25c

Published Twice
A Month

# Adventure

December 1st

This advertisement is for

# Bachelors

and all men temporarily abandoned by wives, and mothers, sisters and fond aunts. Married men see page 2.

**If your memory falters**—just when you have the crowd gathered for a Silver Fizz or a Horse's Neck . . . . Don't despair, there *is* a cure! Next to the "makings" keep a copy of this booklet with all the recipes—in best prohibition style—but need we say more to an ADVENTURE fan? Send today for the 125 thirst-quenching ideas in No. 43 . . BEVERAGES FOR PARTIES . . . . . . 10c

## YOU'LL WANT THESE BOOKLETS, TOO!

### FOOD

63. .HORS D'OEUVRES AND CANAPES . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c

GRILLED STEAK. .You can cook it, but do you know all the other good things to eat out of doors? Send for

35. . PICNICS AND PORCH MEALS . . . . . . . . .25c

CAN YOU CARVE? Many a man who sniffs danger with the relish of a bloodhound, turns pale when he sees a tame chicken on a platter. Now, sir, it's time to learn how to handle a knife indoors. Send for

34. . DELINEATOR COOK BOOK . . . . . . . . . .$2.65

### FUN

21. . FIVE WAYS TO TELL FORTUNES . . . . . . . .15c

46. . SECRETS OF HANDWRITING . . . . . . . . . .10c

27. . WHAT'S IN YOUR NAME . . . . . . . . . . . . . .15c

51. . GAMES FOR GROWN UPS . . . . . . . . . . . . .15c

54. . FUN AND LAUGHTER PARTIES . . . . . . . . .25c

55. . PARTIES FOR ALL OCCASIONS . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c

25. . FIVE MINUTE PLAYS . . . . . . . .25c

65. . ZODIAC PARTIES . . . . . . . . . . .15c

### MORE FOOD

48. . DELINEATOR RECIPES . . . . . . .25c
With the recipe for this mouth-watering chocolate cake.

49. . SECOND DELINEATOR RECIPES . . . . . . . . .25c
With a johnny-cake a man can make.

26. . PARTY SANDWICHES . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .10c
82 ideas, sweet, tart, tidbits or luncheon sandwiches.

41. . SALADS FOR ALL OCCASIONS . . . . . . . .10c

60. . HOW TO ENTERTAIN SIX AND EIGHT. .25c
In case you want to try your hand at a real dinner, a little late supper, or a luncheon.

### COUPON

DELINEATOR INSTITUTE
161 Sixth Ave., N. Y.
Please send me numbers encircled:
I enclose stamps ☐ money order ☐ check ☐ for. .

43. .10c 21. .15c 46. .10c 27. .15c 51. .15c
54. .25c 55. .25c 25. .25c 35. .25c 34 $2.65
48. .25c 49. .25c 26. .10c 41. .10c 60. .25c
63. .25c 65. .15c All for $5.65

Name. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Address. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

City. . . . . . . .State. . . . . .He says to hurry!

**CORNS—SORE TOES**

—relieved in ONE minute by these thin, healing, safe pads! They remove the *cause* —shoe friction and pressure.

***Dr Scholl's Zino-pads***

*Sizes also for Callouses and Bunions*

**LAW**

**STUDY AT HOME**

Legally trained men win high positions and big success in business and public life. Be independent. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Big corporations are headed by men with legal training. Earn

**$5,000 to $10,000 Annually**

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL. B. conferred. Successful graduates in every section of the United States. We furnish all text material, including fourteen-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 64-page "Law Guide" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.

**LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 12367-L, Chicago**
**The World's Largest Business Training Institution**

**EARN MONEY AT HOME**

**YOU can make $15 to $50 weekly, in spare or full time at home coloring photographs. No experience needed. No canvassing. We instruct you by our new simple Photo-Color process and supply you with work. Write for particulars and Free Book to-day.**

The IRVING-VANCE COMPANY Ltd.
364 Hart Building, Toronto, Can.

**A SUPERB XMAS GIFT**

★

to wife, mother or sister

**DELINEATOR**

*"America's Smartest Magazine"*

A GIFT that returns each month throughout the year to remind the recipient of the thoughtfulness of the giver . . . a constant inspiration for any woman who prizes her personal charm, jealously guards her reputation as a charming hostess and home-maker.

With each gift subscription is sent an extremely attractive gift card bearing your name and greetings as the donor. Write the name and address of the person to whom you wish Delineator sent, and your name as donor, enclose $1 for 12 issues, and mail to Delineator, 161 Sixth Ave., New York, N. Y.

NAME

ADDRESS

DONOR AD 231

**FREE! A Magazine for Writers**

***Get it—Learn how others, like yourself, have learned to write profitably.***

MANY fail to realize that they can make money by writing. The Palmer Institute of Authorship, one of the oldest schools of its kind in the country, has helped many increase their income and their prestige by writing.

**RUPERT HUGHES**

writer of many "best sellers", says: "The Palmer Institute is qualified to render invaluable aid in the art and business of authorship." The endorsement of such prominent writers as Rupert Hughes, Gertrude Atherton, Ruth Comfort Mitchell, Frederick Stuart Greene, and many others, proves the high quality of Palmer training.

**FREE!** The coupon entitles you to the LATEST issue of "Writers' Markets & Methods", selling for 25c, edited by William David Ball, nationally known author and teacher.

PALMER INSTITUTE OF AUTHORSHIP,
DEPT. 127-A PALMER BLDG., HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

Send me my FREE copy of "Writers' M & M", and with no obligation on my part, complete information about Fiction Writing [ ] Photoplay Writing [ ] English Expression [ ] Developing Ability by Psychology [ ] AGE: over 17 [ ] under 17 [ ]

NAME............................................................

ADDRESS........................................................

**SPRINGFIELD RIFLE, MODEL 1903**

Cal. 30, 8¾ pounds, 43 inches long, 24 inch barrel, assembled and refinished, without bayonet at reduced price, $16.50. Ball cartridges $3.50 per 100. Illustrated catalog 1931, 364 pages, Army-Navy equipment, mailed for 50 cents. NEW circular for 2c stamp. Established 1865.
**FRANCIS BANNERMAN SONS, 501 B'way, N. Y. City**

**ASTHMA CAUSE DISCOVERED**

Write for important booklet on Doctor Fugate's discovery of the *basic* cause of bronchial asthma and hay fever. No cost. No obligation. Simply address Dept. 7594, Fugate Co., 126 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis, Ind.

**WANTED—OLD GOLD, DIAMONDS**

Cash for old gold teeth—old or broken jewelry—antiques—watches—diamonds—silver. Cash by return mail. Goods returned in 10 days if you're not satisfied.
**OHIO SMELTING CO. 315-C, Hippodrome Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio**

**COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF DRAFTING**

Aircraft
Mechanical
Architectural
Topographic
Electrical, Etc.

**Recognized Headquarters for DRAFTSMEN!**
**1319 F St., N.W., Wash., D.C.**
**20th Year—Local and Correspondence Courses**

*Send me copy of your Free Book showing how I can learn DRAFTING at home.*

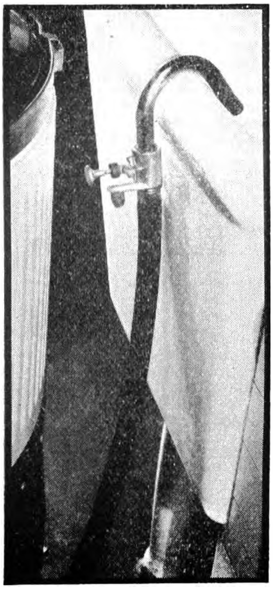
*Name*.............................................................*Age*..............

*Address* ..................................................................Adv. 12-1-31

This advertisement is for

# Married Men

who want to save time and energy for their wives and money for themselves. Incidentally this will help solve one of your greatest and most important gift problems.



You won't have to rush to empty pails of water for your wife, if you have a laundry machine with an electric pump. This is just one of the things to remember suggested in Booklet No. 61 . . LAUNDRY APPLIANCES . . . . . . . . .25c

**When your wife suggests** an electric dishwasher so you can get out to the movies; or if she wants a small washing machine for the baby's diapers; or a new refrigerator—you will want to find the best equipment for your special requirements. Send for these booklets before you buy, then you will know how to spend your money most intelligently.

61 . . LAUNDRY APPLIANCES . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c
All types of washing and ironing equipment, the principles on which they operate, how to save space.

12 . . WELL PLANNED KITCHENS . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c
How to save time and steps by convenient arrangement; exactly what you need in small, medium and large kitchens.

33 . . REFRIGERATORS . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c
What size to buy; facts about automatic and ice refrigerators; care, cleaning and advantageous use.

## Are You Decorating?

Whether you are planning to rearrange your living room, do over the whole house or just one room, these booklets will help you.

44 . . LIVING ROOMS FOR GRACIOUS LIVING . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c
7 charming rooms. Excellent ideas which you can adapt in your own home to add comfort and brightness.

45 . . DECORATING EIGHT BEDROOMS . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c
Master bedrooms; guest rooms; a room a boy will bring his club; a lovely room for a young girl.

42 . . SUN ROOMS THE WHOLE YEAR ROUND . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .15c
Bringing sunshine into your home throughout the year.

37 . . CHEERFUL DINING ROOMS . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c
Beautiful backgrounds for delicious meals; how to arrange for greatest ease in serving.

18 . . PAINTING FURNITURE . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .25c
How to refinish, lacquer and paint. Ideas to freshen furniture you now have.

**---Send This Coupon---**

**DELINEATOR INSTITUTE**
**161 Sixth Avenue, N. Y.**

Send me booklets

61 . . 25c 12 . . 25c
33 . . 25c 44 . . 25c
45 . . 25c 42 . . 15c
37 . . 25c 18 . . 25c
$1.90 for all

Name.......................................

Address.......................................

City........................ State............

ADVENTURE
Dec. 1st, 1931

Published twice a month by The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois.

Volume 80
Number 6

Adventure
(Registered U.S. Patent Office)

# CONTENTS

## for December 1st

1931
Vol. LXXX No. 6

A. A. Proctor
EDITOR

Quicker Than The Eye . . . L. G. Blochman 2
A Story of the Orient

For Glory And The Main . . H. Bedford-Jones 26
A Story of O'Brien, Buccaneer

The Old Champion . . . . James W. Bennett 47

House Of The Dead . . . . William Corcoran 48
A Story of a Prison Break

The Cone Of Fire . . . . . Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson 58
A Story of the Mexican Border

Glenallan Of The Clans . . . Donald Barr Chidsey 76
A Novel of the Scottish Highlands. Four Parts—Part I

The Ballad Of Jeb Tanner (A Poem) Harry Kemp 103

The Oxygen Eaters . . . . Andrew A. Caffrey 104
A Story of the Zeppelin Raiders

The Ice Patrol. . . . . . . Charles Peden 120
Adventures of the Newsreel Men

The Fate Of Anton LeBaron . Arthur O. Friel 124
A Story of the Amazon Bush. Two Parts—Conclusion

A Duel With Kit Carson . . Samuel Henderson Nickels 152

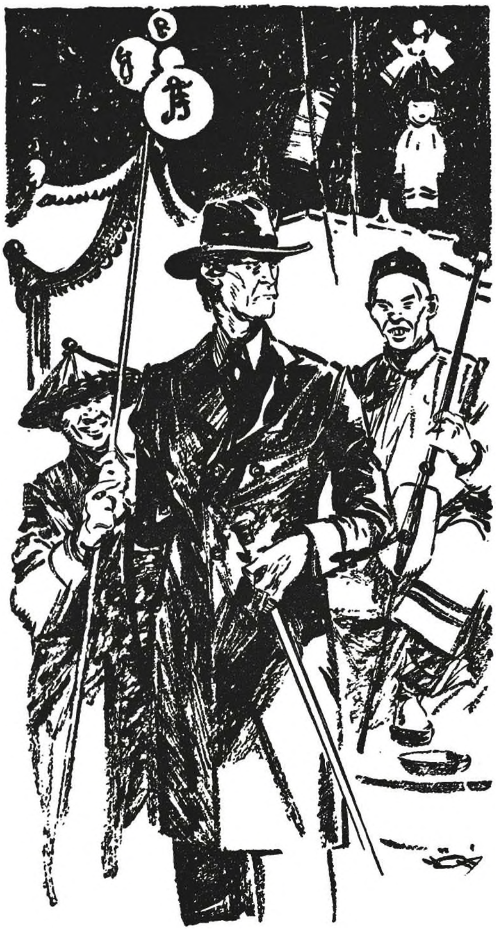
The Deserters . . . . . . . Claude Farrère 154
A Story of the Foreign Legion

Freezeout . . . . . . . . Allan Vaughan Elston 160
A Crime Mystery Story

The Camp-Fire 182 Ask Adventure 188 Trail Ahead 192

*Cover Design by Gerard C. Delano* *Headings by Neil O'Keeffe*

Published twice a month by The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York, N. Y., U. S. A., Joseph A. Moore, Chairman of the Board; S. R. Latshaw, President; W. C. Evans, Secretary; Fred Lewis, Treasurer; A. A. Proctor, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance. Single copy, Twenty-five Cents. Foreign postage, $2.00 additional.
Trade Mark Registered; Copyright, 1931, by The Butterick Publishing Company in the United States and Great Britain.



# QUICKER *Than* THE EYE

By

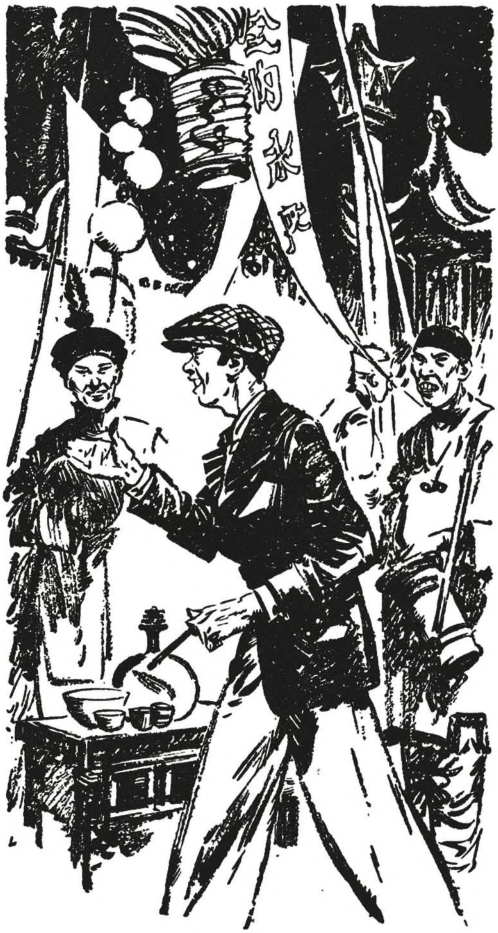
L. G. BLOCHMAN

THE yellow flag had been lowered by the *Ebisu-maru*, the house launch had come alongside, and the liner trembled as the engines got into action again to move her beyond the breakwater into Yokohama harbor. Up the companion ladder, after the diminutive immigration and police officers burdened with gold braid and clanking swords, clambered the gentlemen of the press. With one exception all the reporters were Japanese—photographers and ship news men from Yokohama and Tokyo papers. Most of them wore derby hats and gray kimonos. Several were attired in a semblance of Occidental dress, with baggy trousers and winged collars. None of the trousers were any baggier, however, than those of Al Majors, the only Caucasian in the lot.

Majors was an American on the staff of the *Japan Advertiser.* His unpressed appearance harmonized pleasantly with his air of bored toleration. He wore a stiff brimmed straw hat with a wide band of electric blue. The hat was sometimes perched on the back of his head, sometimes on his eyebrows, depending upon his mood. He had humorous features, and seemed continually on the point of smiling. A certain keenness in his blue eyes gave some people an uncomfortable feeling that the latent smile was for something they had been hiding for years.

Majors had come aboard the *Ebisu-maru,* not because he expected any interviews of importance—the passenger list seemed devoid of interesting names—but because any liner from America was well supplied with American cigarets. Since the Japanese government tobacco monopoly sells American ciga-

# A Radium Mystery of the Orient



rets at an advance in price of several hundred per cent, Majors had a definite mission to perform. He was an expert at working the minor grafts considered legitimate by members of his profession—such as free champagne at the Imperial Chrysanthemum Party . . .

Hardly had he stepped on the deck when his arm was seized by a small, gum chewing individual.

"Pardon me," said the stranger, "but aren't you a newspaperman?"

Majors surveyed his interrogator from his yellow shoes to his checkered silk steamer cap.

"Not me," said Majors, pulling the brim of his straw hat down over his eyes and resuming his way for the chief steward's cabin, where there were cigarets.

"Just a minute." The man with the yellow shoes was persistent. "Don't get the idea I'm a publicity hound. I'm an old newspaperman myself, and I've got a proposition that might interest you. How'd you like to make some money?"

Here were words that stopped Majors.

"How much?" he asked.

The man with the yellow shoes hesitated, chewing his gum pensively for several seconds.

"A hundred dollars or so," he said.

"Who do I have to kill?" demanded Majors, pushing his hat back from his forehead.

The man with the yellow shoes grinned, displaying three gold teeth that shone like a pawnbroker's sign. He looked slowly about him at the confusion on the deck—officials, passengers, coolies; Japanese sailors removing hatch covers, dodging ropes; winches rattling a few trial revolutions . . .

"Come down and have a drink in my

cabin," said the man with the yellow shoes, again taking Majors' arm. "I'll tell you about it."

A long white corridor choked with trunks, a red carpeted cabin with the door locked and a brass bolt pushed into place, a bottle, two glasses—and the man with the yellow shoes began his story.

"There's a fellow on the boat by the name of Simms," said he. "He's quite a well known amateur magician. He did tricks at the ship's concert the other night and he's pretty good. Now what I want you to do is find him, tell him you've heard of him and that there is a big exhibition arranged in his honor tonight by Japanese magicians and then go arrange the exhibition."

"You could probably get your hotel to do this for you for nothing," said Majors. "How come you're willing to pay me to fix things?"

"I don't want Simms to know I'm connected with this in any way," came the reply. "I want him to think it's spontaneous."

"So what?"

"Well, there's one thing: I want you to get a magician who can do tricks with watches."

"I see." Majors poured himself another drink, swallowed it, and looked at his companion suspiciously. "What do you want with Mr. Simms' watch?" he demanded suddenly.

"I'm not at liberty to say at this time," said the man with yellow shoes evasively.

"All right." Majors stood up. "Sorry I can't help you, but I'm not getting myself tangled in anything I don't know the ins and outs of."

THE other man also stood up. Momentarily a whipped dog expression crossed his face. Then it was gone. The gold toothed smile appeared again.

"Have another drink," he said, tilting the bottle.

Majors sat down again.

"What are you—a detective?" he inquired bluntly.

"Yes," said the man with the yellow shoes, after an almost imperceptible pause. "My name is J. K. Forbison. I'm an operative for the Trans-Pacific Detective Agency. Usually I divide my time between San Francisco and Honolulu. This is my first trip to Japan, and I thought it was to be strictly a pleasure trip. But five days ago I got a radio from San Francisco, and I've been working ever since."

"What kind of crook is this Simms?"

Forbison chewed gum nervously for a moment before he said—

"A hundred thousand dollars' worth of radium has been stolen from a San Francisco hospital."

Majors whistled.

"And you wanted to cut me in for a measly hundred bucks for getting it back?" he demanded with an injured air.

"If you help me get it back," said Forbison, "I'll see that you get a thousand."

"That's better," said Majors, taking off his hat and leaning forward with interest. "Now if you'll take my advice, you'll tip off the customs and let the inspectors go over Mr. Simms with a fine comb when he lands in about five minutes."

"Lord, no!" Forbison shook his head violently. "We can't get the Japanese mixed up in this. I understand there's a higher-up in the government helping land this radium for Tokyo hospitals. There's been a scarcity of the stuff here. So if the radium gets into the hands of the customs, we may as well say goodby to it."

"You sure Simms has it?"

"Positive. I've never seen it, though. A hundred thousand dollars' worth of radium is a little more than a gram—probably no bigger than a few watermellon seeds. I've been through all Simms' belongings, but he's so careless about leaving his cabin open that I'm sure he keeps it on him. And the only place it can be is his watch."

"Naturally," said Majors, lighting a cigaret. "On the dial."

Forbison smiled.

"Simms carries a thick, old fashioned watch," he said. "It seems to have room for a thin, lead lined compartment in the back. It would hold the radium and protect him against radiation. You see my plan?"

"There's only one joker in it," said Majors, "and that is that Japanese magicians don't do tricks with watches. Why not just hit the old bird on the head and take his watch?"

Forbison looked annoyed.

"We can't risk involving the Japanese police," he said. "Surely you can find a conjurer who could borrow Simms' watch. That's the only way I can see of getting it out of his hands."

Majors was shaking his head slowly, puzzled, when his eyes brightened. He clapped on his straw hat at a rakish angle.

"I've got it," he said. "There's a broken down American magician doing his hocus-pocus at a little Japanese theater in Asakusa Park. I think he does tricks with watches. Herveen the Great, he calls himself."

Forbison extended his hand.

"You'll get him for tonight?"

"Sure," said Majors, "if—"

"No ifs!" Forbison took out his wallet and counted several bills into Majors' hand. "This is for preliminary expenses."

"What I started to say was, suppose Simms gets rid of the radium before tonight?"

"He won't." Forbison grinned. "There's a little lady on board, bound for Shanghai. She's taking care of Simms for me until tonight . . . Will you go up now and put the invitation to Simms?"

"Sure."

"And—may I meet you somewhere to go with you to see Herveen the Great before tonight?"

"Sure. Meet me in front of the Temple of Kwannon in Asakusa Park in Tokyo at four this afternoon."

As Majors came on deck the ship was being warped into the *hatoba*. A tall, heavy set, round shouldered man with a florid face and a small mustache was pointed out to Majors as Medley Simms.

Simms seemed pleased that Majors had heard of his reputation as an amateur sleight-of-hand performer. He was flattered that this exhibition was being organized for him. Well, he was very busy, but he would find time to go. He was staying in Tokyo, anyhow, instead of Yokohama . . .

Majors walked down the gangplank with Simms and stood by while he greeted a middle aged, puffy eyed, spindly legged American in the customs shed. Majors recognized Simms' friend as Doc Deering, a member of the foreign colony who had accumulated the rating of a "character" by his alternate drunks and brilliant feats of surgery.

Majors remained on the scene until a twittering little blonde with a filmy pinkish dress came over to take charge of Simms. Majors supposed that this was Forbison's agent, and went after an electric train for Tokyo. He was nearly there before he remembered with a silent curse that he had forgotten to bring off his usual carton of American cigarets.

THE sublime rubs elbows with the ridiculous at Asakusa, Tokyo's great amusement park. In the center of the grounds is the Temple of Kwannon, huge red and gray shrine to the many handed goddess of mercy. All about the upturned, incense haunted eaves of the sweeping tile temple roof are cheap theaters, tea houses, restaurants, shops selling bright baubles and obscene pictures. The flagstones of the narrow lanes radiating from the temple rasp beneath the scraping of thousands of wooden clogs as the orderly kimonoed crowds turn from worship to pleasure, eat fish and rice balls, very yellow ice cream, and eels hauled wriggling out of tanks to be skinned and fried to order in evil smelling oil.

One lane in this labyrinth of amusements is a-flutter with long banners hung at an angle over the pavement, emblazoned with ideographs like giant laundry tags—Theater Street. Here, in a small theater, where spectators buy wooden tickets, check their shoes at the door, and either squat on the matting floor or sit on backless benches, the Great Herveen was performing.

The Great Herveen would have been a little shamefaced at his performing in such a theater for the mere pittance he was receiving, had it been in his nature to be shamefaced. However, in whatever touched upon his art as a prestidigitator, he was brazen, smug and completely egocentric. A timid man off the stage, timorous to the point of hesitating to ask a strange waitress for a glass of ice water, the Great Herveen positively strutted when behind the footlights.

Armed with his ivory tipped wand he was a true wizard, bold and unflinching. He had originally come to the Orient with twelve trunks, a manager, and a blonde assistant who looked well in tights and served as the lady to be sawed in two, as well as to be suspended in midair in the latter half of the program. Billed as "The Great Herveen and Company", he had been making a fairly successful tour—just successful enough for the manager to run away with the blonde assistant and the entire receipts. The Great Herveen was left holding his trunks—for a little time.

It was like having an arm amputated for Herveen to lose these trunks, for they contained, in addition to the apparatus for Sawing the Lady in Two and the Levitation Illusion, a set of Duck Tubs (complete with eggs and ducks), a dozen pigeons for the dove catching trick; the Devil's Own Chafing Dish, the Vase of All Nations, Satan's Decanters and, among the miscellany, one rabbit for taking from silk hats. The baggage charges on the trunks, however, together with the cost of caring for and transporting the magical livestock, were too much for the Great Herveen, left penniless by his perfidious manager.

Therefore the Duck Tubs (complete with eggs and ducks) and the Levitation Illusion were left behind in Peking, the pigeons and the Devil's Own Chafing Dish remained in Tientsin, while the exigencies of creditors, after a frost in Mukden, caused him to abandon the apparatus for Sawing the Lady in Two with a none too pleased Manchurian hotelkeeper. By the time the Great Herveen got to Tokyo he had only one trunk and a rabbit left, but his professional ego was undamaged.

The Great Herveen was tall and thin—considerably thinner than he was at the beginning of his Oriental tour. He gave the impression of being well muscled, probably because of the jealous care with which he handled his trunks personally and mounted his own apparatus. He did not affect the diabolic makeup once popular with professional conjurers, probably because nature had handicapped him by giving him red hair and a naive, baby face—neither of which harmonize with mustache and imperial. His red hair was of a light, carroty shade, streaked somewhat with gray, and in spite of all the Great Herveen could do to comb it back, its persistent, bushy resilience made a halo about his head. His eyebrows were invisible above pale, serious gray eyes. His nose was pointed, slightly freckled, and a little too long. It is quite probable that if he had considered the matter at all, he might have considered himself handsome. However, he never thought about that aspect of his presentation.

When Majors of the *Advertiser* and J. K. Forbison came backstage, Herveen was just producing the white rabbit from the hat. He knew no Japanese, of course, and was reeling off his routine patter, full of American vaudeville clichés, just as solemnly as if he were uttering great profundities to an audience that understood every word. An interpreter stood beside the stage and drew titters from the openmouthed spectators by adding his own facetious comment to the Great Herveen's mystic pronouncements.

"And now," said the Great Herveen, laying down the Linking Chinese Rings, "I will show you my own version of the Flight of Time!"

Majors nudged Forbison.

"Get this," he said. "This is it."

THE Great Herveen passed for examination a brown, flattish Japanese pear. Then he borrowed a watch. He held it to his ear, announced it had stopped ticking, that he would fix it. His repairs consisted in pounding the watch to pieces in a mortar amid a chorus of exclamations from the audience. He then poured the conglomeration of wheels and springs into a handkerchief, and called for a volunteer from the audience. A gray haired Japanese with a silk *haori* cloak responded, grinning sheepishly with protruding teeth. From the other side of the stage the Great Herveen's assistant—no longer a stunning blonde, but a bare legged Japanese boy with shaven head and polka dot kimono—came on, bearing a shiny pistol and the brown Japanese pear.

The Great Herveen placed the pear on the head of the volunteer from the audience, took the pistol, and gave the handkerchief, supposedly containing the pieces of watch, to the shaven headed boy.

"And now," said the Great Herveen, "I will proceed to finish my watch repairing. With a single shot from my pistol I will cause the pieces of watch to pass from the handkerchief to reassemble themselves on the inside of the pear. This trick was first performed by a gentleman named William Tell, who, naturally, used a Swiss movement. Watch!"

The Great Herveen uttered his pun laden patter without a smile. The Japanese boy stood on tiptoe to hold the bunched handkerchief as high as the pear on the sheepish volunteer's head. The Great Herveen twirled his shiny pistol until it flashed several times in the footlights, then he fired.

The shaven headed boy let the handkerchief unroll—empty. The Great Herveen put down his pistol and took the pear from the head of the now startled volunteer. With a deft stroke of a knife he cut the fruit open, removed one half, and daintily extracted the borrowed watch, neatly imbedded in the other half.

An amazed chorus of exclamations from the audience was drowned by an orchestra of *samisen,* bamboo flute and *koto* getting into jangling action. The Great Herveen's act was over.

As the magician walked gravely from the stage, rolling down his starched cuffs and tugging at the sleeves of his swallowtail coat, he seemed to change quickly from the impersonal and inscrutable wizard to a rather tired, meek, red headed performer glad to be through with his stint for another few hours.

"Nice work," said Majors of the *Advertiser* as the magician approached. "Meet Mr. Forbison, Mr. Herveen . . . "

"Don't you know," said Herveen, almost apologetically, "that I never allow visitors back—"

"Sure I know," said Majors, "but this is special. Mr. Forbison and I want to engage you to put on your act for a private party tonight. You won't have to bring much stuff—enough for about ten minutes. Just so you do that William Tell trick—that's a knockout."

A smile of pleasure crossed the Great Herveen's face. Then he spotted Forbison fingering pieces of apparatus on a black-and-gold stand. As he made an abrupt move toward Forbison, his pale eyes darkened as though they had just witnessed assault, robbery and mayhem committed upon the six persons dearest to him.

"Please," he snapped, as he seized Forbison's arm in a firm grip, drawing him away. "Don't meddle."

Forbison winced, then grinned.

"That watch trick was great," he said. "How did you do it? You had two apples of course."

"That was a pear," said the Great Herveen. "As to the *modus operandi,* that's my secret."

"You don't expect us to believe in miracles, do you?" asked Forbison.

"Sure," said Majors. "The little Japanese kid performed the miracle offstage by putting the ticker in the pear before he brought it on the second time. Don't worry over trifles, Forbison."

"There's no use prying into my secrets," said the Great Herveen, in a stern, professional tone. "The closer you watch, the less you will see. After all, the hand is quicker than the eye."

"All we ask," said Majors, "is that tonight you borrow the watch from the man we point out to you. He's a big husky chap named Simms."

"Simms?" repeated Herveen, with a reminiscent inflection.

"He has a mustache," continued Majors. "We'll show him to you when you get there. He's got an old watch he's very particular about, and we want you to give him a scare when you pound the thing up in the mortar. He probably won't want to give the thing up, but you insist."

"I'll take care of that," said the Great Herveen.

"Then we'll send the car for you here after your last show," said Majors.

"For me and my assistant," said Herveen, compressing his halo with his two hands. "I must be allowed to bring my assistant."

"Oh, sure," said Forbison, folding a stick of gum and popping it into his mouth. "That little Jap boy, you mean? A cute little devil, ain't he? What's his name?

"Hara."

"Hello there, Hara," said Forbison, rubbing the youngster's shaved pate. "How are you? You and me are going to be great friends. Here's twenty sen. Go buy yourself some candy."

The boy looked puzzled.

*"Anata-ni des,"* Majors translated. *"O-kwashi kaimas."*

The boy shyly took the money, and the interview was ended.

When Majors and Forbison separated, Majors went directly to the central postoffice and sent a cable to San Francisco.

THE exhibition of Oriental magic that Majors organized for Medley Simms began with a large geisha banquet. Not that Majors had any hope that the dozens of courses of picturesque, if somewhat insipid, food would affect Simms' disposition one way or the other. Yet he counted on the entertainment and the *sake* between courses to dispel a vague feeling of tension that seemed somehow to charge the atmosphere. Geishas, their faces powdered pale lavender and their glossy, complicated coiffures looking like so many sculptured designs carved in polished ebony by some mad craftsman, bowed ceremoniously as they poured the *sake* from dainty eggshell bottles into porcelain thimbles. Even consumed by the thimbleful, the pale yellow, warm rice wine had its effect upon the assemblage. Little by little a genial glow pervaded the banquet room, undampened by the mournful twanging of the *samisen* players and the nasal falsetto of the singers.

Like all the guests, Medley Simms sat upon a silken cushion on the matting floor, his stocking feet crossed behind his own ankle high table of red lacquer. Flushed with the *sake,* he applauded everything loudly and impartially. His entry into the gaiety of the occasion implanted a fresh doubt in the mind of Majors. This carefree air while Japanese performers did things with bowls of gold fish and chrysanthemums, did not denote the impatience of a criminal anxious to deliver a fortune in stolen radium. Was Simms so sure of himself that he could afford to be leisurely? Or had he managed to dispose of the radium before the banquet, despite the vigilance of Forbison's scouts? Forbison, who remained out of sight behind the tiny stage at one end of the banquet room, insisted that everything was going according to schedule. Majors wondered. Not that it was any skin off his ankles, he pondered, if this elaborate scheme were to go for naught. The almost fantastic details of the intrigue seemed just as unreal to him as the promised thousand dollars in reward. He was interested in the matter for its intrinsic drama . . .

The Great Herveen arrived toward midnight with his small, kimonoed assistant lugging a large suitcase. He had protested downstairs that a man in evening clothes could not take off his shoes, so the manager of the restaurant had sent out for cloth covers made to protect Japanese floors from barbaric Western footwear. His bushy red halo clung fairly close to his head when he arrived but, by the time he had finished setting up his fringe hung, black-and-gold tables, it had expanded into a full size aureole again.

Majors, who had been acting as impromptu master of ceremonies, noted that Forbison was trying to help the Great Herveen unpack his paraphernalia. When the magician repulsed his efforts in waspish phrases, Forbison gave his attention to the young Japanese assistant. Doc Deering, who had been wandering about drunkenly all evening, also came upon the stage to shake hands with the Great Herveen whom he had met in Yokohama, he said. He also puttered around unsteadily among the magician's paraphernalia. The Great Herveen found him examining his shiny nickeled pistol, reposing in a sheaf of colored silk handkerchiefs, and immediately ejected him. Deering meandered back to resume his seat beside Simms.

Just before the act was to begin Majors called Herveen to look at Simms through a hole in a paper screen.

"I think I've seen him before," said the Great Herveen. "He poses as a sort of conjurer himself. I met him at a meeting of the Golden Gate Society of Magicians."

Majors made the presentation, and the Great Herveen came upon the stage, solemnly rolling back his cuffs, gravely assuring the audience that there was nothing up his sleeves but his arms.

The business of making colored handkerchiefs disappear and appear in unwonted places, knot and unknot themselves at will, worked into the Linking Rings trick. Then came the *pièce de résistance.*

"And now," said the Great Herveen, "I will show you my own version of the Flight of Time."

He stepped into the audience and passed the flattish Japanese pear for examination. Tossing the pear to his waiting Japanese assistant, he asked for the loan of a watch. Turning slowly, apparently with great deliberation, he pointed to Medley Simms.

"Would you oblige me, sir, by lending me your watch?"

"I would not," said Simms.

"You wear a chain," said the Great Herveen, bending over and hooking his little finger under the gold rope. "Perhaps you keep a bulldog on the end?"

He pulled deftly on the chain and the heavy gold watch slipped into view. Simms extended a brusk hand to retrieve his timepiece. Doc Deering laid a restraining finger on his arm.

"It's a trick," said Doc Deering. "I saw him do it in Yokohama. He won't hurt the watch."

Simms withdrew his hand, trying with a suave smile to cover up his moment of hesitation.

"I will take particular care that the watch is returned to you in as good condition as it is now." The Great Herveen paused, held the watch to his ear, shook it, listened again. "Better condition, perhaps, since the watch seems to have stopped running."

He returned to the stage. The Japanese boy brought the mortar and pestle. Majors, standing in the wings, decided that this must be the moment at which the watch was exchanged for a dummy. He was a little disappointed at the lack of response from Simms, who did not seem in the least worried over the fate of his property. When the Great Herveen announced that he was about to repair the watch and proceeded to grind it to pieces in the mortar, Simms watched closely but without alarm. He hurried forward before any one else could respond to Herveen's call for a volunteer from the audience. This was better, thought Majors.

SIMMS smiled knowingly when the Great Herveen took the pear from the hands of the Japanese boy and placed it on Simms' head. He said something out of the corner of his mouth which Majors thought he understood as—"You aren't going to muff this like you did the Rising Cards at the Golden Gate Society of Magicians, are you?"

The Great Herveen flushed slightly, but went on with his routine. He rolled the mangled clockworks into a handkerchief which he handed the Japanese boy in return for the shiny pistol.

"And now," said the Great Herveen, "I will finish my repairs. With a single shot from my pistol, I will cause the pieces of watch to pass from the handkerchief to reassemble themselves on the inside of the pear. This trick was first performed by a gentleman named William Tell, who naturally used a Swiss movement. Watch!"

Majors, who stood on the opposite side of the stage from Forbison, noticed that the man who had promised him a thousand dollars for his part in the recovery of the radium, seemed in a state of perturbation. Chewing gum frantically, Forbison was rummaging in a pile of colored handkerchiefs, looking up just long enough to make a baffled gesture to Majors.

Majors' gaze was distracted for a moment by the Great Herveen twirling his brightly nickeled pistol until it flashed impressively.

The Great Herveen fired. Some one in the audience screamed. Simms went over like a cardboard soldier in the wind. He lay still as he hit the floor. Blood streaked one side of his face.

The pear, dislodged from Simms' head, rolled lopsidedly across the stage. The Japanese boy dropped the handkerchief and ran.

Majors saw Forbison pick up the fruit, slip it into his pocket and dash off in the direction taken by the Japanese boy.

He heard the spectators in an uproar, saw them rise to their feet, undecided, horrified, helpless . . .

He saw the Great Herveen, dazed, unable to make out exactly what had happened, glancing first at his pistol, then at the fallen Simms, muttering in bewildered tones—

"And now ladies and gentlemen—when I cut open this pear—you examined the pear—when I take the pear—" His eyes searched the floor.

Doc Deering, his puffy eyes small with *sake,* appeared to Majors to be the only person present who was acting rationally.

Deering had leaped to the stage as soon as it was evident that something unusual had happened. He was bending over the prostrate Simms, examining the bleeding wound.

The Great Herveen suddenly ran from the stage like a frightened child. He collided with Majors. He was white and trembling. He stammered—

"Will they—my God, they'll—they'll blame me for this!"

The freckles on his pointed nose seemed very large, his hair very wild.

"But I didn't shoot him!" he pleaded. "I use only blanks."

"Well, he's been shot," said Majors. "And you'll have a hell of a time convincing the Japanese police it wasn't you."

"Get me out of this," begged the Great Herveen. "You got me into it. You've got to help me!"

He seized Majors' shoulders imploringly.

Ideas caromed through Majors' brain as he saw the tortured features of the magician close to his. He believed Herveen was innocent. He knew it would be hard to prove. He knew that investigation would involve him and Forbison. He wanted to avoid that, wanted to keep clear for a few days at least. He glanced at his watch, put his arm around Herveen, started him out into the corridor, down a steep, narrow stairway.

"Listen," said Majors. "There's a freighter leaving Yokohama for Shanghai in an hour and a half. The first engineer's a friend of mine. He owes me a favor. Here, give him my card, and he'll take care of you. You'll barely make it."

They came out of the building into a little park. The car ordered for the Great Herveen was still waiting. Majors pushed the magician into it.

"And here — " Majors resumed. "You're lucky this is my payday. Here's a bundle of yen."

"My trunk at Asakusa—"

"I'll look after it. I'll communicate with you in Shanghai. Go to the Hotel du Marne in the French Concession. Stay out of the International Settlement. The Japanese have a hand in the police there. Good luck—"

Majors gave instructions in Japanese to the chauffeur. The Great Herveen arranged his swallowtails as he leaned back in the seat, still dazed. Majors saw his white shirtfront gleam in the darkness as the car backed, swung about and roared away. Then, cautiously, he went back upstairs to the banquet room.

His absence apparently had not been noticed in the confusion.

Doc Deering had pronounced Simms still alive, and was directing his removal to a hospital.

A squad of uniformed police marched into the room, sabers clanking. An English speaking inspector, whose European clothes included a winged collar two sizes too large and a pair of trousers four inches too long, conducted the investigation. He asked many questions, deliberated solemnly, and seemed keenly disappointed that the Great Herveen had disappeared. He made guttural noises in his throat when he could find no one who had seen him go. Forbison was on hand for the questioning. He said nothing about being a private detective. Hara, the magician's Japanese assistant, was missing. The inspector gave officious instructions for his arrest.

At the end of two hours, with much taking of notes and verification of addresses, every one was sent home with the admonition to hold himself at the disposition of the police.

Forbison had disappeared again when Majors started to leave.

Majors went directly to his office. Sitting before his typewriter, he deliberated for twenty minutes before beginning his story of the evening's events. Should he write what he knew—or thought he knew—about Simms' mission to Japan to sell a fortune in stolen radium? He would be accused of obstructing justice if he did not. On the other hand, any revelation would involve him, particularly now that he had aided the Great Herveen to escape. That was a foolish move, now that he thought of it. But, since it was irrevocable, the best thing Majors could do was to keep his hand free until he could learn something definite, both regarding the radium and the shooting. He decided to write only the surface facts of the affair, at least until he had an answer to his cable to San Francisco.

MAJORS had written his story and was sitting by an open window, smoking. His straw hat was tilted far back on his head. The American staff of the paper had gone home an hour before, and only a few Japanese compositors were left in the building, locking up the last forms. Majors intended to wait until he had his reply from California. He had sent his original cable triple rates, urgent. It was now three o'clock in the morning in Tokyo—which meant ten in the morning of the previous day in San Francisco. Offices were full open and he should have his answer at any moment.

A door opened. Majors sat up. A Japanese youth entered. Majors relaxed when he recognized the cyclist bearing the night's last Kokusai press dispatches. The cyclist's kimono was tucked up about his thighs, and a paper lantern was hooked on the rear of his girdle, like a tail light. He dropped the press envelop on Majors' desk and went out.

Majors ripped open the envelop, glanced at the sheets casually, and dropped them into a basket for next day's early copy. He lighted another cigaret and gazed out of the window. A damp, earthy smell which he associated with Tokyo nights drifted through the dark. Again the door opened.

J. K. Forbison stepped in and closed the door behind him. He stood a moment, chewing gum with what seemed to Majors to be ominous deliberation.

"Hello," said Majors. "I was just on the point of coming around to see you. I haven't been able to figure out why you had to have Simms shot, after that damfool complicated plot of yours."

Forbison did not reply. He crossed the room in silence, slouched against the edge of Majors' desk and looked down upon the newspaperman with eyes that suddenly seemed to Majors to burn with the desperation of cowardice. Only the moist sound of his gum chewing relieved the next few seconds of expectant stillness.

"And I've come to see you," he said at last, "to call for a showdown."

Majors raised his eyebrows slightly and flicked the ash from his cigaret into the cuff of Forbison's trousers.

"Meaning which?" he asked lazily.

For reply Forbison took a brown Japanese pear from his pocket. As he set it on Majors' desk, the fruit fell into two neatly cut halves. Majors looked at it a moment, then at Forbison.

"I'm not hungry," he said.

"Never mind the comedy," snapped Forbison. "You know what I mean. Simms' watch was supposed to be planted in this pear. Well, it wasn't. I caught the little Jap boy you said was supposed to do the planting. He said that Herveen changed his stuff tonight, and that the watch wasn't planted at all. The kid didn't know what happened. I got an idea that you do."

