of silence fell between the two friends.

"Are there are any other whites

around here beside yourself?" Westman asked at length.

"Not for twenty miles, Jeff." The Scot shook his head. "Not till Lulatala, an old slave-trading village far up the river. Trader called Joe Swango lives there. Comes down the trails once a month for me with supplies. Decent sort, only close-mouthed."

"THESE blacks of yours, Mac, who I ran off and—died. How'd you find 'em?"

"Riddled through the back with spear holes."

"And their own assegai? Were they flung? Was there ever signs of a fight?"

"Never, Jeff! Their spears were still in their hands. Too yellow to show fight."

"Would you call young Craig yellow, Mac?"

"Good Lord, no! He'd fight ten wildcats twice his size.

"Well, he never put up a fight, either."

"What—!"

"His rifle was still in his hand, without a shell fired. And the rottenest part of it is, Mac, that he was killed not more than five minutes before we got to him. And there wasn't even a bootmark or the track of a native's foot to show who did it!"

"Tommyrot! You must be wrong. What do you think killed him? Black jungle magic?"

"That's just what Kilimi thinks, Mac," Westman said softly.

"Bah! You, too? Some savage leaped on his back and speared him for the diamonds he thought he had."

"Impossible! If it was a Wambute forest pygmy—their spears are always poisoned with datura lily extract. The wounds swell blue and they don't bleed! It wasn't a spear at all. The holes are too clean, not

like the wound from the broad paddle of a black's spear!"

"But for the love of God, Jeff, what was it then that—"

"A white man's long steel dagger. Nothing else makes wounds like that."

"But there isn't a white man between here and Lulatala, I tell you!" Macrae gasped incredulously.

"Except this Joe Swango you tell me about," Westman reminded him.

"That's a wrong trail." The Scotsman shook his head. "Joe's no angel, but he hasn't the nerve for that. If you saw him, you'd know. Besides, he can't kill blacks and murder Craig a mile from my compound—while he's in Lulatala twenty miles away. Half these blacks were murdered when runner boys of mine swear they were talking to him the same night in Lulatala. It's a band of savages, I tell you!"

Westman shook his head. He leaned back against the wattled wall of the hut, his hard, grey eyes half closed.

"WRONG, Mac," he mused. "Blacks don't work that way and you know it. What chance would a black have of disposing of looted diamonds? Suppose he came to a post and offered raw diamonds to a trader? They'd jump him so quick he wouldn't know what struck him. There's something more sinister and a blessed sight more dangerous about this than a band of stray savages or Wambute forest pygmies." The lean hunter straightened slowly in his chair. "You remember Abd el Hussan, Mac?" he asked quietly.

"I'll say I remember him! Didn't I have a time getting the Governor General to send the approval you wanted, so that black boy of yours, Kilimi, could mummify the swine's head for his collection of post decorations!"

Westman grinned slightly at this.

Kilimi cherished those bizarre and ghastly relics of his hunts with his master. But the smile vanished from his angular face almost at once.

"Well, Mac, I was wondering," he mused on. "You remember the Arab was digging here for raw diamonds before you and your company ever knew the deposit was here? I'll wager some one in Lulatala knew about his pretty game before we broke it up six months ago."

"But Abd el Hussan is dead, Jeff."

"Sure he's dead. But he's not the only crooked trader in the Congo."

"Well, I don't mind admitting I'm stumped, Jeff," Mac conceded wearily. "Unless this killer flies through the night like a bat! All I know is there's murder stalking around this place till it's got me balmy. When I told Joe Swango about the way the blacks died he grinned and said something was wrong with their face dye if it wouldn't keep off the jungle magic. They smear their faces with white *ngula* dye for night travel, you know. It's supposed to scare off the evil devils of the forest." Macrae shuddered. "I can't help thinking of poor Craig."

WESTMAN nodded understandingly and seemed to be listening to the moan of the dank night breeze through the swaying creepers of the ancient banyan. At last he stood up.

"We'll both think clearer after a sleep, Mac."

"Aye, Jeff," the Scot murmured from his seat.

The ivory hunter turned away. But he never reached the curtained doorway of the sleeping room. At the instant his hand touched it a piercing shriek stabbed the night outside. Westman whirled. Bellows of terror sounded outside now; hoarse native growls; the swift pattering of naked feet racing for shelter.

Then that single blood-curdling shriek sounded once more, and end-

ed as if a savage hand had instantly clutched the throat. Outside the door-flap Kilimi's unmistakable bass sounded anxiously.

"*Bwana, bwana!*" he cried; and, waiting for no summons, he tore aside the curtain and stood crouched in the opening with blazing eyeballs. "Come quick! The accursed magic again!"

He stood there trembling slightly, sleek muscles rippling under the dark skin polished with castor oil. Macrae leaped to his feet. Westman sprang forward, plucking up his Winchester as he went.

"Come along, Mac!"

One after the other, they plunged into the night.

CHAPTER III

White Man's Weapon

"DOWN, Mac! On the ground!" Westman warned the Scot.

At the foot of the *stoep* of Macrae's hut, Kilimi had already fallen prone on his stomach, the ivory hunter at his side. For a moment, still blinded by their sudden dash into the dark clearing from the lamp-lit room, they could see nothing. Then gradually monstrous forms and waving shapes materialized amid the black tops of the jungle.

At the mouth of the native workers' stockade the mob of Macrae's blacks crowded, paralyzed with fright. In the center of the clearing Westman's eight warrior porters crouched beyond the light of their dying campfire, all eyes glued to a single spot in the jungle's wall. Kilimi it was who first raised his hand, growling a tense—

"Look, *bwana!*"

A tall shape staggered into the dim light from out of the wall of forest. It swayed drunkenly from side to side: a stalwart savage, naked, except for a loin clout. His

face, streaked white with *ngula* dye, wobbled goblin-like above the jet torso.

"Tamwa," Macrae gasped. "The black who bolted with three stolen 'bort' stones—the one poor Craig was hunting."

He started up from his knees. Westman dragged him back to earth. And the black, reaching the edge of the clearing, let out again a single dreadful shriek of terror. At the same instant a dark shape leaped out of blackness, on to the terrorized savage's back. In the ghastly light something flashed three times in rising and descending arcs.

WESTMAN came to one knee, the Winchester at his shoulder. Sighting carefully, he waited an opportunity to fire. But the attacker, clinging to Tamwa's back, made a true fire impossible in that weird light. Only once his face was turned toward the clearing for an instant. It showed distorted, bestial, framed in shaggy hair, teeth gleaming between snarling lips.

"*Batwa!* Forest dwarf!" Kilimi growled.

"The swine!" Mac roared in helpless rage.

Tamwa collapsed, his attacker still clinging to his back. Throwing caution to the winds, Westman pulled the trigger without any attempt at a hit, but more with the intention of scaring off the horrible shape. The flash of fire from his Winchester blinded them momentarily. When the smoke cleared, they caught sight of another short, dwarfed body darting out of the jungle. Once more Westman pumped his gun. It was like firing at dancing shadows.

"Kilimi!" he barked. "Throw wood on the fire. Quick!"

Macrae leaped to his feet. Westman followed. The Scot, enraged beyond all caution, started forward. The ivory hunter dragged him back.

"Don't be a fool, Scotty!" he snapped. "Get a brand from the fire. Kilimi! A torch!"

The black came back with a smoking brand in one hand, his long *assegai* clutched in the other. Behind the stockade a fierce pounding of tom-toms started as Macrae's savages took up the chant of their medicine man's desperate effort to scare away the evil spirits of the jungle devils.

"Come on," Westman bit off shortly. "Fire at the first moving thing you see, Mac!"

He led the way carefully toward the spot. On the rim of the jungle nothing stirred. It was as if everything they had seen had been a hallucination, a nightmare. Kilimi came closer with his rude torch. In the narrow circle of its light, Westman and Macrae inspected the torn terrain closely.

Tamwa's body had disappeared. Only a slight hollow betrayed where he had fallen. Macrae gasped, then caught the ivory hunter's arm.

"Jeff! Look here!"

He stooped quickly. When he straightened up he held in his outstretched hand a long narrow-bladed dagger. It was red with freshly spilled blood.

"You were right, Jeff! It *is* a white man's knife that murdered poor Craig—and Tamwa."

WESTMAN nodded. Taking the wicked looking poniard by the haft, he inspected it carefully. Its point was clean. There was no evidence of poison. Hair clung to the handle. When the ivory hunter handed the weapon back to Macrae and brought his fingers to his face, he caught the unmistakable animal odor of the jungle. Westman turned on his gun-boy.

"Kilimi, you are sure you saw no white man?"

The Wambuba shook his head in-

sistently. "No white man. *Batwa*—forest dwarf!"

"They've dragged his body off, Jeff," the Scot put in awed tones.

"Blast it, Mac!" the ivory hunter exploded in exasperation. "It doesn't make sense. Forest dwarfs don't use knives like this. Wouldn't know what to do with a thing like that if they had one. Spears and poisoned darts from blowguns are their weapons! And look at these tracks." He pointed to the torn earth revealed in the flickering light of their torch.

"One of them stabbed your black. At least another one came to help him drag the body away. But, Mac, aside from the track your black left here, there's only one trail of naked savage feet! I don't believe in magic. Walking men leave footprints behind them on this jungle earth!"

MACRAE shuddered. For an instant they stood stock still on the rim of the clearing. Kilimi watched his master with popping eyes. Then, as they stood there, irresolute, a distant drum beat a single reverberating thump. It echoed loudly on the fevered night air above the dolorous whine of the medicine man in the compound behind their backs. Then it sounded again in a slow characteristic rhythm that gradually filled the entire night of darkness with its monstrous throbbing.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Different from the cadence of signal drums. The ivory hunter knew that. Kilimi knew it, too, for he shrank back a pace.

"That's a sacramental drum, Mac," Westman explained with a strange softness to the Scot. "There'll be a moon soon. Somewhere in the heart of the jungle they're calling the followers of Congo magic for the ceremony. That drum and the black we just saw murdered are bound to-

gether somehow, just as surely as Tamwa was killed by the same hand that murdered Craig.

"It's all bound together. I feel it, Mac. I don't believe in jungle magic. Whoever is behind this business is playing for high stakes. He's using all he knows of white man's cunning and black man's superstitions. If we find the drum and the orgy it symbolizes, we'll find—something."

"You mean, Jeff, that—"

"I mean, Mac, that we can't sit here any longer waiting. Any one of us may be next! I mean to follow the sound of that drum and see where it leads to. The moon'll be up soon. We may find tracks—and we may not. But we can follow the sound, Kilimi and I."

"Let's go!" the Scot cut in harshly.

"Dangerous business, Mac," the ivory hunter warned. "If we come on a tribe of blacks in a ceremonial orgy and we're discovered—it's certain death."

"Better than sitting here waiting!"

Westman nodded and turned to his gun-boy.

"Kilimi," he said quietly in Swahili, "we go to avenge the death of a black man and a white. We need Kilimi, the good hunter. You lead us into the jungle to the noise of the big drum?"

IN the sputtering light of the torch, the black's face was a study in emotion. Superstitious dreads, fear, faithfulness struggled visibly on his jet countenance. Only for an instant he hesitated. Then he drew himself to his full magnificent height.

"*Bwana* go—Kilimi go," he growled shortly.

"Good man, Kilimi. Go pick four Wambuba men with strong hearts and long spears. Then come, too."

The black turned toward the fire where his men stood anxiously

waiting. Westman and Macrae followed soberly, intent on inspecting rifles and filling cartridge belts for their perilous venture. The Scot raised his square face in undisguised admiration to the young ivory hunter.

"How in the world do you do it, Westman?" he asked softly. "That black of yours is scared to death and he hasn't a thing to gain—yet he'd follow you into the jaws of hell if you told him to!"

"Pride, Mac," the ivory hunter muttered, almost to himself. "I've taught Kilimi to be proud."

CHAPTER IV

Worshippers of the Monkey God

AS the little party moved warily along the tangled trail, Kilimi and Westman, in the lead, guided their direction by the booming sound of the single drum. Macrae and the four blacks followed. For perhaps an hour, through tangles and festoons of jungle growth, they traveled the heart of the Ituri jungles, the deep, dull-throated boom of the drum beating ever closer and louder. Suddenly it ceased entirely.

The startling silence froze Kilimi in his tracks, his body tense as a tiger's set for the spring. For a full minute the drum remained silent. Then it started again on its repeated, single note like the beating of some gigantic heart. Kilimi's head came back on his shoulder.

"*Karibu, bwana,*" he whispered. "Very close."

He dropped to his hands and knees now. Crawling forward, he parted the vines and peered through. Then he signaled with his free hand. With a silent gesture, Westman ordered the others to the ground. He led the crawling advance himself to the spot Kilimi commanded. At his side Macrae let out a low hissing of breath between his teeth.

Directly before them—in a slight depression of the land—the worshipping savages were revealed.

The narrow clearing lay bathed in ghastly moonlight. In its center stood a raised dais formed naturally by the rent trunk of a gigantic tree. Some of its dead limbs still reached weirdly upward from its sides. Upon it stood a naked dwarf savage before the great drum. With his clenched fists he pounded it in a maddening rhythm.

At the other end of the platform stood a huge cage of bamboo stakes. In it something black and fantastic, a shaggy creature, danced in a frenzy, chattering insanely with bared teeth. Besides the cage stood a man—giant by contrast with the Wam-bute pygmies—clothed in dirty white drill trousers; naked to the waist; his face covered entirely by a black cloth.

Below him and all about the riven tree-trunk that served as their grisly sacrificial altar sat hunched on their heels the tribe of dwarfs. And these swayed backward and forward to the maddening beat of the sacerdotal drum.

In the pallid light of the ascending moon their hairy torsos looked brown and red skinned rather than black, their faces imp-like and bestial. They were the savage forest dwarfs of the Ituri.

MACRAE, crouching beside Westman, tensed angrily.

"That man!" he growled in a fierce whisper. "The tall one by that cage. He—Jeff, he's white. Look at his chest. What's he wearing that black mask for? Westman, he—"

"Quiet, Mac," the ivory hunter cautioned.

"*Shenzi Nzombi!*" Kilimi's whisper was half dread and half a snort of rage. "Worshippers of the Monkey God!" And he spat disdainfully to show his disgust—a frightened

disgust, for he knew their terrible fanaticism.

Tense and anxious, they watched. Suddenly the white man below them dragged upward what appeared to be a human form. This he trussed by means of a rope creeper to one of the jutting limbs of the tree. There it dangled directly before him, a shapeless bundle with a grisly white-dyed face. From his thigh he whipped out a dagger and raised it on high. Above his head its steel blade caught all the light there was in a fierce and wicked gleam.

Macrae's rifle snapped to his shoulder. The next instant he would have fired. Westman grabbed the barrel and barked out a low command.

"Stop it. You want that whole mob at our throats?"

"Good God, Westman! You gonna sit here and let—"

"Don't be a fool, Mac. Look at the thing. It's a dummy. Sacking stuffed with grass and a white face painted on it. Look."

MACRAE gasped. His rifle came slowly down from his shoulder. There was no mistaking it now. The beat of the drum ceased abruptly. The swaying mob of pygmies leaned forward eagerly. In the silence the brutal senseless chattering of the thing in the bamboo cage rose with horrible clarity as it danced about in mad frenzy. The next moment the masked white man plunged his dagger downward into the grass-stuffed dummy. Again and again he buried the flashing steel blade.

At the sight, the watching savages beneath him let out a series of loud, whining wails. With a final savage thrust the white man came upright, cut down the dummy and flung the blade he had been using into the cage that stood close beside him. Instantly the beast behind the bamboo bars pounced upon it, bawling loudly and clawing the stakes

of his cage with legs and arms, the steel blade clenched between his bared fangs.

"Great God, Jeff! It—it's—" Macrae broke off and clutched the ivory hunter's arm. "Look! The black they're dragging up there now! It—look at his face—dyed white with *ngula* dye. By God, it's Tamwa! The black we saw murdered at the edge of our clearing."

HALF a dozen of the hairy dwarfs were dragging the black up on the dais. His limbs twitched occasionally. Life was still in him. The white man with the mask lifted both his arms toward the cage and started a weird, chanting wail. The surrounding worshipers took it up instantly. The air was filled with its frightful sound. Inside the cage the beast snarled and raved, pulling in a fury at the bars.

Westman turned his head. There was loathing and grim bitterness on his face.

"Worshipers of the Monkey God," he growled in a low, husky bass. "No question of it. That blasted renegade in the mask will pull the door open in a minute, Mac. That sacred ape in there—he's on a braided rope. He's been trained to make their sacrifices for them by watching the white swine knife dummies. When the cage opens—stand ready. Kilimi, do you hear? And you Wambuba men?"

"We hear, *bwana*," the faithful black whispered softly.

Westman turned forward again. The white renegade had the door-trip of the cage in both hands. Suddenly he yanked it clear and leaped aside.

A wild shriek of savage joy sounded from the throats of the worshipers as the beast leaped out of its prison, stopped short in its spring only by the restraint of the rope that fastened him. Whipped

to a frenzy, it crouched on all fours, snarling. Then, spying the supine body of Tamwa, it let out a throaty chortle and seized the dagger from its teeth by the haft.

The white-smearing face seemed to enrage it beyond all measure. And as it leaped upon the unstirring black, the crouching dwarfs shrieked their insane pleasure at the expected blood orgy, goading the beast on with their gibberish.

WESTMAN snapped his gun from safety and brought it swiftly to his shoulder. Carefully he sighted down the sleek barrel. Only a moment he hesitated—then pulled the trigger.

The reverberating shot echoed like a clap of thunder on the fevered jungle night. Whether he had scored a hit or not it was impossible to say, for the beast had leaped at the very instant of firing. It struggled ferociously now on its rope. The dwarf at the drum leaped in panic from the platform. Below them the mob sprang to their feet at the startling report, screaming and milling in terror.

On the raised dais the white man with the masked face bellowed orders. Turning, he plucked a rifle from a corner. The dwarfs whirled about, blowguns at their mouths. A whizz of poisoned darts, like a flight of angry gnats, flew toward Westman and his hidden party.

"Let 'em have it, Scotty!" the ivory hunter cried as he pumped his Winchester. "Careful of those darts."

The man on the dais emptied his weapon at the darting tongues of flame that leaped at him from the rim of the jungle. Kilimi and the Wambubas strained at their own enforced inaction like hounds on the leash. Suddenly the man on the dais, his gun empty, sprang sideways toward the beast before its cage. It still chattered and snarled in bestial frenzy.

Feverishly he undid the animal's restraining rope and leaped instantly clear. The freed beast let out a single inhuman snarl and sprang for the nearest tree, the gleaming knife-blade showing dazingly white between its teeth.

"Now, Kilimi!" Westman roared.

The black leaped to his feet, assegai in hand, an ancient Bantu war cry on his lips. Behind him his Wambubas followed, roaring the gory battle cry of their native tongue. Macrae staggered upright, ramming fresh shells into his gun. Westman dragged him to earth.

"Leave be, mon!" the Scot bellowed angrily, the blaze of battle in his eyes. "Do ye think I'm sitting here while your blacks do my fighting for me? Leave be, mon!"

"Mud—dirt," the ivory hunter answered inexplicably. "Smear it on your face, Mac. Quick!"

His rifle momentarily at his side, Westman was clawing at the soft, wet earth at his feet. This he smeared thickly on his face, masking his sun-scorched countenance until its white texture was totally covered. The Scot looked at him in utter amazement.

"Are ye mad?" he shrieked.

"Mad or not, you Scottish fighting fool, do as I tell you. Smear this mud on your face if you want to come out of this alive."

HE fairly thrust Macrae's face into the soggy earth. Then, leaping to their feet, they followed the charge of Kilimi and his battle-crazed Wambubas. The blacks were far in the lead now. The air was filled with the blood-curdling bellow of their age-old Bantu war cry. Westman and Macrae fired as they raced forward.

The white leader of the bestial orgy had vanished into the jungle. At his disappearance the scattering Wambute dwarfs screamed in terror.

On the edge of the clearing they made their last stand. Arrows and darts from blowguns whirred through the air. But they had lost heart. Their magic gods had deserted them. Suddenly the last remnants of them turned tail and fled squealing from the shambles. Kilimi and his Wambubas took up the pursuit.

Westman bellowed at his gun-boy. Hesitatingly the giant black let off the chase. Panting and exulting, the party collected about the base of the tree platform. But the mystery of it still showed plainly on Macrae's face, all smeared with blackening mud. There was little time then for explanations.

"Two of you make a litter for Tamwa here," the ivory hunter commanded in a snapping voice. "Back to the diggings, Mac. Fast as we can make it. I've a hunch that's where we'll find that filthy renegade—whoever he is. Quick! We've got to cauterize any wounds from those darts and arrows, or it means the finish."

In feverish haste the blacks worked under Kilimi's direction. Not five minutes later they were trekking back for Macrae's compound at a quick dog-trot. They flung all caution to the winds now. Speed was what was wanted.

CHAPTER V

Big Stakes

A FIERCE terrorized wailing greeted them as they crashed from the jungle to the edge of their own compound. The campfire was totally deserted. Every living soul had crammed into the space enclosed by the tall stockade. From behind it issued the agonized shrieks of the superstition-ridden blacks. Only a few braver souls peered fearfully from the opening.

Smeared with the mud Westman had so inexplicably ordered, Mac-

rae stopped in his tracks, panting. The Wambubas dropped their burden and flattened on the ground. Kilimi alone sprang to the ivory hunter's side.

"Look, *bwana!*" he cried "*Shenzi Nzombi!* The Monkey God!"

Directly before them, behind Macrae's grass hut, in the towering branches of the banyan tree, a weird struggle was being enacted. A human scream sounded, blood-curdling. It was answered by an angry chattering. The creepers of the banyan swayed and danced a grotesque dance.

"*Shenzi!*" Kilimi bellowed again.

A WHITE shape hurtled from the tree to the ground, bellowing in abject terror. It was the white renegade of the orgy they had witnessed not half an hour before. But the black mask was gone from his face. His bared chest was gory and dripping with blood. Following him from the branches of the banyan another shape came pouncing savagely downward. It landed squarely on the renegade's back, squealing frenziedly.

The man staggered, struggling vainly. Steel flashed in the night before either Macrae or Westman could bring a rifle to their shoulders. Upward and downward it came in savage swinging arcs. The blade buried itself each time to the hilt between the man's shoulder blades.

Westman's gun spat flame. Three times he fired in rapid succession, his lips set grimly. The two gruesome shapes collapsed to the ground beneath the waving creepers of the banyan tree.

"My God!" Macrae gasped in awe.

Westman led them forward in silence. To one side of Macrae's hut lay the two shapeless heaps. The white man was on his back in a pool of dark blood, his glazed eyes staring sightlessly up at the purple vel-

vet of the Congo sky. Beside him the sacred monkey writhed in its last agonies. Westman's lead slugs through its heart, the glistening steel blade still clutched convulsively in its paw.

"What—what is it, Westman?" the Scot managed to gasp.

"The finest specimen of an Ituri Colobus ape I've ever seen," the ivory hunter replied. "That, Mac," he went on with grim quiet, "that was your murderer."

"It—it's uncanny, Jeff. It's almost as bad as jungle magic."

"The Congo is uncanny, Scotty," Westman agreed softly. "Who's the white man? Know him?"

THE Scot nodded. "Joe Swango—the trader from Lulatala."

"White? He's a quarter-breed. See the kinky hair; the high, negroid cheek-bones, and the puffy lips? He—" Westman broke off. "God, what a game he played!"

"It don't make sense to me, Jeff," Macrae insisted, in frank puzzlement. "Swango couldn't have done the killings. I tell you he was in Lulatala on the night most of my blacks were murdered. And why—"

"Don't you see it, Mac?" the ivory hunter went on quietly. "He wanted to scare you and your blacks off. The Colobus ape is highly intelligent. Swango trained it, the way we saw, to pounce on the back of every white-faced man it saw. Taught it how to use a white man's dagger. Swango himself could be in Lulatala—and the murders still be done miles away.

"That's why we never found any tracks after the killings. The ape didn't walk. It swung along through the trees. And this Joe Swango knew that any black traveling at night from your compound would smear his face with the white dye. I had you and myself smear our faces with mud in the temple of

the Monkey God for that reason, to cover the white of our flesh.

"But Swango, thinking his beast would attack us because our faces were white, came flying back here. He knew the minute he heard our rifles back there, who we were. He traveled fast to get here first—and lost his black mask. But the ape didn't see any white faces back there, so he followed his master. When he did see a white face—you saw what happened. The white face was Joe Swango's."

"But, Jeff. Why the orgy? Why did he turn king of a tribe of savage dwarf pygmies? Why want us out of the way at all? It don't make sense. Didn't he get what he was after when he trained the monkey to kill the escaping blacks and pluck out the diamonds they had hidden in their hair? He—"

"No, Mac, he was after bigger game. What he wanted was to get rid of you entirely—scare you away. As for his tribe of pygmies, he intended to use them as his final alibi. The Belgian government would have put the whole thing—if you and I had been murdered—to his pygmy tribe, while he went scot free with his loot."

"His—what?" the Scot burst out incredulously.

"Pry loose that lead-covered box he's clutching in his dead hand. You'll see what he was after, Mac, I'll warrant."

IN silence, the Scot obeyed. It was a small oblong box of teakwood, covered with pounded lead as protection against decay and the ravages of the dread Congo ant, that the dead man held in his nerveless hand. This he had apparently rescued from its hiding place in the recesses of the banyan tree before the ape pounced on him. Macrae opened it slowly. As the lid came off he gasped aloud.