"Sure I know," said Majors. "Somebody loaded lead into Herveen's gun instead of blanks. Don't happen to know who it was, do you?"

Forbison stopped chewing for a moment.

"It might have been that fellow Deering," he said. "He was fooling around the stage tonight for no good reason. But I don't think it was. I'll tell you why. When I caught that Jap kid and started quizzing him in the park outside the restaurant, I saw you come out and load Herveen in a car. I couldn't hear what you said to him, but I got the number. It didn't take a master mind to see that you and Herveen were in cahoots. Because I told you I didn't want the Japanese cops in this, you thought it would be easy to hijack the radium and split with that ham. Well, it ain't. It'll be a cinch for me to run down Herveen, since I got the number of the car, but I thought I'd come and see you first. Where's the radium?"

Majors flicked his cigaret stub through the open window and watched it describe a glowing arc in the night. Then he breathed a lungful of smoke in Forbison's general direction.

"You are supposed to be a detective," he said. "You ought to be telling me, not asking."

"I got plenty to tell you," said Forbison. "But first I'm giving you a chance to shoot square."

"Thanks," said Majors, lighting another cigaret with exaggerated care and deliberation.

He could feel Forbison's weight shift against the edge of his desk. Although he did not look up, he sensed Forbison's stare upon him.

*"May-joh-zu!"* droned a nasal voice in the stairs. *"May-joh-zu-san."*

Majors snapped out the match expectantly.

*"Koko-ni,"* he shouted back in Japanese. *"O-hairi nasai."*

A messenger entered. Majors half arose to take from him a bit of folded paper of cherry blossom pink, official color of the Imperial Telegraphs. It was addressed to him personally, but before he broke the seal, he said to Forbison:

"Pardon me if I peek into this. It may be something for this edition."

He held the paper so that Forbison could not see it as he unfolded it. He read:

> NO FORBISON EVER OPERATIVE TRANSPACIFIC EITHER SAN FRANCISCO HONOLULU THIS AGENCY UNINVOLVED RADIUM CASE MAN OBVIOUSLY IMPOSTOR STOP HAVE YOU RADIUM CLUES CABLE FOR AUTHORIZATION FUNDS STOP HIGH REWARD POSTED YOUR WIRE FIRST INDICATION RADIUM IN ORIENT
>
> —TRANSPACIFIC DETECTIVES

Majors crushed the cablegram in his hand and stuffed it into his pocket. He did not look at Forbison. On the contrary, he pulled the brim of his straw hat forward until it rested on his eyebrows.

Majors was not exactly startled by the information the cable conveyed. Forbison's story had not set quite well with Majors since the start. Majors had wondered over the plausibility of Forbison's explanation for his reluctance to involve the police. He had wondered why Forbison had not sought the help of the captain of the *Ebisu-maru,* whose absolute authority, coupled with the impossibility of Simms' escape while the ship was at sea, should have closed the case and recovered the stolen radium before the steamer docked at Yokohama. All that was clear now. What was not quite clear was what Majors, in his new rôle of detective, was going to do with respect to Forbison, in his new rôle of crook.

"Well," snapped Forbison, when Majors said nothing, "come on—spit it out. Are you still with me on this, or are you against me?"

"I haven't changed," said Majors. "I'm still with the forces of light and sweetness. Down with crime."

WHILE he spoke facetiously, he was wondering if Forbison had actually lost sight of the radium, or whether he were merely testing Majors. Did Herveen actually have the radium? He didn't seem smart enough for a coup like that. Did the Japanese boy run off with the watch for its own sake? How about Doc Deering? Or Simms, who was supposed to be an amateur conjurer himself, and who might have worked counter-magic on the Great Herveen?

"Then how do you explain your shipping Herveen away from that restaurant?" demanded Forbison, slipping his hands into his pockets.

"I'll tell you," began Majors, reaching to open a drawer in his desk, containing a carton of cigarets.

But he did not open the drawer. Forbison mistook his motives.

Forbison kicked Majors' chair out from under him. From the floor Majors looked up into the muzzle of a stubby automatic held in Forbison's fist.

"Stand up!" ordered Forbison. "And stick up your hands!"

Majors got to his feet and brushed himself off in a leisurely manner.

"Stick 'em up, I said!" repeated Forbison.

Majors stared at Forbison in a disdainful, slightly bored manner. There was a bare possibility that Forbison, suspecting that his deceit was discovered, might shoot his way out. On the other hand, there were men still in the building, printers and pressmen waiting for the presses to start grinding out papers for the breakfast reading of Japan's English speaking colony. Forbison might prefer to make a quiet getaway. At any rate he must not get the impression that Majors was afraid of him.

"Don't be an ass, Forbison," said Majors, continuing to ignore Forbison's command.

As a further gesture of reckless indifference to impress Forbison, the newspaper man stooped to pick up his straw hat which had rolled on the floor when Forbison had upset him. Just as his fingers touched the brim, Majors' cosmos exploded into a loud, black, roaring sound, shot through with screaming, squirming flashes of light. Eventually the roar subsided to a dull, painful pounding in an empty, bodyless consciousness. After ages of this unreal throbbing, Majors opened his eyes.

He was lying on the floor of his office. His head was aching violently. The first colorless light of dawn was in the windows. With the tips of his fingers he tenderly verified the fact that he had been struck on the back of the head. His coat was torn, evidently in Forbison's hasty efforts to search him, for the contents of his pockets were strewn about the floor. The drawers of his desk had been ransacked. Apparently Forbison was telling the truth when he said he had lost track of the stolen radium.

Stiffly Majors picked himself up. He was annoyed to find that he could not wear his straw hat at its usual angle without irritating the newly acquired bump on the back of his head. Well, that would act as a constant reminder that Forbison had bested him in the first round of what he now decided would be a fight. He would accept the commission from the Transpacific Detective Agency. He laughed aloud in the empty room as he pictured himself as a sleuth. Then he started out to work on his first case.

He went to Forbison's hotel merely as a matter of thoroughness. He anticipated the answer he got there: that Forbison had left during the night, leaving no forwarding address.

He did not anticipate the answer he got at the hospital to which Medley Simms had been taken. Mr. Simms was better, Majors was told. No, he could not see Mr. Simms. As a matter of fact, Mr. Simms was no longer there. No, they could not say where Mr. Simms had gone. He had recovered consciousness soon after his arrival at the hospital; he had not been badly wounded. And at two, or perhaps three, in the morning, when he had been left alone for a moment, Mr. Simms had disappeared. He had perhaps gone home . . .

Majors did not think he had gone home. When he left the hospital, Majors went directly to the little house in Kojimachi quarter occupied by Doc Deering. The house stood in the little park. The ground floor, a cheap refreshment stand where the populace could regale itself by day with beer and salted roasted beans and steaming periwinkles, was still shuttered up with the sliding wooden panels which protect the paper screens against night or bad weather. Majors noticed that the wooden shutters were not in place on the upper story. Either Doc Deering was up early, or—Majors saw the glow of an electric light through the checkered skeleton of a paper screen. He went up the steep, ladder-like steps two at a time.

Like all Japanese houses, the place was free of locks. Majors pushed aside the *shoji* and went in. The light was burning in the first room, but it was unoccupied. A forest of cigaret ends studded the ashes of the *hibachi,* the potbellied porcelain brazier. Half of them were cheap, cardboard tipped Japanese cigarets such as Deering always smoked. The rest were of an American brand.

Majors crossed over, slid back the *fusame* partition leading to the next room and stopped dead.

Not an arm's length in front of him a man's body dangled.

The man's knees were bent back, his ankles strapped against his thighs, so that he would swing clear, despite the low ceiling. He was suspended from a spike driven in the lintel beam. He was in his underclothes and had his back to Majors.

Majors took two quick steps, recognized the tortured face of Doc Deering. He cut the man down, freed him from his agonizing bonds, stretched him out, tried to revive him. He had difficulty in arousing Deering from a stupor occasioned by pain, exhaustion, or alcohol, or a combination of the three. Deering spoke thickly and somewhat incoherently, but Majors could understand him. He understod particularly the name of Medley Simms.

Simms had done this. He had come in the night and hung Doc Deering from a spike. If Doc Deering had not been a little drunk, he would never have succeeded in doing it alone . . . He did it as a warning . . . Yes, Deering had known Simms for a long time. He had not seen him in five years. Simms was a lawyer. Legerdemain was his hobby, but he was a lawyer by profession. He had been Deering's lawyer. He knew why Deering lived in Japan and would never return to the United States, at least for a long while. Simms had come in the night with his head bandaged and had accused Deering of hiring Herveen to try to kill him, Simms, and thus be free of the menace of exposure. He also said something about his watch. Deering knew nothing of Herveen or the watch. He knew nothing of Simms' visit to Japan, except that he had received a radio message from the ship, saying that Simms was arriving and expected to be met . . .

"He hung me up like an old overcoat," said Deering. "He was furious. He kept asking me questions. Why was I wandering about backstage at that banquet? Who organized that banquet anyhow? Who the hell was backstage with me for the occasion?"

"Did you tell him?"

"I couldn't remember," muttered Deering. "I couldn't remember anybody but you and that chap Forbison. 'Forbison?' says he. 'Forbison,' I says. 'The chap that was on the boat with you.' He was crazy mad. He punched me in the jaw and left me hanging up like an old overcoat. I don't know where he went."

Majors didn't know either, but he had an idea. And he knew where he wanted to go himself.

By noon he had cabled San Francisco again, made arrangements with his managing editor, consulted timetables, and bought a railway ticket for Nagasaki via the Shimonoseki-Moji ferry. From Nagasaki he would catch an express steamer for Shanghai.

THE first engineer of the freighter *Orestes* had been profanely amazed to see the swallowtails of the Great Herveen coming down the warm steel ladder into the engine room a few minutes before the ship sailed from Yokohama. He read the card from Majors and cocked his head incredulously as he surveyed the Great Herveen from his fuzzy red halo to his patent leather shoes. Then he called a hurried conference and, before the engine room telegraph jangled "Stand by", the magician had been installed in a bunk originally intended for the fourth engineer, of which there was none on the *Orestes* this trip.

It was a dreary and discouraging trip for the Great Herveen. He saw himself as professionally ruined. His last trunk had remained behind in Tokyo. A few months ago he had set out gloriously with a stage full of apparatus to carry on the world traditions of Hermann the Great and Robert Houdin. Today he was a fugitive, with no reminder of his greatness except a pack of cards and a small, white, pink eared rabbit which had come aboard in a secret pocket in one of the tails of his coat, where it had been waiting for transfer to a silk hat when the unexpected termination of the Flight of Time had interrupted the Great Herveen's Tokyo performance.

And why? Because some malicious person had loaded a ball cartridge into his revolver. He was a fool to have run away. Nobody would have blamed him for the shooting of Simms. It is true he knew Simms slightly, and had had an argument with him over a technical point at a meeting of the Golden Gate Society of Magicians some years ago; but that could not be construed as a motive for murder.

He tried to think of some enemy with a serious grievance who might have done this to him. He could think of none.

The Great Herveen gained a little poise by doing tricks with knives, forks and glasses for the ship's officers at meal time, but not much. He folded away his tails, and wore dungarees. He was pretty consistently forlorn, from the time the *Orestes* left the Yokohama breakwater, until the sea turned from blue to khaki off the mouth of the Yangtsze.

The Great Herveen went ashore in a suit lent him by the first engineer, whose legs were a trifle shorter than his. He went directly to the Hotel du Marne in the French Concession, as Majors had directed. At the hotel a halfcaste Annamite clerk, whose eyes bulged behind thick lenses and whose English somehow survived a French accent and a Chinese intonation, handed him a cable. The message was from Majors, telling Herveen to await his arrival.

The Great Herveen waited, impatiently, dejectedly. He would have waited much more successfully had he not tried to kill time by going for a walk. He walked toward the river, strolled along the French Bund, continued into the Chinese Bund. Here he ran into a street juggler mystifying a large, tattered, odorous crowd. The juggler was barefoot and unkempt, thin and pock marked; yet the Great Herveen envied him. Here at least was a man who was exercising his art and whose ears rang with applause. The sight of him drove the Great Herveen to disregard Majors' instructions about keeping out of the International Settlement.

It was in the International Settlement that Herveen met Jimmy Wu. It was not, strictly speaking, a coincidence that he met Wu, because it was inevitable that Herveen should end up in Nanking Road in the Settlement. As well try to keep a born soldier away from a new and lively war, a Chinese away from fan-tan, or a Filipino away from a cock fight, as to keep Herveen off Nanking Road. Nanking Road is the artery in which the cosmopolitan pulse of Shanghai throbs most distinctly.

Nanking Road is thronged with purring motors, jogging, two-horse carriages, swarming rickshaws, chanting pack coolies; its sidewalks teem with rich Chinese in flowered silk, brisk Americans, bored Britishers, homesick Parisians, exiled Russians, roistering adventurers, suave worldly swindlers, upriver war lords in hiding; paunchy international financiers, soldiers of all nations but China to protect them, propagandists of all nations to confound them; the most pleasant, deadly, busy, luxuriously idle, rich, impoverished, mad, calm spot in China; and only remotely Chinese.

There is one part of Nanking Road that is pretty nearly Chinese, at least in its patronage. That part is the "New World"—a sort of Oriental Coney Island under a roof. Here, where country bumpkins laugh themselves double before distorted mirrors or pay a few perforated brass cash for donkey rides, where young bucks dine heavily on *yen hua* and sing-song girls entertain—here are theaters. Here are theaters in which flickering motion pictures from a strange country called *Mei-kwok* show cowboys shooting Indians; theaters in which classic Chinese drama goes on interminably; theaters which smack of the international; theaters which smell of the street fair, with Russian sword swallowers, Japanese acrobats and Hindu snake charmers. It was in front of the gaudy entrance to such a theater that the Great Herveen saw Jimmy Wu.

Jimmy Wu had been christened Wu Ching-lao. However, since he had been born in San Francisco Chinatown and was proud of his Americanism, he called himself Jimmy. For the same reason, now that he was back in the land of his ancestors, he wore a flaming tie and a tight fitting fawn colored coat that pinched his waist. A fuzzy, bulging cap added three inches to his short stature and stuck out as far as his protruding ears on both sides of his head. He puffed importantly on a long slender cigar. When he saw the Great Herveen he slapped him familiarly on the back and pumped his right hand excitedly for five minutes.

"WELL, well, what the hell!" exclaimed Jimmy Wu. "Ain't this a break, though? Who'd 'a' thought I'd be meeting up with the Great Herveen right here in Shanghai? Remember the last time we met, old boy? Damn near four years ago, I guess—back in California. I was managing that troupe of Chinese acrobats—the Flying Foochow Four. Remember? We played the same bill in Placerville, Grass Valley, Sonora—"

"Yes, I remember," replied the Great Herveen, with a slightly pinched expression.

To be reminded of the days when he played the tank towns and did not have a road show of his own recalled him painfully to the realization of the present, when he was again without a road show, his trunks scattered over a dozen degrees of latitude, and some vague threat of arrest pursuing him from Japan.

"I'm damn glad to see you, old boy," said Jimmy Wu, again slapping the Great Herveen on the back. "You're looking pretty spick. Getting along in the world, I'd say. That's the stuff. I'm doing pretty well myself. Got my own joint here. Raking in the shekels pretty fast. What are you doing out East, old boy?"

"I've been touring," said the Great Herveen, "with my own company."

"Well, well, what the hell!" exclaimed Jimmy Wu. "Of course, I remember now. Saw your billings. Got any open bookings for me?"

"The tour's over," said Herveen. "I broke up the company and sent them home."

"Just my luck," said Jimmy Wu. "I could use that act you used to do in Placerville, Grass Valley, Sonora—remember, old boy?"

"I remember," said the Great Herveen sadly.

"That trick where you used to shoot at a flock of eggs—blooie! blooie!—and out would come a bunch of ducks swimming around. Remember? Say, I could use that act. It would knock 'em dead. Why don't you let me put you on here for a month, just a short act—with those ducks?"

The Great Herveen's pale serious eyes lighted with something like hope and enthusiasm at the thought of appearing before an audience again. The light faded when he recalled that his paraphernalia was in alien hands in half a dozen cities.

"Can't do it," said the Great Herveen. "My duck tubs happen to be in Peking."

"That's all right, old boy," said Jimmy Wu. "I'll send for 'em.

The Great Herveen thought of the liens upon his trunks and decided he would not impart such personal information to this Americanized Oriental.

"Can't be done," said the Great Herveen. "Those duck tubs are pretty delicate. I couldn't trust anybody but myself to get them ready for shipment. Sorry."

"Tell you what," said Jimmy Wu.

"I'll pay your way to Peking to get 'em. Simple enough, old boy. Leave today, be back the end of the week. Put you on as headliner. Great stuff. I'll put an ad in the *China Press* and pull the American crowd. The Great Herveen. Great stuff. How about it, old boy?"

The Great Herveen was mentally calculating the extent of his resources. If Jimmy Wu wanted him badly enough to pay his way to Peking and back, the money Majors had given him in Tokyo would be just about enough to liquidate the lien on the Duck Tubs (complete with ducks) and possibly the Levitation Illusion. He would do it. He held out his hand to Jimmy Wu.

"That's a bargain," he said.

"Great stuff!" declared Jimmy Wu.

Twenty minutes later the Great Herveen was back in the French Concession. There was no further word from Majors at the Hotel du Marne, but the Great Herveen could not wait. He had to leave immediately if he were to return in time to open his show at the New World by the first of next week. He wrote a note explaining the situation, telling where he was going and when he would be back. He left it with the bespectacled Annamite halfcaste clerk to hand to Majors upon his arrival. That was mid-afternoon.

Much later in the afternoon, about *apéritif* time in the French Concession, a smallish, pale individual chewing gum and wearing yellow shoes walked into the Hotel du Marne in a very positive manner and demanded to see a man by the name of Herveen.

"Ah—you are Mr. Majors?" asked the halfcaste clerk, beaming.

The man with the yellow shoes hesitated only a fraction of a second.

"Sure, I'm Majors," he replied. "How did you know?"

"We have been expecting you," said the clerk, handing over an envelop. "Mr. Herveen this note left for you."

The man with the yellow shoes snatched the envelop, tore it open, read the enclosed lines. He looked up abruptly at the clerk.

"When did Herveen leave?" he demanded.

The clerk shrugged one shoulder vaguely.

"Two, maybe three, maybe four hours ago," he replied.

The man with the yellow shoes hurried from the hotel without another word.

In the early evening, another American arrived at the Hotel du Marne. He was a pleasantly bored looking youth, carelessly but not disreputably dressed. He pushed his straw hat back from his forehead and leaned easily against the desk as he asked for Herveen.

"Mr. Herveen is no longer descended at this hotel," said the halfcaste clerk. "He departed for Peking this afternoon."

"Peking?" The youth was startled out of his pleasant manner. "What the— Did he leave word for Majors?"

"Yes. He left a chit for Mr. Majors."

The youth looked relieved.

"All right, let's have it," he said, extending his hand.

"But I gave it to Mr. Majors this afternoon."

"Say, what is this? I'm Majors."

The halfcaste clerk smiled blandly as he shook his head categorically.

"Ah, no!" he said, continuing his smiling gesture of negation. "Pardon me, but you are not Mr. Majors. Mr. Majors is smaller than you. And thinner and paler. I gave Mr. Majors the chit—"

"You gave the chit to a man with very small, dark eyes?"

"Why—yes, sir. Mr. Majors had small, dark eyes."

"And a mouthful of gold teeth—here—when he smiled?"

"But—yes, I think so."

The bored youth was bored no longer. He swore long and efficiently, saying many uncomplimentary and even obscene things about a man named Forbison.

"Fool!" he fumed, producing his passport which he shoved under the surprised nose of the halfcaste clerk. "Four-eyed idiot! Look! That's my picture. The name is Majors. You gave that chit to a crook."

Extricating his nose from the passport, the clerk shrugged one shoulder vaguely. After all, this seemed a terrible fuss to make over a simple mistake of giving a note to the wrong man.

"How was I to know?" he asked simply. "He said he was Mr. Majors. I gave him the chit—"

"I got that the first time. What did he do with the chit?"

"He went away."

"Where? To Peking?"

"Perhaps. I do not know. I suppose the chit explained—"

"Damn the chit! Who went with Herveen?"

"To Peking? Alone, I have no doubt."

"But why? Who told him to go to Peking?"

"I'm sure I do not know." Again the vague shrug from the clerk. "I suppose it was the Chinese gentleman."

"What Chinese gentleman?"

"A Chinese, sir, dressed like an American touristic party, who left me a placard for some theater in the New World, which is in Nanking Road. See, this is the card, sir, but I will not put it up. I do not know this person."

Majors did not wait to hear more. He made a hasty exit, shouting for a rickshaw.

The halfcaste Annamite watched him with a puzzled stare. He removed his thick glasses, wiped them, put them back and saw a telegram in a wire rack at his side. He took down the telegram, held it close to his nose and deciphered the address: "Majors—" This was unfortunate. If he had only noticed it while Mr. Majors was still there—but of course it was too late now. And Mr. Majors had not left any forwarding address—neither of the Messrs. Majors. Could this telegram be important? The clerk looked cautiously over the tops of his spectacles, then quickly opened the telegram and read it.

SIMMS SEEN KOBE BOARDING SHIMONOSEKI EXPRESS BELIEVED HEADED CHINAWARD—DEERING

That didn't seem particularly important. At any rate, the clerk was taking no more chances on giving messages to the wrong Majors. And he was not going to be reproached for having failed to deliver the message, either. With long, yellow fingers he tore the telegram in half, in quarters, in eighths, in sixteenths . . .

MAJORS reached Peking, he estimated, as he left the train under the somber shadow of the Tartar Wall, about half a day after the Great Herveen. He congratulated himself that he had made such good time.

From Jimmy Wu, who received him effusively as a "friend of my old pal Herveen", Majors learned of Herveen's mission. He also learned that Herveen had barely caught the Nanking train that connects with the Pukow-Tientsin Express, that there was no other express for three days, that a steamer to Tientsin would probably get him within striking distance of Peking only after the magician had left. There seemed to be no way of catching him. Lack of roads ruled out the automobile.

"Better wait here, old boy," Jimmy Wu had said to Majors. "He'll be back, all right. I'm keeping his rabbit for him."

But Majors could not wait. Forbison was after Herveen, meaning either that there was collusion between the two, unknown to Majors, or that Forbison had some information regarding Herveen's possession of the radium loaded watch. Forbison had already shown himself pretty smart in tracing Herveen to Shanghai—obviously he had traced the Tokyo car to the dock, learned the name of the ship, its destination, and had found out from the ship's officers in Shanghai where Herveen had gone. Forbison was a worthy adversary.

Majors could not go to sleep in his tracks. He must beat Forbison to Herveen. He asked about a plane.

It was next day before Jimmy Wu found that his old pal General Sung was in town with a decrepit biplane once belonging to the Chihli armies. The general would not fly farther north than Kaifeng-fu, on account of some misunderstanding surrounding his departure from the Chihli armies; but from Kaifeng-fu Majors knew he could easily reach Cheng-chow and that the Peking Express from Hankow stopped here. So for five hundred miles he sat behind the moon faced, begoggled Chinese pilot as the plane skimmed over flat, brown country pimpled with grave mounds, squirming yellow rivers, frightened villages huddled within drab walls on treeless hills . . .

Arriving in Peking, Majors was faced with the problem of finding Herveen in a city of a million. Although a foreigner in China is as conspicuous as a naval uniform in Iowa, it is not impossible for a white man to hide in the old Manchu capital.

But Herveen was not hiding. The red headed magician was bent only upon rescuing his precious paraphernalia lost through the machinations of Fate, grasping hotelkeepers and an absconding manager. It did not occur to him that he was being pursued.

Majors knew all this. He also knew, as he passed through the Water Gate, that if he started at the first bar, which was the Wagons-Lits, and continued drinking and asking questions across the Legation Quarter and down the Glacis at least as far as the Grand Hotel de Pékin, he was bound to learn something about everybody who had been three hours in the city. It took him exactly fifty-five minutes and eight shots of King George and Tan-san to locate Herveen.

Majors found the Great Herveen registered at a small hotel on the Glacis, maintained by a darkish family with beards, Latin names and probably a submerged portion of Oriental blood. The dingy corridors echoed with an odor of cooking, through which the strains of garlic, saffron and olive oil rang loud and clear.

The Great Herveen was not in his room, the clerk said with a sniffle. He had been out almost since he arrived. There had been another gentleman calling for Mr. Herveen also. And telegrams—

"What other gentleman?" demanded Majors. "What's his name?"

The clerk did not know the other gentleman's name. Yes, he was rather small. Yes, he had several gold teeth.

"Did you tell him where to find Herveen?"

No, the clerk did not tell him. At that time he did not know. But those telegrams—a most peculiar thing. Every hotel in Peking had received one, all asking if Mr. Herveen were registered there. They had all been sent by a man in Tientsin named Simms.

"Did you tell Herveen about this?" Majors wanted to know.

"No," said the clerk. "The wire came after he had left the first time, and when he came back the second time the matter slipped my mind."

"Then he came back the second time? Where did he go?"

"To a godown in the Ginseng Sellers' *hutung*," said the clerk. "I remember the address because I wrote it down. It was No. 27. Mr. Herveen wanted me to send some coolies there to carry trunks—"

The clerk stopped and stared over Majors' shoulder.

"There's the gentleman I was—"

Majors whirled abruptly. He found himself facing J. K. Forbison.

Forbison was standing with his yellow shoes slightly apart, his hands in his coat pockets. His jaws were chewing slowly, with just a trace of contemptuous side motion. His lips formed a rhythmically shifting smile.

Before Majors had recovered from his surprise, Forbison had disappeared through the door. Majors followed. Night had fallen on the Glacis. The flickering lights of strangely mixed traffic flowed like a stream of fireflies under the great, four-legged *p'ailou* that straddled the road. Cries of wrangling coolies came on the parched wind that swept down the Glacis, laden with the dust of Gobi. But there was no sign of Forbison.

As Majors hesitated a moment in front of the hotel a dozen ricksha coolies sprang forward, the long shafts of their vehicles converging toward him like the spokes of a wheel. Majors considered for a brief moment getting a motor car, but discarded the idea almost immediately. The conception of hurry is one foreign to the Oriental mind, and probably half an hour would elapse between his call and the arrival of the car.

A red turbaned Sikh watchman stepped out, club upraised to beat off the rickshaw pullers clamoring after Majors' fare. Majors waved back the Sikh, stepped into the rickshaw of the huskiest puller of the lot, gave the address, tried to convey the notion of haste by a few halting syllables of Mandarin, a few more of pidgin English, and a convincing jingling of silver coins. Then he leaned back and left his fate in the hands—and legs—of the ragged, horse toothed coolie.

FOR perhaps five minutes Majors kept his eyes fixed on the shifting haunches of the ricksha puller, swinging easily between the shafts like twin shadows in the dim light of a candle-lantern affixed to one of the shafts. He had a growing impression that he was being followed, but decided that the feeling was merely the result of his summing up of Forbison's character. Forbison, he had concluded, was a coward and a sneak, not dangerous in open conflict, but to be feared where trickery was possible. He raised his head and looked about him.

He was in a street half choked by the procession of centuries of transportation. The studded wheels of donkey carts, the screaming wheels of barrows, the wire wheels of rickshaws rolled past. There was no sign of Forbison. There were only tattered beggar children running after the white man's rickshaw, crying, *"Pa-lao-ye!"* There were itinerant restaurateurs, with their stoves and larders dangling from the ends of shoulder poles, jogging by, shouting their wares. There were barrow men with water in wooden tubs; there was the carriage of some official, drawn by four horses, preceded by two breathless, uniformed runners; there were more barrow men with the city's sewage in slimy baskets; there was an ancient, squawking flivver; there was a ragged boy with a basket and bamboo rake, running hopefully after a Mongolian camel train. But there was no Forbison . . .

Majors' rickshaw puller turned off the street, darted into a dark, narrow lane, rounded a corner and stopped in front of a scarlet, brass bound door. Majors got out. He saw another rickshaw, empty, parked fifty feet farther up the lane. There were two half naked Chinese sleeping in the street beside the door. Majors knocked at the door of the godown.

A corpulent Chinese in a black silk skullcap admitted him to an anteroom, then resumed his seat at a table on which a game resembling dominoes was in progress. Two other Chinese sat with him, smoking burnished silver waterpipes. Majors inquired for a white man with red hair. The corpulent Chinese pointed.

Majors followed the indications, walked into a corridor out of sight of the anteroom, paused in front of another door. Noting that the door was slightly ajar, he pushed it cautiously open a few inches. He took off his straw hat, held it head high and advanced it into the opening.

Instantly the hat was torn from his hand and smashed to the floor by a heavy blow.

Majors leaped after his hat. He pounced upon the phantom that had swished across in front of him. He grappled a wriggling body. The door slammed behind him.

Glancing blows from some sort of club fell on his head and shoulders. He rolled over three times and ended with a knee on his assailant's chest, and one hand on his throat. The club thrashed ineffectually for a second, then dropped.

"Hello, Forbison," said Majors, when he had recovered his breath. "Have a nice trip?"

Forbison panted, scowled, but said nothing.

"I want that gun of yours," said Majors. "Stick your hands 'way up while I search you."

Forbison held up his hands obediently. Majors, astride him, began going through his pockets. Suddenly Forbison raised one knee sharply. Pain stabbed Majors through the groin. A moment of agonizing weakness wrung him like a rag. Perspiration poured from him like blood. Kaleidescopic darkness spun crazily before his eyes. A wave of sickness mounted in him. He struggled to ward off the blackness that surged upon him, won, regained control of himself in a few seconds. But by that time Forbison had wriggled free and was on his feet, covering Majors with his automatic.

"And now *you* stick 'em up," ordered Forbison. "And don't bother to yell. It won't do a bit of good. I've bought off the chinks in the front room. Stand up."

Slowly and painfully Majors got to his feet. Slowly he raised his hands. His face was a nauseous white.

Forbison produced a pair of handcuffs and manacled Majors' wrists behind his head. He stood off several steps to survey his handiwork, gun in hand, and reached into his pocket for a stick of chewing gum. When his jaws were working again he stepped behind Majors, poked the muzzle of his gun into the newspaperman's back and said:

"Now we'll pay a little call on the Great Herveen. Get going!"

Majors walked with slow, excruciating steps. The godown was dimly lighted by flares which were obscured from direct view by the piles of objects in storage. Majors could not help noticing the strange conglomeration of boxes, bales and furniture. Elaborate Chinese funeral equipment occupied much space —a great red catafalque with handles for a hundred pall bearers, brilliant banners, gaudy cars. Then they came upon the Great Herveen.

"Stop!" ordered Forbison, poking his gun a little harder against Majors' back. Majors obeyed.

The Great Herveen looked up. He did not seem to notice anything amiss in the entrance of these two men, in their unusual position, in the tortured pallor of Majors' face. In fact, the Great Herveen seemed to be interested in other things. He was extremely busy unpacking his monumental trunks, fitting together lengths of nickeled tubing to make some sort of framework. A drape of black velvet embroidered with golden stars was thrown carelessly over one of two bright red tubs. Without preliminary greeting the Great Herveen launched into a recitation of his grievances.

"You know what happened?" asked the Great Herveen, busy with his apparatus. "You know what the damned Chinaman did who was keeping my trunks and duck tubs? He ate the ducks. I can get some new ones in Shanghai but they won't be as good. The other ones had stage presence. They didn't quack at the wrong time. I'm afraid to look at the rest of this apparatus. You can't trust any one with taking care of valuable and delicate machinery like this—"

"Never mind the machinery," Forbison interrupted. "What we want to know is where's Medley Simms' watch?"

Herveen paused in unpacking long enough to smile broadly.

"I knew I'd fool you with that watch

trick," he said, with a touch of professional pride. "I saw you two snooping backstage, cocksure you knew how I did the Flight of Time. I decided I'd show you the hand was quicker than the eye, and do the trick a new way—by palming the watch."

"Well, where is it?"

"I had it palmed, all right," said the magician. "And I would have produced it from the pear, like I always do, if it hadn't been for that accident. And when Mr. Majors here rushed me away, I was a little upset, and I carried the watch away with me."

"You've got it now?" Forbison said eagerly.

THE Great Herveen seemed oblivious to the high tension that charged the atmosphere. He was smoothing out the wrinkles in a gold-and-blue coverlet under which the lady floated into midair in the Great Levitation Illusion. It may have been to hide his embarrassment that he looked the other way as he said:

"I had the watch in my pocket up to two hours ago. Then I—I happened to be a little short of money to redeem my trunks, so I pawned the watch."

"You pawned it?" Forbison stopped chewing gum. "Where?"

"At a Chinese hock shop a fellow told me about. I don't remember exactly where it was."

"But you've got the ticket?"

Again the Great Herveen paused, made a casual gesture of looking through his pockets, then resumed his examination of apparatus.

Somewhere a door closed.

"I seem to have misplaced the ticket," he said. "As a matter of fact, I probably threw it away—"

"You'll go back and find it."

"—since I didn't really expect to go back for it. It wasn't a very good watch. The Chinaman only gave me thirty dollars on it. It was a thick case, with a very thin watch in it, and it had some kind of a big lead gadget in the back. The Chinaman said I put it in to make him think the watch was made of heavy gold."

"Where is this gadget?"

"Why—I don't know," said the Great Herveen. "The Chinaman took it out. I guess I left it on the counter—unless—unless—"

"Look in your pocket!" ordered Forbison.

"Yes, here it is," said Herveen, producing a leaden disk, shaped like a large, thick lens.

"Bring it here!" ordered Forbison. "Drop it in my pocket."

"Don't!" It was Majors speaking for the first time since he had been marched down the godown handcuffed. "Don't give him that hunk of lead. It's worth a fortune. Forbison's a crook and is trying to steal it. Take my advice and run like hell, get to the American Legation somehow and tell them you've found the radium stolen from San Francisco last month. Run!"

"Stay where you are!" ordered Forbison. "One step, and I'll shoot. First, I'll wing your smart friend here, and then I'll plug you. I'll do it, too—for the same reason I loaded bullets into that phony pistol of yours in Tokyo. I've been paid for it, see? My boss is a guy in Frisco named Parsons. If either of you lives to see Simms again, you might tell him. He'll recognize the name. Parsons. Just tell him; the man he tried to welsh on in the radium steal . . . All right now, hand over that hunk of lead!"

"Don't do it!" said Majors.

Herveen looked from one face to the other. Some intimation that the situation was serious had begun to penetrate. The color faded from his face until his usually invisible eyebrows stood out in bold relief.

"I'll count three for you to bring it," said Forbison. "One—"

The Great Herveen did not need the other two. Quickly he stepped forward to place the lead disk in Forbison's outstretched left hand.

"All right, now step back. Hands over your head. Stand next to your smart friend there. And keep those hands high till I'm out of sight!"

Forbison backed away, grinning. His gold teeth gleamed in the halflight. His gaze and gun were leveled on the two helpless men—Majors, hurt and handcuffed; Herveen, paralyzed with bewildered fear.

Perspiration broke out afresh on Majors' forehead when he realized that a fortune was walking out of the godown. He began to swear under his breath. Suddenly he stopped.

A shadow had stepped up behind Forbison—a tall, husky, round shouldered shadow. Metal flashed. Flame blossomed briefly, roared and echoed through the godown. Forbison silently crumpled, staggered back, then fell forward.

The shadow moved into the light. Majors recognized the florid face and tiny mustache of Medley Simms. He gripped a revolver. A strip of white bandage showed from under his slouch hat. He stooped over, seized Forbison by the back of the collar and dragged him closer to the light.

Simms seemed to take no notice of either Majors or Herveen. He turned Forbison over on his side. A smile in which there was neither humor nor humanity crinkled his thin lips.

"I might have known you were one of Parsons' hirelings," he said, addressing the bleeding Forbison as though he were capable of hearing him, "although Parsons always had a damsite better men than you, up to now."

A look of wild savagery came into his eyes as he snatched the gun from Forbison's limp hand. He struck the unconscious man fiercely across the face until he bled, and flung the bloody gun across the godown. Then he found the precious lead disk in Forbison's pocket, wiped the blood from his fingers on the front of Forbison's shirt, put the lead disk carefully into his own wallet and stood up.

He brandished his own revolver in a curt gesture.

"And you with your mouth open, there!" he said, addressing Herveen. "You got anything to say?"

The Great Herveen, speechless, realized that he had been standing with his arms above his head. Nervously he lowered them to smooth his bushy red hair, but he said nothing.

Simms looked slowly about the room in smug satisfaction. His eyes dwelled lovingly upon the prostrate Forbison, returning to linger sneeringly upon the Great Herveen.

"I suppose I ought to knock you in the head, too, for tying up with these petty crooks," he said, "but you're such a damned cheap wizard, such a lousy specimen of man or magician, that it ain't worth my time. How the hell do you get by with such clumsy hocus-pocus? You sure bungled that watch trick in Tokyo—a blind man could see you palm that watch."

The Great Herveen closed his mouth. A flush of color crept into his cheeks. His Adam's Apple fluctuated as though he were about to reply to this slur on his art. Simms, however, was already backing away.

"Never mind the patter," said Simms. "I ain't got time to listen."

SIMMS backed into one of the Great Herveen's trunks. He swore, turned his head, then deliberately raised his foot to bring it down on the framework of nickeled tubing that Herveen had been erecting.

"Old stuff," sneered Simms. "Levitation. No self-respecting conjurer since Hermann uses that. And duck tubs! Good Lord, that's children's magic!"

Simms took a step out of his way to kick over the bright red tubs. Large, imitation eggs rolled out, and Simms took pains to crush them beneath his heel, one by one. They made a crackling, crunching noise.

As the fifth egg was being stepped

upon, a different sound was heard—not the smashing of a *papier mâché* egg, but a resonant, half metallic bang, the crash of collision between a large nickeled vase and Medley Simms' sneering face. The worm had arisen to pirouette! The magician's hidden spring of ire had been struck! The Great Herveen was on the rampage!

The pale, timid, awe struck, cowering Herveen was converted in an instant into a roaring, wrathful, red faced Herveen, armed and made strong by righteous indignation, meting out punishment to the disparager of his art and the destroyer of his tools.

Simms was overcome by the suddenness of the attack, swept off his feet by the fury and unexpected boldness of the transformed Herveen. The outraged magician had picked up the first weapons that came to hand. After hurling the metal vase, he seized a length of the tubing framework disjointed by Simms, wielding it as a club. His red hair sticking out in all directions, his eyes blazing, his arms working in a frenzy, the Great Herveen belabored, whacked, battered and flayed Medley Simms. His first stroke with the nickeled bar smashed Simms' right wrist, knocking the revolver from his hand. Herveen made no effort to pick up the gun, and Simms was kept off by a barrage of mad blows on his head, shoulders, back, arms.

At the onset Simms seemed unable to protect himself against the insane violence of the magician. His defense was beaten down, his counter-attacks were smashed before they got fairly under way. His efforts at self-protection became weaker and more ineffectual. At last, battered, bleeding and gasping, he stumbled and fell at Majors' feet. Majors promptly sat on him. Simms did not move.

The Great Herveen, disheveled and out of breath, dropped his nickeled bar. With both hands he compressed his stubborn hair.

"I've got a good notion to get the police," he said, looking at Simms. "Can I have a man arrested in China for coming in here and smashing my apparatus like that?"

"Listen," said Majors. "The first thing you do is to rescue that lead disk from Simms' wallet and get it to some place where it will be safe. It's got a hundred thousand bucks worth of radium in it."

"My Gawd!" said the Great Herveen.

"And the second thing will be to get a locksmith or somebody who can get these cuffs off my wrists, and a doctor who can look at Mr. Forbison there."

Herveen took a step nearer.

"You don't need a locksmith for those cuffs," he said. "Don't look." In a few seconds he had sprung the handcuffs open. "Easy," he commented. "They're cheap cuffs."

Majors took the shackles from Herveen and snapped them about the wrists of Simms.

"I'm not sure what the American Consular courts in China can do about a crime committed in California," said Majors, "but from the looks of Mr. Forbison there, they can do something about a crime committed in China. We'll go to the Legation—"

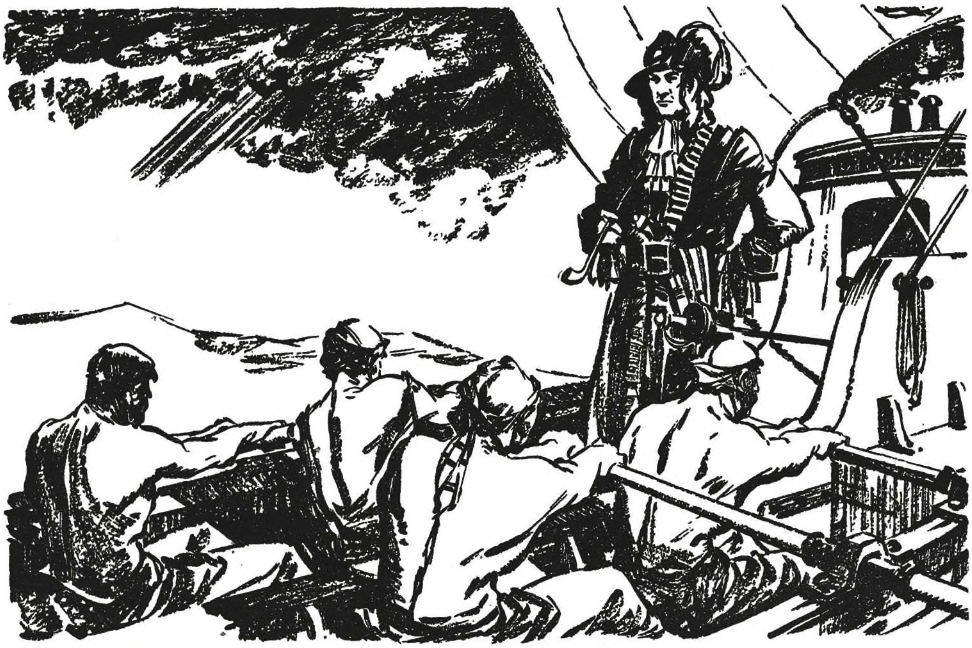
"I'm afraid I won't have time, Mr. Majors," said the Great Herveen. "I'll have to be getting back to Shanghai. My act is booked to open there the first of the week. I'll have to get some new ducks and get some new eggs made. I wonder, Mr. Majors, if you could advance me, say fifty dollars Mex. to have some new *papier mâché* eggs made up for my duck tubs. I could pay you back as soon as I start drawing my salary from Jimmy Wu."

Majors had been fingering the lead disk he had just removed from Medley Simms' wallet. He looked up at the Great Herveen with a strange expression about the corners of his mouth.

"*Papier mâché* eggs?" he exclaimed. "Say, get yourself some goldplated eggs set with rhinestones—and send me the bill. I'll stake you!"