"Diamonds, Jeff! A rajah's ransom in raw diamonds! Look at that top one. Look at the size of—"

"Exactly, Mac," the ivory hunter cut in dryly. "Diamonds. You forget that before Abd el Hussan died he had already been working this diamond field of your Congo Concession Company, for no one knows how long. It wasn't until after you and I got here some six months ago that we even knew there was blue diamond ground here. At that time your company was simply prospecting a gold placer.

"Abd el Hussan never shipped the stones away from here. It was too dangerous. Yet he must have mined them before we broke up his little party. So they were still here. That was Joe Swango's logic. And somehow he discovered they were cached in that banyan tree. He meant to have them before you discovered them. Another week of his black magic and he'd have scared every black of yours away. And you'd have followed. You couldn't have stayed on here alone. That was what he wanted."

MACRAE looked at his friend, the ivory hunter, for a long time in silence. Then, still without a word, he turned and led the way to the stoep of his hut. The precious box was in his hand as he vanished behind the curtain of *kasai* cloth.

Inside, by the light of the fire, Westman and Macrae dressed care-

fully with antiseptic from their kits the wounds of the Wambubas. At length the two white men were alone. The tall, gaunt ivory hunter rose, a little wearily.

"I NEED sleep, Mac," he growled. "I've been on the go ever since I got your message in Murumwa. Better turn in now."

"Jeff, you—I—" The Scot sputtered, then went on in a husky growl: "I'll have to hang on here until the company engineers come up from the coast, Jeff. Then I'm heading for Boma. I'll sure tell the directors about this—and about you. You deserve—"

"Yeah; all right, Mac. You always did have a touchy conscience. You think I need pay to come along when a friend like you—"

"Then what in blazes do you want, Jeff? You're a queer bird. Trekking the jungle. What for? What do you want?"

"Sleep right now." Jeffrey Westman grinned wistfully. "I saw some mighty fine elephant spoor out there, Mac. Tomorrow, me and Kilimi will have a try at finding the father of all the elephants an ivory hunter always dreams about. Some day I'll bring him down, Mac, the tusker whose ivory drags the ground."

He smiled again, pensively, with his strong lean face a deep red-brown against the grease-lamp light. "It gets into the blood, Scotty, elephants and the jungle."

NEXT MONTH: A Gripping, Strange Story of Santo Domingo

BORDERLAND

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

—who wrote "Bare Fists," "The Crimson Blight," etc.

Unusual—Thrilling—Amazing! A Startling Revelation

A
Complete
Novelette

Hot-Trail



Haggerty plunged through the door, his eyes

CHAPTER I

A Trail Is Laid

IN the rear flat of a cheap apartment house two men sat hunched over a table and discussed crime. Between them on the dirty cover lay packages of currency, the bundles of bills held by flat rubber bands. The sickly light from a specked electric globe cast an unwholesome radiance over their sallow features.

One of them, a thin, nervous man with a cast in one eye, turned now and then apprehensively toward the hall door.

"I'm a-tellin' yuh, Butch, I ain't sold on the kid's scheme."

Butch was a hulking fellow with a stupidly vindictive countenance. "Nor me neider, as far as dat goes, but it's a chanct, ain't it, Saps?"

"Yeah, a chance. I'm agreein' to this set-up because we got to move and move fast. The bulls may be on our tails any minute."

Butch's heavy brows folded in vicious wrinkles. "Dey's one bull I'm goin' tuh fix some day an' fix him good; I'll fix his lousy hide!"

"I know—Haggerty. Forget that dick, I'm a-tellin' you."

Footsteps sounded in the hall. The

Follow the Stirring Adventures of a Daring

Haggerty

By ANSON
HARD

Author of "Moro Arms," etc.



Blinking at their sudden emergence into light

door opened to admit a man younger than either of the two. He was flashily dressed and wore a cap pulled down over one eye; and around this cap could be seen his dark hair oiled and smoothed to a polished brilliance. His face had a certain youthful appeal, but in his restless eyes was a look of insolence and cunning.

"Well, mugs, she's fixed. Gimme the dough."

Saps leaned back to light a cigarette. "You be careful, Pete."

The kid gave a hooting laugh. "Quit your worryin'. I tell yuh, it's a push-over. I can get in an' outa

places so even Big Eyes Haggerty can't tumble. Ain't I fixed everything? I soaked that grand where she'll do the most good. And I'm leavin' plants that'll make the Headquarters dummies run round in circles. Before morning we'll be scrammin' with the real McCoy."

"Yeah, I hope so." Saps was skeptical. "Well, there she is; load up."

Pete began to place the flat bundles of bills in his pockets. Butch eyed each disappearing bundle with a certain envious regret.

"Gimme time," he muttered, "an' I coulda peddled everyt'ing."

"Yeah," sneered Pete, "six months

Sleuth as He Unravels a Baffling Mystery!

or a year. And by that time we'd all be dishcd out a bookful. You leave this to me. I ain't figured out everything for nothin'. You fellas gotta learn to move fast."

"I run with yuh there all right, kid," Saps agreed. "But watch your step, Pete. Don't get rattled."

"Me, rattled? Don't make me laugh. I cover everything."

The young man moved toward the door. "Well, so long, mugs. I'll be seein' yuh."

Saps turned back again to the now cleared table. "The scheme's good, all right. All I'm afraid of is Petr. He's a kid. He's likely to lose his head. One slip and he'll leave everything open for Haggerty."

"Yeah, dat lousy round-heels. I tell yuh I hate tuh leave dis town wit'out unwindin' dat dick's clock. Just gimme one chanct an' I'm plug-in' dat baby, so help me. Gawd, how I hate 'im!"

"Aw, fergit it," advised Saps.

Butch rumbled a final growling oath at Haggerty.

PATROL Car Number 17 swung out of Tilliston Avenue and into Fourteenth Street. Beside the uniformed driver sat Detective Sergeant Guy Haggerty, better known as Hot-Trail Haggerty. His nickname was descriptive of his system. He was an exponent of quick and direct action, fast on the trail of the crook while the trail was still warm.

A square behind, a night-hawk taxi followed the course of the police car. Haggerty had his eye on the approaching car and frowned.

A sleepy-eyed attendant came out from the cabin. Far to the south the 3:10 express whistled eerily as it drew near to the grade crossing. The unnatural quiet of the early morning hours hung over the city.

"Fill 'er up," grunted O'Hara. "Charge 'er to the P. D."

A moon-like face appeared sud-

denly at the door beside Haggerty. A cigarette dangled from grinning lips.

"Well, well, and well, my old friend Hawkshaw Haggerty. What's the big murder mystery tonight? Now, now, don't lie to papa."

The young man ducked and held up a warning finger as if Haggerty had aimed a blow. O'Hara growled an imprecation.

Haggerty shoved the reporter slightly away and spat contemptuously. "I talk to regular reporters, but to a picture-snatcher on your slimy yellow sheet, I don't know nothin'—"

Z-z-z, sputter. The radio in the police car began to speak.

"Calling Car Seventeen. Calling Car Seventeen. Investigate one two six four Collins Avenue. Investigate one two six four Collins Avenue. Report, murder. Report, murder. Calling Car Seventeen—"

The radio droned on in repetition. The reporter tipped his hat insolently.

"And is that service? Let this be a lesson to you, gentlemen and coppers. Never trifle with the minions of the Press. When I see the Prince of Pearl-handled Detectives cruising in a yammer buggy, I hails a leaping lizzy with a one-eyed driver and trails along. Am I right, gentlemen, am I right?"

"Get going," ordered Haggerty. "Never mind the gas," he snapped at the attendant.

THE patrol car swung out into the street, gathering speed as the patrolman's heavy foot went down upon the accelerator. Behind it Cheese Golman of the tabloid, *Trumpet*, careened along in his battered taxi.

"That Golman's a nuisance. He may be a star to his editor, but he's a pain in the collarband to me."

"That last picture he had me in was lousy," growled O'Hara. "Some

day that bird's goin' to snap his camera once too often."

Collins Avenue was dark as they turned into it. Street lights burned dimly on alternate blocks. Dark, sooted, brick houses lay back from the street, silent as sphinxes. There was a smell of stagnant air and old woodwork.

In a lower window of 1264 burned a light, a single bar of coal on the low grate of the street.

"This is the place, boss." O'Hara brought the car to a quick stop against the curb.

THE house set back from the street. A short flight of steps led to a railed porch that was little more than a landing. At the right of the small porch was the room where the lights glowed.

O'Hara was but a step behind Haggerty as they ran up the steps. Haggerty tried the door and found it locked. He hammered upon it with the crisp authoritative knock of a police officer. There was a garbled voice from within.

"Open up," ordered Haggerty. "Police."

"Shall I bust it, boss?" inquired O'Hara.

A shot, crackling like the sudden ripping of a paper box, exploded from within the house. Both men reached for their guns automatically.

"Let her have it!" ordered Haggerty.

The door crashed inward at the third assault of their shoulders. Both were through, teetering for the moment unbalanced.

They were in a narrow reception hall. An open door to the right emitted a bar of light that split the darkness of the entrance corridor.

"This way, men, this way!" called a voice.

Haggerty plunged through the door, his eyes blinking at their sudden emergence into light. Beside a

desk at the left of the room stood an old man clad in a faded dressing gown, his hair disordered. Beside him on the desk was a telephone. In his hand was an automatic pistol.

Across the room beside a row of bookshelves, half crouching as if he had been flung violently against the wall, was a young man attired in dark clothes. Above him a row of books was pulled part way from one of the shelves and now teetered above the crouching man as if ready to rain down upon him.

But it was the object sprawled on the floor that riveted the officer's first attention. It was the body of a man past middle age; and it, too, was clad in dressing gown and pajamas. This man had fallen forward on his face, one arm doubled under the body as if it had bent to check his fall, the other outthrust, the hand clawing. One slipper had come off as the man had staggered a step or two forward, and the bare foot was twisted and drawn as if it registered and held the last painful spasm of death.

HAGGERTY knelt beside the body, turned the head. His lips pursed as the lifeless face came into view.

"Bill Jarnigan," he identified.

O'Hara whistled. "Bond and Bail Jarnigan?"

"No other." Haggerty was on his feet. The rapid action that characterized his procedure clicked in his words.

"Get the kid, O'Hara. Watch him." He swung upon the old man. "Who are you?"

"I'm James Treeman, Officer. I am in the employ of Mister Jarnigan."

"Yeah, and who's that?"

The old man swallowed before he spoke. Now that the officers had come, the tenseness left his body. He laid down the pistol.

"That's George, sir, George Bol-

ton, nephew of Mister Jarnigan, the man who murdered his uncle."

The young man came suddenly to speech. "I tell you, I didn't do it. He lies. I didn't do it!"

O'Hara straightened the young man up, rapidly frisking him.

"No rod, Hot-Trail," he announced.

HAGGERTY took in at a glance the accused young man. He was little different from the ordinary run-of-the-sidewalks youth, somewhat flashily dressed.

"Sit down there, kid," ordered Haggerty, indicating a chair. "We'll take care of you. No funny business. Now, Treeman, give us your song and story and don't waste words."

"All I know, sir, is that I found him here. I was asleep when I was awakened by shots. I thought I had heard voices, but I wasn't sure. I came running in and I found Mister Jarnigan there, sir, dead. George was over there, intent on robbing the safe."

"Safe? What safe?"

"Behind the books. Mister Jarnigan had dropped his pistol as he fell—this is his gun, sir. I grabbed it up and held George until I could phone the police. He was wild-eyed and desperate. He tried to escape when you came to the door. I had to fire to keep him. That's why I couldn't come and unlock the door."

Haggerty stepped rapidly across the room to the bookshelves. He jerked out half a dozen books, dropping them to the floor. The opened space revealed a safe. It was locked. One shelf was slightly splintered, and one of the books showed a puffed space where a bullet had entered.

"How many times did you fire that gun?"

"Once."

"Let's see it. Hm, this gun has been fired twice if the magazine was full. There are two bullet marks in the

bookcase. How many shots did you hear when you were in bed?"

"Three, I think."

Footsteps were sounding on the porch outside.

Haggerty jerked his head toward O'Hara. "Keep any rubber-necks out."

O'Hara was gone, his big fists doubling as he went into the hall.

"Why should Bolton, Jarnigan's nephew, want to rob the safe?" Haggerty pursued.

"I know he was trying to get money from his uncle, sir. They had words about it. I don't know what he wanted the money for."

"In other words, the kid slipped down at night to rob the safe, the old man caught him, and they shot it out."

"Apparently, sir."

George Bolton raised his head from his hands, where he had dropped it when he slumped into the chair.

"I tell you I didn't do it," he protested. "I heard the shots and came too, found my uncle there. Seeing the books displaced, I turned to see if the safe had been robbed. Treeman came in and found me. I swear I know no more about it than he does."

"Better come clean, kid. It'll be your funeral."

From out on the porch came the smack of an opened hand, followed by an inarticulate curse. Another shout came from down the street as a car ripped into motion.

CHAPTER II

Fatal Flash

ACOLD, strained silence filled the room. George Bolton sucked in a breath of air that was like a sob. Haggerty's hand came up to rub his chin reflectively.

Patrolman O'Hara clumped into

the room. "That lousy reporter, Golman, boss. I fired him with a good one. Figgured you didn't want any news Johnnies yet."

"No, they can have their inning when the time comes. But you oughtn't to have slapped him."

"Ah, I didn't hurt him. I slapped him where he had the most feelin', and that wasn't in his head."

Haggerty whirled toward Treeman and Bolton. "Which of you two can open that safe?"

"He can," averred Treeman.

"That's a lie," shouted Bolton. "I don't know the combination. *He* does."

Treeman spread his hands resignedly.

"As a trusted employee of Mister Jarnigan, naturally I know the combination," he admitted.

"Then get over there and open it. As a trusted employee, I suppose you know if there was anything valuable in the safe."

"Why, yes, sir. In Mister Jarnigan's business, furnishing cash bond for his clients, he had to have a ready sum of money on hand."

"How much?"

"There is—ought to be—approximately fifty thousand dollars."

"Whce-yoo, no wonder the old bird got croaked. Well, get busy on the dial. O'Hara, get Headquarters. Have 'em send the regular squad down."

"Better put the nippers on the kid, hadn't I?"

"No."

HAGGERTY'S mind was clicking rapidly. He had made his reputation on the force from his methods of thinking straight through from obvious facts—and of getting hot on the trail. The facts, so far marshalled, were damaging to George Bolton; but Haggerty was not convinced that this was an open and shut case.

The outstanding point was the ab-

sence of a gun upon the kid. Of course, Bolton might have concealed it before Treeman came in, but in that event it would be found when the Headquarters squad searched the house.

THE detective's eyes had been rapidly surveying the room. The interior of the house was queerly arranged. An open staircase led up from this office, a room that had apparently once been the parlor of a fashionable dwelling house. This stair led to a small balcony which gave access to a corridor on the second floor.

From the position of the scene as he had found it, neither Jarnigan nor Treeman had come down this stair but had entered the office from the hall. Bolton must have descended the stair; thus he would have stepped out into the room near the bookcase where Treeman had found him.

At the end of the shelves opposite the stair landing, a door opened into a lower floor room. This door was ajar and Haggerty could see heavy draperies on one of the windows.

O'Hara put through his call to Headquarters. Treeman worked slowly at the safe. There were muted metallic thuds as the tumblers dropped into place.

Flash! The room was suddenly lighted by a dazzling, blinding illumination. From the balcony above came hooting, mocking laughter accompanied by a shutter click.

On this balcony stood Cheese Golman, the reporter, grinning like the proverbial cat. In one hand he was holding, Liberty-like, a flashlight gun, and his camera was placed close against his chest. Before his face tufts of smoke were eddying like clouds before the moon.

"Gentlemen and coppers, the Press again triumphant! A cross will not mark the spot where the body was

found. There will be no cross; there will be the body itself. *Vive the Fourth Estate!*"

"How the devil did you get up there?"

"Wouldn't you like to know, my Pearl-handled Detective? Work it out, Hawkshaw, work it out. That's your business."

The reporter's eyes centered on the youth. "If it ain't George, the ladies' man. Now, now, don't get excited. I won't tell. She's a hot mamma and expensive. But be careful, Georgie. Some day papa find out and papa spank. Oh, boy!"

O'Hara, sputtering, started up the stairs. "Shall I wring his neck, boss?"

Haggerty checked the impulsive patrolman. "There's nothing we can do about it now. The *Trumpet's* got the picture. After all, he's a pretty good picture snatcher."

A call from Treeman whirled both men around.

"Where's George?" the old man asked excitedly.

The chair George Bolton had occupied was empty. In the few seconds of blindness produced by the flash he had disappeared.

From down the street came the brazen note of a siren as the Headquarters car drew near.

"AFTER him," ordered Haggerty. "He can't get away. That door."

O'Hara, drawing his gun as he went, plunged through the door at the end of the bookshelves. Treeman was taking a small steel box from the opened safe. Outside, brakes squealed as a car drew up to the curb.

Bang! From the direction of the upper corridor a detonation ripped out. Three seconds, and again the ripping, echoing bark of a revolver. There was a stifled, blood-choked groan.

"Oh, my God!"

Something scraped against the walls of the upper corridor; then came a hollow plump as a body hit the floor, followed by the lighter thud of an object dropping.

Haggerty was up the stairs in bounds, leaving Treeman, agate-eyed, holding the money box in his hands.

THE corridor was dark. Haggerty leaped ahead, his nostrils smacked by the odor of burned powder. The chill, horrifying presence of danger and death filled the narrow passage. Too late Haggerty realized his peril.

A fist shot from the darkness, smacking full below the detective's ear. Haggerty, caught off balance, went against the wall, his brain for the moment humming. In a fog of half consciousness he heard footsteps and the closing of a door.

Down below, the Headquarters squad was pouring into the house.

Haggerty shook his head, straightened up. Light flared up as O'Hara struck a match. He had come up a rear stair. He found and snapped on a wall switch.

In the center of the long corridor, now brilliantly lighted, lay the body of Cheese Golman, the reporter. Near him was his wrecked camera, and two yards away, crazily tilted against the wall was a small black revolver.

"Well, I'll be damned!" grunted O'Hara. "The poor geezer!"

The patrolman reached for the gun.

"Easy," cautioned Haggerty, "we may want that for prints."

He himself was rapidly examining the body of Golman. One bullet had plugged him squarely through the heart, and, as Haggerty rolled him over, a ghastly dark spot was exposed upon the painted floor. The other bullet had hit the camera, splintering the lens and shutter and ripping out through the back of the film carrier.

Haggerty picked up the camera and stared at it, his eyes unblinking. Then he began to glance rapidly around, his gaze finally centering on a bullet hole in the floor. A furtive smile, mirthless, twitched the corners of his mouth.

Up the open stairs from the office came two plainclothes men. Behind them was Treeman, still carrying the steel box.

"THERE'S hell popping, men," called Haggerty. "This is number two and anybody may be next. Everybody watch his step. Treeman, which room is Bolton's?"

"There, that one, sir."

"Is there a fire escape at the back?"

"None, sir."

"Then, come on."

The door indicated by Treeman was the last along the corridor to the left. Haggerty and O'Hara rushed against it to find it locked. From beyond the barrier came the smell of something burning.

"This is getting thick," grunted O'Hara. "Careful, boss, he may fire through the panels."

"I hardly think so." Haggerty rapped imperatively on the door. "Open this up or we'll break it in."

There were movements from within the room. The key turned in the lock. The officers shoved through in a wedge as the door swung around. George Bolton stood facing them. On a tray on the dresser smoldered a blackened ash of paper.

The former scared look on Bolton's face had faded into the expressionless grey of resignation.

"I'll go with you," he said in flat tones, "but I'm telling you I didn't kill him."

"You said that before," snapped O'Hara, "and now you bump off the poor reporter 'cause he knows something, eh? This time you get the cuffs."

Burke, the fingerprint expert, held the revolver out, half swathed in his handkerchief. "This your gun?"

George Bolton started, pure surprise in his eyes.

"That's his gun all right, that's his gun," cut in Treeman.

The detective, Jones, prodded at the black ash. "Been burnin' up something, eh? That looks bad, kid."

O'Hara had snapped the cuffs on Bolton. "Why, this kid's a killer. He's a maniac."

Haggerty observed the arrest without comment. He moved to the window of the room and threw up the sash.

The house ran completely back to the alley, and, the house being erected on a slope, the alley had been cut down below the lower floor. From the second-story window it was more than a twenty-foot drop to the cobbled pavement below. A single ground floor door cut through the basement walls near the center of the building.

Haggerty swung around.

"You take care of Bolton, Jones," he directed. "O'Hara, you come with me."

O'HARA, surprised, followed. A quick search of the remaining upstairs rooms revealed nothing more than an unlatched window. Haggerty then strode past the inert body of Golman and onto the balcony at the head of the office stairs.

Below him a uniformed man was standing guard. The police doctor was examining the body of Bill Jarnigan, an open satchel by his side.

Haggerty squinted from the top of the balcony, selecting a spot near where the reporter had stood when snapping the picture. He seemed to be lining something. Turning quickly before O'Hara could comprehend his movements, he went down the stair at a half run and brushed

through the opened door at the end of the bookshelves.

This was apparently a dining room. The heavy curtains, that he had noticed before, shaded a broad bow window. Quickly the detective felt around the sash, nodding as his fingers struck nail heads. Either Jarnigan or some previous tenant had nailed the window tight.

Haggerty, still without comment, passed from this room into a longer kitchen and pantry, and finally out into the lower corridor at the foot of the rear staircase. It was the same route O'Hara had taken in pursuit of Bolton.

Beside this rear staircase a few steps dropped down to the door that led into the alley. The knob of this door turned at Haggerty's touch, so that both he and O'Hara stepped out into the alley.

"This is where Golman came in," commented Haggerty at last.

"I don't get the drift of this, boss."

"You wouldn't," snapped Haggerty and turned into the house again.

THE Headquarters squad was now in Jarnigan's office. Jones was holding the handcuffed Bolton.

Haggerty's eyes were snapping.

"Open that box," he ordered Treeman.

The old retainer got a key from the desk and opened the steel box. It was nearly filled with packages of bills. Haggerty seized a package and began to examine it quickly, a momentary look of desperate perplexity in his eyes. Then his jaws seemed to spread, although his lips remained closed.

"At any rate, he didn't loot the till," advanced Burke.

"No? Take a good look at these bills."

Burke picked up a package, jerking out the top note and examining it carefully.

"Good as gold," he vouched. "I'd take all of these I could get."

"Yeah, so would I, but while I'm gone you look at them bills more closely. Come on, O'Hara."

At the hall door he turned, his eyes boring the men in the room.

"Hold the kid," he ordered, "and more particularly, don't let Treeman get out of the house."

CHAPTER III

The Odor of Crime

HAGGERTY and O'Hara were again in the patrol car, O'Hara puffed up with unasked questions.

"Around there," ordered Haggerty at the first corner. They came to the end of the alley that ran back of the Jarnigan house. "Stop. Here's where Golman must have left his taxi. Why isn't it here?"

"Hell, I dunno. What yuh drivin' at?"

"I'm figuring on what Golman would do. He'd order the driver to wait. He'd want to get back to his paper with a picture if he got one. Now it hasn't been fifteen minutes since we got to the house. Why didn't that driver wait?"

"You're askin' me?"

"I'm telling you. He didn't wait because the cab was commandeered by somebody else. Now there's a man we want. We got to get that taxi driver and get him quick."

"Cripes, we don't know who he was, and he might be cruisin' around anywhere. It'd be a needle in a haystack job."

"Not at all. O'Hara, you ought to be pounding the pavement. That was a Checkered Cab."

The patrolman audibly snorted. "Yeah, and there's only three hundred of them wearin' out the asphalt."

"And how did Golman describe it: 'A leapin' Lizzie with'—"

"'A one-eyed driver!'"

"Correct for once. I wager my reputation there's not more than one half-blind driver in the outfit. Get to that Checkered Cab Station on Mulberry Street."

FOUR idling drivers engaged in a game of pitch were disturbed with startling abruptness as the scout car came sliding to a screeching stop. Haggerty was out of the car before it was completely checked.

"Got a driver in this outfit with one eye?"

The cab station attendant knew the detective. "We have, Mr. Haggerty, but he's not in."

"Can you get hold of him?"

"He called up from the Paramount Drug Number Two about ten minutes ago. He may still be there."

"Then get on that phone and tell that bird to get over here. If he does less'n sixty I'll pinch him for delaying traffic."

In less than five minutes a driver, wild in his one eye, brought his shaking taxi to a stop beside the police car.

"What do you want me for, Chief?" he gulped nervously.

"Plenty. Why didn't you wait for that camera man from the *Trumpet*?"

"Why this other feller comes out and says the reporter sent him. Told me he'd pay the fare. What was I to do?"

"Never mind that. Where did you take him?"

"I dropped him at the corner of Adams and Hickey. Why?"

O'Hara looked quizzically at Haggerty. "That's a purty tough neighborhood."

"Tough's right. What did he look like?"

"Oh, not so big; dressed in a dark suit, wearin' a cap. I didn't see his face very well; it was too dark."

"That's enough. Come on, O'Hara."

After they had sped along through

minutes of silence, Haggerty asked, "Been keeping up on your pistol practice, O'Hara?"

"Sure, I can shoot. Let me in on this, boss, if you're expecting fireworks."

"I'm expecting them all right. Listen, O'Hara, you're a good enough patrolman, but you don't know the mugs in this town like I do. Most jobs of this kind are pulled off by regular hoods. Half the time I can name the criminal after I see the job, but I can't always catch 'em and convict 'em."

"You can convict Bolton as easy as fallin' down on roller skates. Now you're out chasin' somebody else. You got me all mixed up."