## A Story of O'Brien, Buccaneer

### By H. BEDFORD-JONES



# For GLORY and the MAIN

THEIR Majesties' ship *Bristol*, decidedly in a bad way. She was fourth rate, forty-two guns, was by no means new, for she had been launched at Portsmouth under Cromwell in 1653, and was now forty years old almost to a day, as proved by the Navy List.

The morning had broken in warm splendor, as it is so apt to do between the Canaries and the African coast, but it found Captain the Hon. Sir Philip Boteler in a devilish bad humor on his wakening. A heavyset and somewhat nearsighted man who loved the bottle and a good horse rather than the sea, Sir Philip was hugely disgusted with the alleged life of glory that had beckoned when, on a drunken wager, influence at court appointed him to a good ship and he set forth to better the exploits of Clowdisley Shovell in six months' time.

He had every right to be disgusted on this sunny morning. Only the previous afternoon he had come up with two French privateers who refused to run or even to strike, as he had a right to exact of all who met the blue flag. Against the urging of his officers, Sir

Philip started to give the "mounseers" a hot lesson—with the result foreseen by his officers, who were well aware what would happen when forty-two culverins tried distance against a dozen twenty-four-pound guns, ably manned by Malouins who knew their business. Luckily for Sir Philip, a black squall broke about sunset and saved him from disgrace, but it also settled his ship, and sent him to bed a most seasick gentleman.

He arose to a warm and sunny morning, quaffed his pint of Canary and ordered his officers admitted to his presence. His manservant, after adjusting his wig properly, informed him that there were no officers except Lieutenant Houghton, in the sickbay with a smashed leg, but the master gunner was waiting.

"Sink me!" exclaimed Sir Philip in dismay. "Have him in, have him in! Good morning, Master Gunner. What's this I hear, man? No officers?"

"True enough, Sir Philip," said the brawny, dour officer. "None but me and Lieutenant Houghton, your Worship. The master was swept off the for'ard deck when the squall hit us, and the chaplain was hit at the last broadside—"

"Damme and sink me!" said Sir Philip. "They're lucky. What a night I've had! Never so devilish sick in my life. Sick, d'ye hear? Not ill—sick. What's that paper ye have there?"

"Casualty list, your Worship," said the master gunner. "Out of a hundred and twenty fit men, we've not forty left. Near as we can reckon, there were some two score killed during the fighting, but the storm was worse. Half of them that are left be talking mutiny. They're out o' that pressed lot we took aboard—"

"Good!" said Sir Philip with energy. "Pick out the chief men and have them triced up at the capstan and given thirty lashes. Damme and sink me! I'll teach these dogs the meaning of discipline!"

"Who's to do it, sir?" said the master gunner bluntly. "Besides, there's no capstan. The bosun's dead, and his mate missing. The men do say there's been too much tricing up already, your Worship. Since that foul mouthed boy was doused from the yardarm and took by a shark, they've been muttering a great deal. But I came to tell ye, sir, there's a ship in sight."

"Signal her, then," ordered Sir Philip. "Damme, must I do everything aboard this ship?"

"She's a Sallee rover, sir, by the cut of her jib," said the other dourly. "We're in a dead calm, and she be coming up with her sweeps, but slow."

Sir Philip bounced out of bed. The wine had gone to his empty stomach.

"So that's her game, eh?" he roared. "Damme! Strike the wounded lion, will she? I'll teach the cursed heathen what a king's ship is like! Sallee rover, is she? Muster all hands and double-shot the guns—"

"Your Worship," said the other desperately, "there's eight foot of water in the hold, the rigging is gone, and half the guns are out o' service. We've no powder. We had to flood the powder room, you remember, when fire broke out—"

Sir Philip reached for his breeches.

"Muskets and cold steel, then!" he shouted. "Get to work, ye damned runagate! I'll be up in two minutes, and let me find things in order or I'll know the reason why!"

The master gunner retired, talking to himself in no pious fashion.

Sir Philip, ever the neatest of men, arrayed himself carefully. He had the Garter, which neither Princess Anne nor hard fighting could get for Marlborough, and he adjusted the gemmed star carefully. After cuffing his manservant well for not putting fresh lace at his wrists, he buckled on his sword and sallied forth, breathing valiant scorn of all Barbary rovers.

When he stepped into the warm sunlight on deck, a glass beneath his arm, he came to a stupefied halt. It is true that he had drunk well the previous afternoon, and had been very sick all the night; now he saw for the first time what Frenchmen and squall could do to a fine king's frigate, and the sight simply paralyzed him.

Not a scrap of canvas or rigging was left to greet his eyes. The topmasts were gone, and so were the main and foremasts, close to the deck. The gilded superstructure above the poop was gone. The bulwarks were a mass of shattered splinters, to which a few scraps of the waistcloths still clung. Guns were made fast any way, in and out of ports—where any ports remained. The men, half naked, sprawled about in the sunlight, insolently disregarding the splendid apparition on the quarterdeck.

Sir Philip focused his glass as the master gunner came up to him.

"So that's a Barbary galley, is it?" he asked.

"A half galley, your Worship," said the one remaining officer. "A galley has three masts. She has but two—and has been knocked about herself, lately."

True enough. The galley was creeping down the bowl of the sea like a wounded thing, her half dozen sweeps glittering in the sunlight. There was a slow, heavy swell running, but not a breath of wind. The master gunner spoke suddenly, his voice sharp.

"Look! God's love, sir—look to the east'ard!"

Sir Philip knew the sun rose in the east, and turned in that direction. Against the sun dazzle he could see nothing.

"Well? What is it?" he demanded testily.

"Two ships." The gunner spoke hoarsely, and snatched the glass from him; having been at work all that night, the man showed slight respect. "We're done, sir. Yonder be two more o' them damned rovers, and one a big ship, too."

Sir Philip licked his lips and, not knowing what to say or do, kept quiet. He fingered his lip uneasily, thinking of the precious freight he had taken aboard at the Gambia River fort—the gold dust and ivory for London.

"Now we be all slaves and that's the end on it," said the master gunner.

"Slaves?" said Sir Philip, blinking at the word.

"Aye." The other faced him bitterly. "Slaves to the heathen Moors, all of us; slaves, to be pulling sweeps or sweating blood under the lash!"

"Why, damme!" exclaimed Sir Philip in astonishment. "Ye talk as if 'twere my fault. Mind your respect, my man. Nay, at worst we'll buy our safety with the Guinea freight."

The other laughed harshly.

"Buy? They'll take that and all else."

Turning, the master gunner descended to the waist and assembled the scowling men. He pointed out the threatening dangers, lashed them with his tongue, received sullen oaths and shrill laughs for response. One and all had the same answer, with cutlasses in hand to enforce the word.

"What use fighting? We be done for, one and all, wi' that swine on the quarterdeck. To hell with him and you too. No slavery among the Moors is worse than slavery here."

When Sir Philip comprehended the situation and began to rage among them, one man laughed and knocked the little sword out of his hand, and buffeted him across the face. Sir Philip went back to his quarterdeck, and did well to save his neck from these men who hated him for what he was and what he was not; which, in all truth, was a great deal.

Meantime, the half-galley had crawled up close, and a man stood up to hail them in the bow—a man with graying yellow hair, and sharp blue eyes, and his left arm in a sling. That blue seaman's eye of his needed no recounting of the *Bristol's* story.

"Ahoy, there!" came the English words, so that Sir Philip and all his men leaped to the sound of them. "Lay out your fenders! I'm coming alongside. Stand by to catch a line."

**HE STEPPED** to the shattered frigate's deck, a man slender, straight as the rapier at his side, and when his gaze fell upon the wondering, mutinous men around, they fell back hastily and gave Sir Philip passage.

"What's this, what's this? You're no Barbary pirate?" cried Sir Philip hastily. The other broke into a laugh.

"So my rig deceived you, eh? Small wonder. I'm James O'Brien, late of the Irish Brigade and elsewhere; Colonel James O'Brien, at your service. The Moors took my ship, so I took one of theirs and got away from Sallee."

"I'm glad to have the honor, sir," said Sir Philip with dignity. "I am Captain the Honorable Sir Philip Boteler. If you'll descend to the cabin and enjoy a glass of wine—"

"Faith, we'll be descending to hell if we stand on ceremony!" cut in O'Brien sharply. "You see those craft coming up? Boteler, eh? You're from that branch of the Ormond Butlers that went over to the Dutchman—aye, I remember. Well, are you ready to fight?"

"Fight?" gasped Sir Philip, and his jaw sagged. "I—we've nothing to fight with!" he said querulously. "Our men gone, only these mutinous dogs remaining. Guns out of service. A wreck. And I've got gold dust and ivory below, from the Guinea forts."

O'Brien whistled at this, sized up the man swiftly, and nodded. He looked at the master gunner, who stood by.

"Your rank?"

"Master gunner, sir."

O'Brien glanced at the men, who had crowded about to hear, and ignored Sir Philip.

"Listen, all of you," he said curtly. "I've thirty men aboard there, plenty of powder and shot, nothing but small guns; my galley is knocked about, but her rigging's sound. We've just one chance, my lads—and that's to fight. Yonder's a half-galley like mine, and a fine large galley, the best in their fleet, probably full of plunder and slaves, for they're just in from cruising. What d'ye say? Sling a dozen of these culverins aboard my galley, with shot to match. Pile aboard and lend my men a hand. If ye'd seen the slaves in Barbary as I have, ye'd fight a way through hell to avoid being taken."

"One moment, sir!" Stepping forward, Sir Philip faced O'Brien angrily. "I don't know who ye may be," he said, "but a Jacobite by your own word. You'll kindly remember this is a royal ship of their Majesties, and you can not order my men and guns—"

O'Brien looked him in the eyes.

"By your own name," he said, "you're one of a scoundrel family that deserted their own king and took money from the Dutchman. And you'll kindly remember that we're all Christian men here, in bad straits, and should stand together."

Sir Philip purpled with rage.

"Damme and sink me, sir! You're a rogue and a vagabond, a rascally Jacobite, and if there are orders to be given here, I'll give them, d'ye understand! You're standing on my deck, I'd have you know."

O'Brien bowed to him, with a laughing grace that angered him the more, and then turned. Over the broken rail had come half a dozen more men from the galley, led by a tall, saturnine man in black velvet. O'Brien beckoned this latter.

"M. le Vicomte de St. Rocher," he said, languidly, "I'd have you meet the captain of this vessel, no less than the Honorable Sir Philip Boteler." A note of steel leaped suddenly in his voice. "Take him, men!"

Two of his men darted forward, and next instant Boteler was gripped by each arm and held fast. He swore at his own irresolute men, at his gunner, at the laughing St. Rocher and O'Brien; then the last named shrugged disdainfully and swung about.

"This is now my ship, lads!" he cried. "You're done wi' the king's service; you've taken service with me! Master

Gunner, will ye take my orders in this pinch?"

"Aye, sir," said the master gunner stoutly. "But I'll ship with no buccaneer, if that's your meaning."

O'Brien clapped him on the shoulder.

"Good man! True man! I'll have none that's false to his oath, egad! Get to work and rig shears; sling a dozen culverins aboard me. St. Rocher, back with you and dump overboard some of those useless old guns of ours and get the culverins rigged. Quick, men! Look alive, for there's not a minute to waste."

The master gunner bawled at the frigate's men, who gave a cheer and then fell to work with a will.

"Master, what'll we do with 'un?" said one of the two holding Boteler.

O'Brien glanced at the latter, and there was a gray, chill look in his face. He waved the men away, took Boteler by the arm and gently urged him across the deck to the farther rail.

"Hark you, Philip Boteler! God forgive you, I know well that you're the Ormond Butler who betrayed Lord Burke's regiment to the enemy, after Boyne Water, and got you a title and a place at court by your damned treachery. Aye, turn white, you blackguard!"

There came toward them a tall, gaunt man, gray of hair but with O'Brien's bright blue and eager eyes. O'Brien beckoned him.

"Phelim, you're fresh from long years of slavery, so you've not heard of this man. Sir Philip, this is my brother Phelim. Look you, Phelim, at one of the Butlers who betrayed a regiment of horse and got him a title by it! Get below, you damned rogue—out of sight!"

Sir Philip scuttled away, in no little fear.

"Come, Phelim—" and O'Brien led the way to where the master gunner was at work with the hastily rigged shears. "Take charge of this ship. Master Gunner, here's your captain; fight your own king's ship! I'll give you a dozen men. Work those of the guns you can fight—"

"We've no powder," said the gunner.

"Get some from aboard us, we've lashings of it. Are those wounded men I hear calling from below? Get 'em up. We've wounded men too, and by the saints, they're fighting still! Look alive, man!" He turned. "Phelim, pick your men and quick about it. Are ye suited?"

"Aye," said Phelim, squinting at the approaching ships. "And what if they lay us aboard? They'll have ten men to our one, Jack."

O'Brien nodded.

"Double-shot every gun you can bring to bear, Phelim; empty 'em into the half-galley yonder as she comes up. Not a shot into the big one, mind! I want her for my own. You know their tongue, so shout at them in Arabic that they'll have quarter if they surrender—"

"Devil take you, Jack! You talk as if they were striking to you now!"

O'Brien laughed.

"What? D'ye think I'd talk as though anything else would happen? If they get aboard here, defend the quarterdeck with the swivel guns and cold steel. And every shot into the smaller one, but hold your fire until I begin. Understand?"

Phelim nodded and went to pick his dozen men.

Both ships were in a fever of activity. As the culverins were swung aboard the galley, St. Rocher got the carriages lashed into place; powder was broken out, shot was laid ready. The two approaching rovers were now not a mile away. The smaller was like O'Brien's captured craft; the larger was a splendid craft, a hundred and sixty feet in length, her thirty-five banks of oars flashing with precision; but the smaller ship was in the lead. They were angling out slightly, to come on either side of the two craft lying together, helpless before them.

Here, as O'Brien well knew, was the making or breaking of his entire future. He had jerked his few remaining men out of Moorish hands, but shot had played sad havoc with his captured galley; and any king's ship that came upon him would gobble him up and hang him for the buccaneer he had been. By this time, he knew, word of him had spread far abroad. Beat off these two rovers he might, with small trouble; but he must do more than beat them off. They came from Sallee, were in search of him, so he could not hope to trick them.

Standing there watching, he swiftly made up his mind what they would do, and what he must do.

"St. Rocher! Ready for a gamble, old friend?"

The Frenchman laughed.

"Ready enough, Jack."

O'Brien swiftly told what was in his mind, and St. Rocher whistled thoughtfully.

"*Diantre!* I thought you meant to lay out and fight with the heavy guns. We'd be throwing away all our advantage—"

"Aye, to beat them off. What use in casting dice unless you can throw a double main?"

"Right!" The other chuckled. "You have luck at that, I grant. Agreed, then. We stake everything on the work of a minute."

"Faith, it's not for the first time," said O'Brien, his eyes dancing. "To work, then!"

As though to emphasize his words, a bow chaser blazed out from the smaller craft in the lead, and before the report reached them the ball whistled overhead.

St. Rocher, a skilled artillerist in the old days, sent his voice blaring down the deck. The *Bristol* lay with her stern to the oncoming rovers, O'Brien's galley on her larboard side. Now the lines were cast off and the galley worked ahead of her a little, and turned so that her starboard broadside came full to bear, as though she were about to cross the bows of the frigate; but she lay there motionless.

Swiftly the culverins were shifted, rolled across on their carriages. Ten had come aboard, and all of these were double-shotted, laid along her starboard rail. St. Rocher picked his gunners, sent two to each gun, one man with match alight.

"Every other man to the oars," commanded O'Brien. "Double bank them. Starboard sweeps only; larboard sweeps trailing until I give the word to let go."

So they waited, and presently O'Brien's pulses leaped, perceiving he had guessed aright. The large galley was reaching out to come alongside the frigate and board from her starboard quarter. The half-galley was coming straight in, to lie alongside that of O'Brien.

A smile touched his lips as he stood watching. The men were at the oars, at the guns, every eye fastened upon him, St. Rocher awaiting the word to fire. Now the half-galley was almost under the frigate's quarter, yelling men clustered thick about her rail, oars driving her ahead rapidly.

O'Brien lifted his hand.

The galley rocked and reeled; a white cloud vomited from her rail. O'Brien's voice pierced through the smoke, and the oars dipped, surged, swung her head around. Then came a crash of guns from the frigate, gun after gun in a ragged broadside, shot hurtling down into the corsair.

The galley swung. The double banks were abandoned, her larboard sweeps bit at the water. Screams and yells arose through the smoke. O'Brien spoke to the helmsman beside him. Swiftly spinning about, the galley gathered way, burst through the smoke-cloud dead ahead of her, the half-galley was drifting in under the high side of the frigate.

"Ready, men! Ready and 'ware shock!" shouted O'Brien.

Fusils banged out feebly from the corsair, one of her guns vomited vain smoke and flame. A frightful chorus of yells arose from her crowded decks when O'Brien's prow came driving straight for her, and then lifted in a surge as the oars hurled her forward. A roaring crash, one terrific shock that flung half the men sprawling—another shock as the corsair was smashed against the high side of the frigate. Caught thus, she was instantly crushed like an eggshell.

"Back, starboard oars!" rang O'Brien's voice, and St. Rocher repeated the order from the bow. Then he shouted shrilly: "We're done, Jack! Bows all stove in—"

"Give way!" ordered O'Brien, regardless.

Her men torn by that double storm of shot, her sides crushed and stove in, the corsair drifted on a little way past the frigate; O'Brien looked back to see her going down fast, men in the water or clutching at the side of the *Bristol.* Then he faced around, as his own craft, rapidly going down by the head, came in past the frigate's stern.

The large galley was just swinging in, flinging grappling irons, oars trailing, the excited crew crowded along her larboard rail to leap aboard the frigate as she closed.

"Way enough!" shouted O'Brien. "Board her, lads—we must take her or swim!"

The broken hull was settling under them as they surged in alongside, with a crash of snapping oar blades. Everything had been staked on the work of a moment, indeed. O'Brien saw his men pouring up over the side of the corsair, and he followed them, two of the men helping him. And, when he came over the rail and got out his rapier in his one good hand, St. Rocher's headlong rush had split the crowded Moslems asunder.

The rest was work; hard, driving butcher's work under the tropic sun. It was not ended until Phelim, from the frigate's rail above, emptied two swivel guns into the massed Moors and then led his dozen men down to smite them in rear.

After this, however, it was quickly finished.

* * *

UNDER a blazing noonday sun, with a light breeze springing up from the north, O'Brien sat beneath an awning of canvas and took stock of his winnings.

He was undisputed master of the Bristol, on whose quarterdeck he sat, comfortably smoking one of Boteler's pipes; it was his first taste of tobacco in many weeks. He had a frigate, but she was in such deplorable condition that he could make no use of her. St. Rocher was now busy breaking out the gold dust and ivory and stowing it aboard the galley.

In the bow of the frigate were crowded some three score Arabs and renegades—all that remained of above three hundred men on the two corsairs. In the waist, delighted with their freedom, moved as many liberated slaves, with over a score of seamen captured by the rover and destined to the Barbary slave barracks. O'Brien looked at the splendid galley alongside, and his pulse quickened at the size and lines of her. Phelim, who had been making an inspection and interrogating the prisoners and freed slaves, strode up and dropped on the deck in the shade beside his brother.

"It's a wild divil ye are, Shamus, and with the divil's own luck!" he observed admiringly. "Stuffed with plunder, she is; took an Indiaman off Biscay, and most of those poor souls yonder are from aboard her. There's a rich lading, but she's out of water and has poor provisions."

"Which can be remedied from this frigate," said O'Brien. "Eighteen guns, eh?"

"All fine brass culverins out of Spanish ships," and Phelim nodded. "I remember having heard of her among the Moors; their newest and proudest craft. What's your intent with her?"

O'Brien chuckled.

"Take her to the Main and go adventuring. The Spanish have galleys on the coast; why should not a buccaneer have oars? Faith, it's an idea."

"Hm!" grunted Phelim. "Shamus, I'll be frank with you. I'm for Ireland and the old place again beyond Kinsale. Does it mislike you?"

"It's not for me, Phelim. If Ireland calls you, well and good. You're safe there; and you can go with jewels out of Morocco and gold dust out of Guinea to load you down. God love you! After years of slavery, go back and be a fine old Irish gentleman! Me, I'll live and die adventuring."

"Agreed, then," said Phelim, obviously relieved. "Now, as to crew: out of your men, twenty-six remain; from this frigate's crew, thirty including wounded. Ten of the captives will sign with us, and all the freed slaves—"

"Don't want 'em," intervened O'Brien. "No Greeks or Levantines, thanks."

"There are thirty good stock, French and English, then. That gives us full ninety men, enough to go adventuring."

"To hell and back," said O'Brien, with a glance at the horizon. "And sooner than any one here thinks, most like. Will ye do me a favor, Phelim? Get all our men aboard the galley, arrange stations, pick squads to load aboard water, powder and stores from the frigate. And do it on the jump."

"Eh?" Phelim stared at him. "Art in earnest?"

"Deadly earnest," said O'Brien, and his tone brooked no protest. Phelim cursed, then rose and stalked away. "St. Rocher! Drop everything and come here."

The saturnine St. Rocher swaggered up. O'Brien indicated the galley.

"My friend, d'ye see she's heavy laden, probably foul from long cruising? And the other craft ran away from her getting here, if you remember."

"True," said St. Rocher, perplexed.

"Well, think it over," said O'Brien with a grim smile. "You'll see the reason soon enough. Phelim's getting the men aboard her. Those prisoners are tied?"

"Aye, their arms at least."

"Leave 'em so. Where's that damned traitor Boteler?"

"Sulking in the main cabin."

"I'm off to see him. Get aboard our galley, pick out your gun crews, get ready for action."

"Eh? Man, are you mad?" exclaimed St. Rocher.

"Aye. Send twenty of those king's men back aboard here. And send me that master gunner."

St. Rocher turned to obey. He swept a puzzled glance about the ship, about the horizon—and then he was gone in a flash. O'Brien smiled, and was still smiling when the master gunner stood before him and saluted.

"You want me, your Worship?"

"Yes," said O'Brien. "You're a true man. I'm giving you this ship, which ye can work into the Canaries. You'll have some of the freed slaves, some of the rescued prisoners, and all the Moors yonder."

A flash of joy lighted the dour features of the seaman.

"God bless you, Master O'Brien!" he exclaimed. O'Brien cut him short and pointed to the western sea rim.

"The breeze is freshening. Look what's coming up with the wind."

The other looked, then sprang to the bulwark and took a longer look. Only O'Brien, of all those aboard the two craft, had noticed the three white specks.

"Lord, sir!" said the other, rejoining him with wondering eyes. "Ye know?"

"Aye. King's ships. Do they look like it to you?"

"Sure enough, your Worship. We had orders to join the squadron at the Canaries—we went to the Gambia River fort, and were to join up at the Canaries—"

"Your captain is new to the fleet?"

The master gunner spat disgustedly. "He never seen a ship afore, sir. Appointed out of the court, he was, and came aboard the day we sailed. Junior captain, he was, but old Cap'n Delancey died two days out, and it's his fault we're in this shape. What them Admiralty lords can be about—"

O'Brien's face cleared.

"D'ye know what those ships are?"

"Aye, sir. The *St. Michael*, 96, the *Victory*, 84, and the old *Unicorne*. She be going out o' commission. Laid down in '33, she was."

"Right." O'Brien stood up suddenly. "Master Gunner, you know the navy usage. Stand by me, give me the right advice; and afterward, tell that I forced you into it. Give me your word?"

"Not to fight British ships, your Worship!"

"Upon my honor, no. Merely to save myself and my galley and men—and leave you to take this frigate in. Agreed?"

"Agreed, sir."

"Then, from this moment I'm your captain—remember that!"

"Aye, sir. Shall I prepare a salute, navy style?"

"Yes. A score of your old men are coming aboard from my ship. Take charge."

O'Brien strode aft, well assured that he could trust this man's simple honor. Also, he was well assured that his one slim chance of escape lay in sheerest audacity. Nothing else could avail him now. Colonel James O'Brien was under ban and arrière ban of British law, until King James came into his own again and, if caught, his head was forfeit.

And Colonel James O'Brien was well content to accept the gamble.

He came into the main cabin where the stoutish Sir Philip sat over biscuit and a decanter of port, deserted even by his manservant. O'Brien wasted no words on the man, who was half drunk already. Jerking Sir Philip to his feet, he drove in his fist to the heavy jaw, and let the other crash down. In three minutes Sir Philip was trussed hand and foot, a napkin stuffed into his mouth, and rolled under a bunk.

Some fifteen minutes later O'Brien came out on the quarterdeck. The three ships were within half a mile, bringing a smart breeze with them; already sail was being taken in. The blue flag was going up on the stump of the *Bristol's* main.

"St. Rocher! Attend me!"

It was a new O'Brien who met the astonished gaze of all. He had found garments that fitted passably, wore Sir Philip's dress hat, and the great jewel of the Garter blazed on his breast. Guns were speaking from the huge *St. Michael*, and the master gunner came quickly to him.

"Odd or even, your Worship?"

"Eh? What mean you?" said O'Brien.

"Reply to the signal, sir. Navy custom. Even number if disaster has happened—"

"Does this look like disaster?" O'Brien laughed. "Odd number!"

Three guns boomed out from the waist. Five replied from the ship of the line, and again three from the *Bristol*. O'Brien turned to St. Rocher, spoke swiftly.

"We've a bare chance. Be ready to go aboard her with me. Unless we can hold 'em off until night and then slip away with the galley, we're lost. Understand? Warn Phelim—he seems busy as the devil aboard the galley. We've sunk two Moors and captured one. Master Gunner!"

"Aye, sir!"

"Those spars from the sunken galleys are pounding under the counter. Get 'em fished up and start to work putting jury rig on this ship. St. Rocher will send more men to help you from the galley."

St. Rocher strode away. As the wounded lieutenant, the sole other surviving officer of the *Bristol*, was below decks with the worst of the wounded, O'Brien found his coast clear enough. Now the *St. Michael* came under the stern, luffed smartly, and three cheers went up from her crowded decks and rigging. A hail came from her quarterdeck.

"What ship is that?"

"The *Bristol*, Captain Sir Philip Boteler," returned O'Brien.

"Compliments of Sir Clowdisley Shovell, and will ye send a boat aboard?"

"Compliments of Captain Boteler, and why the devil can't ye see I haven't a boat left?"

There was a burst of laughter from the great ship.

"Sending a boat for Captain Boteler. Do ye need help?"

"I may look it but I don't need it," shouted O'Brien. More laughter from the other ship, and as she drew off, her barge was smartly lowered and manned.

"You don't talk like a navy captain," said St. Rocher. O'Brien chuckled.

"Faith, didn't I get 'em laughing? And that's half the battle. Stick close, now. And mind, you were a prisoner aboard the galley and I rescued you. Lord, Lord! I hate to be lying about it all—but it's neck or nothing. Mind, St. Rocher, your three Moors came upon us as we lay disabled. Ye know nothing about what happened to us yesterday."

"You're devilish confused, but I get the drift," and the Frenchman smiled. O'Brien went to the rail, nearest and above the long galley.

"Phelim! Shoot any man that tries to communicate with the ships, ye understand? We must have until night. Get your hands aboard with sunset, if I'm not back."

Phelim waved his arm in comprehension.

The barge came under the counter and, as the *Bristol* had no gangway left, O'Brien went down to her in a sling, the lieutenant in command catching him and wringing his unhurt hand.

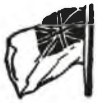
"Well fought, sir, well fought! You've overcome her, eh?"

"Overcome what?" said O'Brien in disdain. "That galley yonder? Faith, we took her, and sunk two more of the rascals, after two Frenchmen had pounded us to a hulk. Coming, St. Rocher? That's right. Who's your squadron commander — Sir Clowdisley Shovell? The same who broke the French fleet at Barfleur last year?"

"Aye, sir, and proud he'll be of this day's work!" said the garrulous lieutenant. "We've been on station the past six months, and not a shot fired. What news from home?"

"None," said O'Brien, and was silent for the rest of the journey to the *St. Michael.*

So he came into the very maw of the lion.



SIR Clowdisley Shovell, then rear admiral of the blue and hero of the British navy, was a quiet, sharp eyed man of forty-three. He sat in his cabin with his captains and, while the decanters passed around the table and long clay pipes filled the place with smoke, heard O'Brien's tale with obvious delight. St. Rocher, welcomed by all as a rescued captive, was made thoroughly at his ease; and when O'Brien's one fear that some of these men might know Sir Philip Boteler by sight had passed, he relaxed and began to enjoy himself.

The company, for their part, enjoyed O'Brien immensely. He noted that, when the health of their Majesties was drunk, more than one of those present unostentatiously passed the wine glass "over the water", and that these same men eyed him with a curious restraint. One of them plumped out the question at him, presently.

"Sir Philip, did ye not have some share in the Irish war? I seem to recall the name."

O'Brien's eyes twinkled.

"Faith," he exclaimed, "you couldn't travel a league in Ireland without hearing the name of Butler damned a dozen ways and spelled in as many! It's like the name of O'Brien in that respect."

"You must pardon our interest, Sir Philip," said the admiral. "You see, we had letters stating merely that you had been appointed to the Navy List and were to join us at the Canaries. Unluckily, we haven't had the honor of meeting you before this."

"That's your loss and my own, then," said O'Brien gaily.

He made light of the *Bristol's* huge

losses, since he did not desire Shovell to send a complement of men aboard her, and glossed over the matter excellently.

"It's odd you should mention the name of O'Brien," said the admiral, after arranging that the *Bristol* should be worked into the Canaries with her prize, where the squadron would meet her. "We've had orders regarding one of that name—a most pestilent rogue who's turned buccaneer."

"Aye, sir?" said O'Brien with interest. "In these parts?"

"We're warned to look out for him. A fellow of ability, they say, who probably fancies himself another Prince Rupert, being a Jacobite. All rank scoundrels, these Jacobites," and the eyes of Shovell twinkled at his officers. "Well, this O'Brien is to be hanged, gentleman or not, when he's caught; that's settled on already. He's played the Dons a dirty trick or two, and we spoke to a Spaniard the other day bound for Santa Cruz, where they think O'Brien may show up. This Don is going to cruise off Teneriffe a whole month, seeking filibusters in general and O'Brien in particular."

O'Brien's blue eyes sparkled.

"Yes?" he prompted. "A Spanish admiral?"

"Hardly, yet prouder than any," and the admiral laughed. "He's the Duke of Torres or some such name; damme if I recall it. By the way, shall I give ye a letter to the governor at Santa Cruz? He's a touchy rogue, and as ye may be there ahead of us, 'twould serve ye well."

O'Brien accepted the offer with hearty thanks, which were entirely unfeigned. The letter was being written, and St. Rocher was telling a most diverting story of certain adventures by no means military, during his service in Flanders, when an officer of marines presented himself at the door and saluted the captain of the *St. Michael,* who was seated next O'Brien.

"Your pardon, sir," he said. "The Irisher who's at the capstan for not smoking his pipe over a tub of water, as the regulations order, asks to speak with Sir Philip Boteler. At least, that's what we think he means, for it's hard to understand his speech—"

There was a burst of laughter. The captain, however, reddened angrily.

"Why, damn his insolence!" he exclaimed. "We've had enough trouble with that rogue. Give him thirty lashes—"

"Your pardon, sir," intervened O'Brien suavely. "It may be some poor devil who knew me in Ireland, eh? I'd be honored, sir, if you'd give me permission to speak with the man."

"Eh? Of course, of course, my dear fellow! I thought ye might be affronted by his cursed insolence. Have the rascal in."

Five minutes later a man was shoved into the cabin. He was still constricted and muscle bound by the intolerable torture of the punishment; but when his eyes fell upon O'Brien, they lighted suddenly and he broke into a torrent of Irish—which, fortunately, was entirely unknown to the officers present.

"So it's you, Shamus my heart! And will yourself look at me now, the man who fought with your regiment of the brigade and who saved your life the day we charged—"

"For the love of the saints, close your mouth before you ruin me!" said O'Brien sharply, in the same tongue. "Aye, Denis O'Neill, I remember you."

"Then save me from this place of torture and hell," cried the other. "There be half a dozen of us here, all true men; and if yourself will take us off, there'll be blessings on every day of your life if you live to be a hundred!"

"I'll do that," said O'Brien promptly. "But don't mention my name or we're all lost."

Affecting an amused laugh, he turned to the captain.

"My dear sir, will you do me a favor that will place me eternally in your debt? This man was once my servant, and because I am from Ireland, he begs that I'll take him and a few others into my ship. I know how to get along with the rogues, and if you'd send them over to join me, I'll be happy to return other men in their place at the Canaries."

"Why, with all my heart!" exclaimed the captain. "That is, if Sir Clowdisley does not object—"

"Any man who sinks two rovers and captures another," said the admiral, "can have anything I possess, from men to boots. So you speak that outlandish tongue, Boteler? Damme if I ever heard anything like it! Positively inhuman, upon my word. Here's your letter, and be so good as to convey my compliments to the governor and his lady. We'll see you again in a week or ten days, God willing."

O'Brien and St. Rocher took their leave formally, and found the afternoon nearly spent. The *St. Michael* stood up toward the *Bristol* and lowered away her barge. O'Neill and five other Irishmen were sent down with their few possessions, and the barge set them aboard the wounded frigate right speedily, then returned.

Guns from the three ships saluted the *Bristol,* trumpeters played her a rousing call, and to the roar of her answering salute, O'Brien saw the squadron fill and stand away to the southward. Phelim came striding up to him, with a grin, and surveyed the six recruits.

"So not content with bearding the admiral himself, ye carried off some of his men? Faith, Shamus, it's a wonder ye did not borrow his shirt and boots!"

"I thought of it," said O'Brien, "but they seemed a trifle small. Get aboard with you and all our men, Phelim. Ho, Master Gunner! A word with you. St. Rocher, will you take these six men and carry Sir Philip aboard us? I've a mind to keep him."

"Best hang him," said Phelim darkly. "You'll have no good of keeping him."

"Nay, I'm no hangman," said O'Brien, and turned to the master gunner. "You kept your word; I'll keep mine. Take your ship into Santa Cruz; I'll give you the proper course and you can't miss it, we're so near there now. I'll have a letter waiting with the governor for the admiral when he returns, taking all blame for what's happened. Tell the truth and you'll come out all right."

An hour later the galley was standing into the sunset, her Moorish canvas bellying out, while the happy master gunner sent a five-gun salute roaring after her. And O'Brien, with close to a hundred men and a ship that fetched a song into his heart, fingered the admiral's letter and faced ahead to an adventure that was after his own heart. The *Bristol* would not reach the islands for some days, with her sorry jury rig, whereas he would raise the peak of Teneriffe on the following day, with luck.

"What I don't like about it," said O'Brien that night, as he sat with Phelim and St. Rocher over their meal, "is making this scoundrel Boteler a hero. I'll have to fix that with a letter. I was sorry to be lying to those gentry, also; I'll fix that as well."

"And what about Boteler?" said St. Rocher. "He's locked in a small cabin yonder."

"Turn him for'ard with the men. About a third of the crew is Irish. See that they know who he is, but with orders to use no weapon on him; they'll make his life a hell, and he deserves it. I'll set him ashore at the Tortugas or put him on an English ship, and be rid of him. He's not worth the rope to hang him."

And so it was done, the next morning. It was a sorry day for Sir Philip Boteler when he became a comrade of the men he had commanded, and of the Irish who knew him for a traitor; but it was like to prove a sorrier day still for James O'Brien, had he but known it.

The matter of discipline was quickly settled, as it is when men are willing; and the crew were promised a day of carousing ashore at Santa Cruz. The galley had been crammed with loot from the Indies by the corsairs, and added to this was the dust and ivory taken from the *Bristol;* while O'Brien had jewels he had fetched out of Morocco. These, with certain specie found aboard, he laid aside and prepared privately for Phelim, in case there were any ship now at Santa Cruz. The men consented readily enough, for O'Brien did nothing without consulting them, at least in appearance.

On the following morning they picked up a frightened fisherman and learned that a Spanish ship was in harbor, loading for Cadiz, and none other but the *Santa Trinidad,* the frigate of which the admiral had told O'Brien. So, pushing boldly in, beneath the high peak, they came into Santa Cruz harbor an hour before sunset, with the blue flag of England at the main to quell the apprehension caused by their appearance.

The port captain came aboard and insisted upon embracing O'Brien; and hearing that he bore a letter to the governor, hastened ashore with the document. Another boat put out presently, inviting O'Brien and his officers to a ball at the governor's house that evening, and providing him with a barge and smaller boats, since the galley carried none.

"So the town is at our disposal," chuckled O'Brien, as he sat at meat with Phelim and St. Rocher. "Faith, if they but knew we were buccaneers, eh?"

"And to what end?" queried Phelim, frowning. "You're risking your head every day you're here, Shamus. What use?"

"Plenty," said O'Brien. "First, we'll get you off by the ship leaving tomorrow. You can have my share of the wealth aboard, and if I ever win back to Ireland, I'll claim it, mayhap. Second, we clean out our cargo of plunder to the merchants here; that's your business, St. Rocher, so make a sharp job of it. Third—my dear Vicomte, have ye looked at the Spanish frigate yonder?"

"Of course," said St. Rocher, with a sniff. "Messy. No gun ports, slovenly rigging, all the gilded carving off her stern—what's it mean?"

O'Brien grinned.

"I was talking wi' the port captain. She's fast as the devil's own, he says. This Duke de Torres is on the hunt for filibusters, d'ye comprehend? Not a bad idea, either. They see a merchantman separated from her convoy, and bear down to gather in the prey. Presto! In a flash she becomes a forty-gun frigate wi' three hundred men aboard."

"So!" said Phelim, while St. Rocher frowned thoughtfully. "And what has this to do with you?"

"Much, my honest brother, much! Look at St. Rocher, here; note the sallow cheek, the sunken eye, the gloomy frown! And why, think you? Because he, a noble of France, must serve as second in command to a wild divil of an Irishman. And what's the cure? Faith, are ye both so dumb and blind?" O'Brien broke into a sudden laugh, and clapped St. Rocher on the shoulder. "There's your ship yonder, comrade! We'll take her, and sail her to the Caribbees together wi' the galley, egad! Why shouldn't Jack O'Brien have a fleet at his back, will ye tell me that?"

"*Diantre!*" swore St. Rocher, his dark eyes suddenly afire. "You're in earnest? But I see you are; splendid! Another bumper of that wine, and we'll sack Santa Cruz itself!"

O'Brien shrugged.

"It could be done; but I'll have no sacking of towns in my day's work, unless forced to it. I've seen enough of hell without causing more of it."

"Thank God ye have some limits!" said Phelim. O'Brien gave him a laughing glance.

"Thank God ye'll be off for Ireland in the morning! I'll have the governor supply ye with papers; and stay aboard tonight, Phelim. Your pose is that of an honest merchant rescued from the Moors, mind. St. Rocher, we'll take this arm of mine out of the sling—the wound is far from healed, but it'll mend quick enough. And this way it's devilish unhandy."

THE galley, which O'Brien had christened the *Black Rose* in a sentimental moment, induced by certain talk of Ireland, lay within the Mole, no great distance from the spot where one Nelson was to lose an arm in later years.

The crowds that had thronged to see the captured Moorish galley were long departed. Moonlight bathed the great peak far above, and poured down across the cactus blackened plain, lightening the volcanic rocks and touching the dark town with magic fingers. Lanterns studded the great Mole with its battery of heavy guns, twinkled aboard the frigate, where the work of transformation went forward incessantly, and glimmered along the shore and the main square of the town. In front of the governor's residence burned huge smoky torches, and a crowd was gathered, talking excitedly about the two handsomely dressed men who had come from the captured galley. Two score men had come ashore also, dispersing among the wine shops and mingling in comradely fashion with the Spanish soldiers who thronged everywhere.

Within the mansion of the governor, healths were drunk to their Majesties of England and to Charles of Spain; there was much stately ceremony, and O'Brien got through it with a courtly grace that well became him. Then he handed the governor's lady through a minuet, turned her over to St. Rocher, and presently strolled in the patio with the Duke of Torres, talking earnestly.

Torres was an impatient and haughty young man of twenty-odd, who had vowed to hang five hundred buccaneers within the space of a year, and was hot to be about the business. O'Brien would have clapped him heartily on the back, had this vow been made for a lady or to the saints; but Torres seemed arrogantly proud that it was made in order to win a wager of five thousand doubloons with the Duke of Alba, and this smacked too much of hangman's pay to suit an Irish stomach. Not that O'Brien showed it in the least. On the contrary, his hauteur equaled that of the Spaniard, so that presently Torres felt like a brother to him, and talked eagerly and at length, waxing eloquent upon the subject of one O'Brien.

"A very son of the Evil One, *Señor Capitan!*" he exclaimed. "We have had word of him from the Americas. He has sacked towns, raped women, conducted himself with all the excesses of his devilish nature. He shot ten priests with his own hand, gave an entire convent of nuns to his men, was guilty of the basest treachery to men who trusted in his word!"

"Here's news, devil fly away with me if it isn't!" thought O'Brien, and banished his last lingering scruple. He took the other confidentially by the arm.

"Listen—perhaps I can help you," he said. "Early this morning, as we were standing in for the Peak, we picked up a sloop containing five men. They said they came from a small trader which had sprung a leak near one of the islands, but they lied. It mattered not to me. I pressed them into service with my crew, since they were English. Now, it strikes me that they may have come from some filibuster or buccaneer, to spy out the harbor—eh? You know how those rascals work. What say you?"

"By the saints, señor, it is probable enough!" exclaimed the other. "If I had those men, I'd put them to the question soon enough and learn the truth!"

"Excellent idea! I'll do it tomorrow," said O'Brien eagerly. "Will you come aboard me and hear what they have to say? After the siesta?"

Torres was overjoyed, and so eager he could scarce contain himself.

That evening, O'Brien accomplished much; chiefly in arranging with the governor for Phelim's departure aboard the Spanish ship in the morning, but he also got permission to sell the lading of his prize. Nothing was too good for the brave Sir Philip Boteler, in fact, and if the eyes of the ladies followed his slender, handsome figure, the eyes of the men warmed to his quick smile and straight, whimsical gaze. In all this St. Rocher backed him mightily, being a very courtly gentleman when the mood took him and he could shake off his somber cynicism.

Later, however, aboard the *Black Rose,* O'Brien sat in the cabin and questioned man after man of those who had been ashore, while St. Rocher pricked down upon paper the items of their responses—chiefly in regard to guns and men, and gossip they had picked up. So closed that day, and none heeded a haggard, unshaven wretch forward, who slept on a pile of rags to ease his bruised body and shattered self-respect.

Shortly before noon next day, with goods pouring ashore from the galley into the booths of merchants, O'Brien took his brother aboard the Spanish ship, whose captain had received explicit letters from the governor concerning him. The two men looked into each other's eyes, and their hands gripped.

"God be with ye, Shamus," said Phelim hoarsely. "And when ye come home, ye'll find all waiting for you, praise be!"

"Home's where honor is, Phelim," responded O'Brien. "And that's in my own heart. God bless you! Goodby."

So he turned and was gone to the galley again, where St. Rocher awaited him; and if the heart was sore in him, none could find hint of it in his thin chiseled features or his quick blue eyes.