The car left the semi-respectable district of Collins Avenue and was penetrating an area of warehouses, storage sheds, and tawdry flats. A definite odor of uncleanness and must pervaded the region. The lights of all-night restaurants here and there splotted the streets with cancerous illumination.

"I never did like this end of town," admitted O'Hara. "She's creepy."

"And so's this car," growled Haggerty. "Step on it."

THE speed of the car was visibly diminishing. The motor coughed, and as O'Hara pressed the accelerator the police car bucked and hesitated like a recalcitrant horse.

"She's outa gas, boss. We never got the tank filled up."

"Now ain't that nice. You get her filled up. I'm hittin' it on foot."

"Don't you go alone, Haggerty. Tain't safe. I'm right with you."

"You take care of this scout car and bring it along. We may need it. Quit arguing. I'm running this shebang. Get them lead legs of yours paddling for the nearest filling station."

The last words came from down

the street. Haggerty had already hit the sidewalk and was running forward. He was going forward at a fast trot. The corner of Adams and Hickey was but three blocks ahead. Unless he was mistaken, the man he wanted was holed up near that corner.

THE creepy feeling that had tingled O'Hara had its effect upon Haggerty also. Even in the daylight the Adams Street section was a grimy, evil-looking region. Under the uncanny influence of the early morning hours, the flat, dark-windowed façades of the buildings were huge skulls with blank and eyeless sockets. A tough neighborhood, tough and treacherous.

Haggerty smiled grimly as he hurried ahead. On the face of things it looked as if he was going on a wild goose chase. No wonder O'Hara had thought him demented. It was a thin hunch he was working, but he was working it hard.

The newspaper Johnnies had at times labeled Haggerty as a human bloodhound. He nosed out the criminal, they said. For once in his hectic career as a man-hunter, this fact would be literally true.

If he found the man he wanted he must actually smell him out with his nose.

In a region where conflicting odors battled with one another, he must be a hound indeed. But one thing that he had discovered in the office of Bill Jarnigan, made him believe the quest possible.

The solution of the two murders was taking a queer turn. He was certain that these two killings were linked up with another form of crime and with a group of unscrupulous and deadly criminals.

Furthermore, he was certain that he was up against a man, or men, who would not hesitate to kill. He hesitated under a dim street light

and made a quick examination of his gun.

Haggerty came to the corner of Adams and Hickey. A ghostly quiet reigned at this intersection. Only from farther downtown, where now and then an owl clanged as it rattled over the frogs, was there any sound of human occupation.

The detective's eyes glanced quickly up and down the intersecting streets. Half a block down Hickey was an apartment house, its red bricks sooted to a dirty grey. A likely hideout.

Haggerty stepped back into the shadows of the nearest building and struck off rapidly in the opposite direction. At the first alley he turned, making his way down this ill-smelling tunnel. Turning again to the right at the transverse alley, he came back to Adams Street, crossed, and entered the passage back of the apartment house.

The building was narrow, jammed in between two warehouses. A single, rusty fire escape led up at the back.

FOR the next minutes Hot-Trail Haggerty, banner sleuth-hound of the P. D., justified his name. He stood there, a silent figure in all the cavernous solitude of the sleeping city, and sniffed, his head twisting to right and left as he smelled the air from different directions.

Suddenly he froze stiff, his breath checking as his muscles and nerves tightened. Then he took another slow, deep inhalation. The night air brought him a pungent, chemical odor, different from all the mingled smells of this dirty region. Chemicals, biting acids: this was the place he was seeking.

Haggerty stepped forward to the fire escape, silently pulled down the lowest section until it touched the pavement, and began to ascend. Slowly, like a vague shadow creeping up

the walls, he mounted higher and higher.

The smell grew stronger as he climbed. He removed his revolver from its hip sheath and slid it into his coat pocket.

At the third landing he was certain. He now and then got whiffs that rasped his nasal passages like an invisible file. The odor came from the windows of the flat to the right.

Faintly Haggerty could hear movements of someone inside, an intermittent drone of conversation. He edged nearer to the window.

Then suddenly he heard a door open, a bar of light fall upon the curtains he was watching. Footsteps clopped about.

Even as Haggerty crouched and listened, the man inside moved to the window and threw up the sash.

The detective leaped back. The iron framework of the fire escape offered no hiding place. Haggerty flattened himself against the corridor door, testing the knob. The knob turned, but the door held, secured by an inner bolt. There was no escape. He drew himself up rigid.

The man thrust his head out the window, supporting himself with his hands upon the sill. Then deliberately he turned and looked at the iron landing and the dark rectangle of the door.

CHAPTER IV

Trail's End

THE whole success of Haggerty's action lay in the balance that moment; discovery would ruin everything. The detective could almost feel the atmosphere grow thin and impalpable about him, the darkness mellowing away as if he himself were radiating light.

The man in the window stared, his

eyes straining into the darkness. Haggerty dared not move; he dared not breathe. He felt his lungs tighten and the blood pound in his temples.

For brief seconds that stretched into hours, Haggerty felt the man's searching eyes. Then, the fellow grunted and disappeared into the darkened room.

Haggerty felt a warm glow as relief flooded him; but quick to take advantage of the situation, he stepped catlike from his hiding place and reached the side of the landing near the window.

THE man had gone away, leaving the sash up. Haggerty swung himself over the iron banister and eased himself through the window. He crouched just inside the opening, accustoming his eyes to the more intense darkness.

The partitioning door was an inch or two ajar. He could hear voices audibly.

"Get a move on, you mugs, if we're goin' tuh scam."

"You worked the trick and we gotta hand it to yuh, kid," a second voice, roughly exultant, responded, "but I still think you oughtn't croaked the old man."

"Dat suits me all right," a third voice rumbled. "De ole louse. Only killin' one odder guy'd suit me better."

"Forget that dick; always harpin' on Haggerty. He's runnin' round in circles. By the time he finds out it was an outside job, we'll be blowed. I covered all my tracks. There's the fifty grand split t'ree ways and we're chug-chuggin' outa town."

In the room where Haggerty crouched the acrid fumes were more biting. He had learned from previous experience that you could smell out a counterfeiter's den. The very tools of their trade betrayed them. And he had discovered in

Jarnigan's office that the bills in the safe were phoney.

Haggerty heard the closing and snapping of hand luggage. He had arrived in the very nick of time. But in that adjoining room were three men—three to one—and these three desperate killers.

He needed at that moment the strong arm of Patrolman O'Hara. Too late for that now. The die was cast. He must win or lose alone. He moved toward the door.

"All set, men. Let's blow."

"**H**OLD it! Don't move. Drop them bags. Get those mitts in the air. Turn around. Easy there. One move and I let you have it."

To the stunned gaze of the three men, the detective stood in the doorway, a cynical smile widening his mouth. His police Colt was held steadily upon them.

"Haggerty!"

"Yeah, it's me, Butch. Back at your old game again, eh? Edge over there; get away from that door."

Butch Kinsey sidled over, but there was in his scowling face mixed dismay and rage. Haggerty could now get a better look at the man, Saps, and the younger man in the dark suit and golf cap. His gaze pinned on the latter.

"So it's you, eh? I remember faces. Remember when we had you for questioning in the Anscot burglary case. I know I'd seen you somewhere, some time. I got it later. Peter Dawson, the Human Fly."

"You ain't got nothin' on us, you poor flatfoot."

"No, Pete, just two murders, housebreaking, counterfeiting and robbery. Nobody but you could have pulled that job tonight and got away with it. Went down the back of Jarnigan's house like a fly, eh? And it was a pretty slick scheme, sure. Substitute the bogus bills for the ones you stole, so it'll be days

before the old man discovers he's robbed. By that time you're gone, gone clean. Pretty slick, I admit it."

"You're nuts."

As Dawson spoke he was calculating the distance between his hand and the light switch.

"Nuts?" Haggerty's cold calculating voice went on. He, now, was playing for time; O'Hara ought to be getting into the neighborhood. "You think you're smart, Dawson, but you got no brains for classy crime. You left clues as wide as a road. I knew that was an outside job before I'd been in the house three minutes."

Haggerty knew that a shot would bring O'Hara if he were in hearing distance. But was he?

Dawson's hand streaked for the switch. Haggerty fired at the moving arm, fired and knew that he had missed. The room went into Stygian darkness.

"Get Haggerty!" bellowed Butch.

Haggerty flung himself flat, jerked sideways. Two bullets splintered the door jam above him.

THIS gunplay in the dark was in Haggerty's favor. Every flash was from an enemy. The gang members stood chances of wounding one another. As he went to the floor Haggerty took a snap shot at the right flash and heard a startled scream. An answering flash from the other side of the room splintered the floor not an inch from him.

He had drawn blood, but he did not want to kill these men, not unless necessary. The snakey Dawson was the man he must get. Where the devil was O'Hara?

In a single leap Hot-Trail plunged across the room in the direction of Pete Dawson. He struck a body full tilt. A gun barked by his ear as the two went crashing back against the wall, falling to the floor in a squirming heap. Haggerty

swung his gun once, felt the energizing thud of steel against bone, and the body went limp.

Then it seemed the weight of a huge beast fell upon Hot-Trail Haggerty. Hot breath fanned his face. He was stunned, his own gun knocked from his fingers.

"Scram, you fellows!" he heard Butch bark. "I'm settlin' this dick!"

Haggerty heard the door near him open and close.

The detective shook his head to clear the humming. The powerful weight of Butch Kinsey held him down. He felt an arm go back as the big man balanced a weapon. Haggerty twisted and squirmed sideways with all his strength. He was not finished yet.

Second wind came to Detective Haggerty. He went into his full bag of tricks. He was tough and wiry with whipcord muscles, muscles unsuspected under his tweed suit. He was adept at police school methods. He felt the softer, untrained body of Butch give way before him.

Haggerty was on top now, headlocking the big man with a torturing hold. Butch was choking, incapable of sufficient breath for speech. Haggerty's exploring fingers found a dropped gun. One swish and Kinsey melted into stillness.

HOT-TRAIL staggered to his feet and felt for the light switch. In a moment the room was flooded with light. Butch Kinsey lay flat and moaned softly. In the corner Pete Dawson was attempting to sit up. The third man was gone.

The hall door swung open. Saps was shoved into the room by a blue-sleeved arm.

"I met this bozo goin' down while I was comin' up," said O'Hara. "Want him, boss?"

"Yeah," puffed Haggerty, "he's part of the picture."

The police car was again in front

of 1264 Collins Avenue. Hot-Trail and O'Hara were back again with the Headquarters squad and with them were three sullen prisoners.

"Well, how'd you find that money, Burke?"

"Phoney, all but the top and bottom bills, but a mighty good job of counterfeiting."

JONES was eyeing Haggerty. "Give us the low-down, Hot-Trail. We give you credit for the catch, but what's it all about?"

"Not much, an easy job," said Haggerty modestly. "I got the breaks. You see, these birds wanted money to make a quick scam. They had the phoney dough but they couldn't drop the load of it all at once. They could crack the old man's safe all right, but an empty safe would have started an immediate search. By substituting the phoney money they might stave off discovery for days, maybe a week, plenty time to scam.

Dawson pulls off the housebreaking, but Jarnigan catches him cold. The kid loses his head and plugs Jarnigan. Dawson leaps for the dining room as Bolton runs downstairs. He don't have time to shut the door so he hides behind the curtain in the bow window. Treeman runs in and holds Bolton and calls the police.

"Dawson can't get out the window behind him because it's locked and nailed. He can't cross the room to the door because he'll be seen by Bolton. When Golman makes the flash picture, Dawson gets his chance and bolts. We'd be blinded enough for him to risk it. Before he gets to the alley door, he realizes that he's probably in the picture.

"Dawson figures he's got to wreck the camera. He goes up the back stairs, gets Golman and wrecks the camera. He slugs me as I run into the corridor. He can't shoot me be-

cause he's already dropped the gun. He goes into a side room, out the window and down the wall. He used to be a human fly. At the end of the alley is the reporter's taxi. He commandeers that and he's off."

"Is that the way it was, hoss?" gasped O'Hara.

"Come on, come on, Hot-Trail," pleaded Burke, "what put you next?"

"A FEW simple observations, Burke—you ought to learn to make 'em. In that bookcase are two bullet holes. Treeman admits firing once; besides, we heard him. The other was apparently fired by Jarnigan when he found someone robbing the safe. Now, if he'd found his nephew there, would he shoot him?"

"Not likely. He'd cuss him out."

"So I figured. That made me feel Bolton's story was true and an outsider did the job. Second, that camera was deliberately shot. There was a bullet hole in the floor under it. Why? To keep that film from being developed. I went to the place where the reporter stood. He'd get that open door in the middle of the picture. I guessed there was somebody in that room; for there was obviously no reason why the picture would damage Bolton."

"That's right," cut in O'Hara. "Sure, that's the way it would be."

"The next point was to see if there'd been a robbery. When the box showed full of money I was flabbergasted. That upset everything. I grabbed up a bundle and examined it. I got the substitution gag right off. I got on the trail of the man who left the house—and here he is. Just plain trailing."

"Hot-Trail Haggerty. Attaboy!" O'Hara leaned toward Bolton. "I figured you was a good kid all along," he lied. "Here, I'll take off them bracelets. But, say, what did you run up to your room for?"

Haggerty clicked his tongue.

"O'Hara, you'll never be nothing but a patrolman," he mocked. "Didn't Golman kid Bolton about some woman? The boy got scared; he didn't want her name dragged in. He figured his room would be searched, so he took a chance on burning up any letters with her name and address. Right, kid?"

Bolton's eyes grew round, but he nodded affirmation.

Then Haggerty did a surprising thing. He went to the man, Treeman, who was standing, white-faced, near the wall.

"Treeman, let me congratulate you. You made a mistake, but you acted like a man. Your holding of the supposed murderer was meritorious. And your telling me where the counterfeiters' den was, entitles you to a reward. I'll see you get it."

Pete Dawson was crowding forward, shaking his manacled hands.

"You dirty snitch, you squealer!" he howled. "So that's how the dick found us so quick. Me payin' you a grand to play your part. You sold me de combination. You gimme de kid's gun. You low-lifed son—"

HAGGERTY shoved Dawson back. "That's just what I wanted to know. You've said enough, Dawson. Put the nippers on Treeman, Burke. I figured his act phoney from the first. He overdid his part of guarding Bolton." He turned again toward the muttering Dawson. "Can't hold yourself, can you, Pete? You've not got the control for classy crime, not got the control. All right, men, load 'em up."

Haggerty and O'Hara were the last to leave the premises. Hot-Trail turned toward his partner.

"O'Hara, you may be only a dumb gas cop, but you're a swell prophet," he complimented.

"What—why—"

"You said Cheese Golman would snap his camera once too often."

The Gun-Swinger

Lawton's gun was a streak of blue as it rose, then crashed down



Buck Lawton Barges into Wolftown and Runs Smack into Some Mighty Tough Hombres Whose Welcome Isn't Exactly Cordial!

By JACKSON COLE

Author of "Gun Law," "Vanishing Beef," etc.

BUCK LAWTON whirled; his fist smacked against the unshaven chin of Jed Adams. The blow snapped the big man's head back, but his fingers continued to claw for the holstered gun on his right hip.

There was a blur of motion from the lean stranger in Wolftown. Lawton's gun was a streak of blue as it rose, then crashed down on the head of Jed Adams. The big man swayed for an instant, then his knees buckled and he hit the floor with a thud that

jarred the glasses on the back bar.

"Anyone else figurin' on takin' this up where he left off?" Lawton crouched, back to the wall, slitted eyes scanning the faces of the men in the saloon as he rasped the question. "This jasper starts gettin' nasty when I first come in here five minutes ago. Yuh all know that!"

FOR an instant no one spoke. The gaze of the men in the bar seemed fascinated by the long barreled Colt in Lawton's left hand. From behind the counter the bald-headed barkeeper looked like a moon rising over a mountain as he stood up cautiously.

The man who was seated at a table idly thumbing a greasy deck of cards laughed suddenly. The sound was startlingly sharp in the tense silence.

"Looks like th' play is all yores, stranger," he said. "Mc, I figured Jed Adams was bitin' more'n he could chew when he starts pickin' on yuh."

"Uh huh," Lawton thrust his gun back in the holster, a cold smile lingering on his lean face as he glanced at the other man. "This Jed Adams' way of welcomin' a stranger to town shore is what might be called conducive tuh hostilities!"

"Acc Fenton's my name," the man at the table stood up as he spoke. He was tall and thin with grey, expressionless eyes. "An' I'm buyin'."

Languidly the stout barkeeper moved around the counter, a pail of water in his hand. He sloshed it in the face of the big man who was still sprawled upon the floor, unconscious. Jed Adams sputtered and opened his eyes. The barkeeper yawned and returned to his place behind the counter.

"Name yore poison, gents," he said indolently.

Lawton followed Fenton to the bar, but he stood so that he could watch the big man on the floor.

Adams sat up and looked about him dazedly.

"Make mine beer," Lawton told the barkeeper.

"As usual, Sam," said Fenton.

Jed Adams uttered a snarl of rage as he got to his feet. His hand again started toward his gun as he glared at Lawton.

"Hold it, Jed!" Fenton spoke sharply, his hand hovering near his own weapon. "Th' fight's over. Lawton here could have plugged yuh plum center, but he didn't, just knocked yuh out. Yuh started it. Yuh asked him what he was doin' in town—what his name was—and a lot of things that weren't none of yore business.

"He answers yuh, right friendly like; then yuh stamp down on his toes with yore heel and sure got socked in th' jaw." Ace Fenton frowned as the big man started to speak. "I said it's finished!"

Lawton had been watching, tense and ready. He caught the quick glance that passed between Fenton and the big man. It seemed almost a command.

The big man scowled, but he moved the hand away from the butt of his gun. He hesitated for an instant without speaking, then abruptly swung around and stalked out of the saloon.

FENTON picked up his drink and Lawton poured out a glass of beer. The other four men began a game of cards, to all appearances no longer interested in the new arrival.

"There might be some reason for Jed Adams' dislike of strangers," said Fenton. "Folks around here have been bothered considerable by a bandit who's been doin' a lot of robbin' an' killin' lately. Nobody knows who this feller is, but he always wears a bright green mask."

"Yeah," Buck Lawton nodded. "They were tellin' me about him

when I stopped in Festival a day or so ago. He robbed th' stage near there. Killed th' driver and th' guard an' got away with a lot of money." He filled his glass from the bottle of beer beside it. "Too bad—that guard was a nice feller. I knew him."

"Yuh see any sign of this jasper along th' trail?" asked Ace Fenton as Lawton bought a second round of drinks.

"Mebbe—I ain't sure." Lawton spoke thoughtfully. "Early this mornin' I was ridin' through a narrow pass. Somebody ropes me, pulls me right off my horse. I lands on my head an' don't know nothin' more about it for some time. When I comes to I'm layin' beside my pinto—my gun's in my holster and there ain't a soul around."

"That's a funny one," said Ace Fenton.

"Sure is," Lawton nodded. "I ain't figured it out yet."

They talked casually for some time. Then there was the sound of hoofs coming along the dust-laden street of the town. A few moments later a cavalcade of grim faced horse-men drew rein in front of the saloon. They entered with a gray haired man in the lead who wore a sheriff's star pinned on his vest.

"I'M Sheriff Woods," he announced.

"Me and th' posse run into a feller just outside of town. Said he had been held up and robbed by th' green masked bandit."

Jed Adams entered close behind the members of the posse. His eyes glittered vindictively as he glared at Buck Lawton.

"There's yore man, Sheriff!" Adams exclaimed, pointing a big grimy finger at Lawton. "He ain't wearin' no mask now, but I shore recognize that checkered shirt."

Lawton glanced about him tensely. He knew that he had been framed by the big man. His hand hovered

above his gun for an instant and then he shrugged his shoulders. There was nothing to be gained by showing resistance.

"He's shore wrong, Sheriff," he said slowly, his gaze wandering around the room.

"We ain't takin' any chances," said the sheriff grimly. "Raise yore hands high, all of yuh!"

Lawton and Fenton promptly extended their hands above their heads, as did the four men at the card table. Lawton's eyes narrowed as he observed a torn place in Fenton's gray flannel shirt near the tall man's left arm-pit.

"Search 'em!" ordered the sheriff.

THREE members of the posse stepped forward and went through the clothes of the seven men in the saloon. Finally one of the sheriff's men unbuttoned the pocket of Lawton's shirt. He took out a small bag of tobacco and a package of cigarette papers. Beneath this he drew out a tightly folded bit of green silk.

"Here it is!" exclaimed the man who had searched. "Th' green mask!"

A cold smile passed over Lawton's face. He knew why he had been roped back there in the rocky pass. It had given the real outlaw the opportunity to plant the mask on him. It had been carefully planned. He was a stranger in that part of the country, and the masked bandit was unknown.

"Thought so!" exclaimed Jed Adams from where he stood near the door. "There's yore bandit killer!" The big man's hand streaked to his gun. "An' I'm finishin' him right now!"

"Wait!" shouted the sheriff.

One of the posse close to Jed Adams leaped forward, knocked the big man's gun up into the air as he fired. The bullet tore into the ceiling of the saloon.

For the moment no one was

watching Lawton. He vaulted behind the bar, grabbed the stout bar-keeper as he landed, and swung the man in the front of him, clutched in a bearlike grip of his right arm as his gun covered the others.

"Hold it, gents," Lawton grated. "If yuh shoot at me an innocent man sure dies, 'cause Sam here will stop th' bullets."

"WHAT'S the idea?" growled the sheriff. "We know yuh're guilty."

"No yuh don't," Lawton spoke rapidly, his gun covering the men in the room. "I've been framed. Listen, Sheriff."

Swiftly he related what had happened to him as he had been riding through the rocky pass.

"Why should we believe that?" demanded Sheriff Woods when Lawton had finished.

"What was th' name of th' stage guard that was killed?" Lawton shot the question at the lawman.

"Why, Jim Lawton," answered the sheriff.

"Yeah, an' I'm his brother Buck," announced Lawton grimly. "I was lookin' for th' green masked bandit myself. That's why I came tuh Wolfstown. An' I found him!"

"Huh?" Sheriff Woods glared in surprise.

"Yeah." Lawton pointed his gun toward Ace Fenton. "That's him!"

"Yuh're crazy!" exclaimed Fenton, hand close to his gun.

"No, I'm not. When they brought Jim in after he was killed, I examined him. He was clutchin' a little piece of grey cloth in one hand."

Lawton reached into the top of his left boot and pulled out a bit of grey flannel. He tossed it to the sheriff as the latter moved closer to the bar.

"There yuh are," said Lawton. "Yuh'll find it fits that tear in Fenton's shirt under his arm."

Fenton uttered a snarl of rage, but the guns in the hands of the posse covered him, Jed Adams and the four men at the card-table. The sheriff stepped to the tall man and found that the bit of flannel fitted the torn place in Fenton's shirt exactly.

"Looks like yuh're right, Lawton," said the sheriff. "We'll take care of this. Yuh can let that barkeeper go and put yore gun away."

"That's a relief," Lawton smiled as Sam moved hastily away. "I've shore been playin' a bluff tuh a fare-yuh-well."

"Well, Jed Adams picks a fight with me when I first come intuh town. Reckon he figures on downin' me, and then claimin' he's killed th' feller with th' green mask. But Fenton, he don't figure on playin' th' hand that way. So he stops Adams. But there was somethin' more important than that as far as I was concerned."

"Let's have it," commanded the sheriff.

"My gun ain't loaded. When I was thrown off my hoss in that ravine, th' feller that did it took all my bullets away—"

"WHAT!" Sheriff Woods looked at him in amazement.

"Yes—took all my bullets away, an' left th' gun just like it was in th' holster!"

"But why didn't the feller who knocked yuh out know yore gun was empty?"

Lawton grinned.

"He did. But he couldn't be sure I hadn't got me some bullets afore I come intuh town, I reckon. I might have met up with somebody an' got me a few shells, but as it happens I didn't see a soul till I got here." Lawton laughed.

"That's why I had tuh be kind of a gun-slinger, stead of the gun-slinger!"

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The GLOBE-TROTTER



PHIL HARMON is back in town—but not the same Phil who went off on a vacation about three weeks ago.

He dropped in on Ye Olde Globe Trotter just before starting out; and the old boy was feeling pretty low. Well, no, he's not so old, as a matter of fact. Twenty-five or so, and he holds down an office job here in Bagdad on the Subway.

Off on a Camping Trip

"That's about all there is in life," he groused gloomily; "just the job



and the Subway. Fine chance a guy like me has to bump into real adventure. That's only for fellows like you to write about. Yeah, I'm going off on a vacation now—sure. A camping trip—and that'll be about as adventurous as a boarding house at a summer resort!"

Yes, sir, he was pretty low in his mind.

And Then!

That's why I hardly recognized the snappy-eyed, tanned and grinning gent who flopped himself down beside my desk this morning.

"Some vacation!" he gloated. "Boy, I was just taking life easy, grabbing a few winks, when it came down! And did it rain! Buckets full is nothing compared to that; when I looked out of our tent there seemed to be a solid wall of water. And then we

heard the river roaring like a wild man!

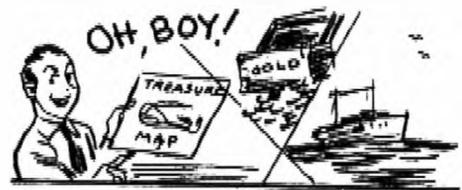
"We didn't lose any time after that. Just about flung ourselves into our canoe in time. A minute later the whole camp went down the river on a rushing wall of water and we were doing our darnedest to keep the canoe afloat and headed with the delugel!"

When Ye Olde Globe Trotter could get in a word edgewise, he got the key to all this. Phil and his partner were camped on the Cohansey River, some miles above Bridgeton, N. J. And their wild ride carried them right through the flooded town—just in time to fish a young girl out of the raging torrent.