That afternoon the Duke of Torres came aboard, with half a dozen of his officers, all stately Spanish men, and when they had drunk wine in the cabin, five blood spattered wretches were dragged in, groaning, and cast down before O'Brien, who gave them a wink and a stern word.

They straightway confessed all, to the amazed delight of the Spaniards. They were in truth buccaneers, and their captain was one O'Brien. They had been sent to spy out what ships were in the harbor, and their own ship was to meet them in two more days at a certain point off the coast of Grand Canary.

They were dragged away; more wine was fetched in, and the cabin echoed to loud voices. The vision of two hundred buccaneers falling into his hands at one blow, and the infamous O'Brien their commander, quite carried Torres away with its splendor. Then O'Brien made himself heard, and they listened eagerly to his words.

He pointed out that the rascal O'Brien evidently had all the craft of the Evil One, and would not shirk a fight; it were pity to spill more Spanish blood than might be necessary in taking him. Also, Torres was much set on taking him alive and hanging him. If he might venture to offer the help of himself and his men, said O'Brien, not to speak of the really good guns mounted by this galley—

Torres was delighted, for the proffer was most delicately phrased and flattered his vanity. So O'Brien outlined his plan.

Let the two ships go forth on the second morning, said he, to meet the infamous O'Brien. Aboard there was great store of Arab garments, and more could be found ashore. The crew of the frigate could be hid below decks, and she could be manned by some of the English crew in Moorish garb. Those aboard the galley, also, would be costumed in the same wise. To all appearance, here would be a Sallee rover with a prize—and mighty few men would be in sight. With a little ingenuity, evidences of a hard fight might be made to show. The buccaneer would think both craft an easy prey, and would certainly swoop down upon them; with most surprising results, to him.

Torres sprang to his feet, eyes blazing with delight, applause pouring from him in a torrent; and when he departed with his officers, he was walking on air. But

St. Rocher surveyed his friend with a grim and saturnine smile.

"Well, Jack? One would think they were children, to fall for such a lure! Your intent?"

"Simplicity itself," said O'Brien quietly. "We go out with the Dons below deck—and we keep 'em battened down until we set 'em ashore on one of the islands. If these gilded popinjays show fight, which I much doubt, well and good. There'll be a dozen or so shut in their main cabin, and we'll turn a gun against the door if they insist. That's all. There'll not be a shot fired, I'll wager you."

The other nodded.

"I believe you. And not a bit of shame, friend?"

"Aye," confessed O'Brien. "I could not do it, had not the rogue prated of his vow. Vow, forsooth! Hangman's wages, that's what it is; hanging men for money, no less. Yet I'd not harm him or his gentlemen if I can help it, for they're men of honor—all save that fool. How seems the plan to you?"

"Perfect," said St. Rocher, and looked at the *Santa Trinidad*. "A magnificent ship there, my friend. With her, and with this galley—what could we not do?"

"Not could, but will," and O'Brien smiled. "How goes the bargaining?"

"All the stuff will be cleaned out of her, and ballast of water and stores put in by noon tomorrow," said St. Rocher. "And I'm afraid to think of the wealth we've won; I'm taking bills of credit on Havana where I can't get cash, but I'll be able to discount most of them with the Jews here. There are two, both wealthy rogues, who've pretended to be converted. What'll ye do if the squadron shows up unexpectedly, Jack?"

O'Brien glanced at the horizon, then at St. Rocher.

"Faith, I'd do what any wise man would do—run as though the devil himself had me by the tail! Let's fall to work, for we dine aboard the frigate tonight, ye mind."

* * *

BY THE following noon, most of the *Black Rose's* cargo was gone, and she was loaded and trimmed with provision, water, powder and stores in general; further, she had taken aboard a huge amount of specie, and St. Rocher had bills on Havana for other amounts, and the gold dust of the *Bristol* was still aboard. The men, who had caroused to their hearts' content, were well satisfied to await further spendings until they reached the Antilles.

O'Brien settled all details that afternoon with the Duke de Torres. He and his officers were living aboard the frigate, almost alone; most of his crew were quartered ashore, for the work being done on her was performed by shore carpenters and workmen. By dark, according to Torres, she would be in readiness. He planned to bring his men aboard at daybreak, with two hundred soldiers from the garrison, and to sail with O'Brien at sunrise. By noon, he figured, they would come up with the buccaneer. Returning to the galley toward sunset, O'Brien recounted all this to St. Rocher.

"And no squadron returning, either," he concluded jubilantly. "All going well. The old *Bristol* should appear tomorrow, but we'll be gone. I've left a letter ashore for the admiral; I'd like to see his face when he reads it! The governor's secretary has it."

"Signed by your name?" queried St. Rocher.

O'Brien nodded.

"Aye, but it's sealed; they'll not read it, before delivery." He looked at the Mole and shore batteries, and nodded with relief. "I'll admit I've been a bit worried, but now all's past. A bad position, if aught went wrong."

True enough. The *Santa Trinidad* lay against the great Mole, moored stem and stern. At the outer end of the Mole was one heavy battery, at the shore end another, and batteries on the shore and higher ground beyond commanded the harbor. With these guns, and those of the frigate, the galley would be in a tight place had anything gone amiss.

"Any shore leave tonight, your honor?" queried one of the men who had been appointed boatswain. O'Brien nodded.

"A score of men from the larboard watch. I promised 'em yesterday. Until ten o'clock."

The galley lay some fifty feet from the *Santa Trinidad,* and inshore from her. The men went ashore; the night was fine and clear, without a breath of air stirring, the stars all in a white blaze overhead and the full moon promising to be up in an hour's time.

O'Brien and St. Rocher were bidden that night to a banquet with the governor, given in honor of the departing heroes, and Torres had promised to call for them with his boat. When the barge came from the frigate, O'Brien was still settling details of the morning's work with his men. Torres and two of his officers came aboard, and St. Rocher took them down to the cabin while O'Brien departed hastily to shave and dress.

He was nearly finished, and on the point of joining his guests, when the boatswain appeared hurriedly.

"Master, summat is up ashore. There have been light signals from the station on the Peak, where they watch for ships; and the port captain's barge just went out o' the harbor with her oars dipping fast."

"Well, that's nothing to us," said O'Brien good humoredly. "If we find—"

Another man came leaping down the companion.

"He's gone, Bosun!" he exclaimed, and ducked his head at O'Brien. "There's a line over the side for'ard. He must ha' slipped over and swum for it—"

"Eh?" said O'Brien sharply. "Who?"

"That English captain, Sir Philip—"

"We'd missed him, Cap'n," explained the boatswain, "and now it seems like—"

O'Brien brushed them aside and was leaping for the deck on the instant. He stood there in the starlight, glancing around, listening. If Boteler had indeed got ashore, it meant the devil to pay. Lights were still winking from the signal station on the Peak, but he could not read their message. Boats were being rowed across the water—one was just at the frigate's side, hailing for Torres. Ashore, from the town, rose confused sounds, sharp outcries, that might mean anything or nothing.

"Bosun! All hands—silently about it!" exclaimed O'Brien. "Serve out arms. Send me three men here with pistols. Quick!"

"Aye, sir."

The galley's deck became a scramble of padding figures. The boat from the frigate was now coming across the water, and a voice came from her in a hail.

"Ahoy the galley! We have an urgent message for his Grace the Duke of Torres. Is he aboard?"

"*Sí, señor,*" responded O'Brien. "Come with your message."

The boat drew in beside Torres' barge, and a man mounted to the deck in breathless haste. O'Brien met him, turned to the three men who had just come up, armed.

"Take care of this fellow—hit him on the head! Then down to the cabin."

He darted for the companionway, and a moment later broke into the cabin where St. Rocher and the three Spaniards sat about the table. At sight of him, St. Rocher came to his feet.

"Señores!" cracked O'Brien's voice. "Remain where you are. On deck, St. Rocher!" The three men came crowding in at the door, and O'Brien turned to them. "Stay here. If these men give any alarm or show fight, pistol them. Señores, you are my prisoners."

Then he was gone, with St. Rocher beside him, explaining as he went.

"The devil to pay now. Boteler's gone ashore, given the alarm. The governor's read my letter and verified his story. Not an instant to lose—"

"*Diantre!*— And our two score men ashore?" cried St. Rocher.

O'Brien was on deck now, among the crowding men.

"Take those boats alongside!" he snapped. "Quick! Down into them!"

A chorus of shouts from the water, drowned by the oaths and cries alongside, as into the barge and boat dropped men from the galley, striking down the amazed Spaniards, clearing the two small craft. Lights were flashing in the batteries ashore, whistles were shrilling, a drum began its quick, ardent beat.

"Barge a-coming, sir!" rose a voice. "Looks like our shore party!"

A barge was indeed racing out, crowded with men, who shouted as they rowed. O'Brien caught St. Rocher's arm, and his voice leaped.

"I'm going aboard the frigate. Slip the cables, get out the sweeps. Have a hawser ready to put into that barge. You'll have to tow her out; give the battery a broadside quick as you come opposite. Go!"

"You're mad!" cried St. Rocher. O'Brien laughed, excitedly.

"Aye. The moon's trembling under the horizon—we can just make it."

He darted to the rail, hailed the approaching barge. A voice made answer.

"They jumped us, Cap'n! Sojers all over the place—stabbed our men right and left! We broke away—murdered us, Cap'n! Bloody murder, it was! And sojers are loading into boats and barges—"

"Lay alongside and pick me up," ordered O'Brien. He counted swiftly; over a score of men in the barge coming under the rail. The others were lost. "Hawser coming down; lay hold of it!"

The barge drew in, with the long sweeps of the galley already reaching out into the water. O'Brien was down quickly, among the men in the barge.

"To the frigate, men! Aboard her, make fast that hawser, cut her shore lines. Put your backs into it, now!"

The barge darted from the galley's side, the heavy hawser dipping into the water behind, slowing her down. The silver notes of a trumpet rang out musically from ashore. Lights were springing in the great battery on the Mole; torches and flambeaux were breaking out ruddily ashore.

At O'Brien's heart tore the thought of those signal lights from the Peak, and the port captain's barge that had gone leaping from the harbor.

IN UNDER the towering frigate's side now, with a sleepy hail from above to greet them. The men went up like cats, and O'Brien followed, for the gangway was out. The hawser was hauled up. Shouts, oaths, cries rang up as his men scattered over the decks and struck down the few workmen and guards in sight. Out along the Mole showed a dark mass of men—soldiers marching out to board the frigate.

The galley was on the move now, her sweeps dipping.

O'Brien darted to one of the shore lines, severed it with his knife, sawing through the tough manila. An officer from the dark mass of soldiers shouted, gave an order; musketry blazed, and bullets tore around. The other lines were severed. Excited voices leaped from the battery up beyond. The frigate moved, slewed out from the Mole.

"Hawser fast, men?" shouted O'Brien. "Find shot and powder if ye can—lay a gun or two on the Mole battery!"

For the moment, both ships lay between the battery on the Mole and those ashore, so the latter could not fire. The *Black Rose* was gathering way rapidly, but this fell off as the hawser drew up and the weight of the frigate had to be overcome. And meantime, the boats and barges from ashore were crawling out over the water. O'Brien heard St. Rocher's voice.

"Starboard watch, stand by for boarders!"

Now was the crucial moment. The galley alone might have won clear without a struggle, but the dead weight of the *Santa Trinidad* was a terrific handicap. Yet it was being overcome foot by foot, while the barges swept up toward the two ships. One of them had cut over and was heading for the frigate.

"Two guns laid, sir!" rose a voice exultantly from the waist.

"Plump 'em into the battery then," ordered O'Brien.

Luckily, Torres had made everything ready against the morrow, even to powder and shot laid ready. A man came running from the lantern where he had been lighting slow matches. The red pin points glimmered. Then, almost together, two guns in the waist crashed out; yells and shrieks arose from the battery on the Mole.

St. Rocher was engaged now; two of the barges were under his counter, sending up men. A yell warned O'Brien. Musketry blazed from the barge creeping up, and bullets whistled all around. One of his men coughed and sank down. The others swarmed at the rail as the barge came in alongside.

"Over with 'em!" said a voice, and man after man lifted, strained, got the heavy shot over the side. Crashes from the barge, wild yells, as the roundshot tore through her bottom. She fell behind in drifting wreckage.

"Good men!" cried O'Brien. "Another gun if ye can!"

They could and did, working like mad. Now both ships were picking up speed, with the sweeps bending desperately and forcing them ahead. St. Rocher had beaten off his assailants, but his guns were still silent—he could spare few men from the oars and bulwarks. They were nearly opposite the great battery on the Mole now, and with luck, those heavy guns could blow them out of the water. Tense, strained, O'Brien waited.

A crash, and the frigate reeled. The first gun of the battery had spoken. The two guns in the waist made answer. Then, without warning, the galley's starboard battery vomited flame with a great roar, and no mean eye had laid those guns. Bags of bullets screamed about the Mole battery, struck down men right and left, silenced the guns ere they had spoken. A cheer went up from O'Brien's score of men, swabbing desperately at their two guns. These were run out once more, and once more stormed shot into the hapless battery, not a hundred feet distant.

Then the shore batteries began to speak.

The moon was just coming up. Already the towering Peak was silvered with her light, and the long hills behind the town, running up to Point Anaga, bathed in splendor. The guns spat red flame along the shore. Another gun and another from the Mole roared out terribly. An entire shore battery erupted into thunder.

The two ships drew out.

Shot ploughed the water around them, smashed into them, rocked them; for the second time, the galley's guns volleyed, and this time with roundshot that wrought death and ruin in the Mole battery, where lay the greatest menace. Steadily, oars dipping like mad, the galley drew out, fetching along the great ship behind her. The barges and boats had given up the vain chase now. Guns roared from the fort on the hill, but did no damage.

"Ahoy, Cap'n!" It was St. Rocher's voice, shrill and eager. "We're clear! All right aboard?"

"Right enough," answered O'Brien. "Well done, friend! Better come alongside, once we're well out. No wind ahead."

There was none, indeed. The sea lay glimmering like molten lead in the level light of the rising moon; not a catspaw ruffled the face of the water. The oars dipped and dipped, and phosphorescent swirls of fire trailed behind. The guns were silent now, their prey escaped from them as by a miracle.

The oars ceased to dip. The frigate forged ahead still, came in alongside;

lines were flung, fenders put out, the ships touched. O'Brien leaped to his own deck, and a wild yell of exultant delight went up from the men.

"We've paid for our murdered comrades, lads," he exclaimed. "Any killed aboard?"

"Five," said St. Rocher. "And a dozen wounded."

"Three down on the frigate. A cheap enough price for such an escape! If we—"

The words died on his lips. St. Rocher, reading his face in the moonlight, swung around. The men turned to stare. A dead silence fell upon them all in this moment, so that the gentle grind and squeak of the fenders was the only sound. A man cursed, and fell silent again.

For there, coming out around Point Anaga to the north, was the squadron of Sir Clowdisley Shovell, the towering *St. Michael* in the lead, clearcut in the moonlight.

"They made out the squadron from the Peak," muttered O'Brien. "And the port captain's boat bore 'em word—"

Then his voice lifted like a trumpet blare.

"All hands! Gather around!"

THE squadron was two miles away and heading down for them, half a dozen boats out ahead of each frigate, towing them rapidly along, navy style. O'Brien saw at a glance, however, that the topsails of the frigates hung listless. There was no breath of wind.

"Lads," he said quietly, "we can get away in the galley, but damned if I'll give up such a prize as we have yonder! We have one chance. Get out the boats of the *Santa Trinidad.* Those of you who are navy men, take charge, man the boats, lay out lines. Work with a will, kill yourselves at the oars—and we can manage it! St. Rocher, take your ship. Head southward."

A wild yell made response.

"And you, Jack?" said St. Rocher.

"You'll see. Go at once!"

St. Rocher and another score men went aboard the frigate, and her boats were cast loose. O'Brien called the boatswain.

"Load the guns—bags of bullets, lads. No shot. Wait! Every other gun, double-shot with grape."

The frigate began to move, as her boats drew out with their lines. The boatswain's whistle told O'Brien that the guns were loaded.

"Out oars. I'll take the helm. Gunners, stand by with your matches. Every other man to the oars."

The galley darted through the water. She swept around, then headed straight for the approaching squadron.

O'Brien looked over his ship. Here and there a shot had done damage enough, but the spars were untouched. With the "Haw-haw! Haw-haw!" of the timer, the oars dipped regularly, evenly, sending her spurting ahead through the water. The *Santa Trinidad* was standing now for the south, gathering way fast.

The three ships of the squadron were close together, the boats spread out fanwise ahead of each ship. The barge of the port captain was alongside the admiral. Straight for them went the galley, closer and closer; within half a mile now, and heading forward unfalteringly. A puff of smoke came from the *St. Michael*—her bow-chaser, the only gun she could bring to bear. A shot plumped into the sea.

The galley made no response.

"Steady as she is, Bosun," said O'Brien, turning over the helm.

He strode rapidly along the deck, giving the gunners their instructions. Another heavy boom from the *St. Michael.* This time the shot whirred and screamed overhead. He came back to the poop and took the helm.

"Trail larboard oars!" leaped out his voice. "Two strokes more, starboard benches!"

The galley headed around in a swerving sweep across the pathway of the three ships and their boats. She lost way. The gunners sighted, laid their guns. She reeled and rocked as the pieces thundered out, and through the smoke appeared jets of spurting water all around the boats.

"Give way, larboard oars!"

The galley spun as she rocked, came about. Now her larboard broadside roared forth in a ragged volley. The stricken boats clumped together, those unhurt picking up survivors from the smashed craft. Trumpets sounded aboard the frigates. Their bow-chasers boomed out. One shot plumped into the galley's bow, crumpling her forward bulwarks and sending splinters flying.

"All hands to the oars! Give way!"

She shot down athwart the silvery moon lane, and leaped into speed. From the poop, O'Brien shook his fist at the three ships, whose bow-chasers roared with futile voice, and laughed as he sped away from them. The pursuit was checked, smashed, ended.

And the *Black Rose* headed down to pick up her consort.

Sunrise saw the two ships off Roxa Point, the Peak towering up into the sky behind, and a breeze coming down from the north. Three miles to larboard, coming past Grand Canary, was a large ship under jury rig. The frigate ran down and came close.

"Ahoy, Cap'n!" hailed St. Rocher. "Yonder's the *Bristol*. D'ye want her?"

"Nay, she's promised already!" and O'Brien laughed. "Give her three guns."

He brought the galley into the wind. In response to his order, St. Rocher sent over a boat which came aboard, and with his gangway still out, O'Brien ordered up Torres and his two officers. They came on deck, with all the fight taken out of them, for they had long since learned the truth of their position. Nor had Torres a word to say when he was shoved down into the boat with his officers, and O'Brien pointed to the *Bristol*.

"There's a craft will take you aboard," he called down. "Row for her! All right, men. Up wi' the canvas!"

The men toiled on the lines. The lateen sails bellied out to the breeze, and O'Brien looked back to see no sign of the squadron in pursuit. The thought of Sir Philip Boteler came to him, and he chuckled whimsically.

"After all, why worry about the rascal!" he reflected. "He'll have worse punishment ahead than if I'd hung him. But faith, I'd give a fortune to be present when Shovell and the others learn the truth about him and me! Bosun, three guns for salute!"

The three guns crashed, and from the *Santa Trinidad* came three more. The two craft came side by side, and headed to the westward.

Behind, the master gunner of the *Bristol* answered their salute with a hail and farewell of five guns—navy style—and brought in his jury rig to pick up the small boat.

"Where bound, Master?" asked the boatswain curiously. O'Brien looked at him and laughed.

"For glory and the Spanish Main, Bosun!"

And as the word was passed on a cheer rippled along the deck.

# *The* OLD CHAMPION

## By JAMES W. BENNETT

A DIM yellow light tunneled down from a beam overhead, illuminating the gamesters in the ring, and their handlers. The crowd, stretching upward in tiers, was an indistinct mass. Only when a Pirate or a Ruby Queen cigaret was inhaled with sharp nervousness did a sallow face disengage itself from the blur. That brief glimpse showed almond eyes glittering with excitement. Yet there was no noise, no shouting. Only the restless hiss of silken garments—for this crowd was Chinese and wore on its back a fortune in satin, in brocade, in cloth of silver.

Suddenly a staccato voice barked—

"A thousand Yuan dollars, at ten to three, on The Golden One."

There were no takers. The Golden One was showing more and more aggressiveness as the battle wore on, more élan, more of that calm surety which marks a champion, a killer. The Golden One was the challenger. His technique was cruder than the champion's, but he possessed one priceless ingredient—youth. He was not scarred and battered by a score of previous battles.

Yet his opponent, Old Man of the Mountains, owned a glorious record. The Old Man had never been defeated. Also, he was a thoroughbred, descended from the great Tai Shan who had defeated the best from Singapore to Mukden. More than that, he was out of Nine Fairies by War God. Old Man of the Mountains had been groomed from babyhood by the greatest trainer in China—a veritable dozen of trainers whose methods, even in his lifetime, had become classic.

Tonight, the old champion was growing more and more weary, less able to withstand the cruel rushes of youth. And, with victory in sight, The Golden One grew arrogant, even careless. Deliberately he turned his back.

Old Man of the Mountains saw his last despairing chance. He drew a heavy draft upon his fighting heart and attacked viciously.

The audience gave a deep, contented gasp. Here was drama! Men craned forward, their sallow knuckles clenched and showing oddly white.

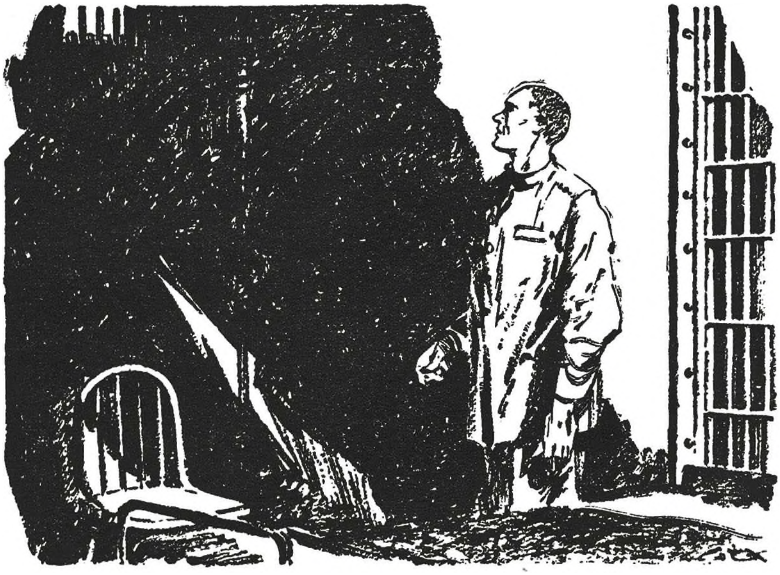
In the ring there was an instant of bewildering flurry. Then stillness. The Golden One, the young challenger, lay dead. Over him stood Old Man of the Mountains, mandibles clicking. Very, very weary—but the victor! Still the champion, vindicator of the thoroughbred strain!

His owner picked up Old Man of the Mountains, put him in a tiny, lacquered box and left the ringside. He accepted his winnings, a sheaf of Hongkong-Shanghai Bank notes, totaling fifty thousand. In his ears rang the roar of the crowd:

"*Kungshi - Kungshi!* — Congratulations!"

He was still the trainer of China's greatest fighting cricket, the champion.

# HOUSE *of the* DEAD



## *A Prison Story*

### By WILLIAM CORCORAN

PATIENCE, the copybooks admonish us, is a virtue for which much is to be said. But patience, under certain conditions, may easily become an attribute which the authorities can commend only with reservations. Consider the patience of Samson awaiting his grim release, of Monte Cristo, or of Duncan Price immured for life in the steel and concrete tomb in the center of Brandon Prison.

Duncan Price was a galling thorn in the side of Warden Clowes. Price had been transferred from Clearwater Penitentiary to the harsher Brandon already marked as an "escape case" and a dangerous man, and he announced to Warden Clowes on the day of his reception that he would be out of his new prison within a month. Clowes had a grim respect for the man's peculiar genius, but it was with confidence that he ironically challenged him to try to get out of Brandon. And within a month, as promised, Duncan Price was out. That he was recaptured two days later made him no less of a problem. The solution was drastic. He was given a stiff term in solitary for punishment, and later was subjected to the most severe form of imprisonment that modern penology can devise. He went into Brandon's dreaded "ice box"—for life.

Not yet thirty, he was a lean, erect man of medium height, with long, delicate hands of steel-wire strength and a close mouthed and hard but intelligent face.

"You won't keep me here," he told the warden. He was white and weakened from the ordeal of the solitary cells, but his voice was hard, grating. "You tried once and you couldn't. You got the breaks and brought me back, but I'll get out of here again."

"I don't think so," the warden differed dryly. He gave the young convict a long, keen look. "You're mighty anxious to get out, Price. What's outside that makes the risk worth it?"

"That's my business," said Price. "Wait and you'll learn—after I'm out. Your business is to keep me here."

"And that's something you're going to spend a long time waiting and learning." The warden emphasized the statement by rising behind his desk. "Nobody's ever found the combination of the segregation block yet."

"I will. Give me time, I'll find it."

Clowes smiled grimly as he ordered the guards to remove the prisoner.

And so Duncan Price faced the new régime stripped of all but one solitary weapon, that of patience. He clung to it, for he knew its strength. Somehow, somewhere, the inevitable flaw in the armor built about him would appear. He had a lifetime to prepare for the moment if necessary.

He became "the man Brandon could not break."

Without question, Duncan Price should never have been a criminal. He lacked the moral and emotional resiliency which makes it possible for a human being to pursue that most futile of careers. He was, in the terms of the psychologists, a maladjusted case in adolescence, and at the time of his incarceration in Brandon Prison he was still refusing with the stubbornness of an iron-willed man to "adjust himself". Prison authorities are much given to the use of that term. It explains a great deal.

Dunk Price was up for murder in the second degree. He had resisted arrest and held off an army of police until tear gas drove him in agony from his barricaded flat. After his preliminary hearing, he wrested a heavy wire mesh screen from a window in a detention pen at the county court house and wriggled through the ornamental outside bars and reached the street. He was captured by a traffic policeman one block away.

At Clearfield Penitentiary, after his speedy trial and sentence, he fashioned a key from a spoon handle, got out of his cell, attacked a guard and half killed him, released himself from the cell block, and was desperately attempting to scale the high walls of the prison when caught and returned to a cell. His ferocity all through the affair, and his spirit, unbroken after a long punishment in solitary, induced the warden to have him transferred to Brandon Prison. Brandon was a veritable city of the damned, lost in a bleak wilderness far from any of the centers of population in the commonwealth, where lifers, incorrigibles and maladjusted cases were isolated from the common run of felons like plague bacilli in a laboratory tube.

Brandon is tough. It is so tough that no keeper ever strikes a prisoner, no matter what the provocation. At first sign of trouble the guards rush for their stations on the walls where they dominate the prison with rifles and machine guns. Blows are futile, for it is extremely hard to punish a lifer, and blows invite the explosion of a riot. Death walks with every man in Brandon, for in many cases it is the only release an inmate will ever know.

Brandon is tough, but it did not intimidate Dunk Price. By a ruse he gained admittance to the prison hospital as a patient, located a loose bar in a window in the night, dropped on a rope made of sheeting to an adjoining shed, gained the walls and surmounted them with the aid of the makeshift rope, and spent two days in the wilderness around Brandon before hunger betrayed him. He was cornered in a box car, where he fought his captors till he was knocked unconscious.

## III

BY THIS time, Price had attained a certain fame. To his fellows in the prisons of the land he was a hero. To the men of Brandon he was more. He had done what none of them had been able to do—break the hardest prison combination known. They looked up to him and pitied him. They knew what would be his fate. The overwhelming power of the commonwealth, delicately refraining from a forthright extinction of this troublesome life, would now set about crushing the last fragment of meaning for existence out of it. Death as a punishment had been decreed barbarous; it was more civilized to elect Duncan Price to a place among the living dead.

They were twenty in number, and Duncan Price made them twenty-one. They existed in a bleak, low oblong of concrete and steel in a far corner of Brandon's great enclosure. Within the building were twenty-four cells and a guardroom.

Duncan Price lived there in a cubicle measuring five feet by ten. Except for the Spartan prison furnishings, it was bare. The steel barred door looked on a blank corridor wall. At the rear a solid steel door led to a small yard closed in by concrete and topped by an open grille of steel bars. For seven hours each day he had access to the yard; the remainder of the time light and air entered through a little barred window over the yard door.

Duncan Price saw no man but his keepers. Meals were brought directly to him. He left the cell only to strip in the corridor for a periodic search among his effects for contraband and to transfer once or twice a week to a similar cell. The inmates of the block were all shifted constantly to prevent any effective attack on a cell too long occupied by one man. The shift was managed in orderly rotation so that each man occupied every cell in turn for a few days, and returned to his starting point a couple of months after leaving it.

Duncan Price was permitted neither to receive mail nor send it. He could form no bonds of friendship. There was no work to be done, and there were no recreation periods. There was only a negation of every meaning in life. None of the twenty-one inmates, in all likelihood, would emerge before his death—except briefly, when rumor outside might compel the warden to produce proof that a man actually was still alive. He was, in truth, as good as buried. It was the place of the living dead, the unbreakable "ice box" of Brandon Prison.

Those first months in the segregation block Duncan Price found no harder to endure than the time he had spent in other prison cells. Not even solitary had dented his armor of hard assurance, for the ordeal was bound to end, and the future always held the promise of freedom. He never permitted himself to dwell on his imprisonment as an immutable doom. He had proved the vulnerability of the prison system, and he could do it again, even in the segregation block.

He explored each cell he occupied from top to bottom with microscopic attention, gaging the hardness of the steel, the solidity of the concrete, the strength of the locks. He had no fixed plan; he was merely getting acquainted, eliminating obvious blind alleys. The locks were eliminated first. A sheet of heavy steel backed each lock, firmly riveted to the cell door, so that any access from the rear was out of the question. The sheet was too large to permit his hand to reach through the bars to the lock opening even if he made a key. He wasted no time on the doors, but went on to other details. He found no weakness anywhere, either of material or construction.

In the intervals when he was not so occupied, Duncan Price exercised by steady pacing in the tiny yard. He built up his exhausted strength and kept constant watch on his health so that he might possess reserves of stamina when the time came for flight. He had learned a great deal during his one disastrous sortie from Brandon.

The guards were acquainted with his every activity. Twice each hour the keeper on duty left the guardroom and sauntered down one corridor and up the other, glancing into each cell as he passed. Price was the object of their special attention, for an almost superstitious belief in his powers had crept through the prison, seeping from the convicts to contaminate even the guards. They knew he studied the cells with minute care, and they did not try to stop him, for they hoped the examination would demonstrate the futility of attempted escape. They hoped thus, for they feared his resourcefulness, but they had little real expectation of such an outcome. Like the tiger which has tasted human flesh, the escaper never forgets.

And besides a long memory for that exultant thrill of freedom, Duncan Price possessed an incentive which smoldered like banked, undying fires in his soul. No prison could rob his life of meaning while it lasted.

The other prisoners in the segregation block had heard of Price's exploits. They were cut off from the world, but a predecessor had brought in the story while he was yet in solitary. They learned all the details, for in addition to conversation through the bars with their unseen mates, they availed themselves of the universal prison code transmitted by a faint tapping on the cell walls. The guards could overhear conversation, but the prison telegraph was secret.

Duncan Price was too determined on his purpose to be led into rash confidences, and he remained somewhat aloof from the queer, distorted communal life of Brandon's "ice box". In this he was only sensible, for trustworthiness among felons is as rare as honesty. His attitude won him the resentment of his fellows. It was a resentment with many reserves, nevertheless, for it was compounded of envy and a certain awe.

One ironic, hard young voice on Price's corridor frequently inquired into the progress of his plans for getting out.

"How's the tunnel coming, Price?" he once drawled. "Or was that a airplane I heard you building all last night?"

The others chuckled in malicious amusement, for any suspicious sound brought a keeper on the run from the guardroom.

Duncan Price either ignored them or vouchsafed a dry, noncommittal retort.

"That was my non-shrinking, reversible diving bell you heard. I don't expect to use it, but I could lend it to you. It's for going down the drain . . ."

This brought a whoop of laughter, and the project was discussed in unflattering detail more typical of a prison cell than of any place else in the world. Duncan Price's keenness and cultivation of mind were unapproached by any of his fellows, but he talked their language—perhaps even a little more fluently than they.

THOSE familiar with the case of Duncan Price could not help searching for the reason behind his passionate desire for freedom. He never talked, even when he was at Clearwater, free to mingle with the other prisoners. However, he was of that type of criminal in whom an enmity is never forgotten and a wrong never forgiven. And it was said in certain quarters that Price was in prison only because of an unqualified doublecross.

The homicide for which he had been sentenced to life imprisonment really merited the electric chair. However, since it was only circumstantially established that Price was guilty, the jury shied away from the death penalty. At any other time he might have been acquitted, but the community was panicky over an increase in killings, and a sacrifice was necessary. Duncan Price was a convenient selection.

The murder occurred during a payroll robbery which proved abortive when one of the bandits lost his head and turned loose his automatic on a defenseless guard, necessitating instant flight. The preponderance of evidence was against Price, and it was established to the jury's satisfaction that he was one of the pair. The identity of the other remained unknown. Duncan took the rap.

The identity of the unnamed partner never was broached in the newspapers, but an unpleasant story was presently current in the deeper channels of the underworld. It intimated that a certain individual was arrested, tentatively charged with the murder, and confronted with the evidence already in the hands of the district attorney's office. It was alleged that he had thereupon broken down and supplied the district attorney with all of the stronger evidence that subsequently appeared in court. It was evidence that incriminated Price while clearing the other. The D. A., switching from one weak case that was largely bluff to another that was a sure conviction, held to his bargain.

So Duncan Price faced a hostile court and jury with cold defiance and offered nothing in defense. Beyond the plea of not guilty no word came from him. He was silent about his unknown partner, and the prosecutor refrained from inquiring too deeply into the matter. Duncan Price went away to life imprisonment with his defiance unbroken and with his own brooding thoughts sealed behind unreadable blue eyes.

Day after monotonous day spun to a close in the segregation block. Days became weeks, and weeks were presently months, and Duncan Price completed his circuit of the cells and was well on his second round. The hot sun that had beaten straight down into the little grille topped yards when he entered now slanted from the south over the twelve-foot concrete walls and barely touched the pavement with its rays. The round of the countless years began.

Warden Clowes rarely entered the segregation block, but one day he visited Price. He joined the inspection party of four guards gathered to examine Price's clothes and belongings for forbidden articles. He studied the prisoner standing in the corridor, erect and healthy and hard, while the keepers fingered every seam in his few garments. Price returned the scrutiny with caustic gaze.

"Still afraid of me?' he asked. "Still worrying about the job?"

Clowes' smile was humorless and hard.

"Neither of us need worry," he said. "There's only one job around here safer than mine, and that's yours."

"Better start looking for another berth then, if it's that shaky."

"Oh, so you're still going out?" mocked the warden.

"Sure as God made little green apples."

The warden's face grew red, and his voice was metallic.

"The next time you give us any trouble, Mister Man, you'll go into solitary for the remainder of your term. On bread and water in solitary, I can assure you it won't be a long one."

Duncan Price laughed and his eyes glittered. It was the first time warden or keepers had heard him laugh. He said:

"Then you are afraid of me, eh? You got me cornered like a rat in a hole and you had to come and take a look to make sure."

One of the keepers dropped Price's trousers to the floor and came close.

"Shut up, you punk!" he said. "I'll bust you open."

Duncan Price looked at the guard. There was a quivering, taunting smile in one corner of his mouth. And there was a cold deadliness in his eyes as chill as interstellar space.

The wave of prosecution that swept Duncan Price to Brandon had begun to recede, but not before it deposited in the prisons of the commonwealth a larger assortment of criminal flotsam than they had ever harbored. Two additional convicts won for themselves the distinction of dwelling in the "ice box", and the segregation block was full. There was no place left for incorrigibles save the solitary cells, and no man living could withstand a full term in those damp, dark holes.

Word came to the block one morning that six transfers were to be made to another prison. The six selected were notified. Their jubilation all that day was without precedent in the block. One of them had not seen the world outside, not even viewed the prison yard, in seven years.

There were whisperings between the cells that night after "lights out". Sleep for six of that doomed twenty-four was out of the question. Duncan Price lay listening in silence, fighting the bitterness and the fury of frustration that for once threatened to have their way.

Some vigilant nerve in Duncan Price's body suddenly sent a quivering signal to every last inch of his being. He lay still for a moment, unable to read its meaning. Then abruptly he knew, made due response, and all his faculties concentrated on the task of transcribing the message that was coming to him in the faint tapping on the wall at his right.

The man in the adjoining cell was one of those selected for transfer. He was a lifer, a placid, good natured fellow who talked a great deal but said little. He tapped out a jerky, disconnected message.

"Leaving steel saw," the message came over. "Sash weight box. Cell 17. Window. Can't take it along. Yours now."

Price tapped out a quick reply, and his neighbor supplied further details. He had obtained the saw in the prison before being committed to the segregation block, and he smuggled it here in his prison uniform. He promptly secreted it in the window counterweight box, so that the first routine inspection failed to betray possession of the tool. He was unable to figure out how to put it to use, and it lay idle for almost a year. He did not dare take it with him on the transfer for the complete change of uniform at the new prison would reveal it. Price was welcome to it. Good luck and a clear road!

The months of sternly controlled watchfulness had only been a training period for the stoic patience Price practised now. Cell 17 was on the other corridor, weeks removed. Meantime the guards might discover the presence of the saw, or another convict might come upon it and bungle the job.

IT TOOK seven weeks for Duncan Price to toil his way around the double row of cells to No. 17. He was installed in the morning, and it was midnight before he dared get to work on the window casing. It was a small window, simply made, and the counterweight box finally surrendered to a belt buckle muffled in a handkerchief. The handkerchief suffered, but the light wooden front of the box was pried open sufficiently for Price to reach inside with his fingers and withdraw the narrow strip of tooth edged steel.

Price was content for this night. He lay on his cot in a glowing mood of satisfaction over mere possession of the tool, and he grinned in the darkness as the keeper on watch made each half-hourly round of the cells. Patience had been his only weapon; now he had two weapons. All his months of faith were justified. The flaw in his impregnable prison had widened invisibly to a deepening chasm.

Next morning when the daily inspection of Cell No. 17 was made, the saw was back in the window box, safely concealed. Price submitted to the routine search without fear. He spent the day as he had each day that had gone before.

When night came and the lights were out he got to work again. His plans were mature. Those last weeks of waiting had given him plenty of time for thought. There was but one way out. He must go out through the yard. Two barriers of steel barred the way, but they must be broken down.

By perching on the edge of the tiny washstand, Price was able to reach out and upward far enough to touch the grille over the yard. By stretching his arm, he could hack on the bar at a point about twelve or fourteen inches distant from the wall. He set himself firmly on his precarious perch and pressed the hard teeth of the saw into the inch-thick metal of the bar.

His nerves crawled at the rasping sound that came from the protesting bar. He stopped and listened. Nothing save the deep breathing of sleeping men was to be heard. He pressed the saw into the faint groove and worked it back and forth slowly, biting into the metal with all his strength.

Price spent no more than ten minutes at his task, though they seemed so many hours. He dropped silently to the cot and crawled between blankets. He lay there with pounding heart until the keeper made his customary round. He waited till the keeper's slow tread passed through the guardroom door, then he sprang from the cot and to the washstand. He examined the roof bar. There was a definite incision in the metal. He slid the edge of the saw into the notch and renewed his labors.

All that long night Duncan Price alternately sawed at the tough bar and played a fantastic game of hide-and-seek with the unsuspecting guard. At no time did he arouse any suspicion, so stealthily he moved and so well he timed his intervals. He took no chances whatever. He could afford none.

By dawn Price was honestly asleep, soundly asleep, in his blankets. The saw once more reposed in its hiding place. The cut in the bar outside the window was almost halfway through the solid metal. It was plugged with dirt and artfully camouflaged with scrapings of paint from the other bars.

Price rose with the other men that morning, electric with anticipation. He scoured his cell for any clue that might reveal his night's activity, and the routine inspection went through without event. The long day stretched before him.

Frequently that day sleep made imperious demands of Duncan Price, but he denied them. Instead, he trudged for miles along the tiny oval path his exercise yard allowed him. To display unwonted exhaustion before the watchful guards would be to betray his wakeful night.

That night Price sawed almost clean through the roof bar. Dawn was thinning the darkness when he desisted. A slight sliver of metal remained, a piece that would break at one solid pull. He plugged up the slot and rolled into bed.

Genuine exhaustion was with Duncan Price all next day. He was in fair condition, but hardly in trim for an intensive effort of this kind. Two nights of hard labor in a strained, cramped position, and two days of practically no sleep took their toll. It was slight enough, and he was too exultant to feel distress, but he feared that his red eyes might implant a suspicion in the minds of his vigilant keepers. He knew their mental habits too well. On the fourth night he went directly to bed and slept through without stirring once.

And on the morning of the fifth day the order for a change of cells came forth. Duncan Price picked up his handful of belongings and moved to other quarters.

Slowly the days went by, and slowly Price made his round of the cell block. There was no variation in his habits, no change in his moods. Warden Clowes visited the place once and stopped before his cell to look in at him. He saw Price as assured as ever, and no surer; as defiant as ever—though no whit more.

"So you're still with us, Price?" observed the warden.

There was a keen light in the prisoner's blue eyes.

"You found yourself that new berth yet?" he asked softly.

The warden looked at him a moment, grunted, and went his way. The next morning the routine inspection was of a more rigorous nature than Price had experienced in a long time.

Six weeks after leaving Cell No. 17, Duncan Price was back. He got to work early the first night, and by dawn the roof bar was sawed three-fourths of the way through, close to the wall where it was imbedded. It was a little easier to work on this end of the bar.

The second night Price attacked a window bar. Here it was still easier to work, but twice as hazardous because of the noise made within the building. His earlier labors had given him skill in the work, however, and the strolling guard suspected nothing. Price managed almost completely to sever the window bar.

The insidious fever of impatience began to rise in Duncan Price's veins on awakening the following day. His plans were bearing fruit, and the fruit was almost ripe.

At inspection Price experienced a moment when his heart stopped beating. One of the guards took hold of a window bar and jerked at it powerfully. By luck it was a sound bar. The guard glanced at the other bars absently, tested a second, and then abandoned that angle of inspection. He missed the weakened bar.

But the day brought a setback of another kind. The change cells order came through, and Price was moved almost on the eve of success. The weary round began again.

THE weeks that followed bore down severely on Duncan Price. Patience still sustained him, but now he was tormented by dread of discovery. It would be difficult for the guards to fasten the responsibility on him if they learned of the plot while he was in another cell. But his reputation would bring upon him the brunt of punishment meted out to the whole segregation block. And far worse, the yawning chasm would be irrevocably closed again, and freedom put years beyond his reach.

Winter was already on the land when Price returned to 17. He found everything as he had left it. He set furiously to work that night. He was almost reckless in his zeal to finish the task in one final burst. When morning came it was completed. He cut the roof bar to a last shred of metal and he severed the window bar at the bottom so that it was held in place only by the thread joining the ends at the top. The way was open; there was needed but one stiff pull to tear each bar from the path.

The last day passed, and that night the keeper on his rounds saw Price retiring before lights out. He made out his blanketed form asleep on the cot at the next round. He saw him again, still unmoved, half an hour later. Once, about eleven-thirty, as he sat reading a magazine in the guardroom, the keeper's imagination played a trick on him, and he thought he heard a quick, soft, snapping sound somewhere. On the next round it seemed that all was well.

But Duncan Price had flown. Immediately after the guard passed by on the round before eleven-thirty, Price rose and dressed. He stuffed all his belongings beneath the blankets to form a passable counterfeit of a sleeping man. Rising to the washstand, he braced himself firmly, gripped the bar, and gave it a powerful tug. It made a tiny snapping sound and came away in his hand. He dropped to the floor and slid the bar beneath the blankets.

Rising again to the window, he broke away the outer roof bar. This he secured down his waist belt for a weapon. He thrust a head and shoulder in the window opening and began to struggle through. It was a fierce battle. The opening was about eight inches wide, and the necessity for silence was never more imperative. He scrambled through, heaving of breath, and rose up through the roof grille opening. Another struggle there, and Price was free atop Brandon's unbeatable prison within a prison.

The segregation block was situated at a far end of Brandon's enclosure, away from the main buildings and the other prisoners. Between the block and the nearest wall lay the prison's lumber yard. Cat-like, Price ran along the roof to that end, hung over the edge of the low roof, and dropped to the soft earth of the yard.

The whole prison was silent. The yard was empty. On the walls a night patrol was maintained, but no guard box was near and no sentry loomed in the faint visibility.

Price ran to a stack of heavy lumber, rolled off a length and, wielding it with the strength of desperation, tipped it on end and stood it against the high wall. It touched the wall close to the top. Using hands and knees he climbed the piece of lumber like a monkey on a stick. It stood firm, and he gained the top of the wall. He scrambled over, lowered himself from the outer edge, hung for a second, and let go. He landed almost without a sound in the loam at the foot of the wall.

Duncan Price picked himself up and ran a few feet. Then he stopped and looked back at Brandon Prison. It was a monstrous bulk in the night, black and forbidding and impregnable. Price laughed softly. Then he turned and ran on in the darkness.

Shortly before dawn the escape was discovered, and by daylight the sparsely settled countryside heard the incredible. The unbeatable combination had been broken in Brandon Prison. Several additional discoveries were soon made in the vicinity which had more or less bearing on the matter. The general store in the little town of Brandon had been broken open, and an outfit of clothes stolen. Various other items were missing too, including a revolver, a box of ammunition, a pocket knife, and a couple of cans of food. The most pertinent discovery of all failed to materialize: the whereabouts of the escaped prisoner. A laborer, early bound for work, tardily bethought himself of the hobo he had seen scrambling aboard a freight train as it got underway in the gray morning mist, and reported the incident to the authorities. But that was all. Duncan Price had vanished into the limitless Outside.

THERE is a certain speakeasy in the big city which even in these easygoing days maintains a certain exclusiveness of clientele. It is entered through no gateway suffused with an inviting saffron glow, but by means of a dingy, battered hallway laid with threadbare linoleum and flanked by walls painted a sickly green. A number of doors lead off this tenement entryway, and the rearmost, the one with a peep-hole in its center, opens on Big Nick Fiori's place. Nick is almost always to be found here except on fight nights, when he may be found in a ringside seat at the Coliseum in the semi-obscurity behind a dazzling diamond stickpin and a smoldering black cigar. Big Nick Fiori has many varied interests for which the place is a convenient point of contact.

It was Nick's eye that peered through the tiny hole in the door when Duncan Price gave the knock. And it was Nick, thick necked, smiling and darkly opaque of eye, who swung wide the door for his welcome. Price sent a swift, wary glance into the room, along the bar and among the tables, and sauntered inside.

"Well, well!" said Nick gently. "If it ain't Dinky Dunk himself after all these years!"

"Lay off that name," said Duncan Price. "Lay off me every way, Nick. I'll lay off you just that long too."

"O. K. with me," agreed Nick, smiling. "It ain't my way to fry other people's fish. You know that."

"Yeah?" said Price. "Well, I can learn."

They walked to the bar. A couple of the half dozen men lounging in the place sent intensely interested glances after the pair. Nick bade the bar-tender produce the private bottle, and a drink was poured. Price fixed the big man with a hard gaze.

"You know what I want," he said. "Where's Twist Filer?"

Nick shrugged.

"How should I know?"

"You'd know," said Price. "And I'm asking you. I want to see that heel. I've been waiting two years to see him."

Nick gave Price an odd, penetrating glance.

"You ain't been getting the news regular, have you? You ain't heard that the Twist moved in on your girl since you left, I suppose?"

Price did not flinch.

"No, I didn't hear. I wasn't allowed to hear anything. But that just doubles it. That punk blew his top in a tight squeeze, killed a guy, and then handed me the rap for it. Now I'll be twice as glad to see him. I couldn't find her anywhere when I looked, and I had to lay too low to look far. That's why I'm here calling on you, Nick. We never were pals, but we don't owe each other anything now. Give me a right steer, and you'll never see me around here again."

Nick blew a long, billowing puff of cigar smoke into the still air and eyed it reflectively. He did not speak for a moment. Then he shot an unreadable glance at Price and poured another drink.

"Well, I'll tell you," he said. "The Twist ain't been in this neighborhood for maybe a year. But I can give you a little steer. If I was you, I'd take a flyer at Paddy Duffy's. You know Paddy's place?"

"Yes. Crosstown."

"That's right," said Nick. "You'll never see him this side of town. And Duffy's is the best tip I can give you."

Price looked at him a moment.

"O. K," he said. He downed his drink, shifted an unaccustomed, weighty object under his coat beneath the left armpit, and headed for the door without further farewell.

Big Nick Fiori stared into his glass when he was alone. He chuckled so that his large body shook slightly with inward laughter. Then he walked to the telephone booth in a corner of the room and called a number.

"Hello?" said Nick. "Steve there? . . . Never mind who's calling. I want Detective Steve Durkin . . . O.K!"

He waited. Presently he resumed in a drawling voice:

"Hello, Steve. Nick. Say, I got something for you. It's hot, too. It's about Dinky Dunk Price on the lam from Brandon. . . . Well, listen a minute—here it is. He's on his way to Paddy Duffy's old place this minute. Get on your roller skates and you might run into him. You both got a chance, even money, and the first man there wins. . . . No, that's all I got. It ought to be plenty. So long!"

Nick was still chuckling as he sauntered over to a table where a pair of his cronies watched him with faintly cruel grins of amusement. There was no love lost here on Duncan Price.

"Paddy Duffy's!" said Nick, and laughed as he sat down. "Paddy's place has been closed for a year. If Dunk makes it before Steve Durkin, he'll get wise and scram like hell out of here. If Steve makes it first, he gets the prize money. It's neck and neck all the way."

"And so he's looking for the Twist with a rod under his arm!" said one of the others.

They all laughed.

"Think," said Big Nick Fiori, "of Dinky Dunk Price working on the bars at Brandon all the time so he can get out and get at Twist Filer! And he gets out—after his girl has spent a year and a half to get even, patiently working on the Twist till she finally nails him cold on a fourth offense and sends him on the skids into Clearwater for a life sentence. Price is out—and the Twist is in. Jeez, ain't patience one hell of a bad habit to get into!"

And they all laughed again, for they found it grotesquely funny.

### By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

# The CONE of FIRE

## A Story of the Mexican Border

"AFTER ALL," said the major tolerantly, "a dumb shavetail is not the worst gift of God."

He tamped the tobacco down in his pipe and settled back, and I waited for the explanation of this cryptic statement, gazing below us to where the squadron tents spread out in neat rows of brown khaki with the horses munching contentedly on the picket lines. The treeless mesa extended to the far horizon. The major cleared his throat.

What I am about to relate [he began] happened around in this country back before the war. The Nth Horse was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, and we were loaded down with recruits and green horses.

In addition to that, Villa was on the rampage on the other side and every ragged peon with a whole pair of shoes to his name was appointing himself a general and leading flocks of patriots to where the loot was heaviest.

We were licking the regiment into shape as rapidly as possible. I was a first lieutenant then, commanding K Troop, and worked like mad getting them through their recruit drill and School of the Soldier. The Old Man was driving us like one of Pharaoh's overseers, yelling that we would be needed out on Border Patrol at any minute because things looked tricky on the other side of the Rio Grande. Which was true enough.

And we were making fair progress—until about the second month. Then an epidemic of cocaine snuffing hit the regiment. You know how that stuff travels in an outfit. The peculiar thing about cocaine is the persistence with which its users try to inveigle others into taking it. One morning I found some ten of my men wild eyed and staring, all of them recruits. The whole regiment was shot through with it. The guardhouse was full and we were all trying to find out where they got the stuff.

One of my men tipped me off and, without saying a word to any one, I slid downtown in seedy looking civilian clothes and appeared at a roller skating rink on Stanton Street. It was a place much frequented by soldiers—and the place, I had been informed, where a lot of the dope came from. The floor was crowded with men in khaki, some of them with girls, swinging around the hall to the tune of a blaring orchestra high above.

Sure enough, I saw several men drifting by with that staring look in their eyes that marks the cocaine jag. One of these men I stopped.

"Hey, guy, where can I get a shot of snow?" I asked casually.

The man stared at me dreamily for a second, then pointed down the hall to the window where the roller skates were rented. This was enough for me, and I headed in that direction.

A sleek youth dressed in a flaring striped suit, was officiating at the window when I made inquiry. He also stared at me a second, then jerked his head to some one behind him.

"Gimme a twist, Bull," he said.

A hand reached out from the shadows in the rear and laid a folded slip of paper on the counter. The sleek haired youth shoved it toward me, still holding it.

"Four bits!" he said.

Just as I had put the money on the counter and was reaching for the folded slip of paper, I saw the sleek looking youth pushed aside by some stronger person and a new face glowered out at me.

"What the hell do ya think you're tryin' to pull!" growled the newcomer and he snatched the paper back out of sight. For a second the intruder glared into my eyes; and if ever a man looked like a combination wildcat and rattlesnake it was that fellow. Hatred showed from his eyes as light shines from fire. There was something vaguely familiar about the face, a set of features that I had seen somewhere before under unpleasant circumstances. But there was little time to study it, for the man reached through the window and swung at me with his fist. I leaped backward just in time to avoid it. *Slam* went the window, leaving me with a startled memory of a dark skinned man, who looked part Mexican but who had blue eyes filled with hatred.

I hammered on the window and tried the door a few yards farther away, but to no avail. Hurrying out, I called the police and had the place surrounded. But it was too late. The birds had flown. At any rate, we had the place closed and established heavy guards over every place of its nature in El Paso and soon had the trouble partially under control. The cocaine had been coming boldly across the river by the International Bridge from Juarez, but we soon put a stop to that.

The next thing we knew it was coming in again, from farther up the line. This had to be stopped. Garrison duty ended, and we were ordered into the field. I expostulated with the colonel, because so far my men had not fired a shot with the rifles and we needed target practise badly. But it was no use.

"Can't be helped," growled the Old Man. "You've got to get out on Border Patrol. Not only is this dope smuggling going on unhindered but there's a gathering of bandits along the Border up near Bosque Bonita and the ranchers are yelling for protection."

"If moral force will suffice, I'll give them plenty of protection, Colonel, but if it comes to actual shooting we're just not there!"

"Do the best you can; take some targets along and run your practise firing on the ground when you arrive," he answered. "There's a fellow called José Medel operating in the country opposite Bosque Bonita. Watch out for him. He has a pretty good sized gang with him."

And that's all the satisfaction I got out of the Old Man.

Just to make me feel better he assigned a recruit shavetail to me as we pulled out. Royle was his name, and he was pretty far from measuring up to my idea of a *beau sabreur.* I should say, offhand, that he had a tendency to mental stringhalt. Also he was pimply faced, had a poor voice and could neither ride nor shoot. Outside of that he was a fine shavetail. And you know a recruit officer is harder to train than a recruit man or horse.

We had to hike well over a hundred miles to get to the place.

And while I'll grant you that one day in the field is worth ten days in garrison for shaking men down into their jobs, our hiking didn't help our shooting any, and it was the shooting that worried me most. Without the ability to use their rifles, my outfit was no better than a hollow shell.

ANYWAY, I picked a camp site down close to the river, established outpost lines, made sketch maps and arranged the place for defense. Without giving the men a breathing spell, I started in on aiming and sighting drills. For several days they worked with the slotted bar and its large tin front and rear sights, learning what a half sight was and how normal errors in sighting could be corrected. The air resounded to the cries of "Mark!" or "Hold!" as each man went through the drill.

As soon as they could make triangles that were normal, they were moved on to the next lesson, which was position in aiming drill, wherein they were taught to breathe properly and to squeeze their triggers evenly. This was followed by the rapid fire exercise and deflection and elevation correction drills. All of these things were taught without a single shot being fired.

While I was engaged in this work one morning, a melancholy looking old rancher rode up and watched the proceedings with considerable interest.

"What are you aimin' to do with all these here monkeyshines?" he asked me.

"Aiming," I returned, "that's just what I'm trying to teach them."

" 'Pears to me like the best way to learn to shoot is to shoot," objected the old boy.

"Correct as hell, as long as the ammunition holds out. But our generous Government doesn't give us enough to permit us to let a man shoot it all away learning this primary stuff."

This was a new angle and he digested it in silence.

"These here men of yourn, they're pretty nigh all of 'em recruits, ain't they?" he asked.

"Most of them. What makes you ask?"

"Nawthin'—only 'pears like there might be some ructions hereabouts purty soon."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I hear tell that Bull Taylor an' his pard José Medel are on the warpath."

"That so?" I answered. "Do you know how many men they have?"

"Dunno for sure," returned the old fellow cautiously, "but I hear tell they got plenty. They been in my place four or five times, but outside of actin' kinda free an' easy they ain't done nothin'—yit. But they been actin' purty bad elsewheres. They shot up Presidio an' raided Pilares a week or ten days ago. I don't think they intend nothin' agin my place, howsomever."

"Where is your place?" I asked quickly.

"Oh, down the river seven, eight

miles—" he waved vaguely in that general direction. Remembering my map, I located the ranch in my mind as soon as he spoke.

"Are you Mr. Murray, by any chance?"

"That's me, young feller."

"Well, I'm glad to know you, Mr. Murray. How about stepping off and having a drink?"

The old man didn't say a word, just slid out of the saddle and dropped the reins over his horse's neck, and in another minute we were solemnly toasting each other with a couple of generous slugs of Four Roses.

"Good licker," grunted the old man, wiping his whiskers, and made no protest as I filled his glass again.

He examined my tent, with its single cot, my saddle rack with its gear all covered under a slicker, and seemed especially interested in the folding canvas bucket and tub and the folding table.

"Purty neat," he volunteered, and then tested my field glasses—a fine pair of artillery binoculars—my map, compass case and sword. The latter he snorted at disapprovingly, although it was a beautiful piece of German steel with a chisel point.

"You're kind of a likely young feller," he said at last. "Ain't nothin' stuck up and stand-offish about you like some o' these here Army officers. Maybe you'll listen to a little advice from an old-timer?"

"Sure," I said. "Glad to hear it." But he turned from me to gaze out of the tent to where the men were lining up for mess call.

"Ain't them soldiers o' yourn purty green?"

"I'm afraid so," I answered.

"Well, you better hurry up and lick 'em into shape. There's goin' to be hell bustin' loose along this neck o' the woods purty quick." And he rose and made his way out, with me following along.

"Who's going to raise all this hell?" I asked, feeling him out further.

"The guy that's a-goin' to raise it ain't exactly a rattlesnake, for a rattlesnake gives some kinda warnin'. An' José Medel won't give no warnin' 'fore he strikes. An' that guy Bull Taylor is worse'n what he is."

"Who's this Bull Taylor?" I asked.

The old fellow shook his head.

"Don't know much about him, 'ceptin' he ain't healthy to monkey with. He's been hangin' around my daughter. An' I aim to cure him o' that if you-all don't crack down on him first."

"What's he doing up here anyway?" I asked, puzzling over that name. It seemed to me that I had heard it before.

"What's he doing? He's runnin' dope, that what he's doing!" And with that the old man rode away.

THIS warning had been handed out with such evident sincerity that I gave it due weight and began to speed up my target practise. At the same time I set inquiries on foot and found out that this José Medel - Bull Taylor combination was camped across the Rio Grande at an *hacienda* some six miles away in Mexico and had from one hundred and fifty to two hundred men with them. Medel had given himself the title of general and was supposed to be organizing a revolution. But that didn't mean much down here, except as an excuse for plundering the country on both sides of the line. Bull Taylor was his lieutenant as far as I could find out.

I strengthened my outguards, arranged some standing trenches and found a more secure position for my picket lines. After having laid down the orders for assembly in case of a call to arms, I went back to the shooting.

Young Royle wasn't of much use to me, because he couldn't hit a barn door. And as an instructor he was worse than useless. So I set him to making a rifle range, after locating a likely spot about half a mile from camp, just above the river on a broad flat mesa. I'd already brought along two target frames with pulleys and ropes. He set about digging target pits and marking off ranges.

It wasn't long until the troop was going through its preliminary practise, starting at two hundred yards. The rifles cracked all day long. The white targets bobbed up and down like polite old ladies, the marking disks wobbled up out of the pits, the black disk for a 2, the black and white for a 3, the red for a 4 and the blessed white disk for a 5. The men steadied down to it and more and more white disks showed up. The firing line backed up to three hundred yards, then farther back to five hundred, and at last to six hundred where problems of windage entered in and men were schooled in shifting their windage screws.

It kept me pretty busy, what with coaching every soldier at every range—curing this man of flinching, that man of jerking his trigger, and another of canting his piece; but the men were interested and worked hard, beginning to shape up exceedingly well at slow fire.

We were smack up against the Rio Grande here, with nothing but a few yards of shallow water between us and Mexico. From the target range itself we could look over into Chihuahua, and through the purple haze to the mountains far in the distance. My eyes roved over that way more often that not, for I was thinking of those fellows José Medel and Bull Taylor, wondering what brand of rough stuff they were contemplating.

For after all, this shooting at bull's-eye targets is simply preliminary stuff to show the soldier how to hold his rifle and make it hit. The real battle practise comes with the rapid fire at silhouettes, which is the culmination of the course, with men firing in masses at olive drab, life size figures. I hoped that we could get through that before we were jumped by the Mexicans.

About this time a messenger came riding in from the railroad bringing me a letter from the Old Man. It was a hot one. It fairly sizzled.

The colonel wanted to know what in blazes I was doing up there, informing me that two large shipments of dope had come through from my sector in the past few days, and telling me in no uncertain terms to get on the job and stop it.

From all I'd heard, it seemed pretty clear to me that this fellow Bull Taylor was behind the dope smuggling. The next question was how to get on his trail. Then I remembered the remark of old Murray, about this fellow Taylor hanging around his daughter, and I decided to look into that.

And, as luck would have it, old Murray rode into camp that very evening, accompanied by two girls. They were certainly easy to look it, those daughters of his; especially the elder, whose name was Mercedes. She was about eighteen or nineteen and showed a trace of Spanish blood. Afterward I learned that her mother had been partly Spanish. Slim and graceful as a boy, she was a beautiful sight on a horse.

They had come down to invite me home to supper with them.

"A little home cooked grub'll do you good, young feller," said the old man gruffly.

It fell in very well with my plans. After all, this ranch was only about eight miles away and I could get back in a hurry if trouble should arise. In addition to wanting more information about this fellow Bull Taylor, I was frankly lonely for a little feminine society. And as I stated, that older girl was easy on the eyes.

The upshot of the matter was that I turned the troop over to Lieutenant Royle, knowing that the top sergeant would take care of anything that came up, and I rode back with father and daughters.

After the heat of the day it was cool and pleasant among the cottonwoods along the river, and we laughed and chatted happily. I gathered that the girls were pretty lonesome for the companionship of their own kind and had put heavy pressure upon the old man to invite me. They had been East at school for several years, and I think the few lonely months they had spent with their father were beginning to pall upon them. Needless to state, I was just as lonesome, being at the age when I considered that an evening spent without a girl was practically an evening wasted.

MURRAY'S ranch-house was a large rambling adobe affair, its heavy walls not only thick enough to keep out heat and cold, but to stop stray bullets as well. The old man had certainly built the place with an eye to defense, which was sensible enough, seeing how many scalawags of both races were along the Border.

Supper was served after Mr. Murray had mixed up some drinks for himself and me, and we sat down to the ministrations of a grinning Chinese who certainly turned out a good meal.

"Aren't you afraid to keep two such attractive girls so near the International Boundary?" I asked Murray as we ate.

"Afraid? Afraid of what?" he growled.

"Well, these wandering bandits and revolutionists from the other side, and the dope runners and outlaws from this side," I hazarded.

"Never had any trouble so long's I've been here," he returned shortly, and I gathered that my remarks were not being received in very good spirit.

But I persevered nevertheless, for I had an idea in mind, an idea that had occurred to me after seeing his big corrals, his heavy gates and his thick adobe walls.

"How about this fellow Bull Taylor?" I asked and noted that the younger girl, Conchita, nudged her sister and smiled. The older girl flushed a little and looked annoyed.

"He's jest a cheap tinhorn sport," growled the old man, and bent to his food as though wishing the subject changed. But the younger girl was giggling and poking fun at Mercedes.

"What's the joke?" I asked.

"Connie, if you say a word I'll never speak to you again!" cried Mercedes. But Connie fended aside her sister's hand and turned to me, bursting with laughter.

"Bull Taylor has been here making eyes at Mercedes. He has a case on her," she giggled.

The older girl looked more annoyed. The father looked up, his light blue eyes angry.

"The impident varmint!" he growled. "I'll send him packin' if he gits fresh around here."

I could see that it was more or less a joking matter to the two girls, and that the father did not take it too seriously. But knowing the Border, I wondered if the matter could be dismissed so lightly, especially as Taylor seemed to be surrounded with a big gang of cutthroats. It would be easy enough for him to slide in here between the dawn and daylight, raid the place, carrying off the women folk and disappearing into Chihuahua where he could never be found again.

It all served to strengthen me in my resolution to put forward the plan I had in mind.

"Look here, Mr. Murray," I said, "it seems to me that you are running a pretty serious risk having these two girls alone here so close to Medel's gang of bandits. Of course there's a whole troop of Cavalry up the river. But we're nearly eight miles away and anything might happen before we got here. I have a scheme to propose"—and I looked around at the two girls who had grown serious and were listening to me wide eyed. Old Murray put down his knife and fork, giving me his whole attention.

"Supposing I bring the troop down here," I continued. "There is plenty of shelter for my men and horses and this would be an easy place to defend in case of an attack—"

I saw the eyes of the two girls glow with enthusiasm.

"Oh, daddy," said Mercedes, "that would be lovely. Please, daddy, say yes."

The old chap looked at her indulgently.

"Suits me," he said. "Not that I'm worried about anything these here greasers can do, but it is kinda lonesome for the gals."

"Good!" I said. "I'll arrange it as quickly as we finish target practice and our field firing. In the meantime, I'll station an outpost of ten men and a non-commissioned officer here, sending them down tomorrow morning."

Just as I finished speaking, I heard horses stamping about outside and the clump of feet on the porch. There came a heavy knock at the door. The grinning old Chinese went to open it. Over his shoulder I saw the flash of silver on a sombrero and heard the notes of a heavy voice. The old Chinese came back to report.

"Mexican fella out there." He pointed to the door. "Big fella alla same José Medel."

"Tell 'em to come on in," called Murray, and in another moment a swarthy, rotund figure stood in the doorway, bowing, sombrero in hand.

He was plainly a peon, but possessed of the certain grace of manner that a Mexican peon betrays. My eyes swept past him. Suddenly I forgot all about Mexicans and their manners. Forgotten was José Medel as I saw the man with him.

For there glaring at me over the peon's shoulders was the sallow faced, half Latin looking man whose hard blue eyes shocked me into remembrance with their hostile stare.

It was the dope seller, the man who had struck at me from behind the wicket at the roller skating rink.

This, then, was the notorious Bull Taylor. But even with the combination of the name and face of the man, each of which had recalled some vague memory separately, my brain refused to solve the mystery of where I had seen the fellow previous to our meeting at the roller skating rink in El Paso. Try as I would, I was unable to remember where and when I had seen him.

For a second he stood there, his eyes boring into mine. Then he switched his glance and it was like having a beam of white hot hatred removed from my person. The Mexican bowed again as Murray invited the two of them to draw up chairs. Bull Taylor essayed some greeting to Mercedes, but her chin rose and she answered very shortly. He sat back, his eyes smoldering. As Murray and the Mexican talked together in Spanish, Bull Taylor turned his attention to me, his eyes insolent as he stared me over from head to heel.

"Well, how's the phony hoss soldiers?" he asked in a hoarse, cracked sort of voice, directing the question at me.

"Speak English and maybe I can understand you!" I snapped back. The girls looked up startled; and even Medel and Murray stopped their talking, sensing the tension in the air.

"I guess you understand me all right," he retorted. "When I say phony hoss soldiers I mean that there troop o' yourn that can't ride—and can't shoot."

It flashed over me suddenly that he was uncannily aware of the deficiencies of my recruits, but I answered him steadily enough.

"Oh, yes? I'd advise you not to count too much on their being unable to shoot. You might let yourself in for a sad awakening."

"Now ain't that too bad!" he sneered. "From what I seen of 'em, I'd say the safest place to be when they're shootin' is right where they're aimin'!"

"Any time you want to take the place of one of our targets, say the word," I returned equably, "and I'll be only too happy to oblige you. You wouldn't be the first wooden target they have hit."

What he had on the tip of his tongue to retort I don't know, for at that moment Mercedes, probably becoming alarmed at the acrimony displayed in the conversation, rose from the table.

"Lieutenant," she said, "wouldn't you like to come out on the porch where the air is pleasanter and leave these gentlemen—" what scorn she put in the word "gentlemen" as she rested her eyes on Bull Taylor—"and leave these gentlemen to talk business?"

The two girls looked at me expectantly. There was nothing to do but accede, and I rose. Bull Taylor appeared startled for a second, then addressed Mercedes.

"Could I see you for a moment privately?" he asked, starting to rise.

"Mr. Taylor," her voice came very clearly—"I am quite sure that there is nothing of any importance that would require your seeing me either in public or in private!"

She turned away from him and smiled at me. "Shall we go?" she asked.

If ever there was a slap direct, it was that one. Bull Taylor turned pale and then his face flushed a dull, angry red. He was plainly groggy for a second as he subsided into his chair. But he managed to shoot a look at me that was murderous in its malevolent intensity.

I must own that I felt a little foolish, trailing out of there like a tame cat in tow of the two girls. But I soon forgot that in the magic of the Mexican moonlight outside. We laughed and chatted and sang light heartedly to the strumming of Mercedes' guitar. But underneath all the gaiety, something hammered persistently at my brain as I sought for the elusive memory to verify my having seen this fellow Bull Taylor somewhere long before, and that the meeting had not been a pleansant one.

NOT even the glamor of that Southern moon, bathing the mesa and the river and the great plains of Chihuahua in unearthly light, could drive that feeling away. It was only when Mercedes sang "Las Golindrinas" in a lovely liquid voice that the magic of the music and the time and place drove every other thought out of mind for a moment. It was only for a moment, however. I tried hard to keep my mind on the beauty of the evening and the charm of the girls, but I found my thoughts returning to Bull Taylor, to my elusive memory of him and his connection with dope peddling, and how I was to get a line on his activities and stop them.

I strove to put him out of my thoughts and to disregard the rumble of voices that came from inside. My two companions were affected by the magic of the evening and I had to play up and do my share. Taking the guitar, I strummed out "Mi Niña" and a lot of other things, and the girls snuggled up on either side in a more friendly fashion as we gazed off over the silver flooded mesa and sang everything we knew.

Thus it seemed that but a few minutes had elapsed before we heard the scrape of chairs inside and the clump of feet coming toward us. The girls drew away from me on either side and sat up very primly as the unwelcome visitors came to say goodby. Bull Taylor looked ugly, but José Medel seemed amused. In frigid politeness we followed them to the front of the house where their horses were tethered.

Because of the light shining from the open door on the man's face, or because my truant memory decided at last to rouse itself, I suddenly knew when and where I had seen Taylor before. As clearly as though it had happened yesterday, I saw him standing as the accused before a court-martial of which I had been judge advocate. His sentence was being read—a year's confinement at hard labor and dishonorable discharge from the Army.

Now I remembered the case very well, and how I had succeeded in convicting him of peddling cocaine within the regiment. Suddenly I recalled the slow, venomous look he had turned on me when the president of the court finished reading the sentence. The prisoner at the bar evidently considered it a personal affair, which it was not in the least. I had simply gone after him hard and heavy for his share in debauching good American soldiers with cocaine.

That I had failed to recall his face and name was not especially remarkable, for it had been two or three years since that court-martial. In that space of time I had commanded hundreds of men in different organizations. Besides, the last time I had seen him he had been in uniform; and that does make a difference. At the same time, he had a great deal more reason for remembering me.

There was no doubt that he had recognized me at the roller skating rink. And that explained the hatred he had shown. Well, that couldn't be helped. I shrugged my shoulders as he mounted his horse. Medel made a sweeping gesture with his sombrero, bowing low in the saddle. Then the two of them galloped away with a typical Mexican swirl and rush.

Old Murray excused himself, mumbling something about "bein' dog tired" although I well knew that the old man was just exercising a little tact, and left us alone to return to our singing and low voiced talk while the moon sank lower in the sky and the mesa gradually became deep, inky blackness. And still our voices rose and fell until it was well toward midnight and time for me to be on my way.

The two girls came with me to the hitching post in the darkness. Peggy, my mare, was very anxious to be off and danced around impatiently as I swung into the saddle.

*"Hasta mañana,"* came Mercedes' soft voice; and there was a faint note of worry in her tone as she went on. "Take care that Bull Taylor and his friends don't lie in wait for you on the way back!"

*"Hasta mañana,"* I echoed. "No fear!" And I was off, with Peggy skipping about like a ballet dancer, in desperate pretense of trying to unseat me.

It was not until we passed the outer gates and corrals that Peggy stopped her nonsense and became suddenly very alert—moving forward, her feet gathered under her, poised like a cat. Her ears twitched to the front and back again. She sniffed suspiciously of the night air. I knew Peggy too well to disregard her warning.

Something was ahead of us, but whether it were man or animal I could not tell.

PEGGY grew more and more nervous and excited, trying to tell me in her fashion that something was wrong. From the ranch gates to the fringe of cottonwood trees, in which the trail lost itself, was some two hundred yards. I thought of Mercedes' warning and decided that there might be something in it after all. If those two were waiting for me in the darkness of the trees, I wouldn't stand much of a show, as they could see the shadows of myself and my horse as I rode up.

Of course it might be just a delusion of Peggy's imagination. But Peggy, after all, was a pretty reliable personality, not at all given to false alarms.

She had halted now, her neck outstretched and her nostrils working. Without any more delay I touched her with heel and rein and swung her off at right angles to the route we were following. We moved down toward the river, along the corral wall.

The ripple and swish of the water grew ever louder as we approached and soon I had forced Peggy into the edge of the current and faced her upstream. She picked her way through the shallows; but a horse splashes too much in shallow water, and I quickly moved her up on dry land again, hoping that the sound of her progress had not been heard.

The sand of the shore muffled her footsteps beautifully and we moved along as silently as phantoms, while I ducked to avoid the low hanging branches. Peggy seemed aware of the need for silence for she moved forward tense and alert, her neck arched, ears and nostrils working overtime.

As we rounded a little point that jutted into the current, Peggy suddenly leaped, graceful as a deer, out into the stream and stood there, poised and trembling. I heard a commotion in the brush at the edge of the water and some dark shadow fled back into the trees. Peggy seemed to realize as quickly as I did that it was nothing but some night animal in search of water, for she moved immediately back to the shore again and resumed her progress without any further bidding from me.

The more I thought of Bull Taylor and his companion the angrier I got at the idea that they were lying in ambush for me, if that was what they were doing. I decided it was best to find out, in any case, as a guide for future action. After we had traveled about six or eight hundred yards along the river, I swung Peggy to the right up a slight trail that climbed the bank.

Once at the top, I tethered her to a tree and crept forward on foot, unbuttoning the flap of my pistol holster. It was only about fifty yards or so to the main trail and I came out on it a minute or two later and stood stock still, listening and trying to see through the darkness. After a futile moment of this, I turned down the trail, moving back toward the Murray ranch-house, feeling that the men, if they were waiting for me, were probably close to the edge of the trees.

I had not gone over ten yards when I heard the unmistakable sound of a horse shaking itself. I knew it was not Peggy, for it came from far ahead. I crept on. As I advanced, I grew puzzled, for I began to hear the stamping about of many horses and the champ of their jaws as they tore at the brush and browsed on the foliage. Unless I was completely deceived, here were not only three horses but sixty or seventy in addition. What the dickens this portended I could not figure out unless—and here I halted and grew a little chill—unless Bull Taylor was preparing to attack the ranch-house!

Either he had brought his men with him when he first arrived and left them concealed in the woods, or he had sent for them as a result of something he had seen or heard in the ranch-house. I wondered if old Murray had been foolish enough to tell him that he expected a soldier guard the next day. The more I thought of it, the more likely it seemed. If this had been the case, then Bull Taylor's first move would be to bring up his men and capture the place before the arrival of the soldiers.

My duty was clear. I must get back and get the troop turned out as quickly as the good Lord would let me. But first I must be sure of my facts.

As I crept forward, the sound of the horses grew louder and I heard the occasional low voiced remarks of men speaking Spanish. A strong odor of horse, leather and tobacco assailed my nostrils. Then, rounding a turn in the trail, I saw innumerable tiny lights like fireflies and knew that I was gazing upon the Mexicans and their cigarets. Evidently these men felt themselves secure well back from the ranch, and were waiting for orders.

I had found out that men were there in force and turned to retrace my steps. As I turned my elbow collided with flesh and bone and some one grunted a Spanish oath.

My first reaction was instinctive. Drawing back my fist, I drove at the sound. And then did a little swearing, but it wasn't in Spanish. For my fist had come into violent and painful contact with a rifle barrel. Luckily the blow was delivered hastily and at short range, or otherwise I would undoubtedly have broken my hand. As it was, I had zipped out a mouthful of sincere and classic Anglo-Saxon expletives, and thereby spilled the beans, let the cat out of the bag and threw a monkey wrench into the machinery all at one and the same time.

It seemed to me for a dizzy minute that the sky was raining Mexicans. They dropped on me from every conceivable angle, silent and business-like. The next few minutes were about the busiest that I can remember for many moons. I was doggedly hitting every head that arose, without partiality, fear, or favor; and varying this by kicking like a machine gun mule. In some way I was aided by the darkness. As I began to think more clearly, I took advantage of this and threw the nearest Mexican at his fellows, who immediately proceeded to claw and lam him under the impression that it was I. By confusing the issue in this manner, I managed to split my antagonists up into several little knots of struggling men and to slide out of the mêlée.

One persistent individual clung to my neck, calling on all the saints to aid him as he tried to gouge out my eyes, an occupation that didn't exactly call for saintly assistance, to my way of thinking. But I discouraged him by banging him emphatically against a tree and broke away, dodging between excited Mexicans until I was almost out of the fight, and headed back up the trail toward Peggy.

The getaway was not to be as easy as that, however, for several of them must have spotted me at the same time. They ceased their internecine warfare and legged it after me, yelling bloody murder.

There was only one thing to do. For the first time my gun arm was free, and I jerked out my pistol and fired point blank into the pursuing mob, thinking as I pulled the trigger that the sound of firing would at least warn Murray, if it didn't do me any good.

But it did give me a second's breathing spell, and I turned and fled like a long legged jackrabbit. A bullet whistled overhead and revolvers and rifles cracked behind me, but they only accelerated my strategic retreat, as the official communiqués so gracefully put it.

IN ANOTHER moment Peggy was nuzzling me, nearly knocking me down in the vehemence of her joy. I jerked the rein loose and flung myself into the saddle.

A yell came from the main trail and the sound of galloping hoofs. Peggy needed no urging, and leaped forward at loose rein as we sped for the river bank.

We made good progress by crossing to the Mexican side and soon arrived at the ford that led over to the American camp. I noticed before we splashed across that the sound of pursuit had died down far in the rear by now. In a few more minutes we were across and I was being challenged by a scared recruit who wobbled his rifle muzzle at me in dangerous fashion.

"Put down that gun, you blankety-blank idiot—!" I yelled at him.

He evidently recognized my voice and manner of speaking for he replied, "Pass—friend," in a meek and much relieved tone.

In practically no time I had that camp boiling. Men were rushing to horse, half clad but armed. Calling out ten soldiers and a noncom, I left Royle, my dumb shavetail, in charge of them and the camp.

"And don't let any dope smugglers get by you in our absence!" I yelled as I led the troop down the trail toward Murray's ranch.

We arrived there after a wild gallop through the night—only to find that the birds had flown. There wasn't a sign of the Mexicans anywhere near us. As I halted to breathe my horses, it suddenly came over me that we had been tricked.

The sham attack against Murray's ranch was only to lead my troop away from our camp, which guarded the only good trail leading to the railroad. Cursing myself for a blind fool, I swung the troop about and hurried back.

It was getting well toward daylight. As we approached the camp, I heard the sound of distant firing. Following it up, we went up the valley away from the river, where I came to Royle and his handful of men dismounted behind a crest.

"A group of Mexicans tried to sneak across just after you left," he reported. "We fired into them and they have taken cover up the valley."

His men were firing in desultory fashion, and I followed the direction of their aim to the place where I saw two abandoned cars near the edge of the trail. Off to the right was a rocky stretch. Concealed among the boulders were the smugglers, who fired at my men every time they exposed themselves.

Dismounting the troop, I formed a firing line.

From where I stood I figured the range about six hundred yards.

Royle was beside me.

"What do you make that range?" I asked. He pursed his lips and stared thoughtfully across the mesa.

"About twelve hundred yards," he answered seriously.

"Mr. Royle, you certainly need some practise at range estimation!" I advised him. But just about that time a bullet from the smugglers' hangout cracked down close at hand, sending a spray of rock and sand into my face. The troop was well sheltered behind an outcropping ledge of rocks, but I would have to put a stop to this.

Signaling the men to keep low, I waved them up along the crest of the rocks and went along behind them, pointing out the target. Sergeant Shedd's estimate of the range was the same as mine, and I gave them six hundred yards with one point right windage, for there was a good little breeze blowing across the valley from three o'clock. Cautioning the men about breathing properly and squeezing their triggers easily, I gave the command "fire at will" and adjusted my field glasses on the target.

The character of the soil, rocky and hard, made it impossible to correct the range by means of ranging volleys. But with my glasses I could pick out the limits of the cone of dispersion of our fire by the tiny spurts made by the bullets. It was a very large cone, much too large, as is always the case with inexpert riflemen, and I went along in rear of the line, cautioning the men about taking the half sight and aiming carefully. This steadied them down slightly.

Now I could see through my glasses that the "overs" and "shorts" were drawing into a smaller cone of dispersion. With this result achieved, another thing immediately became apparent to me, and I passed word along to raise the range to six hundred and fifty yards.

"You see, Royle," I explained, "the smaller the cone of dispersion—in other words the better trained your riflemen are—the more careful you have to be with range estimation. Do you understand that?"

He didn't.

"Well, you see—" I explained patiently—"supposing you are firing a hundred men, poor to average shots. The sheaf of bullets sent out by them land on an area two hundred yards in depth. If you have made an error of one hundred yards in range estimation, at least half your bullets will fall around the target. But if you have a group of expert shots, their cone of dispersion will be much smaller, say fifty yards in depth. If that cone falls on the target, it will be much more deadly. But if you make an error of one hundred yards in range estimation, none of the bullets will fall on the target. They will all drop into an area fifty yards short. Do you understand that?"

I doubt if he did, although he nodded.

"In other words," I added, "the better your riflemen, the more carefully does the officer have to estimate his ranges, or they will be worse than useless."

The bullets were landing pretty closely around that space where the smugglers were concealed. I had some fifty rifles there in the firing line, and I could imagine those bullets kicking up a fearful rumpus. What with rock chips, richochets and direct hits, the men at the receiving end were probably having a devil of a time. I must say I was really proud of the comparative smallness of that cone of dispersion, for it showed that my hard work of the last few weeks was bearing fruit, and that we were developing riflemen. Of course, the cone was much too large as yet. It showed that lots more work was needed, although this was only slow fire and the real test of battle trained troops is rapid fire.

If my dope were correct, it was about time that the enemy showed signs of being fed up. Just as I was thinking this, I saw a man jump up from behind a rock and run, zig-zagging, across an open space. I focused my glasses upon him and received a shock.

For unless my eyes were deceiving me, the man was none other than Bull Taylor himself. At sight of him, the firing from the troop became wild as every soldier tried to hit him. I could see bullets striking all over the mesa and the cone of dispersion immediately leaped to twice and thrice its former size. This was discouraging. But what was more discouraging, the fellow dived unscathed into a hollow and disappeared for a space.

In another minute he reappeared at the far end, leaning low on a horse, and galloped out of sight around a rocky butte up the valley. Believe me, I swore. But I became silent on a sudden, beginning to figure things out. In a flash of comprehension, I saw a lot of things at once. In the first place, Taylor was working the dope racket with José Medel and probably splitting profits with him. And in the second place, the attack on the ranch had been, as I suspected, a feint to draw my troop away while Bull Taylor smuggled through another rich load of dope. And they had blame near succeeded.

THE flight of the lone rider made my men careless. As they craned their necks watching him, the remainder of the enemy force sent in a burst of fire that knocked over three of my soldiers, one shot through the shoulder, one creased alongside the head and knocked out, and a third with a broken leg. It was the first time my men had seen any enemy bullets land among themselves. It rattled them, so that when the remainder of the Mexicans broke out of cover and galloped away our shooting was terribly wild.

We found three dead Mexicans on the mesa and five heavily laden pack animals concealed in a hollow nearby.

The captured pack animals were led back to camp. When we came to investigate the packs, we found nearly one hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of cocaine, morphine and heroin, neatly packed in convenient containers. It was a big haul and I immediately put the stuff under guard and sent word to the civil authorities.

Due to the fact that we had been marching and fighting all night, I gave the men a day off with nothing to do but the ordinary and necessary guard and fatigue. I was under no delusions as to what we might expect from Medel, Taylor and Co. as a result of our work of the last twenty-four hours, and took the precaution of extending my outguard line and strengthening it, knowing full well they would try to hop on our necks at the first opportunity. Personally I'd much rather have been down at Murray's ranch where the surroundings were such as to lend themselves to an easy defense. But I had to finish my target work, especially after I had seen the troop go to pieces the moment they started rapid fire.