Phil sorta colored up when he told that part of it—especially when he had to admit that he expects to run down there again this week-end, just to see that she's all right, you know.

Where You Find It

"And you were the gent who was so sure you'd never bump into adventure!" The opportunity was too



good to lose; I had to get in that crack. But Phil only grinned a bit wider.

"I guess it's pretty much like they say about gold—adventure's where you find it," he admitted. "And, boy, it's just what a fellow needs to pep him up and put him on his toes!"

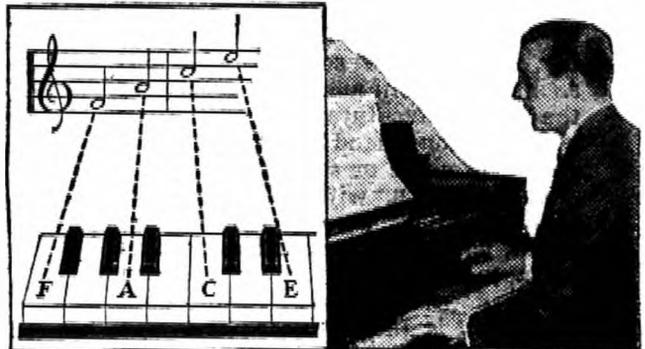
Phil Harmon was dead right about

(Continued on page 150)

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It Seemed So Strange to Hear Her Play

We knew she had never taken a lesson—so everyone laughed when she sat down at the piano. But she played with such soul fire that everyone swung forward, tensed, listening. When the last chord vanished like an echo—we were astonished and contrite. "We can't believe you never had a teacher," we exclaimed! And then she told us about this new, easy way to learn music at home, without a teacher.

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Don't get the idea that you have to be a musical genius—or need previous musical training. Not at all. And unlike the old-fashioned way, with this modern method you don't have to spend hours and hours playing monotonous scales and hand-drum finger exercises.

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City

State

(Continued from page 148)

that: adventure is where you find it. It never sends in its card first to be properly announced. It just comes *smack*—and you're in it!

All Year Round

There are no seasons on adventure. Now that the vacation season is over, most of us summer adventurers have to be content with vicarious adventuring, listening to someone else tell about it. But in many other parts of the globe adventure and danger are walking along hand in hand without regard to climate or season.

The Tropics, with their impenetrable jungles; the Far North and South, with their seas and mountains of ice; the deserts, where the sun beats down without regard for whether it is July or December—men are adventuring there today just as they were a few months ago.

Land of the Rajahs

This month we're going to have a few of our yarn-spinners tell us a bit about some of these places where adventure is an all-year-round proposition.

First of all, Major George Fielding Eliot steps up to give us the lowdown on what lies behind his great yarn, "The Rajah of Jhanpur," in this issue:

Dear Globe Trotter:

The background of "The Rajah of Jhanpur" is the peculiar political affair known as an Indian "native state." Almost one-fourth of the population of India resides in the various states of the semi-independent rulers, varying in size from a great kingdom, such as the dominions of the Nizam of Hyderabad, with his twelve million subjects, to tiny villages ruled by chiefs with little more authority than a local magistrate.

The various rajahs and maharajahs are distinguished as to importance by the number of guns allowed them by the Indian Government as a personal salute, from twenty-one guns down. Sometimes a prince is allowed an extra number of guns during his lifetime in recognition of some special service to the British Raj.

Among the darkest chapters of Indian history are the "palace intrigues" by which, from time to time, ambitious younger sons, mothers of promising princelings, and power-seeking courtiers have attempted to alter the course of succession to some of the Indian thrones. Many of the native

princes are extremely wealthy, so, frequently, the prize is over-tempting. The dagger, the poison cup, have all too often been the instruments by which the ambitious have sought to clear their path.

British residents are stationed at all native capitals. Their power is very great in some matters, but does not extend to details of administration. The more important princes maintain bodies of troops,



known formerly as Imperial Service Troops, some of which have British officers attached as advisors.

The snake mentioned in my story—the jessur, or Reaslian viper—is exceptionally dangerous, and is responsible for a large annual mortality in India. It is especially noted for its malignant disposition, being far more prone to attack without provocation than any form of cobra except the hamadryad.

I might add that lumbering has long been a prominent Indian industry, and is now being much developed as a result of the fine work of the Forest Research Institute at Dehra Dun, one of the best equipped units of its type in the world.

Major George Fielding Eliot.

Closer to Home

We don't have to go as far as Asia for all-year-round adventure; there is plenty to be found right here at home—along our long and often wild Mexican Border, and plenty more a few miles below that Border! Tom Curry, who contributes "Fool Americano" to this issue, knows that country well.

Hear what he has to say about it:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Everybody knows how the Texans beat off old Mexico, freeing themselves from her yoke. Since then the Texas cowboy has acquired a free-and-easy idea of independence along with the conviction that he's good for any number of Mexicans, or, for that matter, any number of any kind of *hombre*. And everybody is aware of how far you can trust a straight puncher, which is all the way. In "Fool Americano" I have tried to bring out these two traits of the cowboy.

I've always liked the cowboys, and old Mexico is ever intriguing with her flaming volcanoes, physical and human. The Mexican may not enjoy working, but he does like fighting. So many clashes have oc-

(Continued on page 152)

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Hollywood, Calif.—Dad! I've enjoyed my new Midwest radio. I had never thought it possible to bring in entertainment from half way around the world so clearly!
Joan Harlow
 (M-G-M Picture Major Star)

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Hollywood, Calif.—My Midwest is the best one I have ever used. It gives me super-toned reception and new radio adventures. Its performance on all five wave bands amazes me!
RICHARD ARLEN,
 (Paramount Featured Player)

Yearning Foreign Reception
Hollywood, Calif.—Max and I loved our new Midwest 16 and I really appreciate what radio reception was. It thrills me to bring in distant foreign stations so clearly so loud program!
 (Max)
Claretha Collier

Radio Foreign Reception
Hollywood, Calif.—I am quite amazed with my Midwest. Many friends who have heard it are delighted with its performance. It brings in, without a doubt, the finest all-wave reception I have ever heard!
J. J. Hamilton

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(Continued from page 150)

curred along the hundreds of miles of border, back and forth along the Rio Grande. It's impossible to patrol such a deserted, attenuated line; smugglers and thieves run back and forth almost at will. There's still



plenty of excitement down on the Rio Grande at any season of the year.

As for myself, I've traveled in Central America and the West Indies, as well as South American ports. A couple of years ago I had a trip all the way to Guiana, close to the equator. It proved exciting, though I wasn't looking for trouble at the time. I happened to sail on a bad ship, and, what with terrific storms, a Negro mutiny and a cracked boiler, we had a warm voyage.

Another interest of mine is the French penal colony, known as Devil's Island, in French Guiana, on the northern coast of South America. Thousands of Frenchmen, and with them criminals of other nationalities, caught by the French police, have died in *La Guyana*, the "Dry Guillotine," of fever, misery, bad food, ennui. There are many still there.

Tom Curry.

Days of Glamour

California, the balmy, holds the invitation to adventure at any old time of the year—and looks back with pride at the stirring reception the adventurer has found on her shores throughout the years. Land of romance, the country of the missions and the *Dons* holds many a stirring tale for adventure lovers.

When we want to hear about the old days on the West Coast, Johnston McCulley is the man to tell us. Says he:

Dear Globe Trotter:

The period of history in which the Whirlwind lived and moved is one of the most glamorous and romantic of all. Not many of us realize that along the West Coast, now dotted with great cities and the Mecca of millions of tourists from all over the world, there was an empire before New England began thinking it was big and powerful enough to start a nation of its own.

The robed Franciscans worked their way up from Mexico. The sainted Junipero Berra founded the missions of San Diego

de Alcalá, where the city of San Diego now stands. Northward they went, founding more missions and erecting splendid buildings, instructing the natives, multiplying their herds and flocks, until they reached San Francisco de Asis. These missions were connected with a highway called *El Camino Real*, the highway of the king, which is today marked suitably by the California Historical Society.

In the wake of this great movement came a splendid Castilian society, the *don*, the dashing *caballero*. The valleys became the scenes of splendid *haciendas* and *ranchos*. Great houses were erected. There were hundreds of native servants and field workers. Hospitality was for all inside the law. Gentlemen traveled in fine carriages drawn by splendid steeds, or rode equally fine horses. Servants used mules. So did the humble Franciscans. It was a land and time of prosperity and plenty. The *ranchos* produced more than could be used.

Towns sprang up. In each town was a *posada*, an inn. They were patronized by travelers off *El Camino Real*—people of quality and rogues alike. There was heavy drinking of native and imported wines, one particularly popular drink being heavy wine into which gobs of honey had been dropped.

Men ate in those days, too. Sheep were roasted whole over low fires, the forerunner of the present barbecue. There was always heavy playing at cards and dice. Gay young *caballeros* rode madly, made love furiously to the *senoritas*, fought with their jewel-hilted blades at the slightest provocation.

So rogues sprang up, traveling up and down *El Camino Real* to rob and cheat and steal, robbing travelers at pistol's point, raiding a *hacienda* now and then. When unmasked they were dealt with summarily.

This is the time and the atmosphere in which the Whirlwind moves. It is more than a profession for me to write these stories—it is a real pleasure. Some years ago, I made this period particularly my own. I gathered the basic material during a tour of the old missions, inspecting and having translated for me rare old records and documents. For me the Whirlwind rides in reality, as I hope he does for you.

Johnston McCulley.

The Rest of Us

Now that the "guest speakers" have had their say, let's see what the rest of us, the rank and file Globe Trotters, are doing about finding a bit of adventure for ourselves these days. Here's a program that sounds like adventure any day of the year:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Though only nineteen, I am a national

(Continued on page 154)

"Stop Worrying..."

NOW I CAN TELL YOU THE TRUE FACTS ABOUT

SEX!



WOULD YOU like to know the whole truth about sex? All of the startling facts that even the frankest books have heretofore not dared to print are explained in clear, scientific manner, vividly illustrated, in the revolutionary book — "The New Eugenics". Here at last, the naked truth stands forth, stripped of all prudery and narrow prejudice. Old fashioned taboos are discarded and the subject of sex is brought out into the bright light of medical science by Dr. C. S. Whithead M.D. and Dr. Charles A. Hoff, M.D., the authors!

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Sex appeal and sex satisfaction are the most powerful forces in your life. To remain in ignorance is to remain in danger of lifelong suffering. It is the purpose of this great book to show sex-ignorant men and women how to enjoy safely the thrilling experiences that are their birthright. It not only tells you how to attract the opposite sex, but also how to hold the love of your mate throughout a blissful married life.

DANGEROUS!

... Unless you know the true facts about sex! Ignorance leads to shame, despair, worry and remorse.



Do you know how to add variety to your love-making? The most innocent kiss may lead to tragedy if you are ignorant of sex relations.

WILL FEAR

grip you on your wedding night? ... or will it be the tender, thrilling experience that is your birthright!



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Are you an awkward novice in the art of love-making or a master of its difficult technique? The art of love-making takes skill and knowledge. The sexual embrace as practiced by those ignorant of its true scientific importance is crude, awkward and often terrifying to more sensitive natures. Normal sex-sated people are torn apart because they lack the knowledge that makes for a happy sex life!

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- Sex Excesses
- The Crime of Abortions
- Impotence and Sex Weakness
- Secrets of the Honey-moon
- Teaching Children Sex
- The Dangers of Peeking
- What Every Man Should Know
- The Truth about Masturbation
- Veneral Diseases
- The Sexual Embargo
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- 2 **THRILLING WESTERN** features **KILLERS CANYON**, a roaring, hell-for-leather complete book-length novel by Tom J. Hopkins. Also, a novelette by R. Craig Christensen—**QUICK-TRIGGER COUNTRY**. Stories by Chuck Martin, Murray Leinster and others. 10c.
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- 5 **TRAIL TO THE HOODED KILLER**, by Paul Ernst, a complete book-length novel in **THRILLING DETECTIVE**. Ed Lybeck, G. H. Coxe and others. 10c.
- 6 **THRILLING RANCH STORIES**—15c—features **LOVE'S STAMPEDE**, a complete romantic Western novel by J. Edward Leitch. Also, **ROUND-UP SHOWDOWN**, a novelette by Stephen Payne.
- 7 John Masters, world's greatest sky fighter, in **THE LAUGHING DEATH PATROL**—a complete book-length novel—**IN THE LONE EAGLE**, America's fastest action crate. 10c.
- 8 Bring home a copy of **THRILLING LOVE**—10c—to sit and moan. They'll love it! The featured novel this month is **MIRACLE OF LOVE**, by Sylvia Parker. And there's a great, throbbing love story by **RUBY M. AYRES**. Other delightful stories and features.

—THE PUBLISHER.

(Continued from page 152)

writing champion, author of over a hundred published stories, and ranked by the National Forensic League among the ten leading speakers in the U. S.