The night passed without incident, although I made about four inspections and prowled around like an insomnia afflicted hyena.

The next morning, bright and early, we started the rapid fire practise, speeding it up as much as possible. The troop made some progress that day, going from the two hundred yard firing point to the three hundred yard position. Rapid fire is largely a matter of steel nerves and semi-automatic muscular reaction. The men had steadied down enormously, due to the fact that they had been "blooded" and had actually fired against living enemies.

We continued firing until it grew too dark to see, and then came in for supper. Sergeant Wilkins' outfit had returned and reported all quiet at Murray's ranch. The outguards along the river and back on the mesa had nothing to report. The inactivity of Taylor was welcome to me, for I wanted above all things to finish my firing. At the same time, the silence was a little ominous.

By the time I had finished inspecting rifles, animals, signing reports and attending to my orderly room work it was nearly ten o'clock. I went toward my tent, which stood at the head of the troop street on the flank of the camp. The interior was dark.

I struck a match and lighted my candle lamp which threw my distorted shadow on the canvas walls. I turned away from the table and sat on the bed to unbuckle my spurs. At that second I heard the crack of a rifle and something brushed my campaign hat off my head. I stared at it, uncomprehending, and saw a clean bullet hole drilled through the crown. There was another crack of a rifle and a furrow appeared along the top of my table and a bullet buried itself in the tent pole.

From the rear of the camp I heard a voice shout my name.

"— and if these don't fix you, I've got some more that will!" yelled a familiar voice and I heard the clatter of hoofs as some one galloped away.

I knew instantly that it was Bull Taylor.

Investigation showed that he had ridden into camp wearing a khaki uniform and campaign hat. The sentries, believing naturally that he was one of the troop, paid little attention to him when he came in. And he galloped out too swiftly for them to locate him in the darkness. I went to sleep again.

NEXT day we started rapid fire practise in grim earnest. In a few more days we had finished, with the men making excellent scores. Royle was pretty hopeless, not knowing the difference between a thousand yards and three hundred although I drilled him constantly at range estimation.

With the completion of the rapid fire, I started field firing, which is the combined firing of groups against silhouette figures. The idea is to teach officers and noncommissioned officers to direct the firing of their units.

The squads went through their tests with flying colors. The platoons created havoc with the life size cardboard targets and then the time came for the troop to fire as a whole. Several times through the course of this firing, which lasted a week, I felt we were being watched from various parts of the range. But guards who were sent to investigate came back reporting no one.

I set the troop test for the morrow, deciding to let Royle go through with his first. For his own good, I was throwing all possible responsibility upon him, letting him handle all details.

An invitation had come from Mercedes to dine at the Murray ranch that evening. Before starting, I went out on the range and supervised the setting up of the targets, putting up a fixed row of forty silhouettes under the crest of one hill and placing a collapsible row under the crest of another hill, these latter worked with a rope and pulley so that they could be raised into view at signal. The two rows were so arranged that Royle would have to switch his fire through a forty-five degree arc. The second targets were left flat on their faces, with rope and pulley ready to heave them into view and a pit dug off to their flank where the men who were to work them would be stationed.

My duties finished and everything in readiness for the morrow, I accompanied the relief of two squads that was on its way to Murray's ranch.

It was a beautiful evening. The old man was the soul of hospitality and the two girls charming and delightful. Midnight came all too soon. When I started to depart, the girls objected strongly to my riding back alone. But I merely joked about their fears and started forth.

The moon was still in the sky as I rode toward the darkness of the woods at the edge of the clearing.

Once in the trees, there was nothing to be seen except the blotches of moonlight filtering through the branches. Nor could I hear anything save the pensive sighing of the breeze through the cottonwoods and the ripple of the waters of the Rio Grande as it coursed over its pebbles.

It must have been that the breeze was in the wrong direction, or else Peggy would surely have warned me. How she failed I do not know, but the first thing I knew I heard a faint whir in the air above my head. Something that coiled like a blacksnake in the moonlight dropped down upon me and snapped tight about my arms. In another second I was jerked roughly out of the saddle and landed, half stunned, on the ground.

Then something struck me violently, whether a fist or a boot I don't know.

How long afterward I began to recover consciousness I do not know either. I found myself aching all over and with an intolerable throbbing in my head, bound in some peculiar fashion to a stake, as nearly as I could figure out in my befuddled state.

Some one had been pouring water upon me, and my khaki was drenched. I felt chilly in the cold morning air.

"So you come outa your faint, did you?" A hoarse voice, all too familiar, fell on my ears.

I looked upward, my brain working more rationally, to find Bull Taylor standing above me. The effort of looking upward made me dizzy for a space, but I was not too far gone to notice that I was on the target range and that far below me lay the camp. Staring about me, I saw that I was tied to a line of cardboard silhouettes and I recognized the targets whose location I had supervised before departing for the Murray ranch.

The significance of my position did not occur to me. Again Taylor's voice grated on my ears.

"So the purty hoss soldier ain't talkin' so fancy and free!" he jibed.

I struggled ineffectively to loosen my arms, which were bound tightly to the stake, as were my legs. I was tethered in a kneeling position about midway of the long line of silhouettes—which happened to be kneeling figures.

"It was a good idea you gave me, fella," the voice went on, "talkin' to me about targets and about me actin' as such any time I pleased. I thinks to myself: How would it be if I make a target outa you—" here his voice rose strangely and I looked up again to find his eyes wild and staring as he stood above me. Doped, I was sure.

"You would bobtail me outa the Army, would you! You would bust up my quiet little business in El Paso? You would try to steal my girl? You would sick your men on my property? You sure played hell, fella, when you crossed my trail!" and he laughed wildly, like a demented man. And in effect he was demented, as any dope fiend is demented when under the influence of the drug.

"And you hadda fine time teachin' them dumb recruits how to shoot, didn't ya? And I guess you taught 'em! Now I'm goin' to have a fine time standin' off and watchin' 'em practise on your lousy frame! How will you like that? Answer me—or I'll knock your block off!" He crashed his fist into the side of my face.

"And in case any o' your dumb recruits misses you, don't worry! I'll be standin' off there on that other hill, watchin', with my rifle trained right on your gizzard, ready to polish you off."

With a parting kick he disappeared out of my range of vision. I heard the shuffle of many feet and took it that his men were with him. I saw them reappear for a moment as they reached the other hill, that second hill near the river below the crest of which I had placed the second line of targets, the concealed ones.

THE full meaning of what Bull Taylor intended did not come over me until I began to figure out the procedure that would take place at reveille and after. In the first place no one would particularly remark my absence, as it was known that I had gone with the relief to Murray's ranch and the troop would reason that I had remained there the night to return with the old guard in the morning.

As remorseless as the grinding of some heavy lethal machinery, the next moves were clear. Breakfast, water call and police of camp would finish quickly. The troop would line up under my shavetail, Royle, and march to the range. Here the range sergeant would assign them their position and give the word for them to start. Suddenly there would be the crack of a single pistol shot as signal and Royle would halt his men, estimate the range and start the rifles of some forty men firing at this line of silhouettes.

The range was nearly eight hundred yards. At that distance my figure would not be noticed in the line of cardboard figures; my khaki was of the same color as the cardboard used in the targets; the lights and shadows that played on the target would conceal me from the view of my men as effectually as though I did not exist.

For five minutes I would be the target for some forty rifles; rifles held by men whom I had trained to hold and aim and breathe properly and squeeze, whose scores I had seen mount daily until they were fit to rank as capable shots. I would be shot to death by the very men whom I had trained. Only an opiate-crazed brain could have devised such a diabolical form of death!

There was the remote chance that the bullets might miss me.

But that hope went glimmering as I remembered Taylor's parting words and his promise to keep his own rifle trained upon me.

My position was cramped, leaning forward, kneeling. The ropes that bound me were cutting cruelly into my legs and arms and wrists. But the physical pain was as nothing to the mental agony I underwent as the sky slowly lighted up in the east, as reveille blew in the camp, as the cook fire sent forth its cheerful smoke and the camp stirred into life.

There before my eyes I saw the routine of camp carried out, knowing each step in advance and knowing that each step was bringing my death that much nearer.

I saw the horses led down to the river and return. I saw the men turn out with rifles and cartridge belts and fall in. I saw Royle come out of his tent and receive the first sergeant's report.

Then, toiling slowly up the far side of the range toward the river, I saw the two men who were to work the second target. My heart lifted at sight of them. Surely they would see those Mexicans behind that hill and spread the alarm. Nearer and nearer they came, smoking and chatting carelessly together. I twisted and turned, hoping that my movements would attract their attention. But never a glance did they send in my direction.

At last they disappeared into their pits on the far side of the hill and the range became vacant again.

Then I saw the troop wind through the cottonwoods and follow the road that led to the range. They appeared and disappeared, but always they came closer and closer until finally they halted behind an outcropping of rock which was the starting point.

My end was not long to be delayed. Far over on that other hill I knew that rifles were trained upon me ready to finish me should anything upset the scheme. But I saw no hope of anything happening that would save me from that blast of rifle fire from my own men.

Now the scouts were going forward. Suddenly they spied the targets and ran back. I watched, fascinated, as the line of men in skirmish order came out from behind the rocks, trailing their rifles. If only Royle would use his field glasses and see me bound and helpless. But Royle made no motion to use his field glasses, and too late I remembered that he had none.

I waited with a kind of cold dread for that crack of a single pistol shot that would signal the commencement of the firing.

It came as I waited, sounding like the veritable crack of doom itself.

I was trembling violently waiting for the inevitable hail of bullets to land. As in a dream, I saw Royle standing there behind the men, waving his arms and giving orders. I saw the firing line disappear as the men dropped to the prone position. I closed my eyes, shrinking back against the stake that held me, wondering where that first bullet would land.

Something spat malevolently behind me. I opened my eyes and saw faint puffs of dust arising before the muzzles of the rifles on the firing line. There came to my ears the unmistakable steady roll of rapid fire. Something else struck overhead with all the vicious intensity of a rattlesnake. At the same instant there was a metallic whir and a tearing sound at my right, and I knew without looking that a ricochet had smashed through a target. My brain persisted in recalling pictures of ricochet wounds I had seen, ugly, jagged, tearing things, their effect on the human anatomy so frightful that in war the cry of "explosive bullets" invariably goes up.

There was over me that feeling of numbing paralysis that must come to the mouse when the cat seizes it. But it began slowly to be borne upon me that there was a remarkably small number of hits being registered. Something like a savage burst of hope swelled up in me as I realized that the firing on these targets must be nearly over.

And I had heard only three bullets land!

Made instantly alert, I opened my eyes and strained forward to see what the explanation could be. And then I saw and thanked God for the stupidity of my shavetail!

He had underestimated the range by at least two hundred yards. And the troop, well trained and skilled in firing at last, was making a small cone of dispersion exactly where he had set the range. I saw the puffs of dust raised by the bullets, falling short nearly two hundred yards in front of me on the mesa.

My surge of hope became chilled by a sudden doubt as I remembered that Bull Taylor had me covered from the other hill. Glancing over that way, I saw him outlined with startling clearness about a hundred and fifty yards behind the second group of targets. Back of him were grouped his men, silently staring at what was going on. As I watched, I saw Taylor raise his rifle to his shoulder and take careful steady aim at me. A sudden dimple appeared in the earth in front of me and particles of sand were dashed into my face.

He had missed. I saw him peering at me just as the troop far down in front ceased its fire. And then I saw Royle, my shavetail, pointing excitedly to the second set of targets. That single rifle shot he had mistaken for the signal to fire on the new targets. Already he was giving his range estimation, and men were shifting their positions on the mesa.

Bull Taylor, uncertain whether or not

he had hit me, was now raising his rifle for a second shot. As he started to take aim, again I heard the roar of forty rifles at rapid fire.

Being apprehensive of Taylor's second shot, I kept my eyes fixed on him. Slowly his weapon settled into place. It seemed an eternity that he stood there. Suddenly he dropped his rifle, spun about and fell to the ground.

I grew more and more puzzled as the Mexicans behind him began to scatter in all directions, many of them dropping in their tracks. They cleared out of there as though the devil himself were on their trail, leaving several dead and wounded men behind them, shapeless bundles on the ground.

Afer the Mexicans disappeared, little spurts of dust continued to rise in the place they had been.

In spite of my shaken nerves, I managed to scare up a grin as I saw what had happened.

Royle, that dumb shavetail, had *over*-estimated the range this time and the troop's cone of fire was dropping nearly two hundred yards behind the targets, where it had smashed into the Mexican gang who had occupied that spot.

So great was the relief from the strain under which I had been, that I sagged inertly against my bindings. I knew it would not be long now until I was released, for I saw two of the range detail start across the range toward me, pasters and markers in hand, and carrying a red flag.

I must have passed out for a space about this time, for the first thing I knew I was being unbound and laid on my back, while some one was pouring water from a canteen over my face.

I came to in short order, noting that the firing had ceased against the other targets.

"Help me up on your horse!" I ordered one of the soldiers.

Two of them pulled and tugged at me until I was in the saddle. The contact of saddle leather and horseflesh brought back my wits and strength. Galloping down the range, I signaled the "rally" to the startled troop, who were busily engaged at the moment in picking up their empty cartridge shells from the mesa.

They understood me at last, and Sergeant Shedd started them forward at the run. We arrived in time to get in a few good shots against the last of the Mexicans as they splashed across the ford.

Returning to the scene of the shooting, I found the body of Bull Taylor, a hole drilled neatly through his head.

One of my men found Peggy tethered down among the cottonwoods, where Bull Taylor had left her.

[The major sighed reflectively as he came to the end of his story and knocked the ashes out of his pipe.]

"So you see," he said, "if that shavetail had not been so dumb, I wouldn't be here telling you all this. That's why I've always been a little more sympathetic to dumb shavetails," and he looked at me blandly.

However, I'm hoping that it wasn't to me he was referring, even if I did happen to be the only shavetail within hearing at the time.

# GLENALLAN

## *BEGINNING A NOVEL OF SCOTLAND*

### CHAPTER I

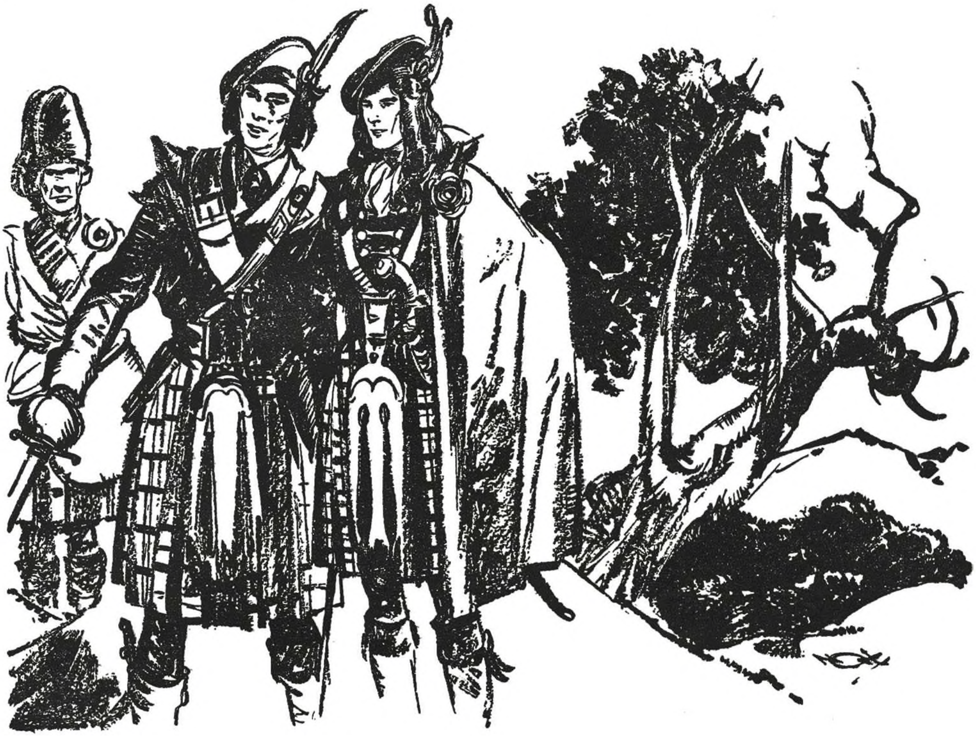
#### THAT NIGHT AT MARTIN'S

IT LACKED an hour of midnight when Lord Barrymore entered Martin's, in Hockley-in-the-Hole, but already the tables were crowded. Around three sides of the Long Room gentlemen sat playing whist-and-honors—quiet, most of them, very serious. There were three large hazard tables in the center of the room, all crowded. Other gentlemen, gathered at steaming punchbowls, were merely engaged in getting drunk.

Lord Barrymore walked in and out of the crowds, smiling to left and right, and nodding to acquaintances as they smiled and nodded to him. He refused many invitations to stop and play, or stop and drink. He had more important things to think about.

At last he saw the man he wanted—a tall, young Scot dressed in brown broadcloth and narrow Irish lace. He was a glum fellow, this Scot; and glumness was not the rule at Martin's. His luck was bad; he had just thrown aces, and on the next roll had crabbed. But that was not the reason for his melancholy countenance; he was by nature somber, and it was quite obvious from his manner that he took little delight in his surroundings and had little love for

# *of the* CLANS



*BY DONALD BARR CHIDSEY*

his roistering fellow gamesters.

"Seven," the Scot called, and began to cast again. Six, five, nine, ten fell out. On the opposite side of the table Captain Fitzstephen had been winning. The others busied themselves making side bets.

Aces fell—four; nine. It was a long roll.

Lord Barrymore took a place at the table next to the caster. His manner was that of a gentleman who would watch for his own amusement, perhaps side-betting a little, but not gaming in earnest. Nevertheless, he spoke to the Scot in a low voice.

"You are the Young Glenallan?"

"Aye." Malcolm of Glenallan glanced up, nodded, then returned to his casting.

"Do you remember me?"

"Aye. You are my Lord Barrymore."

The newcomer drew a snuff box from a waistcoat pocket, took a sniff, snapped the box shut. He was nervous about this business. He wanted to keep the other players under the impression that he had come merely to pass the time and that the caster was the most casual of acquaintances.

"Heed me carefully, Glenallan, and don't show any emotion at what I tell you. Prince Charles is coming."

Four, five, eleven, then a six. The

caster's expression did not change; he pretended not even to have heard; but he was inwardly so agitated that he forgot to pick up his winnings, and Captain Fitzstephen, assuming that this meant a doubled bet, threw twenty pounds on the table. Elsewhere the currency clinked, as those who had bet with the dice collected their winnings.

"Six!" The dice fell four and two. He left the money on the table, and Fitzstephen, no longer grinning, covered it with forty pounds. "Seven!" He nicked with eleven, left the money on the table, picked up the dice again.

Meanwhile Lord Barrymore was talking. Occasionally raising his voice, he commented upon the caster's good luck or congratulated a fortunate side better. But for the most part his voice, very low, was heard only by the man for whom it was intended.

"You are to depart for your home immediately. They will tell you there where to go. The landing will be somewhere near your estate. The Cameron at Fassden will inform you."

Malcolm of Glenallan called eight and threw six, called seven and threw eleven. He never touched the money, which increased rapidly. There were murmurs of amazement at his luck and daring, for he had previously seemed a cautious gambler. The truth was, he was casting in a daze, and did not realize how much he was winning, or how much he was risking.

Captain Fitzstephen, his face a thundercloud, drank heavily from a punch glass that had been brought him, and continued to cover the bet in the center.

"Has he sailed already?" Malcolm's heart was pounding furiously; the room and all its bright colors were a monstrous blur to him.

"Sh-h-h! Don't even speak the name. Yes, he has sailed. But until he lands we must be careful as cats, Glenallan. No mention of this to— Lord, man! You're not quitting when the luck's running with you?" he cried aloud.

For Glenallan had started to pick up the money and had pushed the dice away. There was only one thought in his mind now. He wanted to be going north to join his father and his clansmen. Gambling was forgotten. Charlie had sailed . . .

Captain Fitzstephen asked—

"Quitting, Jocky?" It was apparent that Fitzstephen was dangerously angry; he had lost all his winnings, and no little part of his own money besides, on this one remarkable roll.

Malcolm heard the Jocky—a word he disliked. Under ordinary circumstances he would have resented it, perhaps demanded an apology. But the information Lord Barrymore had given him had left his head in a whirl. He looked up quickly, stared a moment, blinking, and then returned to the collection of his winnings. He was going.

But Lord Barrymore would not permit this.

"Lord, man! If you go before you finish the roll they'll know I've told you something important!" He was whispering again, very excited, frightened too. "I'm suspect already, and there are spies everywhere. At least finish your roll!"

THERE was reason in the request. Almost savagely, almost as though he were attacking an enemy, Malcolm pushed the money back to the center of the table and picked up the dice. The gamesters moved closer. There was a considerable crowd now.

"Seven," called the Young Glenallan.

Lord Barrymore, anxious to escape before too great suspicion was attached to his presence, click-clacked across the floor to the street entrance. There were scarlet rosettes on his shoes, which had high French heels.

Six and an ace fell. It seemed as though the roll would never end. Malcolm wanted only to get away, to get off to the north. He called seven—and cast five and two. He was annoyed.

He waved a hand to indicate that he would bet all the money on the table.

Fitzstephen asked:

"Aren't you getting reckless, Jocky?"

Again that Jocky. And again that harsh sarcasm, intended for insult. Fitzstephen was in ugly humor, and he had been drinking. Young Glenallan looked up sharply. But he told himself that he must not fight now. He was needed elsewhere.

"All of it," answered the Young Glenallan, "and this besides." He threw down the money he had been holding in his left hand, a matter of some thirteen or fourteen pounds. It was all he had left in London; and the instant after he had tossed it on the table he realized that he should have held it. If he lost this one cast he would be obliged to borrow in order to ride post to Scotland: the Northern Diligence would be much too slow. The Stuart would be needing money, too. War was a costly business, and a good subject would not be gambling at such a time.

But the bet was made. Captain Fitzstephen dropped his last shilling, and others covered the rest. The crowd was silent.

"Seven!"

He rolled a ten, a difficult point to make. He was angry with himself now; he picked up the dice and cast swiftly, frowning at them as they rattled across the smooth table. Four, six, four, nine. The lace at his sleeves got in his way; impatiently he tucked it back under the broad brown cuffs. He continued to roll. Aces, eight, four—and then two fives.

There was a burst of excited talk. The Young Glenallan quietly pocketed the money and bet five pounds. Somebody at his left covered the bet.

"Seven!"

He threw nine and then seven, and the roll was finished at last. The man at his left picked up the ten pounds, and the Young Glenallan turned to leave.

Captain Fitzstephen of the Dragoons was ordinarily an amiable and even a jocular young man. He liked companionship, gaming and wine. But money he worshiped. A younger son, with much ambition, he knew that his only chance for military advancement lay in the acquisition of his Majesty's silver, for commissions were being priced higher every year. The Scot's spectacular luck, and the Scot's eagerness to quit the game as soon as the roll was finished, infuriated Fitzstephen. The punch, which might otherwise have cheered and enspirited him, turned sour inside of him now.

"Leaving so soon, Jocky?" he asked. "It seems you don't like our company."

Malcolm of Glenallan stuffed the last piece of gold into his waistcoat pocket, put his cocked hat under his arm. This Englishman was going too far.

"I don't," said Malcolm of Glenallan.

Men at this table suddenly became more serious. Voices slid to a quieter note and eyes were raised.

Malcolm strove to keep cool. He promised himself that he would not be drawn into a silly and perhaps a dangerous duel because of the snorting of a drunken fool who couldn't take his losses gracefully.

But Fitzstephen, a tall brute, magnificent in his scarlet coat with blue facings and gorgeous gold braid, drained his punch bowl deliberately, set it down on the table, and said slowly:

"But you like our money, don't you? Yes, all you damned Scotchmen are like that."

Resolutions went for nothing. Malcolm *shouldn't* fight. The flaming cross would be carried through the hills soon, and every true clanman was needed as he had never been needed before. But "damned Scotchman" was altogether too much. He was not strong enough to endure that. So he took his cocked hat from under his left arm and, reaching across the hazard table, struck Captain Fitzstephen squarely in the face.

Instantly there was uproar and confusion. Gentlemen dragged the Young

Glenallan back from the table; he drew his dress sword, but he submitted quietly to those who would hold his arms. Other gentlemen, on the opposite side, dragged back Fitzstephen. The captain was swearing loudly:

"Damn me! I'll fight him! I'll kill him! Let me go, you fools!"

Men who had been playing whist-and-honors as quietly as you please sprang to their feet and hurried toward this table, eager to learn the cause of the noise. The lackeys, obliged to retain their positions at the punchbowls, strained their necks to see over the heads of the gentlemen, and some of them even stood on chairs. One old fellow slapped his hip repeatedly, saying over and over again:

"Damned well done, sir! Egad, sir, that boy has spirit!"

Mr. Martin, the proprietor, hurried in from another room, straightening his cravat as he walked, and loudly begged that order be restored.

"My Lords! Gentlemen! Surely this can be arranged quietly?"

His friends, and notably two fellow officers, were conferring with Captain Fitzstephen, imploring him to be quiet and settle the matter decently. A tall man, whom Malcolm remembered having met at Vauxhall, but whose name he could not recall, offered his services; and Malcolm accepted gladly.

"I don't care what weapons," Malcolm told him, "but it must be here and now —anyway, it must be tonight."

The tall man attributed this wild talk to excitement; he tut-tutted soothingly and disappeared.

THE crowd stilled somewhat, the loud cries dropping to quick, blurred murmurs. In one corner of the Long Room two lackeys were holding a young buck, very drunk, who had drawn his sword and was announcing his intention of fighting somebody, he didn't care whom; they were trying to take away his blade before he hurt somebody with it. There was no attempt to continue the gaming, nor did anybody make any serious effort to bring about apologies and a patching-up of the quarrel. Mr. Martin, frantically bustling here and there, was shoved aside by every man to whom he appealed; there were tears in the old villain's eyes, for he knew that one more scandal would mean that the civic authorities would close his comfortable, profitable business.

Malcolm of Glenallan waited, sword in hand, alone. And soon his representative returned, nodding reassurance. Everything had been arranged. No trouble of any kind. At the old cockpit in Birdcage Walk. Fitzstephen preferred the small sword.

"It will be too dark there now," said Malcolm.

"Why, you won't fight now! We have arranged the meeting for Thursday morning at five o'clock."

But the Young Glenallan shook his head.

"I'll fight now or not at all. Tell him that."

Fitzstephen's representatives overheard this, and they broke into prompt protests. Their principal had been drinking; they would not permit him to go to the field now. What gentleman in his right senses would advance such a proposal?

"If he is willing to fight, he should be willing to fight now."

"But he's been drinking!"

"Listen, I will drink twice what he's had, and then meet him. Is that fair?"

There was laughter and a few cries of scorn. The crowd, previously favoring neither man, now quite obviously had turned against the Scot. The proposal was preposterous, of course. These barbarians should be kept out of establishments intended for gentlemen. Probably the fellow was a coward, willing to fight the captain while the captain was drunk but afraid to meet him when he was sober.

"Why won't you fight Thursday morning?" somebody asked. The crowd was so close that the arrangements were commonly heard.

"I can not. I am leaving London tomorrow morning, early."

"Postpone your departure."

"I can not."

"Is this mission so important?"

"It is."

"Is it more important than your honor, Jocky?" somebody in the back asked.

Somebody else snickered. And the Young Glenallan was suddenly sick of the whole business. On one side there was the Stuart cause, to which he was sworn, in which he had been raised, for which he was ready to die. On the other side was his personal honor, yes—but in a dirty gambling house brawl. His father, his uncles, his grandfather, the MacIldowies of Glenallan for more generations than a clerk could count, had fought for the Stuart kings. Glenallan blood had been shed at Sheriffmuir, at Kilsyth, at Bannockburn, on Flodden Field . . .

Malcolm hated Englishmen. He had been in London for two years, and every day he had spent there increased his dislike of the place and of its people. They were all merchants, the Londoners, or else men with merchants' hearts. Prince Charles would plead in vain for their support. Their promises were weaker than silk, their fidelity depended upon trade, you could measure their loyalty by the figures in their profit and loss columns.

He owed it to himself to go through with this duel. But he owed it to all his ancestors, and to his rightful king, to quit London without delay and be ready when he and his claymore were needed.

One of the captain's representatives addressed him. The crowd hushed to hear the man.

"We have made reasonable arrangements. Your offer is ridiculous. We can not permit our man to fight tomorrow morning because he's drunk now, and certainly we can't permit him to fight tonight. Unless you give us some explanation of why you are leaving the city so soon, we must assume that you are not willing to go to the field."

Of course he had an explanation. But he could not give it here. He could not even whisper it into the private ear of any gentleman in the room.

"Tell your friend," he said to the army officers, "that I am willing to fight him with any weapons and at any place, but the affair must be postponed. I am not at liberty to explain. Tell him I will fight him if I have to cross the world to do it! But the affair *must* be postponed!"

This brought only a chorus of hisses and boos. The gamesters had no further respect for him. The tall gentleman who had offered his services now asked to be excused; he had supposed, he explained, that Mr. Glenallan would be willing to give satisfaction to a man he had struck. Mr. Martin looked relieved and, eager to hasten the thing through, he joined his catcalls with those of his patrons, thinking to speed the Scot's departure. A lane fell open to the door. Some of the gentlemen made mock bows. Some of them grinned. But most of them were grave, threatening, and they indicated plainly to the Young Glenallan that his company was not desired.

He looked around. He had no friend in the place. His anger would make no impression upon these cold, exact Englishmen. And he could not possibly explain. He put his cocked hat under his left arm and, amid a terrific silence, a silence that rang in his ears for the rest of his life, he walked across the floor and out into the street.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAN WITH THE MASK

IT WAS midsummer, but the London streets, though warm, had a nighttime freshness. The enervating heat of the gambling house was gone, and sweet air bathed Malcolm's face.

Nevertheless, his face was hot with anger and shame. He had never known such a rage; his was the fury of impotence, the truest fury of all. He vowed again, inwardly, that when he saw King James upon his rightful throne, and was free once more to engage in personal quarrels, he would seek out this Captain Fitzstephen if it were necessary to cross the seven seas to find the man.He vowed it quietly, by himself, kissing the blade of his dress sword because he had no dagger to kiss. Fitzstephen's broad, florid face, his arrogant mouth, his narrow brown eyes, were fastened in Malcolm's memory by hooks of hate.

But such mental tempests were foolish. Probably, better sense told him, he would have been killed in the duel anyway. With pistols the result might be doubtful, for Malcolm was a crack shot. But for all the fencing lessons—and a pretty penny they had cost him—he still was a poor hand with the small sword; the heavy claymore of his native hills had spoiled him for the handling of these steel toothpicks; he could never remember, in the excitement of a bout, that there was no edge on the thing but only a point, and he had a risky habit of beating his opponent's blade and so swinging his own weapon out of line. Yes, in a duel with small swords, Fitzstephen probably would have killed him. Still, he would rather be killed, even by such a man, than be thought a coward.

He walked rapidly, his long legs swinging like those of a man eager to cross mountains. He was impatient of the little, crooked streets through which he passed. He wanted the brush of heather against his brogues and the kilt flapping at his legs, and the weight of a broadsword at his belt, the rub of a target on his shoulder. It had been two years since he had been in Scotland. His father had sent him to London "to see what they're like there." He was to make his bow to society, learn to wear the Southron's breeches and fancy silk stockings, and amuse himself or instruct himself as best he could on an allowance necessarily small.

His letters back home had been few, for he hated to write, and in them he had praised such things in London as he could find it in his conscience to praise, avoiding mention of the fact that he despised the place and practically every man and woman in it. His father had spent a pretty sum to send him to London, and his father must not be disappointed. But it was a stupid business; and the news that Prince Charles had sailed for the West Coast was doubly welcome to this particular subject.

London, he reflected, as he walked, was a place for merchants, fops and women. There was no room to move, no room to walk, and precious little silence. In addition, there was dirt, the necessity of a strained manner, the unavoidable presence of rascals, and an unceasing demand upon a gentleman's pocketbook. For it was necessary that he live like a gentleman—even though the name of Glenallan meant nothing to these conceited fools. They considered him a barbarian, these strutting, French-aping Southrons, who made such a fuss about their six- and seven-generation families and boasted of their silly escutcheons as if those escutcheons meant anything except that the original grantee had licked the boots of some other effeminate fool.

Malcolm of Glenallan felt very strongly about Englishmen.

Well, there would be an accounting soon. The Englishmen had dragged from his throne the rightful Stuart king, the seventh James, and had exiled him, putting a Dutchman, and then a stupid, drunken German in his place. And James had died in exile, and his son, James the Eighth, had remained, a lonesome and neglected monarch, in Italy. But Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, was coming over now. There would be an accounting soon. And if Malcolm had lost the opportunity of killing one Saxon, he would soon have the opportunity to kill many more.

So ran his thoughts as he strode along the narrow streets toward The Cardinal's Hat, his inn, on the other side of Clerkenwall Green.

The streets were exceptionally quiet. He passed a chocolate house—a buzz of talk and a glow of light that approached, climaxed and receded without attention from him. He passed a group of roisterous bucks, out in search of devilment. He passed a dirty, crouched little man, who hurried away as though afraid to face him.

He turned up a dark and narrow alleyway, connecting two somewhat broader but hardly better illuminated thoroughfares. And so deep were his thoughts and so strong his emotions, that it was not until he was halfway up this alley that he realized something was wrong. A sense of danger, born in him perhaps, or perhaps the result of many years spent among the hills of his native country, suddenly rose and pushed at his consciousness. He realized that those light footsteps had been behind him for several squares, though he had made at least two turns since he had first heard them. And he looked up and perceived a solitary figure at the other end of the alleyway.

The man was a tall, thin silhouette. A light cloak enwrapped him, and his hat was not a tricorne but a broad brimmed felt, of the sort affected by sportsmen and highwaymen. Malcolm turned. Behind him were, as he had estimated, two men. They approached him with a rapid but a peculiarly wary gait. Malcolm looked the other way. The solitary silhouette had come to life: he, too, made real by his motion, was approaching. This could not be chance. He was trapped. Both ends of the alley were stopped to him; on either side there were only the high, windowless backs of houses, too steep and smooth for climbing.

Malcolm, cursing quietly, put his back against one of the walls, in such a manner that the moonlight would be sprayed into the eyes of whoever faced him; and he drew his sword.

The three men were in front of him. The one with the light cloak was masked. There was about this man something of the air of a gentleman, but the others were clearly cutthroats from Whitefriars.

"Let us be brief and quiet about this," said the man with the mask and the cloak. "You understand, of course, that we want your purse. We will not take your life with it unless you oblige us to do so."

Stuffed into the lower waistcoat pockets, none too carefully, were the winnings at hazard. The memory of them added to Malcolm's discomfiture. Ordinarily highwaymen would get from him no more than a few guineas, possibly not that much, but this was a fortune he was carrying tonight — a thousand pounds; two thousand—he did not know how much there was; he had not counted it. And the return to the north would have to be postponed until he could arrange a loan.

"I regret the haste," said the man with the mask, "but we are too near the square to risk delay. You must appreciate that, sir."

"I appreciate," said Malcolm, "that you're too near the square to risk a pistol shot. It happens that I have a pistol under my coat here. And unless the three of you are gone instanter, I'll murder a scoundrel and fetch a crowd with one discharge."

But the man with the mask was a cool character.

"You are lying," he said quietly. "If you had a pistol you'd have drawn it to frighten us off, instead of drawing your sword."

"Nevertheless," insisted Malcolm, "you will not dare to shoot me."

"That is true enough, sir. But you will observe that my companions, although not exactly Knights of the Garter, are at least armed with swords, and that I carry such a weapon myself."

It was three to one, then, and the Young Glenallan a wild blade to boot. But he had dodged debate once this night, and he was damned, he told himself, if he would dodge it again.

"Perhaps," he suggested coldly, "you and your companions would like to give me an exhibition of your skill?"

"Well said," cried the highwayman. "On guard, sir!"

HE DREW like a flash, and stepped in. The two villains from Whitefriars, not so courageous and certainly not so skilful, came in also, stiff-armed. Malcolm Glenallan took two counters desperately, and raised his voice in a lusty shout for help.

It was three to one. And it would have gone very badly—indeed, it could not have lasted more than a minute—had Malcolm been silent. At the upper end of the alleyway there appeared a group of link boys, and there was a sudden stamping of hoofs.

"Coming! Coming! Hallo!"

Two horsemen galloped down the narrow way, steel out, bodies bent forward. The highwaymen ran, the horsemen pursued and, abruptly, Malcolm was alone.

Sword still in hand, he walked to the upper end of the alley where the link boys were. In their midst he found a sedan chair. Of its occupant there was visible only a slim, round arm, pink-sleeved to the elbow, where triple ruffles of Valenciennes hung.

"May I ask what person it is I have to thank?"

A head appeared—a very beautiful head—with oval face, and combed back, powdered hair, and a tiny lace cap. The girl smiled in pleased amazement when she saw him.

"How happy to meet you here, Mr. Glenallan!"

He bowed and kissed the hand she extended.

"Lady Helen! There is no one to whom I'd rather owe my life."

"Was it as bad as that?" she asked very seriously. "I had supposed that some of the bucks were annoying you."

"No, they were tobymen."

"Then I am glad a thousand times that we took this way home. We've been to the Drury Lane. But you mustn't thank me. It is my brother, and Sir John Appleton."

Lady Helen Hornsby was one of the few things that had made London endurable to Malcolm. He had met her frequently at the theater, at Ranelagh, at the Italian Opera House in the Haymarket, at Don Saltero's museum in Cheyne Walk where Mrs. Hall served the coffee. But they had never been intimate. Naturally shy, he was especially so with this lady. She was at the court, attending one of the Germans, and her father was Herbert, Viscount Hornsby, whose name was a great one in Whig politics. What would Malcolm have to do with such a woman?

She was tall, almost as tall as Malcolm himself. She was slim, brown haired and, for all her height, as dainty as some Oriental bird brought from across the seas. Her beauty had been sonnet material for the fops during two seasons. Perhaps her wealth and position, both considerable, had helped to inspire some of the verse that was heaped at her feet; but no man could deny that Lady Helen alone, had she been a farmer's daughter and penniless, would have drawn the admiration of all who saw her.

Her eyes were blue, or purple, or perhaps gray—Malcolm could never be certain; it was a matter that had puzzled more sophisticated observers. At any rate, they were very big eyes and very bright. Her nose was tiny; and when she was riding (she was an excellent horsewoman) and not fully powdered, you might discern three or four wee freckles there, the lightest brown freckles imaginable. Her mouth was perhaps a shade too long; but Malcolm liked long mouths. For the rest, her hands were very long and very thin; her neck and shoulders and the ample expanse of bosom that showed above the tiny frill of chemise were superbly smooth and white; and her arm was a strip of lovely song.

Just now, in a new pink gown, with banded V-front, voluminous side hoops, and turn-back cuffs from under which the Valenciennes fell, she was, it seemed to him, almost reprehensibly beautiful. There were crescent patches on her cheeks, and pink satin brocade slippers on her tiny feet. One long curl, perfectly powdered, fell over her right shoulder to the ruffles of the corsage. And, most wonderful of all, she seemed pleased to have encountered him and eager to chat.

"You should go to the theater more often, Mr. Glenallan. If you could have been with us tonight! Mr. Garrick was Abel Drugger, and what a performance! Mrs. Bracegirdle, too—"

Malcolm could never be amused by the strutting of mummers. They only aped the folk he saw around him every day, and those folk he hated. He was not in London, he reasoned, to be wasting money on such fripperies. Instead, he had spent most of his time in the school of pugilism, in Oxford road near Adam and Eve Court, where he was one of the Great Broughton's most promising pupils; and at Foubert's Riding Academy, though he would never, he feared, become a personable horseman; and at the tennis court back of the Haymarket; and at M. Loti's fencing academy.

But Lady Helen seemed to like the theater. And Malcolm tried to be polite with her.

"I'm sure it was a wonderful play," he said.

"It was magnificent."

She paused, perhaps remembering that theater talk did not interest this melancholy young man. She had been letting her enthusiasm fly too far. She drew herself back abruptly and said—

"I suppose there are no theaters in Scotland, Mr. Glenallan?"

It was strange to be called Mr. Glenallan, but that was how everybody in London addressed him. Young Glenallan meant nothing to them: they could tell at a glance, they would explain condescendingly, that he was young.

"No. There were some men who wanted to start a theater in Edinburgh, but the clergy were against it."

"Now, that's too bad. I should think that a theater there would have crowds every night. What do the people of the village do at night?" And before he could venture an answer, she exclaimed, "There! I knew there was something I wanted to tell you! As soon as his Majesty goes back to Herrenhausen, and he's going next week—for which thank the Lord, Mr. Glenallan!—why, when he goes, Gerald and I are to visit our cousins in Edinburgh. That will interest you."

It did interest him. But it seemed also to trouble him. He frowned, shook his head ever so slightly, seemed to start to say something. Then his lips tightened.

"Tell me—you know I have never been in Scotland before. Tell me, what sort of village is Edinburgh?"

"It's smaller than London," said Malcolm, the troubled expression still on his face, "but better."

"Better than London? How?"

"The people are more decent."

"I'm afraid you're harsh with us, Mr. Glenallan. You don't like London, do you?"

"No."

"Well, you know, Mr. Glenallan, I have Scotch blood in me myself. Did I ever tell you that?"

She had told him. Her maternal grandmother was a Grant of Glenmorriston. It was a fact upon which he loved to linger.

"Aye," he said, "you told me that."

He was not a boor, yet his manners were certainly not the manners to which she was accustomed. Sometimes his bluntness amused her; sometimes she admired him for an honest and straightforward man; but it was always difficult to make conversation with him. She paused again, wondering what to try next, and as she paused the two horsemen returned. They had not been able to catch the robbers.

"We chased them around two corners," Gerald Hornsby related. "The two little fellows dodged into doorways, but the tall one with the mask we managed to trap. I got off my horse to capture him, and the devil disarmed me as neat as be damned. I gave him too much of the blade, y' see. How was I to know a tobyman could handle a sword as well as that? He got away."

Malcolm greeted his saviors coolly. thanking them and shaking their hands.

"I am your servant, gentlemen," he said.

THERE was an embarrassing pause. Neither Sir John Applegate nor the Honorable Gerald Hornsby thought highly of the Young Glenallan; and to him they were no more than another pair of Englishmen, to whom—and he almost regretted it—he owed his life. They did not dismount.

"It was pleasant," Lady Helen ventured, "to have Mr. Glenallan to chat with here while you two chased the villains. I've been telling him about the trip we're going to make, Gerald."

"Yes, we are going to visit your country, sir."

"This will be next week?" Malcolm asked.

"As soon as his Majesty departs. Lord, I hope that will be next week! The court, Mr. Glenallan, is just about the stupidest thing in all London."

"Aye."

"Gerald thinks I ought to feel proud to be a lady-in-waiting. I wish he had to do it. Emily's as gracious as anybody could be, when she's in good humor. But she doesn't like a one of us. We try, but we can't be confidential with her. After all, Mr. Glenallan, she's a German, and it's so difficult to get along with anybody from another nation."

"Aye," said Malcolm of Glenallan heartily.

This made for still another awkward silence. Lady Helen was annoyed. It had been indiscreet of her to mention another nation. But somebody had to make conversation; and Gerald and Sir John were as glum as a pair of porters. She decided to make an end to the talk.

"But I must be off to bed. The princess is always up at seven, and I must get some sleep tonight. We are going to ride. Tomorrow Farinelli is to sing in Dr. Arne's new opera—what is it called, Gerald?"

"I've forgotten."

"Well, whatever it is. Harriet attended one of the rehearsals yesterday, and she tells me it will be well worth hearing. Won't you go with us, Mr. Glenallan?"

To go to the opera with Lady Helen Hornsby. It would be a pleasure almost as great as the killing of Captain Fitzstephen. But Malcolm shook his head.

"I return to Scotland tomorrow," he said.

"Well, sir!" she exclaimed. "We have been talking here for ten minutes, and you didn't tell me that you were leaving London tomorrow. I trust that no bad news has reached you from home?"

"No."

"Then perhaps we will meet in Scotland? Is your estate near Edinburgh, Mr. Glenallan?"

"No. It is benorth the Great Glen."

"Oh."

"Benorth the Grampians."

"Yes, I had forgotten. You are one of the—of the Highlanders, aren't you?"

He nodded.

"One of the Wild Scots," he said. "They call us that," he explained, "to distinguish us from the Lowlanders, who are the Tame Scots—so damned tame that they'll do anything the German tells 'em to do!"

Lady Helen spoke quickly.

"Oh, don't start talking politics! When Gerald gets to talking politics he never stops. It's all I hear at court, and there's nothing that bores me so." She signaled to the carriers and the link boys. "Forgive me if I wearied you with the praises of Mr. Garrick. For me, at least, the interruption has been most pleasant. It's a shame that we can't meet in Edinburgh. Gerald and I will be at John Forbes' house in the Cannongate, if you should get there. Perhaps you will see us there on your way back to London? You're coming back to London, of course?"

"I hope to come back."

He refrained from explaining that he hoped to come back as a conquerer for the right king, in arms and with his clan behind him.

"Well, good night, sir."

The carriers lifted the chair. But he stepped up to the window again and the worried frown had returned to his face.

"Is it necessary that you go next week?"

She was amazed at the earnestness with which this question was put. But she covered her confusion with a laugh.

"Oh, I assure you it is! Gerald and I promised them more than a year ago."

"I would not go, if I were you."

"But you are going yourself? Why—why, really, Mr. Glenallan, this is the most singular thing I've ever heard you say! It was you who raved to me for nearly an hour—that one night at Lady Hawley's when I did manage to get you to talk—about what a beautiful country Scotland was and how much I would like it. And now you advise me not to go there!"

He blushed when she recalled the night he had talked so freely—a wonderful night when, tired of dancing, she had sat with him, fragrant and exquisite, and asked him questions about the Highlands. But he repeated, now, that he would not like to see her go to Scotland.

"Not at this time of the year," he explained.

"Why, it was in the Spring, you told me, that the countryside was prettiest!"

He fumbled with words, dreadfully worried, dreadfully embarrassed, while the Honorable Gerald Hornsby and Sir John Applegate, both puzzled, waited, their reins straight.

"Not—not at this time. Only in the very early Spring—and Edinburgh is not worth seeing anyway. It is only a city. All cities are ugly. There are no theaters there."

"I'm afraid you don't want us to go because you may meet us and have to listen to me chatter again about Mr. Garrick. La, you should be politer than that, Mr. Glenallan."

"No, no!" He shook his head desperately. "You must not think that. It gives me pleasure to hear you talk, whatever you say."

The horsemen, in spite of themselves, could not help smiling at a gallantry so clumsy. Lady Helen smiled too, but it was a gracious, encouraging smile.

"Well, then," said Lady Helen, "we have all of us been pleased. So now we must be hurrying home, Mr. Glenallan. Gerald is so sleepy he will be dozing on his horse if we don't move soon, and I suspect that only politeness is making Sir John keep his eyes open like that. Good night, sir, and a good trip."

"Good night," he called.

But he stood in the center of the street, shaking his head, until the links had disappeared around a corner. She was going to Edinburgh. And there was no way he could stop her. For Edinburgh, any fool might know, would be the first place the Stuart would attack.

## CHAPTER III

### THE STIRRUP CUP

THE Knight of Glenallan was on his death bed, but the boldest man in the world would have treated him cautiously. For this warrior—gray now and scarcely able to lift his hand to greet his own son—had still in his face all the vigor and all the courage of his medieval ancestors, those tough, bearded Gaels who had fought with clubs and with war-axes. There was not a moment that he was not a fighter—never a trim, befrogged, precise soldier—but a genuine warrior, ready for anybody with any weapon or with none.

He was magnificent still. His enormous frame, covered by tartan blankets, looked capable of any exertion. He seemed to be the only person in the big room; it was not until Malcolm had been there for ten minutes or longer that he observed the old woman and the old man, bent gillies, by the side of the bed. The chief, gray and grim, monopolized attention.

Many years before the Parliament, under James VI, had made another determined attempt to break the clan system by passing a law which required every chief to produce legal proof of his ownership of the land he occupied. Now most of the clans had held this land from time immemorial; it had always been theirs, and nobody, least of all themselves, knew how it had come to them. But by the the new law, unless they produced the title deeds, with all the necessary seals and stamps, and the ribbons and signatures and whatnot, the property would be confiscated by the crown, and the gallant gentlemen, whose genealogies nobody dared to question, would be penniless wanderers.

The king's officers had appeared at Allan's Castle then and said to the MacIldowie of that time—

"Where is your title deed?"

And the MacIldowie had drawn his two-edged broadsword, his mighty claymore.

"Here is my title deed!"

It was of this stuff that Sir Douglas was made. He was a throwback to the days when any man was a gentleman who would fight and defeat any man who said he was not; when clerks and barristers were servants to be summoned for the writing of a letter or the framing of a proclamation, and not pompous asses who strutted about in laces and silks, screaming when they saw mice, and making laws to which brave fellows must submit.

And so Malcolm knelt before his father, not simply because of their relationship, but also because the Knight of Glenallan, besides being his father, was also his chief.

"My greetings, sir."

The knight, somehow strong even in his feebleness, took a half bottle of claret from the chair beside the bed, drank deeply and passed it to his son. Malcolm, too, had a deep drink, so that between them they emptied the bottle.

"Bring more," said the laird; and the old woman shuffled out.

Then he looked long and hard at his older son. His eyes displayed none of the joy he felt; they were, instead, hard and cruelly critical. But in the end he seemed to be pleased, for he nodded and almost smiled.

"Did you like London?"

"No."

The old man nodded again. The answer did not seem to astonish him.

"I didna like it mysel'. Ye'll no' go back then?"

"Aye."

"Ye'll go back?"

"Aye, with the men."

"Wi' what men, Callum?"

The old gillie by the side of the bed was evidencing alarm. He made frantic motions toward the Young Glenallan, putting a forefinger over his mouth to indicate silence. But Malcolm thought that his father should know whatever there was to know. He might be dying, but he should not die in ignorance of what was about in the land.

"Did they not tell you then?"

"Tell me what, Callum?"

"Prince Charles, Jamie's son, has sailed from France. He will be landing soon, somewhere near the Macleod country."

This was news the knight could not receive without expression. His grandfather had fought under the Great Marquis, the marvelous Montrose; his father had been at Killicrankie; his father and his two brothers had been out with Sir Douglas in the Fifteen, under the Earl of Mar; and he himself had fought with the Spaniards in that last mad attempt at Glenshiel. The laird was, indeed, the first of his line for five generations who would die in bed and not on the field of battle. And now, with his last breath very near, he learned that Prince Charles was coming and the pipes would soon be sounding the rallying song.

He sat up. His eyes almost popped from his head; his voice was weak; his hand trembled.

"You're sure o' that, Callum? 'Tis no' a wild tale?"

"My Lord Barrymore told me in London, and the Cameron of Fassden when I was coming here."

The laird sank back with a sigh. If a Cameron had said it it was true. He was satisfied that Prince Charlie was coming. God be with the brave laddie and his cause.

Then he remembered something and looked up suddenly. The old gillie crouched to the floor like a mongrel that waits for the whip.

"You knew!"

The gillie nodded, wetting his lips.

"Ye war sae weak, Macdomhnull Dhu. We didna dare—"

Sir Douglas, within touching distance of death, fairly quivered. He almost managed to get out of bed and grab the gillie.

"Weak—ye filthy dog!"

The gillie ran from the room. Sir Douglas addressed his son, pointing after the man.

"Kick him! Throw him out o' the glen! It's no helot o' mine would be such as him!"

Malcolm nodded and walked rapidly out into a long stone corridor, high arched and absolutely bare, musty with old air and black with the very pressure of time against its walls.

"An' bring more wine back wi' you," Sir Douglas called after him.

Malcolm came to a little serving room in which he found the two gillies. They threw themselves on their knees before him, imploring him to be merciful.

"Get up, you fools. You should have told him. Bring me six bottles of claret. And you, Patty, where is my brother?"

"I' the hall he be, MacDomhnull Dhu. I'll be—"

"Don't bother. I'll go to him."

MALCOLM hurried down another corridor, a higher corridor, and into the banquet hall of Allan's Castle. It was a huge place, lighted only by a couple of bogpine torches and a fire of peat in the fireplace. The ceiling was not even visible, so deep and thick were the shadows. In the center was a long, heavy table, capable of seating two hundred guests; except for a few bickers of whisky and a large piece of goat milk cheese, it was bare now. The walls were hung with ancient weapons. There were conical helmets with pennyplate camails attached, steel bonnets and headpieces, targets, dirks, plaids, claymores; dusty, dull habergeons, shirts of reticulated mail, and coats of plate armor that the old MacIldowies had worn in battle; falcions, pikes, morgensterns, tasseled halberds, Jedburg axes, longbows, crossbows, climbing hooks, maces and battle clubs.

In front of the fire stood Fergus MacIldowie, brother of the Young Glenallan. He was a slim, smooth muscled lad, straight and handsome, nervous in his movements, dark, boyish. He was eight years younger than Malcolm and lacked, perhaps, that stern insistence upon military etiquette, that somber sense of hard duty, which his brother had inherited from Sir Douglas. He looked very small and childish as he hurried across the dark, enormous room.

"Tell me about London, Callum. Is it a braw town, as they say? Is it like Edinburgh, Callum? Ye ken I've been to Edinburgh."

"Hush, laddie! An' your father dying in the next chamber! London is a dirty place filled with people and noise. It's not worth the telling about."

"They're waiting out there for you, Callum. Walter MacPhail and Evan too."

"They must wait. And let you and Gillie Angus be here where I can call you if I will. There's death coming, Fergus—and after that war and more death. 'Tis a serious business, Fergus."

"I heard of Prince Charlie coming!" the lad exclaimed.

For all the true sorrow that he felt for his father, he could not conceal the enthusiasm with which he looked forward to the war that was about. His black eyes glittered with excitement.

"You'll hear more of it soon," Malcolm told him grimly.

He returned to the bedroom, carrying the wine. The stones of Allan's Castle, above him, below him, and all around him, were good to feel and to see. There was a world of sanity, a world of straight, sober behavior, in those stones. They had been there for five hundred years. They knew nothing about politics and nothing about lace.

The bedroom was gloomy, gloomier even than the banquet hall. Night had come, and through the two high, narrow windows he could see the tiny stars. The fire burned stodgily. Malcolm lighted a candle by the bed, but this gave only the thinnest sort of illumination, as though it were afraid to blaze in full—afraid perhaps, of the gaunt old laird.

He opened two bottles and each man took one.

"*Deoch slaint an Righ,*" said the MacIldowie, raising his bottle.

"*Deoch slaint an Righ*—God save the King."

They drank deeply. The laird retained his bottle afterward, shaking his head impatiently when Malcolm would have taken it from him to put it on the floor.

"Now, tell me about Charlie."

And he listened while Malcolm related what little he knew. The old man nodded seriously, and from time to time he drank. He shook his head when Malcolm told him of the nature of the Jacobites in London, and of Malcolm's estimation of their loyalty.

"They're a worthless lot there. It will come frae the Highlands, Callum."

"Aye, frae the Highlands."

"An' I'm no' too certain o' the men here, ye ken. They're no' fightin' the way they used to fight. They're a pack o' farmers these days. We've no' had a *creagh* on the Campbell country since I was a wee laddie, Callum. The Macgregors will turn out, that's certain," he said. "An' Clanranald an' Keppoch an' the MacIan o' Glencoe—the MacIan has blood to mop up . . . If Cameron o' Lochiel was here we could be sure o' him. But he's an old man in France, ye ken, and he dinna dare come back if he could. Will the Young Cameron fight?"

"Aye, he'll fight," said Malcolm.

The laird continued thoughtfully, counting on his fingers the clans upon which it was certain, he believed, that the Stuart could depend. The Macleods of Harris, the Macleods of Barra, the Stewarts of Appine, Cluny Macpherson's men, the Kinloch-Moidart Macdonalds.

"Fergus must no' be out," he commanded. "In the Fifteen, y' ken, Callum, I went out wi' a' my brothers an' my father, that was your grandfather, an' we had a fussy fiddydooler to lead us, an' we lost when we should have been slaughtering everybody. Damn Mar! An' we nearly lost Glenallan, too. Y' ken that, Callum."

Malcolm remembered the story. His uncles had been killed in battle and their bodies left to rot; his grandfather had been captured, tried, convicted and hanged and quartered with great solemnity. His father had been obliged to fly to France, in company with other Highland gentlemen, who occupied their time as officers in the continental wars. Glenallan, confiscated by the crown, had been offered for sale, and a Lowlander, who saw in it a rare bargain, had purchased the property and moved into Allan's Castle—very pleased with himself at having, as he thought, become a lord of land.

The Lowlander had been quickly disillusioned. The Cameron country was adjacent, and the Lochiels and the MacIldowies were cousins. That Lowlander's cattle began to disappear, and his collies, and his fowl, and his very servants—all disappeared. In the second week, he himself rode forth to look over the ground. His damned Lowland bonnet had been knocked off his head by a musket ball and his horse had been shot dead underneath him, breaking the rider's leg in the fall. After this he had returned to the city and sold the property. A Cameron had purchased it, indirectly, at a price even lower than the price the Lowlander had paid; and thus Glenallan had returned to the sons of Domhnull Dhu, who were its right and proper owners.

But the lesson had been learned. One male member of the family must stay at home in the war to come, and the land must be held in his name, for there were title deeds and all that now.

"Lochallan," the laird said, "will tell you where the silver is. He knows where the powder is, too."

THE original Glenallan silver had been melted to help the Earl of Mar, during the Fifteen, when the army needed money. The laird referred to the plate that had been given him by a nobleman of France, whose son had been saved from death by Sir Douglas while Sir Douglas was an exile. There was little enough of it, but it was heavy, and Prince Charles would be needing all the silver he could get.

Malcolm nodded understandingly. This pair did not need many words for a full conversation. They were silent through long periods, thinking.

"I suppose they will march on Edinburgh first?"

"Aye. When they have that castle, they have Scotland. Whoever would be taking England must take Scotland first. Will there be Frenchmen?" the laird asked.

"Aye."

"Cannon?"

"Aye. And twenty thousand stand of arms. And Louis has promised more."

The laird took another deep drink. Malcolm opened a third bottle. The firelight, very faint, and the candlelight, fainter still, flickered weirdly on the high black walls and the faraway ceiling; the shadows twisted into little corners, or squirmed as though they were wounded. The floor lay blank and blandly staring—yellow near the chimneyplace and sliding into deep orange against the opposite wall. Sometimes from other parts of the castle there came the sound of a door shut carefully, or the sobs of a gillie who wept because his master was dying, or the growl of a restless dog. But mostly it was quiet.

"Call Fergus," the laird said suddenly. He had not spoken for more than an hour.

Malcolm passed under the high doorway, down the corridor, through the serving room and into the banquet hall. He walked rapidly, for the end was very near. His face was stiff with grief and there were tears in his eyes. It was an awful thing to think that such a man should die.

Fergus was asleep in a chair by the fire. Gillie Angus stood behind him in attendance. Back among the shadows, Evan of Lochallan, gentleman of the clan, and Walter Macphail, *am Fear Sporain*, were talking quietly. Malcolm only nodded to Evan and Macphail, for although the sight of them pleasured him after these years, it was no time for social talk. He awakened his brother and without a word they returned to the bedroom.

Fergus knelt before his father. Fergus, like Malcolm, feared this man and respected him, and loved him too.

"It will be the *deoch* and *doris*, laddies."

He raised his bottle. The sons took bottles and raised these, waiting for the toast. It was a solemn moment.

"Callum, you will carry my claymore," the laird said. His voice was very weak now: he was holding his arm up only by a terrible exertion of strength "Gentlemen, *Deoch slaint an Righ.*"

*"Deoch slaint an Righ!"* cried Malcolm and Fergus.

They drank, and immediately afterward the Laird of Glenallan dropped his bottle, his eyes closed and the muscles of his face relaxed. He did not speak or move again. Within ten minutes of that time he was dead.

## CHAPTER IV

### HE RALLIES THE CLAN

IT WAS the first time in more than twenty-five years that the chief of the Glenallans had summoned the clansmen to war.

Saxon ball and bayonets had stretched out many during the Fifteen, and Grandfather Time's resistless blade had cut many another warrior down. The Glenallans, never numerous, had never been so few. But there was no detail omitted in the ceremony; everything was as it had been for hundreds and hundreds of years; for the new chief, like his father, was a stickler for etiquette.

He stood in the exact center of the mound just outside the castle gates—very young, very tall, and solemn. He was dressed in the *breacan feile,* or belted plaid. The family war tartan was red and blue and yellow and black, a vivid, unforgetable mixture, worthy of a chief so proud. It fell, nicely pleated, almost to his knee caps, and in the rear it was lifted up loosely and brought over the left shoulder, being fastened in front by a pewter brooch; and it belled out bravely behind him, spread to the full by the breeze that was blowing.

Malcolm wore a bright blue coat, very short, with broad cuffs turned over with scarlet, and a scarlet waistcoat. His hose were tightly stretched over the thick muscles of his lower legs, and were held by yellow garters from which yellow ribbons fell. He wore soft molach brogues, a plain doeskin sporran with pewter check top and a narrow white stock. On his head was a blue bonnet, on the front of which had been fastened a small white cockade.

There were also, on the bonnet, three long eagle feathers, which showed that he was a full chief who owed allegiance only to his king.

But it was the weapons he carried that pleased the clansmen most. The Glenallans had always been poor. Their clothes had often been mean. But they had not spared money where weapons were concerned; no family went better armed. In Malcolm's right hand, the stock resting on the ground, was a long musket, newly come from France, very straight. His left hand gripped the hilt of his claymore. The claymore was a genuine Andrea Ferrara — long, heavy, double-edged, with a high median ridge, and scarlet velvet padding in the basket hilt. It had been carried by the chief of the clan for more than three hundred years, and it was as bright now, and as sharp, as the day when it had come from the Spaniard's famous forge. There was no finer broadsword in all the world. Not a gentleman in the Highlands but would have given half his possessions to own it.

In addition, Malcolm was equipped with three dirks, triangular, single-edged, and very sharp. One was in a sheath in the back of his round leather target; one was suspended from his belt, on the right side; and the third was thrust into the stocking on his right leg. A very broad belt, made of black leather, encircled his waist; another belt, equally broad, went over his right shoulder to join its brother in front and back; and to this upper belt were attached two Doune pistols with silver mountings adroitly scrolled.

It may be understood, then, that Malcolm MacIldowie Macdomhnull Dhu, the laird of Glenallan and chief of the clan of that ilk, was a person any Highlander would be proud to follow. Tall and straight he stood, while the clansmen were summoned to war.

The summoning was sheer ceremony. Everybody in Glenallan by this time knew that Prince Charlie, Jamie's son, had landed at Lochnahuagh and was ready to do battle for the throne that belonged to his father by right of God. And every man there, and every woman, was willing to do whatever he could do in Charlie's behalf and for the glory of the new chief.

"Blow up, Angus!"

Old Angus was the hereditary clan piper, who had been out with Malcolm's father at Sheriffmuir and Glenshiel. He was very, very old and walked with uncertain step; but he had learned his art on the Isle of Skye, and he piped like a MacCrimmon inspired. He was called Old Angus to distinguish him from Gillie Angus, who attended the new chief.

Soon the loud notes flew through the chill air, and the highest peaks tossed them back and the valleys and ravines gave them gleeful harbor. Old Angus was playing the *"Cruinneachadh nan Ailein,"* ancient rallying song of the Glenallans.

Now two men, who had been standing rather apart from the others on the edge of the mound, strode forward to join the chief.

One of them was young, slim and of medium height; he was a handsome fellow, dressed almost as elaborately as Malcolm, at whose right side he now stood. He was Evan of Lochallan, who owed homage to the Glenallan by reason of a grant at the western end of the loch—a grant the Lochallans had ruled for many years. The other man was middle-aged, stolid, rather stout, with a red, quiet face and thick wrists and large hands and feet. He was Walter Macphail, another grantee, of lesser family but still a gentleman. He took his position at the chief's left side. These were the only two gentlemen of the clan who were of the age to go to war.

The helots followed. Gillie Angus came first, by reason of his position as valet of the chief. Then the three sons of MacMichael Roy—Great Davie, a monstrous fellow, the only man in the West Country who could throw the caber farther than Malcolm; and John and Paul. Then came Lochallan's gillie, a very old man, who was also named John. And finally came a vacant faced, short, waddling fellow whose name nobody seemed to know but who was always called Looney by reason of the fact that he was halfwitted. Looney had been accepted into the clan by Sir Douglas Glenallan, who made the fellow his innocent, or jester, a position the unfortunate man could fill only nominally, for he had no ability to make songs or to dance, and indeed, rarely moved at all except at command, and did not open his mouth unless he was questioned.

These were the warriors of the Clan Glenallan, all the men that Malcolm could bring into the field for the Stuart cause. They were few enough, but they would fight, he was confident of that. Old Angus and Lochallan's gillie already had seen battle. Walter Macphail and Evan of Lochallan were gentlemen, a recommendation sufficient in itself. Gillie Angus, like Looney, would not desert his chief though Malcolm were to stride straight into hell. And the three sons of MacMichael Roy had been thrilled from childhood by stories of their father's prowess and bravery, and they were all grand, strapping fellows—especially Great Davie, who was almost a head taller than Malcolm and had the chest of a bull.

THE rest of the villagers were grouped in a half-circle, facing this mobilization, on slightly lower ground. There were perhaps thirty of them—women and men so old as to be scarcely able to walk, and little children. All who could go were going. The pipes had sounded the rallying song, the chief was in full regalia. And though the women wept, and some of the old men shook their heads, there was not a one of them who did not secretly or openly wish that he, too, might strap on claymore and march out over the hills to meet the other warriors in the shadow of the Stuart banner.

The song was finished. Old Angus, chest heaving and face sweaty, but with a smile of pride, slung the bagpipes over his shoulder, and stepped back with the rest of the commoners.

Malcolm turned to face them. There was happiness in his heart, for all the grief that he felt at the loss of his father. He said:

"His Majesty King James, King of Scotland, England and Ireland, has sent his oldest son, the Prince of Wales, to raise the faithful clans. Prince Charles has been created Prince Regent. That means he is like the king. He is your lord above me. I will read the proclamation issued by his Gracious Majesty King James—"

He did so, loudly, slowly, gravely, stumbling over some of the long words, and frowning upon the paper which he had drawn from a pocket of his waistcoat. Evan of Lochallan listened with wide, gray eyes, fully alive to the importance of the occasion. Walter Macphail, who had read the proclamation previously, was quiet and perhaps a trifle bored. The helots stared attentively; they didn't understand a word of it, for the proclamation was all in English, but they listened because it was their duty to listen when their chief spoke and because they marveled and were proud that their young chief could talk the Southron tongue so well.

Malcolm finished, folded the paper and put it back into his pocket. He cleared his throat.

It was a wet, dark morning. The rain was like a fine spray from the sea; the mist was thick upon the hills; a breeze carried past them, toward the grim old towers of Allan's Castle, where it moaned ghoulishly.

"And so we are going away," he said, speaking now in the Gaelic. "Very soon, I think, there will be fighting. There may be a great deal of it before we get King James his throne again. I am not asking you to risk your lives at the expense of mine. I'm commanding you to follow me. Wherever there is danger, I will go first. And who cares to stay behind may do so."

They broke into cheers, for this seemed to them the most eloquent speech ever given by any man. They threw their bonnets into the air, or waved them atop their claymores.

"Glenallan! Glenallan!" they cried.

Malcolm raised his hand for silence.

"Yelling is one thing, fighting another," he said. "Save your lungs for the battle cries you'll be giving soon. And now, make your farewells."

He turned aside to talk with Fergus, who had been loitering near the gate. Fergus was a jumpy flame of impatience, and there were tears of mortification in his eyes that he was not to be allowed to go. But Malcolm had been firm.

"One of us must stay alive," Malcolm had said. And the title deed had been made in the younger brother's name, a clerk from Fassfern arranging it all to the Glenallan's satisfaction. Fergus would be sole authority in the glen while his brother was away, with authority to settle all disputes and with powers of life and death; he would rule the women and the children and the very old men. But he had only his own claymore; every fowling piece and Lochaber ax and pistol had been appropriated for the use of the warrior clansmen. And Malcolm warned him.

"There's not anything certain in this business, Fergus. Ye ken I may not be coming back. Maybe instead of these brave laddies there will be redcoats coming here. If they do, remember that you're a Glenallan."

"Aye. And they'll know that too!"

But the chief shook his head.

"Remember that the name must stay, Fergus. It's too bonnie a name to be snipped off like a sapling that's not grown full. Remember that if I'm killed you're the only Glenallan left. If instead of me the redcoats come, don't resist them. Resistance would forfeit the glen, Fergus. Hold your head up, and take what they tell you, and keep the glen, Fergus. There'll be a time for vengeance too."

He grabbed the boy's shoulder and shook him suddenly.

"Promise me that!"

Fergus nodded. But it was bitter medicine staying at home when the one big chance, the one chance that all true Highland gentlemen had been awaiting, came to him. He nodded; but he bit his lip to keep the tremble away, and his eyes were cast downward. There was a big lump in his throat, poor laddie, and he did not trust himself to speak in the presence of his brother.

"I'll not be writing you, Fergus. Ye ken how I hate to write. Keep the old gillie making trips to Lochiel and Fassfern, and you'll learn more than I could be telling you in a letter. Goodby."

They shook hands very solemnly. And Malcolm returned to the center of the mound. He nodded to Old Angus.

"Blow up."

The march was started, and the men fell into their proper places behind the chief, and they marched over the south hills toward the meeting place. Once only Malcolm turned to look back. It was atop a rise that would shut the glen from sight and perhaps this would be his last look. Allan's Castle, small, brown, awkward, very ancient, sat firmly, defiantly, on the edge of the tiny bright loch at the other end of the glen. There was nothing soft about the place, no decoration, no grass or flowers. It was harsh and ugly and bitter; and Malcolm loved it.

The clear, cold loch, unruffled by the wind, heedless of the chill, drizzling rain, glittered like a steel shield; the brown-and-red hills, shaggy with mossless rocks and with heather, pushed down from three sides, but Allan's Castle would not budge for them any more than it would budge for the numberless years that had tried to crush it. Malcolm could see, dimly through the rain and the mist, the villagers in front of the castle gates; and he could see Fergus standing there alone and apart, his tartan ballooning behind him, his right arm raised high in a gesture of farewell.

## CHAPTER V

### IN BLEAK GLENFINNAN

CHARLES Edward Louis Philip Casimer Stuart stood at the noisy head of River Finnan and stared up a blank, chill glen. The wind moaned ghoulishly, a cold, wet wind from the direction of the sea; and the cold water scampered among the rocks as though anxious to get out of this dreary place; but these were the only sounds. Halfway up a hillside, toward Glenaladale's estate, a tiny group of fisherfolk were huddled together like frightened animals, gaping at the newcomers; and near a mound at the lower end of the loch were nine or ten Wild Scots, most of them barefoot, but all of them armed; these were the only persons in the glen. An ungainly black cormorant wheeled in wide circles overhead.

"Why, there's nobody here!"

"It's still early, your Highness. They will come."

But Charles Edward Stuart was not so confident. Here was a poor beginning for a war. He maintained a smiling face, conscious that his personal charm could be made to count for much; but inwardly he was troubled. These men were his father's subjects, and they should come when he summoned them. They should be here! He had sent out the proclamation; the flaming cross had been carried through the Highlands; he had entertained many of the chieftains, and fed them wheat bread, main bread, ginge bread, and partridge, venison, capon, mutton, goose, drake, capercailies, not to mention ale, beer, whisky, claret, malvais, brandy, hippocras, muscadel, usquebaugh . . .

They had promised to meet at Glenfinnan this morning, and to bring their clansmen, and now where were they? Cold, reserved men. He thought that they lacked proper respect for his person, but he could not yet afford to show them that he thought this. He needed these men, these glum Wild Scots. But where *were* they? For the first time since he had landed, with seven courtiers at his back, to conquer England and Scotland and Ireland, he began to suspect that he might have been betrayed. This silence, the dreariness and emptiness of the glen, were ominous. He didn't like it. But he smiled brightly upon his retainers and he marched at their head toward the mound at the end of the loch.

"Of course they will come," he said. "We are early, gentlemen." He walked easily; he had long legs, and took long strides, and he held his right hand on the hilt of his sword while his left hand toyed with the Star of St. Andrew brilliant on his breast. "See who those men are, Buchanan. I don't like their appearance."

Buchanan hurried ahead, to talk for a time with the leader of the group on the shore of the loch. But meanwhile old Tullibardine, leaning on a cane and peering eagerly, had identified the plaid.

"They are Glenallans, your Highness."

"Is Sir Douglas among them?"

Tullibardine shook his head. He had been exiled for many years, but he knew that he would still recognize Sir Douglas MacIldowie if he saw him; and Sir Douglas, he reported, was not there.

"But the tall laddie wears three feathers in his bonnet."

"Which means?"

"That he's a chief. I don't understand it, your Highness. But it looks like a MacIldowie. Perhaps he would be one of the Glenallan's sons. They were mere bairns when I went away from here."

Buchanan returned to confirm this, announcing Malcolm MacIldowie MacDomhnull Dhu of Glenallan, with his men.

So Malcolm knelt before the Stuart. He knelt before a tall, firmly built young man exactly his own age, twenty-four; a young man with long muscular arms, broad shoulders, narrow hips, the legs of a runner, and with a high round nose, small mouth, small pointed chin, and large, light blue eyes that were sometimes hazel. That was Charles Edward Stuart, handsome and gracious. But Malcolm knelt rather before a representative of the ancient kings, a member of that family to which the MacIldowies had always professed allegiance, a descendant of the Bruce, a Stuart. Charles Edward and his father and his brother were the only men in the world before whom the Glenallan chief would kneel.

He was glad that the prince commanded him, almost immediately, to stand. He wanted to look at the prince.

"One of the names I was first taught to love and to respect," Charles Edward said slowly, "was that of Glenallan. Your family, sir, has given my royal ancestors some of their loyalest subjects. Lately we have been in no position to repay you, as you know. But there will be reward, sir, believe me. My royal father, his Majesty King James, will not forget what your clan has done."

Malcolm bowed, embarrassed. He did not know whether he should speak; so he waited, blushing, and after a deliberate pause, Charles Edward continued.

"I am aware," he said, glancing over Malcolm's shoulder at the Glenallans assembled, "that your clan is a small one. But I am also aware—and I tell you it was my own father who informed me of this—that it is a clan before whose righteous rage brave men might well tremble."

This did not seem very sensible to Malcolm; brave men did not tremble, he thought. But it was evidently the way they talked in courts. He bowed again. And the silence that followed suggested to him that now, at least, he was expected to say something.

"It has fought in the past, your royal Highness," he said, "and I hope it will fight again in the very near future."

"I hope it will not be obliged to, Glenallan. I hope that my father's subjects will see the light when we go among them and will expel the German usurper from my father's realm. But I am glad to hear you speak in this manner. There are chieftains who are not so prompt to exhibit their loyalty. Do you speak for your father, the chief?"

"Your Highness, my father died Wednesday night. I am the chief now."

Instantly Charles Edward seized his hand and pressed it firmly.

"I am sorry. Believe me, I am sorry to learn this. I have heard many tales of your father, and in each of them he was a gallant gentleman and a loyal subject, a true descendant of Donald. There was no man my own father loved more. It will distress him to hear this sad news."

Malcolm could scarcely believe his ears. This Prince of Wales, brought up in faraway Italy, had heard of Sir Douglas of Glenallan, and knew that he was a descendant of Donald Dhu! And the king himself remembered Sir Douglas and loved him! Malcolm was glad that he was not obliged to speak at that moment, for the lump in his throat was enormous and he could scarcely have behaved in the proper court manner.

"And I am doubly grateful to you, sir, who have shown yourself a worthy son by pushing aside the deep grief that must be yours and offering some of your men to me. Believe me, this will not be forgotten."

* * *

THE Prince dropped his hand, nodded gravely, no longer smiling, and turned away. Malcolm stood blinking, uncertain whether to bow, to kneel, or to follow. The prince walked to the base of the mound, and Malcolm, apparently dismissed, returned to his clansmen. But soon afterward Buchanan summoned him again and he found himself standing again before Charles Edward.

"You are here early, Glenallan."

"Your Highness, we have been here all night."

"Do you know, Glenallan, that you are the first chief to answer the call with his clan at his back? But where are the rest of your men?"

"There are no more, your Highness."

"These are all?"

"These are all. We are a very small clan, sir."

This information obviously did not please the invader. But he smiled nevertheless and nodded encouragingly.

"The more reason for praise, Glenallan. We may need every fighting man we can get, and I knew that we could depend upon the family of MacIldowie. But tell me, as you were coming here did you see any other clansmen in arms and on the march?"

"None sir."

The prince, during this audience, frequently glanced at the hills that hemmed Glenfinnan. The sun was shining, but it had rained all night and the rocks were wet, and diamond-like raindrops lurked still in the heather, catching the sunlight and throwing it back.

"The Cameron country is near here, is it not, Glenallan?"

"Aye."

"And Lochiel's seat?"

"It is not far, sir."

"Lochiel promised me to have his men here soon after dawn."

"Then they will come, sir."

"But if you did not see them—"

"If Donald says he will come, he will come."

The prince glanced sharply at this tall young chief, whose manner now was almost truculent. The prince was not at all sure he liked the fellow. But it was no time to resent small impertinences.

"Donald promised me he would come," said Malcolm. And this, too, annoyed the Stuart; for the young chief appeared to attach more importance to Lochiel's word to him than he did to Lochiel's word to the Prince of Wales. They were a curious people, these Highlanders—reserved, surly, difficult to understand. Charles Edward was worried. But again he smiled.

"You are very close to Young Lochiel?" he asked.

"Aye."

"Of course. You are neighbors. Cousins, too, I believe?"

Malcolm explained the exact relationship of the two families. This required a long discourse, but the prince listened patiently. Afterward Malcolm made bold to ask if he might present the gentlemen he had brought with him; and the prince, though a bit startled to learn that the ragged group included any gentlemen, graciously consented. Lochallan and Walter Macphail were summoned to the presence and duly presented, and Malcolm, as was proper, recited the genealogy of each. This, again, took a long time, but again the Stuart was all serious attention and politeness, though there were moments when he had difficulty keeping his glance from wandering back to the hills from whence he expected help.

"It is very interesting to learn all this," he said, when Malcolm had finished the longest speech he had made in many a year. "I am sure that the gallant Lochallan and the gallant Macphail will be of great assistance to us in recovering the realm for my father.". He paused. His glance was now undisguisedly upon the hills, and there was worriment in his eyes. But he talked on, smoothly, affably. "These other clansmen," he asked, "are they all commoners?"

"They are all helots, your Highness."

Charles Edward evidently was familiar with that word, and he nodded. Malcolm, at his request, explained the hereditary privileges and functions of the men under his command. Lochallan was *marischal tighe*, or seneschal, of the chief's household; Macphail was *am fear sporain*, the treasurer; and Looney was the jester, *an cleasaiche;* Great Davie was *an gille mor*, whose duty it was to carry the chief's helmet when there was no fighting,

"But men do not wear helmets today, Glenallan!"

"Your Highness, the office continues, and Great Davie is entitled to precedence over the other gillies because he holds it."

"And what's all that metal he's holding in his arms now? Does he take this position so seriously that he polishes up ancient pieces of armor and carries them anyway?"

Malcolm had forgotten about the silver. He explained now to Charles Edward, and asked permission to contribute this plate to the cause. He apologized for it, informing that the original family silver had long since been melted.

Real tears came to the prince's eyes then, and he forgot the bare hills and looked instead at this chief with a new respect.

"You come to me in all the grief caused by your father's death, and you are the first chief to come with his men. And you bring the silver from your castle. This devotion must not go unrewarded. Kneel down."

Puzzled, Malcolm dropped to one knee. He heard a claymore slide from its heavy scabbard, and a moment later he felt that blade on his shoulder—not light touch, either, but a good, firm, friendly blow.

"Rise, Sir Malcolm."

Dazed, gasping, and probably looking very foolish, he got to his feet. The smiling prince was putting the claymore back into its scabbard, and behind him the gentlemen were all beaming and nodding congratulations. It was incredible! It had happened so suddenly, and so unexpectedly! Malcolm did not know what to say, did not know how to thank this god-like young man.

The skirl of pipes saved him. The

wind had shifted slightly and was coming from the north, so that the sound reached them suddenly in Glenfinnan. Every head was lifted, every pair of eyes was turned toward the brown and red hills in the direction of Lochiel. They listened. The music was very near, but no piper was in sight.

"What would that song be, Glenallan?"

"That is the 'Pibroch of Donald the Black', your Highness. It is called 'Piobaireachd Domhnull Dhu', and it is the marching song of the Camerons."

"Ah! Then Lochiel is coming."

"He told me he would come," Sir Malcolm said.

A few minutes later the brow of the hill was bright with clansmen who marched eight abreast, sporrans swinging, claymore hilts twinkling in the sun. In front were the pipers, blowing up bravely. Behind them, surounded by his gentlemen and followed by all his warriors, eight hundred strong, walked Young Lochiel. They marched well, and they sang as they came.

And Malcolm knew now that it was going to be a fight to the finish, for Donald of Lochiel was that kind of man.

## CHAPTER VI

### WILD TALK

IN EDINBURGH there was consternation and all sorts of wild reports were being circulated. The Young Pretender had ten thousand men behind him, the Young Pretender had twenty thousand men—fifty thousand—a hundred thousand. There were Frenchmen with them, Spaniards, soldiers of the Pope sent for the expressed purpose of razing all Protestant churches in the kingdom. No prisoners would be taken. The countryside was to be scraped clean, houses were to be burned, women and children murdered, and everybody who had ever obeyed any law passed while a Guelph was on the throne was to be hanged and quartered and his property annexed by the Vatican.

This was according to some supposed authorities. Others tut-tutted the whole business. The Stuarts and their claims were a dead issue. France would not dare to support such an enterprise; France needed all the money and all the men she could keep at home. And as for Spain, why, Spain had had her fingers burned once already. She would not go near the fire again. And what did that leave? Only Highlanders themselves—only a gibbering, jabbering pack of ignorant savages who knew nothing about the art of war, nothing about the conduct of a campaign and, in fact, very little about anything at all. There could be no cavalry, for there were practically no horses in the highlands. And from whence could the artillery come?

Even supposing that an army (if you could call such a rabble an army) could fight without cavalry—even supposing *that*—could it fight without artillery? The suggestion was absurd. Two hundred of the King's disciplined troops would send the damned rebels scampering back to their hills as fast as their bare feet could carry them. Why, the trained bands alone could smash these savages to bits.

Nevertheless, there was consternation in Edinburgh. The good merchants were dreadfully worried. Memories persisted, and from the ancient times the people had heard tales of the Wild Scots and their terrible shrieks and their swinging broadswords.

Lady Helen Hornsby listened with interest to all that was said on both sides. She began to understand, now, Mr. Glenallan's reason for quitting London in such haste, and his perturbation when he learned that she was going to Edinburgh. She began to understand why it was that he had refused to fight Captain Fitzstephen, and she marveled that a man could be so passionately attached to a cause so dubious—to what, indeed, seemed to her neither more nor less than a forlorn hope. She had heard a great deal about the Highlanders and their fantastic garb. She wondered how Mr. Glenallan would look in those skirts, with one of those belt purses and a sword and shield.

The threat of an invasion did not in the least frighten her. The stories of butchery and rapine she discarded without giving them a moment's credence. The Highlanders might be barbarians, but they were led by a Stuart; and the Stuarts, whatever else might be said against them, were certainly not the sort of men to tolerate promiscuous murder. If Charles Edward wanted to restore the throne to his father, he would not start by destroying the confidence of a people already half inclined to his cause, and stimulating antagonism by giving his consent to the sort of outrages excited residents of Edinburgh predicted.

She suggested once, rather half heartedly, that they cut short their visit, on the plea that Edinburgh might be unsafe at this season; but Gerald, who was in a towering rage about the whole rebellion, would not consider it.

"We are peaceful, decent subjects of King George," he cried with wholly unnecessary vehemence, "and we will stay right where we are. Let any damned mountaineer try to harm us!"

So Lady Helen had let that subject drop. Anyway, she had heard that the king and queen, informed of the uprising, were making plans to hasten back to London; so probably she would be summoned to court again in a little while, by royal command, which would, she hoped, put an end to Gerald's splutterings.

She was seeing a great deal of Captain Fitzstephen, who was stationed with his company just outside the city. The captain annoyed her. He was a handsome man, and among men he appeared to be tolerably well liked and respected. Probably, too, he was a good soldier; certainly he was entertaining and amiable. But he annoyed her, nevertheless. He was so obviously bent upon marriage to her with the purpose of getting some part of the Hornsby fortune. She could see a reflection of money bags in his eyes when he made love to her. He protested his sincerity in the most eloquent phrases; and she did not doubt that he found her easy to look upon and pleasant to chat with. But behind his suit there was the glitter of gold, and it was a glitter which had blinded Captain Fitzstephen to everything else.

Moreover, Gerald, a notorious bungler in these matters, was constantly speaking well of Fitzstephen in his sister's presence, with the only-too-apparent purpose of turning her in his favor; and this in itself was enough to decide any spirited young lady against a suitor.

It was Fitzstephen who brought them the most reliable news about the uprising, the official military reports. Even these were vague and brief. Sir John Cope, as everybody knew, had marched into the north at the head of three thousand men; he expected to enlist many others as he went; he would crush the rebel array in one swift blow. But Sir John Cope, the captain informed them one September day, had been outpaced.