I've climbed every worth-while peak in this country; have had many scares and thrills. At present I am a member of the Wisconsin Collegiate Expedition going down through Mexico, Honduras and Brazil in search of a Fountain of Blood and the missing Colonel Fawcett, who disappeared in the Matto Grosso.

Our expedition is backed by Wisconsin's governor, Dr. Franks, William Beebe, Robert Ripley, etc. Equipped with motion picture camera and book and magazine contracts.

I am anxious to be a member of the Globe Trotters and think it would be great if you had pins.

Irving Wallace.

Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Land and Sea

Thrilling Adventures sails a good many seas. On Uncle Sam's battle-ships and on many a liner and tramp freighter it does a good bit of adventuring of its own. Here is one of the merchant mariners who finds it a good pal:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I'm a sailor in the Merchant Marine of the U. S. A., and I've traveled all up and down the coast. **THRILLING ADVENTURES** is my favorite magazine, for I like fast-moving sea stories—adventure stories of all kinds for that matter. Please join me up with the **Globe Trotters**.

John Joseph Frazer.

New York, N. Y.

And another rolling stone who does not stay put very well in any one place no matter what the time of year:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have read **THRILLING ADVENTURES** and the letters of the **Globe Trotters** with much interest for the last four years in all parts of the U. S. A., especially while working as a mule-skinner on the Mexican Border and as a soldier in the U. S. cavalry. I always carry it with me on my moose hunting trips way down in Nova Scotia. Kindly enroll me as a **Globe Trotter** so that I may hear from some of the others.

John Wytock.

Providence, R. I.

All the Same Outfit

Maybe you noticed, each of these fellows wants to be lined up with the **Globe Trotters**. They are just a drop in the bucketful of **Globe Trotters'**

Club applications that each month brings in.

Have you sent yours in yet, or are you still waiting? Time to hop to it,



if you haven't already. Remember, it costs you nothing to join this unique club of red-blooded adventurers spread all over the world. No dues. No initiation fee. Merely fill in the application blank which you will find in this issue, let us have your name and address and a self-addressed, stamped envelop. We'll do the rest.

We'll send you a handsome membership card that you will be glad to show your friends—a card such as is traveling in the pocket and the war-bag of many a rolling stone bounding along the rough spots in the far corners of the earth. It's an outfit you'll be proud to belong to—just the way

(Continued on page 156)

LIST OF CHARTER MEMBERS

The Globe Trotters' Club

(Continued)

- Bert C. Cole, Box 1035, Mindt, N. D.
- Lionel Colton, 1834 East 31st Ave., Denver, Colo.
- Vernon K. Keel, Cuba, Kansas.
- William J. Pfeffer, Jr., 1907—9th Ave., San Francisco, Calif.
- Charles McCarthy, 2083 E. Chelton Ave., Phila. Pa.
- Bruce Irving Rathmell, 125 Willis Ave., Youngstown, Ohio.
- HARRY M. Lee, 3180 Market Street, Riverside, Calif.
- Mary D. Sage, Bonaw Island, Hyannisport, Mass.
- Hilrick Dodgen, 4147 Drexel Blvd., Chicago, Ill.
- Jack W. Staff, 400 Elizabeth Ave., Newark, N. J.
- Ralph Dnpree, 411 Valmont St., New Orleans, La.
- Joseph E. Collins, 834 Commerce St., Miami Beach, Fla.
- Joseph Bigert, Jr., Box 547, Florida, New York.
- Robert Parker, 5341 Lipton Ave., Detroit, Mich.
- Elwood E. Wilson, 1816 University Ave., New York.
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- William Hite, 145 Zana, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Bob Hooks, Box 1291, Weirton, W. Va.
- Wilfred Lock, "A" Company, Mayango, Burma, India.
- Dr. W. E. Huddleston, 805 American National Building, Galveston, Texas.
- James Daniel Blyth, 3912 Nottingham, Chicago, Ill.
- Roy C. Fulcher, 1145 E. 22nd St., Indianapolis, Ind.
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- Irving Hodgeon, 15 Richmond St., New Bedford, Mass.
- D. Harry Reighter, 2022 N. Chadwick St., Philadelphia, Pa.
- Milton Whitney, P. O. Box 102, Garberville, Calif.
- James Stromquist, 1115 62nd Ave., Maywood, Ill.
- Walter W. Greenhatch, 853 York St., Jersey City, N. J.
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(Continued from page 155)

the rest of them are. How about it, brother?

The Clan is Gathering

In our September issue, George P. Bradley called on the Globe Trotters to join in an expedition to recover a lost treasure which he believes is buried on a little island somewhere off the coast of Borneo. He has a letter and a map with full details. The response?

Well, they're coming in thick and fast. Letters, requests for Mr. Bradley's address, even callers here at the office hoping to locate him. The last word from Mr. Bradley came in just in time to be included in this department. He writes:

Dear Globe Trotter:

The first fruits of my letter, published in your department, are coming in abundantly. I am on the up and up about this trip, and am foolish enough to believe the treasure is there.

While I haven't located James Farley's daughter, mentioned in the letter I found in the bottle floating off the coast of Mexico, I am on her trail and have found several people who knew her in her childhood and youth.

I'll be glad to hear from any other Globe Trotters who are interested in an expedition of this sort.

George P. Bradley.

Mr. Bradley is at present on the shore of Lake Superior, but, as he will soon be changing his address, Ye Olde Globe Trotter suggests that you address him in care of the Globe Trotter if you want to drop him a line.

They've Got the Bug

What sort of fellows are interested in such hare-brained things as buried treasure expeditions? Well, here's one who has the bug badly:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have been a persistent reader of your magazine whenever it has been possible for me to obtain a copy. I am an engineer by trade and spend most of my days in places far off the beaten tracks.

I've just returned from a wild goose chase into northern Canada. Spent two years in the bush this time. Well, better luck next time. There wouldn't be much fun in it if we connected every time we tried. All I got out of it was a broken leg on which I had to crawl fifteen miles to get back to camp.

I'm at loose ends right now so would

like to find something that will offer a little diversion and excitement. The trouble seems to be that places are getting much too civilized at an altogether too fast rate. I was down around the Straits in 1921; went down again five years ago, and what a difference!

Count me in with the Globe Trotters. I'll be glad to answer any question relating to Canada, China, Straits Settlements, and the Islands. Also about flying and guns.
18 E. 120th St., A. Shapel.
New York, N. Y.

Mr. Shapel is hot on George Bradley's trail, and so is this would-be treasure hunter:

Dear Globe Trotter:
I am very much interested in searching for buried treasure and would like to get in touch with George Bradley. In my estimation the small islands off the coast of Borneo ought to produce something worth while.

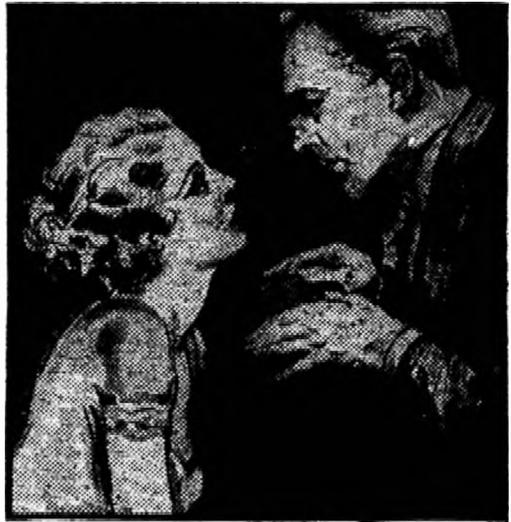
Enclosed is my Globe Trotter's application blank. I am seriously interested in anything pertaining to the Orient and the East Indies. Walter Grapen.
St. Louis, Missouri.

Far Places Information

One of our Globe Trotters features is the exchange of letters among members, the answering of questions and giving information, first-hand, by men who are right on the spot. Maybe these fellows have something that will interest you:

Dear Globe Trotter:
I wish to be enrolled as a Globe Trotter. I was born here in Western Australia and have traveled into almost every corner of the state. I'll be glad to answer questions about this state and other parts of Australia. I should also appreciate receiving letters from various parts of the U. S.
22 Chatham St., George R. Coulson.
West Midland, Western Australia.

Dear Globe Trotter:
I have certainly hopped here and there
(Continued on page 158)



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(Continued from page 157)

and am willing to answer all letters sent to me. I served through the World War; have been to China, Canada, Australia, the Malay States, and through the African jungle. I am an ex-member of the famous Legion of Frontiersmen, and hold four decorations for bravery. Please enroll me as a Globe Trotter.

Edwin James Andrews.

184 High St., Guildford, Surrey, England.

You Stamp Collectors

Nothing pleases Ye Olde Globe Trotter better than being able to make this department of the magazine as useful to Globe Trotters as possible. I'd like to turn it into an employment agency, but that is out of question. So, regretfully, I have to pass up your requests for information about where to get a job.

Every little while along comes a stamp collector who asks me to pass on to him the foreign stamps that come into the office. There have been dozens of such requests, so of course that's out, necessarily. But there's no reason why you stamp collectors cannot use this department as a get-together place to arrange your swapping. I'll be glad to list the names of philatelists who are interested. So speak up if you want to be listed as a potential stamp-swapper.

Thank You!

Ye Olde Globe Trotter is a modest gent. He has ducked the bouquets pretty successfully—and been caught on the ear with many a good stiff brickbat. But now it's time to stand up and take a bow—he's made a convert! And here's the proof:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have only recently been reading the Globe Trotter. I never used to read it because I thought it all the bunk, but now I believe what you write is true. Give us more of it!

How is Harry Palmer making out about going to South America? Has he gone yet—or how can I get in touch with him?

Harry White

New York, N. Y.

Well, after that bouquet I ought to be able to straighten you out about Palmer, Harry, but the truth is that the jasper has been mighty silent the

(Continued on page 160)

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Continued from page 158)

past few months. I don't know whether or not he succeeded in showing off. Maybe he'll let us know when he reads this.

Guess there's room this month for only one question. Here it is:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am contemplating a trip to Alaska and would like to get some information from Globe Trotters who live there or who know about Alaska. Can you work your way from the Pacific Coast to Alaska on a freighter or a similar craft?

I would also like to know where I can contact the United Fruit Co. about a job in Central America.

George C. Smith
Middlesboro, Kentucky.

Answer:

Well, it looks as if you've aimed your questions half at me and half at the Globe Trotters—which is a right smart idea, George. As long as your questions about Alaska are not specific, I'll leave it to some sourdough Globe Trotter to take care of them.

Now, about getting there: yes, you may be able to work your way to Alaska from the West Coast. Portland or Seattle would be the most likely ports to try. But, again, I must warn you that jobs of any sort are scarce these days. Labor conditions on the coast are not what they might be, and it would be very risky to take

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Bandera Highway, of Kansas, invests \$88.00 and shows returns of \$4,707.00 between April 5th and June 29th! Bowser Lumber and Feed Co., West Virginia, invests \$15, reports returns well over \$1,000.00! Fox Ice and Coal Co., Wisconsin, returns \$3,564.00! Hallimore Sporting Goods Store invests \$45, returns \$1,800! Poltom & Son, Indiana, in 45 days turned \$15 installation into \$2,250.00 cash. With these and scores of similar results to display, our representatives interest business men from the very smallest to the very largest. No one can dispute the proof in the photo-copies of actual letters which our men show.

**NO HIGH PRESSURE—
SIMPLY INSTALL—
LET IT SELL ITSELF**

Here is a business offering an invention so successful that we make it sell itself. Our representatives simply tell what they offer, show proof of success in every line of business and every section of the country. Then install the specialty without a dollar down. It starts working at once, producing a cash return that can be counted like the other cash register money. The customer sees with his own eyes a big, immediate profit on his proposed investment. Usually he has the investment, and his profit besides, before the representative returns. The representative calls back, collects his money. **OUT OF EVERY \$75 BUSINESS THE REPRESENTATIVE DOES, NEARLY \$80 IS HIS OWN PROFIT! THE SMALLEST HE MAKES IS \$5 ON A \$7.50 SALE!** Our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They are getting the attention of the largest concerns in the country, and selling to the smaller businesses by the thousands. You can get exclusive rights. Business is GOOD, in this line, in small towns or big cities alike! It's on the boom now. Get in while the business is young!

F. E. ARMSTRONG, Pres., Dept. 4085-M, MOBILE, ALABAMA

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As well as selling thousands of installations to small merchants, professional men, etc., we number either the parent companies, or branches, or dealers, etc., of many world-famed concerns among our customers: Cities Service Oil Co., National Mopac Inc., Chevrolet, Chrysler, Public Utilities, Consolidated Corp., United Aluminum Corp., Street Railway Advertising Co., Great American Life Underwriters, and scores of other nationally known. Universities, newspapers, doctors, etc., buy substantial installations and heavy repeat orders.

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MAIL FOR FULL INFORMATION!

F. E. ARMSTRONG, Pres., Dept. 4085-M, Mobile, Ala.
Without obligation to me, send me full information on your proposition.

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