"He's a stupid old ass," Fitzstephen explained condescendingly. "He made a straight line for Fort Augustus, but the rebels fortified a place called Corryarick, and he didn't dare to pass. There he was. He might have come back, or he might have turned toward the coast, or he might have stayed where he was. He turned toward the coast. I suppose that was really the best thing to do. But the rebels marched right past him, as soon as he'd turned, and now they're on the south of him, coming this way."

"That means they will attack Edinburgh," cried Gerald.

"If they ever get here," said the captain.

"But who will engage them?"

"Why, we will," Fitzstephen replied, with the greatest confidence imaginable. "There are two regiments of dragoons here. These rebels are nothing but shepherds with clubs. Indeed," he added, "I'm really pleased to hear that they slipped past Cope. It gives us the chance to chase them. And there's a reward of thirty thousand pounds on the Young Pretender's head. Had you heard that?"

THE news that Sir John Cope had been outmaneuvered increased by tenfold the city's dismay. The terrible stories multiplied. Merchants were taking their money from the banks and hiding it in their cellars. Clergymen, a-quake under the shadow of Rome, were laying plans for a visit to friends in England, while exhorting their flocks to be firm in faith. The trained bands were drilling night and day, doing their exercises with antiquated fowling pieces, and keeping step very badly indeed.

For when Sir John and his army had marched out of the city, gorgeously scarlet, with drums beating and flags flying, it had seemed that no force would withstand them. And now it transpired that all this grandeur had been neatly eluded, and was thumping around in the wild hills of the north, while the rebels, crossing country rather with the speed of birds than the speed of men, were descending directly upon the capital.

On the heels of this report there came another, to the effect that the rebels had taken Perth. The Young Pretender was lodged at the Viscount of Stormont's house, and was busy reviewing his troops every day. There were no Frenchmen involved in the uprising, it became known now, and no Spaniards; but fresh companies of Wild Scots from the Highlands were joining the red and white standard every day, and the force was strong enough at least to threaten Edinburgh.

The trained bands drilled furiously. The Dragoons scampered here and there, impressive enough but not sufficiently numerous to inspire the citizens with much confidence. The old city walls, unused for many generations, were being repaired and strengthened, and the gates were guarded, and there were sentries everywhere.

"It would be easy for me to get passports for both of you," Robert Forbes told the Honorable Gerald Hornsby and Lady Helen. But Gerald banged his right fist into the palm of his left hand, and replied that he'd be doubly damned if any slave of the Pope was going to scare him into quitting the place. And Lady Helen remained discreetly silent.

Proclamations that the Pretender had caused to be printed were in full circulation in the city now. They declared him to be Prince Regent of England, Scotland and Ireland, by order of his father, who was styled King James the Third of England and the Eighth of Scotland. They called upon all soldiers of the false king, the so-called George II, to lay down their arms, and announced that any resistance to the uprising would be considered treason and treated accordingly.

The rights of no man would be taken from him, the proclamation stated, and the peoples of all legitimate religions would be permitted to worship as they pleased without interference. The authorities tried hard to confiscate these papers, which, however, continued to appear and were to be found in all corners of the city, almost every inhabitant of which had read the proclamation or had it read to him.

The big talk continued. The Dragoons and the trained bands would cock up the Pretender's beaver. He might take Perth—but any fool could take Perth. To take Edinburgh, with its wall, was a different matter. The blue blanket was hoisted on St. Giles's steeple. The town council was in session all day every day. There was vast excitement. in the air.

And, to Lady Helen Hornsby, it was all very thrilling—although she could not tell just why. She often caught herself wondering when she would see Malcolm . . .

## CHAPTER VII

### AS THE SUN ROSE

IT WAS near time for the sun to be coming back when they reached the Borough Muir and hid themselves in the bushes. There were nine hundred of them. The space between the spot where they crouched and the Netherbow Gate—a good hundred and fifty yards—was brilliantly lighted by the moon and as bare as a monk's pate. There were two sentries at the gate and there were sentries at regular intervals along the wall top. The Highlanders could see these men, fantastic figures, perfectly silhouetted, moving back and forth like pieces of black pasteboard against a gray-green wall.

"Do y' ken the city?" Malcolm asked of Evan Macgregor, younger son of the Macgregor of Glencairnaig.

"Aye."

"Do y' ken whereabouts Robert Forbes' house would be?"

"Aye. It's near the palace, a grand brown building on the right side of the Cannongate as you go up the hill."

Donald of Lochiel, in charge of the party, had paused, troubled. His orders were to take the city as quietly and with as little bloodshed as possible. His plan now—the only one he could evolve—was for all of the men to rise at a given signal, shrieking their various war cries and brandishing their weapons. They would make a rush for the gate.

Perhaps the sentries, frightened for the moment, would forget to shoot. One group of Highlandmen would pretend to make an attempt to scale the wall on the left of the gate, a second group would do the same on the right, while a third and much smaller group would plant a barrel of gunpowder at the gate itself and touch it off—after which all of the men would rush through the breach created. They had brought the gunpowder with them.

But it was a doubtful business. Young Lochiel shook his head and begged those who surrounded him to search their wits for a better plan, the necessity for speed being apparent in the dawning sky.

"There is nothing else," said Mr. Secretary Murray impatiently.

Donald nodded, sighed and turned to big Robert MacUalrig, his foster-brother, who was by Donald's side.

"Will you instruct the men, Bobbie? And you, gentlemen, will you instruct your men? The signal will be a shot."

He drew one of his pistols—a Spanish weapon, with silver mountings, exquisitely chased. He waited while the word was being passed among the hidden men. But he shook his head.

The moon, round and very thin, slid quietly along through the gray-green sky. Soon it would be gone, for it was near the horizon now. But by that time the sun would be fully up. Already the sun was appearing, restlessly it seemed, almost jerkily, as though some colossal god were trying to hold it back.

"Everything is ready," Keppoch reported.

Malcolm and Ardsheil and the faithful MacUalrig nodded: all of the men were prepared for the dash; there remained only the giving of the signal. Young Lochiel raised his pistol.

"A bottle of brandy that I beat you to the gate," Evan Macgregor whispered to Malcolm.

"Accepted, sir."

But Donald of Lochiel had lowered the weapon. For at this very moment, the hinges of the Netherbow Gate were heard to creak, and the big portals started to swing open. A hackney-coach was returning to Cannongate.

"Leave the gunpowder," whispered Mr. Secretary Murray quickly. "We'll run for it. All of us. No yells."

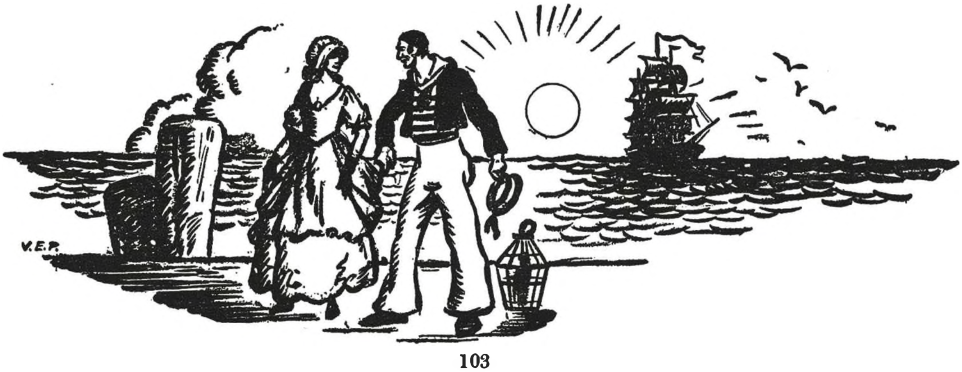
"Aye," said Donald; and the chieftains passed the new instructions rapidly. The signal was "King James the Eighth," spoken by the leader.

TO BE CONTINUED

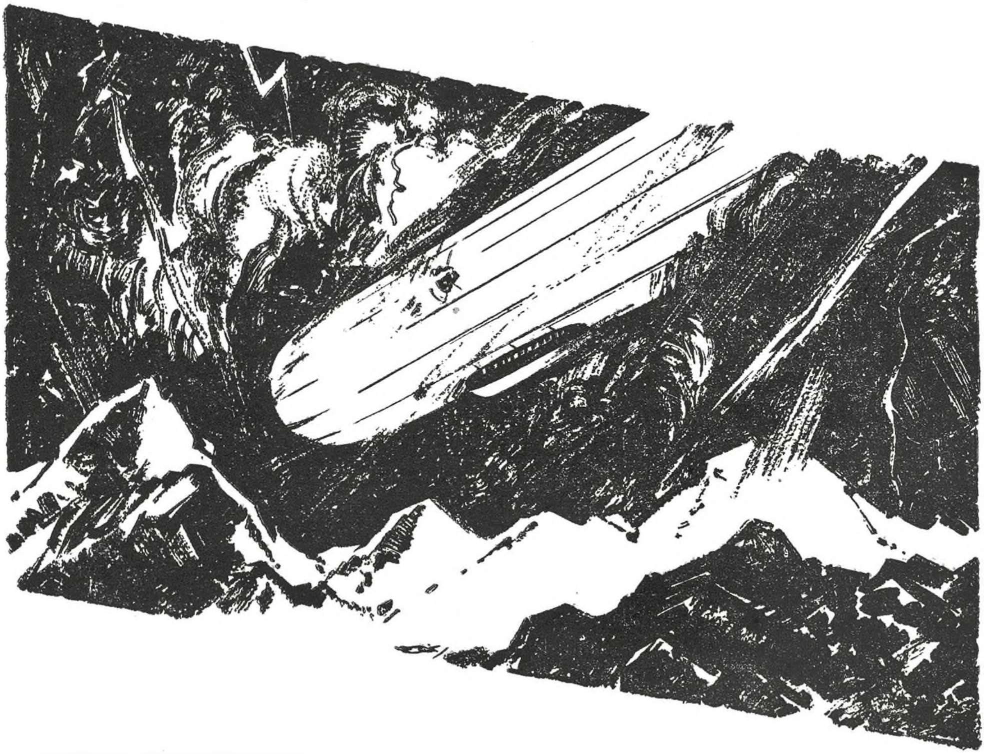
# The Ballad of Jeb Tanner

## By HARRY KEMP

I WOULD sing the song of Jeb Tanner, a little less than a man,
Who signed on a whaler to be a sailor, where all his troubles began—
Where all his troubles began; and where he was made a man!
Jeb Tanner, he didn't mean to ship on a whaler, no-sir-ee!
But we needed an extra hand and so we shanghaied him out to sea;
His arms were skinny as beanpoles, his neck was like a crane's;
But after a two years' trip with us he thanked us for our pains.
He didn't know yarn from rigging, his eyes with books were dim,
But we caught him right on our sailing night—and we made a man of him!
The first day out his sealegs were not what they ought to be;
And the salthorse and his belly, they didn't quite agree.
The second day out we sent him aloft where he nearly came to an end,
If the arm of the bosun by his side, it hadn't become his friend.
And when we rounded the blithering Horn he was getting rather good:
We'll say this for Jeb Tanner, he learned as fast as he could!
On shore he was sick for most of the time, his body was peaked and thin;
At sea the mate brought about his cure with a hard belaying pin.
His sauce for his food was climbing aloft; the power of his muscles grew,
When he took his place at pulling an oar along with the whaleboat crew,
From the rising sun to the sinking sun when we chased the great Right Whale;
And he gained his appetite for good when we fought through a three days' gale!
Jeb Tanner, you have won your discharge; Jeb Tanner we've made of you a man!
Jeb Tanner, this was what God meant when the labor of men began!
Jeb Tanner, here you are back home, from the waves and the winds that whirl—
And if you've lost the girl you loved, go get you a better girl! . . .
I have sung the song of Jeb Tanner, once a little less than a man,
Who signed as a sailor on board a whaler, where his real life began—
Where his real life began, my bullies, and where he became a man!



# *The* OXYGEN EATERS



## *A Story of the Zeppelin Raiders*

### By ANDREW A. CAFFREY

THE terrorization of Paris was important to the last. The French capital city seems to be not only the heart but the backbone of the nation. It is singular that way. Now take London: The Zeppelin raids, had they been successful, might have wiped that great metropolis off the map; but Britain would have gone right along with the business of warring. Then there was the loss of Brussels for Belgium, but that people merely took the drubbing and fought all the harder. But Paris, it seems, is different. Perhaps it is that all Frenchmen believe that Paris is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of all things worthwhile. Most certainly the big city on the Seine is the nerve center of the nation; and with that nerve center cut off, the whole fifty million—right or wrong—are willing to curl up and call it a day. Or call it a war. Take Paris, and France is yours.

Germany knew this. . . .

A new class of Zeppelin had just come

into being. It was the super-Zeppelin, nearly seven hundred feet of ship, with supercharged motors. Those motors were eight in number, per ship; and Maybachs, of course. These supercharged engines could reach a ceiling very close to the 30,000-foot mark; and the crew of thirty men lived with and by the new oxygen apparatus which had come out of the shops at the same time as the ships.

In the new *LL-C*, each crewman wore his mask and plugged in at any one of a hundred oxygen stations throughout the craft; inside, in control cars, power gondolas and on machine gun platforms. The hundred or more ozygen stations were supplied from a score of large tanks. These tanks, well scattered, were so placed that any or nearly all—except one—could be hit by enemy fire, and just so long as one remained intact, the crew was safe for a reasonable length of time. As far as human precaution could make sure, the oxygen apparatus of the *LL-C* was perfect.

She had other features that added much to the safety that 30,000 feet demanded. Ballast troubles had been greatly overcome. A new water-condensing system took care of this. All exhaust gases were condensed, and the water captured and stored. Even the rain and mist, all moisture collecting within or upon the great airship's envelop fabric, were caught. Therefore, to win great altitude, the *LL-C* could quickly dump all water ballast and know that she could recover another cargo at will, when wanted.

Then again, her eight motors could operate either on gasoline or hydrogen. That is, if the great craft should be put to it for any reason, she could drop all those heavy gasoline tanks. Then, with the mere turning of valves, her engineers would have her operating on the ship's gas supply.

Even beyond these advanced features the *LL-C* had one other that was entirely revolutionary: she could drop any or all of her power gondolas and control car.

This last feature, like the others, was the outcome of many experiences that attended the early years of the war. More than once had Zeppelins found it necessary to remove those heavy power units. But, till the *LL-C* came out of the shops, it had always been necessary to land the craft and remove the suspended nacelle. But now those units could be jettisoned at will. The engineer, upon orders from the control car, simply climbed the ladder that went aloft into the ship. There he broke a wire seal on a single lever; then pulled that lever. The lever in turn pulled all four strut bolts; and so much weight was removed from the ship. Of course, the *LL-C*, or any other ship, would have to be up against it before any such important parts would be sent down.

But, on the other hand, Zeps had been up against it before. It is war; and war is plenty tough. War is tough even on the very best and latest of equipment. The German naval air service recalled this when they took delivery on the *LL-C*. The higher-ups, looking over the *LL-C*, could not help but recall the fate of the *LL-X*. And, at the same time, they recalled the *L-70* and her fate. The *L-70* was the Zeppelin model just before the *LL-X* and *LL-C* class. And with the going down of the *L-70* went the moving spirit of German naval air service. That man was Captain Peter Strasser.

But the spirit of Strasser lived. The spirit of Strasser also moved. It moved the naval air service to the very end, long after that service and the high command had lost all faith in lighter-than-air craft. The *LL-C* was "in work" long before Captain Strasser went the way of all flesh. But these new features embodied in the *LL-C* were, for the greater part, Strasser ideas. So the memory of the great one required that his successors carry on and bear the heat and the toil of the days to come when Allied incendiaries should reach the gas containers of the great airships and send them groundward, flaming torches. Heat, white-hot heat, to the very end.

But it was a brave service. It was a service terribly virile and brutally efficient. It said that men should sail out and come back with their ships or go down with those ships. It disdained the use of parachutes; and this in spite of the fact that the pack parachute was known to Germany even before the war. Use parachutes? No! A Zeppelin must not be abandoned. Never must the enemy fall heir to one, and to the structural secrets that such a chance legacy would secure.

So the German naval air service, always favored above the army air service, took delivery on the *LL-C*. Old fires of hope began to burn anew; and those who had gone cold on lighter-than-air doings warmed once more to the promise held out by this super-craft.

But with the *LL-X* loss still in mind, the brass hats of the German naval air service struck a more conservative, maybe a more preservative, trend in commissioning the new *LL-C*. The manning of the ill-fated *LL-X*, under Captain Strasser's world-beating faith, had been signalized by an optimistic leaning toward the go-get-'em idea. And a mere kid, the rash and very young Captain Techner, had been placed in command. Young Techner was able, but no respecter of personal safety or the safety of equipment. And as Captain Strasser saw the thing, that was the big idea. Fly these Zeppelins. Get there! Use them. And if need be, lose them.

But now, with Strasser's hand fallen from control, the men of power, those brass hats in the swivel chairs, actually leaned backward in their efforts to make assurance doubly sure.

There must be no more young and rash Captain Techners tackling tricky English battle fleets. There must be no more young hotbloods rushing in where older and wiser men—in all truthfulness—would fear to tread.

Anyway, in leaning backward, the powers that were certainly leaned away back on the matter. They transferred old Papa Wind-Rider Muller from the age-old training Zeppelin, *Dresden*, and put him in command of the supership. Old Papa Wind-Rider, bringing his old crew along, walked as one filled with awe and utter respect. Strange that he, at the age of fifty-two, should be called upon to master this monster.

Papa Muller—generally called Wind-Rider—was one of Germany's old men of air. Back, years before the war, when brave men went up to the clouds in free balloons, Papa Muller was one of them. And in those days, from those free balloons, men came down via parachutes. Papa Muller was one of them. That, too, in those far days, was a measure of bravery.

The veteran man of air was more than a balloonist, and far more than a mere parachute jumper. Old Muller was one of the few men, of all nations, who really understood air and air currents. And that's saying a lot. Free ballooning is an art and science in itself. Any one can go up in a balloon Nearly any one can get down, after a fashion. But only a few men—perhaps one out of each generation of balloonists—can go where he wills while free ballooning. That is, only the Mullers of the flock know where the right currents flow. They alone know that a certain wind, at a certain time of day, is carrying in a certain direction, at a certain altitude. Then at another level, another flow of air is moving in a second direction.

All men schooled in the balloon service know that. It's in books. Yes, it's in books, but only a few seem able to read those books. And only a few care and dare go out looking for those balloon carrying streams that cross far skies, and high skies. But Papa Wind-Rider Muller knew all about those strange currents. And because the old head knew, he was destined to become the long gun that was firing on Paris.

"YE GODS!" wailed at least one gloom in each outfit. "The Hun has us now! They're flying so high that you can't even hear their motors, to say nothing about our being able to see the ships. It's the end. They'll flatten Paris when they get good and ready. Then they'll mop up on the rest of France to suit themselves. Wish I was back in the good old United States and that my brother was here dodging Jerry hardware."

That was the first reaction. The Allies felt sure that the Hun had raised his fighting ceiling far beyond the 20,000-foot elevation to which 1918 had sent aerial warfare. 20,000 feet is high. You've got to look more than once to locate a plane that is cruising at that altitude. Then if you add a few more thousand to the fighting ship's climb, you send that ship beyond the sphere of ground eyes. So, with the speed of wartime development, it was natural enough to believe that the Germans had gone the Allies just one better. And, of course, that had to come; but it was hard to take.

It was just plain hell! It was crushing. It's almost entirely forgotten now, but it paralyzed the official Allied thinkers and chief worriers at the time. And it unnerved the air forces most of all. They felt sold out, without hope.

Then, at the low hour, somebody guessed that the Krupps had turned out a new gun. A gun, they guessed, that could toss stuff for seventy or eighty miles. Ah, that was it! And everybody felt swell again. A gun? Well, well, well! Not so bad! You can put guns out of business with airplanes, or other guns—if you find those guns.

Well, they were still looking for that gun, or guns, long after the war had ended. And they say that some sort of a long gun was uncovered. But maybe it was a toppled factory chimney. Or an unearthed culvert. Something like that. At any rate, any artillery man can tell you that such a gun could not be fired more than once or twice. And, having heard the artillery expert say that, we can go back to the idea that old Papa Wind-Rider Muller was a big gun. Chances are, old Papa never wanted to be a big gun firing on Paris, either. But old Papa was a German and his country was always next to his heart. You can honor him, or anybody else, for that. Stephen Decatur's "Our Country! May she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong," goes for any and all men in any and all lands. It is a slogan and a dictum. It sends the brave up to the stars and down to the bottom of the seas. And it will even make a fighting bomb-dropper of a quiet old mossback such as was old Papa Wind-Rider.

So Papa Muller and his training ship crew moved, bag and baggage, aboard the *LL-C*. They started a week's work of trouble finding on the new craft. And, from day to day, other men were added to fill out the complement of the super-Zeppelin. Machine gunners, bombers and a bombing officer, supercharger experts, and so forth. The place was a busy mill. Then the day arrived when Papa Muller reported his charge fit for duty. The ship was ready for raiding. London was no longer an objective for such Germanic endeavors; so gay Paris was the most likely dumping place for the great bomb load of which the *LL-C* was capable.

Paris was bright at night, and asking for it. And Germany had a system of air beacons behind the Western Front that flashed the path into Paris; so the stage was all set. But of course, and to be expected and avoided, the Allied armies had the path into Paris pretty well covered by searchlights, anti-aircraft batteries and night-flying attack squadrons. So the way to Paris was bound to be hot. But the sky was wide, and the world was just chockful of brave men on two sides of a zigzagging line that was the Western Front. Then again, besides being wide, the sky was high. What's more, the *LL-C* was fitted to use the very highest places in that sky. The high command might well send her out over the hot path that was Paris-bound. Anyway, the betting was all in favor of the super-Zeppelin. War was a gamble, and here was a bet worthy of the game.

During his first ten days in the rôle of raider, the old man of the air currents had his *LL-C* aloft, supposedly on bombing missions, for ninety flying hours. They were trips of 24, 36 and 30 hours. And in all that time not a single bomb was dropped. Never a hostile airplane encountered. Not a single enemy searchlight caught and held the long craft. Nor were any anti-aircraft shots dodged. Fact is, Papa Muller's costly charge was pretty much like the king's horses: it seemed not to be out to fight the foe. Just merely going places, here and there, then coming back. Papa Muller, after each of the three trips, made out his official flying report and appeared very well pleased with the war.

The log of each flight looked very much like a tour of Europe. The *LL-C* had crossed Czecho-Slovakia, and down beyond Budapest. She'd also been into northern Jugo-Slavia, then west and north across the Gulf of Venice and northeastern Italy. She'd been north over the Baltic, and west over the North Sea. Her log showed that she had even crossed France, via Reims, Orleans, Angers to St. Nazaire; then back over a more southerly route. Yet never a cargo of old iron was dropped.

The crew, motormen and riggers, were worked ragged. The bombers and gunners said that they had bed sores. And all hands, once back on the ground, would wail:

"Free ballooning! Oxygen eaters, that's what we are! 25,000 feet. 30,000 feet. Hour after hour of damned free ballooning and oxygen eating! Devil take the old man!"

Well, for a fact, the oxygen was pretty well exhausted at the end of each mission. But the *LL-C* was still intact. And the crew said old Wind-Rider must be away ahead on his solitaire.

It seems that the weather wasn't just right. Five times on those three long flights the *LL-C* had been over Paris. That is, the navigation officer said she was over Paris. But Paris, 25,000 or 30,000 feet below, was under clouds; so Papa Muller refused to bomb. The long gun must not fire unless the long gun had its sights on the target.

Old Wind-Rider, of course, came in for a lot of kidding. No small amount of that kidding was from fellow officers, men who, no doubt, envied the old man his up-to-date command. The *LL-C* though she might be a means to achieve death, was also a fast path to service glory, if a commander should be lucky. Kid as they might, the fact remained that Papa Muller had used only twelve hours' fuel supply during the ninety hours of his three queer missions. Twelve hours' supply! That was hard to understand. It was beyond the rest of the lighter-than-air kidders. And that's where the kidding stopped. Still, old Papa Wind-Rider was only human. Being human, kidding hurt. It always does. Kidding's a keen blade. And men who do things are all thin skinned. That's a fact. Nature makes 'em that way.

So the high powered kidding kind of got to Papa. The day and the hour for his fourth try arrived; and you just knew that there'd be bombs dropped this time.

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK in the morning—a darned funny time for a ship to start its night raid on Paris—the *LL-C* was walked out of her giant shed. She was heavy in fuel and heavy in bombs. And a few stray kidders thought to ask if she was well loaded with oxygen. She was. By the time they finished weighing off, the mighty monster had little in the line of water ballast. It was plain to see that the old Wind-Rider had just about everything of fuel.

grub and gear that the ship would lift. Maybe that was one reason for the morning start, with the air still cool. Perhaps the old boy intended to make a long trip of this. No two ways about it, it appeared as if the crew would have lots of time and opportunity to eat more of that oxygen. But that crew was on hand to a man, all set and willing to go places with Papa.

Nine o'clock came. Papa Wind-Rider gave the signal, and the ground crew tossed the *LL-C* into the air. Like a whale on a swell, she nosed into the light wind and took the climb slowly, with the west and the war at her back. Moreover, when she passed from view, some twenty minutes later, she still had her climbing nose pointed in the general direction of China. That was no way to start for a battleground that was fully two hundred miles to the west.

The *LL-C* ballooned slowly, laboriously, toward her ceiling. 10,000 feet came; and Papa Muller was then bucking a wind that tried to carry his ship northward toward the Baltic. That must have been the wrong wind, as Papa saw the thing. 15,000 feet came to the altimeter's dial; and there was little or no wind at that level. But at 18,000 feet the old man of air found a wind to his liking. He allowed the *LL-C* to ride along with that favorable current; and the pride of the service was being carried southward toward the border, and Czecho-Slovakia. A place where there was no such city as Paris; and Paris was the objective.

Ninety miles per hour was the rated speed of the *LL-C*. Now, with motors idle and riding the wind, she was doing not better than fifty or fifty-five. But at noon the long craft was high over the Thuringian Forest, south of Gotha and Erfurt; with the Erz Gebirge mountains and the southern border in view. At one o'clock she was at 20,000 feet; and the wind was carrying her in a more southwesterly direction. Papa Muller was playing solitaire. The gunners and bombers were doing bunk fatigue. Mortormen, riggers and supercharger men were on the job, listlessly, and all was better than just well.

The long afternoon wore on. At times it was fairly warm, even at that altitude, yet mostly it was pretty chilly. But the men of the *LL-C* had more clothes than an Arctic expedition, so they didn't mind the weather. Oxygen wasn't being used. However, some of them were airsick; and all hands were pretty heavy, dopey. High flying sure puts a fellow on his back if he stays up there long.

Late in the afternoon, shortly before six, the wireless picked up a coded Admiralty weather report. This report was the usual hit-or-miss, inaccurate meteorological data. It was a sort of pooled, composite average of what the weather showed at a number of German positions along the front. It wasn't much, but it was promising; and as close as the experts could guess, Paris was going to enjoy a clear night. Papa Muller received the report from his wireless operator, and then went into a huddle with his officers.

The *LL-C* was high above Switzerland when that report came. The Alps were on her port side. Only her two bow motors were turning, idling, and no sound was getting to the earth below. There were some clouds down around the 10,000-foot level; and earthly observers would have to know what they were looking for before they could have hoped to catch a view of the ballooning drifter.

Now, shortly after six, still riding that southeasterly wind, Papa Wind-Rider Muller dropped more water ballast and shot the great *LL-C* some five thousand feet higher. There, at 24,500 feet, the *LL-C* seemed to bear off more to the west. A test balloon—one of those toy things—was liberated and watched. Papa's guess was right: the *LL-C* was in a stiff gale that was carrying directly west. Again the wireless spoke the *LL-C* at 6:40 and warned her that Allied flying activities were rife all along the Front. What with the full moon that would be in the sky at eight o'clock, bombing of German positions was expected.

Part of the *LL-C*'s crew was now on oxygen. The weaklings, perhaps. All were cold. Every so often, just to keep them warm, each motor was started and revved slowly. A bit of hot food and drink was a welcome treat at seven. Papa Muller was at his favorite post, just behind the helmsman; and the *LL-C* cruised onward toward the coming night.

Riding the 47th parallel, with darkness blotting the world below, the *LL-C* crossed the Switzerland-France border, over the Jura Mountains, and westward above the quieter part of the enemy's country. Just to the south of Dijon and over Bourges the path led. It was a part of France that was thick enough with training operations, but also a part of France that was surprisingly poor in communication. Nobody ever expected anything to happen down there and nothing ever did.

At eight-thirty, with the sun's last high rays long gone, the *LL-C* had passed west of Bourges. It was then two hundred miles behind the lines. It was one hundred and twenty-five miles south of Paris.

The full moon was well up from the distant indistinct horizon; and there was never a light below to show the *LL-C* where the ground might be. Plainly enough, the country was under either fog or clouds.

Tours, the city of American Air Service Headquarters, was abeam, slightly to starboard, when nine o'clock ended the *LL-C*'s half day aloft. The location, however, was merely the navigation officer's estimate; for the lights of Tours were denied the German airmen. It began to look like another bombless bombing mission for old Papa.

Again and again, between eight and nine-thirty, the wireless operator tried to secure some weather data. The Admiralty wireless seemed to know everything under the sun, except something about the likely sky conditions over Paris. Behind the lines—said the coded Admiralty report—were many night-flying Allied activities. And look out! Those Allied bombers, French and American, had reached objectives fully one hundred miles in German territory. They'd been along the Rhine; and nearly reached Lake Constance and Friedrichshafen. Also they'd been in behind Luxemburg, along the Moselle, to Coblenz. But as to the weather, well, it was just weather. French weather, perhaps.

For Papa Muller that Admiralty report was no news at all. However, as Papa saw it, it was just a case of dovetailing two and two to make the usual four. If Allied airplanes were flying, and raiding, then operating visibility along that Western Front couldn't be too bad. Perhaps, and it was a logical conclusion, the *LL-C* was then in Bay of Biscay weather. Guess that was it, for Bay of Biscay weather can be one brand of weather while eastern France is enjoying another kind. Then again, it wasn't so good. If those clouds far below were from the bay, it meant that Papa Wind-Rider must go down—dropping much of his safety-giving altitude—in order to ride eastward across Paris. As Papa Muller knew, it wasn't likely that there were two southwesters prevailing: one down there, and one higher up. One, say, up at 30,000 feet, an altitude at which Papa preferred to lead the *LL-C* home.

Paris, though, was calling. And the kidding of the past was pushing. So the job had to be done, and devil take this monkeying! Nevertheless, safe and slow Papa Muller wasn't going to drop all his fine altitude and cruise for two hundred miles or more across a land that might be waiting for him. True, when Paris was approached, the old man would have his craft riding the wind, with motors dead and even the instrument board's lights extinguished. But the time to pass above Paris was still quite far removed.

Papa Muller ordered more water dumped at 9:45. The *LL-C,* with that weight gone, ballooned some more. 27,000 feet was reached. Then 28,500 feet was on the altimeter. All hands were back on their life-giving diet of oxygen. At ten o'clock Papa and the navigation officer decided to see what they had now in the line of winds. They fired a Very shot. The parachute-riding flare shot backward over the *LL-C*'s tail. That wasn't so good! They were bucking a pretty stiff wind out of the northwest; and that was just where Papa Wind-Rider wanted to go.

SHORTLY after ten the *LL-C* had reached the 30,000-foot level. The barometer was reading normal, so the air was in old Muller's favor. Good for altitude; and he'd make it good for free ballooning when the time came. But first, before going down to ride that west wind, the raiding craft must be flown northward for eighty miles or more. That meant that the motors must be used; which, in turn, said that some noise must be sent down through the quiet French night. Quiet so far behind the actual Front. More altitude could be used. And more altitude could be secured. The last of the water ballast was dropped and nearly two tons of fuel were jettisoned at the same time.

Three thousand feet were won, and the altitude was 33,000. It was cold, with a 20° below zero reading showing on the external thermometer. All motors were signaled; and with superchargers building up pressure on the starved carburetors, the big Maybachs took the load and moved the *LL-C* ahead into the steady northwest blow.

Oxygen eating, sluggish men stood to their positions then. Heavy men in an unnatural element put all that they had of will power into every move; and here and there, in gondola and on the catwalk, a man sat down, bleeding from mouth and ears—and wishing that he were jolly well out of this!

The helmsman and elevator man had little or no operating pressure on control surfaces. They spun wheels in response to the given commands. Then turned with queer, beaten expressions to face Papa Wind-Rider. The old man talked to the engine men, in the gondolas, and thus managed most of the steering by use of power. Then, at 10:35, with Le Mans to port and under fog, the aft motor, starboard side, burned out its supercharger, cracked the crankshaft, and tossed its whole rear end by the board. The oxygen line was cut; and when the watch officer made his way to that car, two mechanics were close to death on the floor boards.

Till after eleven o'clock the *LL-C* followed that path which sent her so far to windward of Paris. 33,000 feet continued to be her altitude; and the crew stuck mighty close to hot motors and the frequent ration of hot rum. Papa Muller was always good to his crew. But they were suffering; and the great super-Zeppelin seemed to be going nowhere, on an aimless, purposeless mission. Altitude had dulled all senses and distorted every reaction. Not even the roar of motors and whistle of high speed superchargers meant anything to the mechanical ears in charge; and the owners of those ears—the men at each engine—watched dial and gage, never trusting self. At 11:20 vibration, on the rear port side motor, snapped a radiator shutter control rod and, before the men in the gondola had time to make a quick repair, the cold blast of sub-zero air had frozen the whole motor unit tighter than a drum. That meant that two of the *LL-C*'s eight engines were now out of commission. But the great ship carried on.

Eleven-thirty, according to the navigation officer's best computation, found the raider directly west of Paris and something like one hundred miles away. This communication was handed to Papa Muller, jotted upon a slip of paper; and the old man signaled that the news was good. Another hour, with a slight change of direction, should put the *LL-C* above the Seine valley. Then, if Papa knew his winds, he could drift up the river and over the city of lights. Papa gave the order; and shortly after the ship was bearing off to the northeast.

The thought occurred to old Wind-Rider that there should be some wireless news. So thinking, he quit his stand behind the helmsman, pulled his oxygen-mask's plug-in, and moved a few steps aft to the wireless bay. The wireless operator was dead, frozen there on his small stool. And the *LL-C* was cut off completely from the world below; for this man who had passed on was the only one of the crew who knew how to handle the instrument under his cold right hand.

Midnight came. It was marked conspicuously in the log, for it was the exact time that the third motor failed. This time it was the second motor from the rear, port side. The propeller, revving at 1500 turns per minute, had splintered. Before the lethargical, cold engine man could kill the unit, the hellish vibration of that long and heavy propeller had kicked the big Maybach engine loose from its motor-bearers. Then, still running wild, the strong vibration shook the entire gondola loose from its strut hangings. The engine man and machine gunner went with it. There was tragedy for two.

But Papa Wind-Rider Muller, drafted from his quiet training job, must raid. Kidders there were, back at the home shed, who would laugh long and loud if the oxygen eaters should return with all bombs in place. And the oxygen eaters with Papa also knew that he must raid. Never for a second did the men of his crew forget that. But to carry on was almost beyond human endurance. There are limits even for the best of picked crews, and those limits had been passed.

Now comes a break! At 12:20 the watch officer, there at Papa's left, pointed ahead and to port. There was a ruddy glow far away. It was, no doubt, Rouen. Then there were other lights, some much closer at hand. The *LL-C* was in the clear, with that ground fog behind. Evreux, also to port, was just coming out from under the fog. Vernon and Mantes, with the faintest traces of light showing, were right ahead on the Seine. Papa Muller signaled all five remaining motors to idle. The *LL-C* dropped her great nose; and the hellish altitude was being thrown away. With the crew half dead on their feet, it was high time. And nobody knew that better than old free ballooning Papa, for he was no longer young.

Motors were only turning fast enough to keep the warmth of life in them. Hydrogen was being valved off; and the compressors were picking up whatever they could of water ballast. Down and down she went. 30,000 feet read the altimeter. Watching the ground lights of Rouen—a sizable town of 125,000 souls—Papa Wind-Rider checked any change of wind. No change came during the first mile dropped.

25,000 feet was the reading at 12:45; and the wind's point had not changed. More and more hydrogen was valved, and lower the *LL-C* went. 20,000 was on the dial. The oxygen eaters had stopped eating that stuff, and man was beginning to talk to man as if it were a great privilege. What a relief to get your mug out of a trap like that! Fresh, cold air! God's own pure air, and you're still here to breathe the fine stuff. A grand and glorious feeling!

Forgotten was the cold. And they could even force the old stiff upper lip and stop thinking of their immediate dead. Here was an altitude that was something like a man's proper sphere. And there were lights, city lights and town lights, lights that spelled life. And ahead was their mission of death. Their belated raid on gay Paris. However, that was war. It was the day's work. With that off their hands they could cut for home and forthwith drink a scuttle of suds out on the sidewalk, under the lindens, with the best of them. There'd be no more of that high-powered, low-down kidding from the men who had been out and dropped stuff.

Below 20,000 feet old Papa Muller gave away altitude with the unlavish hand of a miser. He didn't like to drop any more of the fine stuff. 20,000 wasn't too high for anti-aircraft guns. Or for the searchlights. To say nothing of the Allied pursuit planes which were beginning to raise 20,000 and a little more. 20,000 feet, as Papa figured the thing, was the great divide. The dividing line between practical safety and the thing that had happened to too many Zeppelins. That thing must not happen to the *LL-C*, for the *LL-C* was the knight errant of a tottering service. Three times the old Wind-Rider had brought her home. All Zeppelins had not returned that many times. And she must come home a fourth time, too. It was as much Papa Muller's own cause as it was the championing of lighter-than-air; for was not the old Wind-Rider the very essence of air travel?

For nearly a full hour, at that 20,000-foot level, Papa Muller stalled and studied air charts. They were charts that were old long before the war. They were charts of Europe's air currents that had no duplicates; and their only claim for authenticity lay in the fact that Papa Muller had created them, year after year, over a period of many years. Old Wind-Rider and Count Zeppelin had had pre-war dreams of commercial air together, even before the first powered balloon had arrived on the threshold of possibility. Hence the charts.

But air charts weren't enough. The air had to be studied. At the present altitude, in a clear sky, the use of a Very pistol's parachuting flare was out of the question. But the liberated test balloons had a certain value; and Papa was playing with those toys like a kid at the circus.

Along toward 2.00 A.M. the old head seemed satisfied; and he grew outrageously spendthrift and tossed away a few more thousand feet of sky. At the same time two of the mid-ship engines purred with a little more power; and the *LL-C* passed north of the river for a few kilometers. Again at 2:10 the power was idled, and the bow of the great craft was pointed at Paris. A test balloon turned loose drifted directly in line of flight, then the motors were killed. The raiding menace was free ballooning, a shadow from hell, unseen and unheard, drifting east by south through the quiet French sky.

THE wind's velocity, even up there at 18,000 feet, wasn't very great. Perhaps twenty miles per hour was the rate. And Paris was still forty miles away. Two hours yet of drifting, and 4:15 would be on the chronometer's dial before the raid was underway. Then beyond Paris there was more than a hundred miles of hostile country to be crossed. Of course, if the *LL-C* were discovered, the push for home could be made under power. It would be at a reduced rate of speed, owing to the shortage of available motors. But, on the other hand, great altitude would be within reach.

Nevertheless, daylight was going to find the *LL-C* on the wrong side of the lines. That wouldn't be so bad if all things went well. But if anything should slip up, if she should strike storms and hard going over the many rivers east of the gay city, all things might not go so well. At any rate, even though the old Wind-Rider was in his element, the big ship wasn't out of the woods by any means. A new tension was on the crew, and all men were on the job.

Mantes showed them a few lights when they sailed by at 2:35. Poissy did likewise at 2:50. But now the moon, so helpful for so long, was quitting its tour of duty; and the snaking silver ribbon that was the Seine was fading back into the gray-black surface that was France.

But the stars seemed nearer, and the crew somehow had an idea that this perhaps silhouetted the *LL-C* just a little plainer against the spangled canopy of sky. They would think that, and fear it; for men with more than an hour of waiting ahead of them can do a whole lot of stray guessing.

All the time, with one small hooded light above his map board, Papa Muller studied those well fingered maps; and every ten or fifteen minutes a test balloon was sent out into the night. The helpful wind held true, however, and no change was made in the handling of the craft. Then three o'clock was logged; and, after an age, 3:30. A few minutes later they had the lights of St. Germain well placed; and hardly more than a dozen miles beyond those lights were the first glimmerings of Paris. The *LL-C* would be over the western outskirts of the unsuspecting city before 4:00 A.M. And across by 4:15.

No longer did Papa Muller finger his ancient air charts. He was sure of the carrying wind now, and the completion of his mission was merely the matter of another half hour's quiet drifting. All hands stood by, and the bombing officer was at his station. The *LL-C*'s belly shutters were wide open, and the cargo was set to go. There wasn't a light on board, and hardly a sound. No definite targets were to be attempted, but a general terrorization of the queen city would result.

At 3:45 the brightest spots of the always-celebrating burg could be spotted. The *LL-C*'s course was not going to carry her right over those thickly settled sections. Old Wind-Rider was glad of this. Personal killing was not his object. Enough that a great noise be made, and that some property damage be done. Enough if it were again made known that "the giant guns were once more firing on Paris."

The hum of the city, and the noises of the West Bank railroad yards, came up through three miles of air. Off to the north, toward Compiegne, a searchlight fingered the sky. To the east, where the Yank line was pushing up toward Exermont, two more lights fanned the sky. There must have been other flying activities abroad. Best that the skipper of the *LL-C* get this piece of work off his hands, then cut for home.

At a few minutes to four, in a very dark and quiet part of Paris's West Side, a Yank M.P. had a Yank buck private backed up against a wall. The wall was part of a dark building in a narrow street.

"What're ya doin' outa bounds?" the M.P. was barking in his best military police tone of voice.

"Me?" the innocent, though slightly stewed, buck asked.

"Yes, you! Who'd ya think I was talkin' to—the Kaiser?"

Just then, at 3:57, something flashed brightly. Seconds later there was a thud and rattle, then the resounding, deadly *wham!* of old iron arriving. Windows rattled and screams filled the dark.

"Eh-huh," the Yank buck eh-huhed, "sounds like said Kaiser is talking to you, Mr. Pershing. You'd best do something about winning this war, guy, or them there busy Berthas is goin' to wipe your nice playground off the map. So long! I'm leaving here."

The M.P. lost all interest in one stray buck. Other *whams* and *whangs* were filling the small hours of the Paris morning; and those *whams* and *whangs* seemed to be working closer and closer to where the M.P. and his recent victim had been standing.

Sirens sounded. Lights went out all over Paris. More and more bombs shook section after section of town. And excited Frenchmen ran around in tight circles and did nothing about it. Thousands of Allied troopers, on leave in town, filled the streets, gazed skyward and listened.

There was nothing up there. No sound of motors.

"The big guns!" they said, and let it go at that.

PAPA MULLER'S load, haphazard as its placing seemed, had done more damage than any other Zeppelin attack on Paris. Three major fires were burning in widely separated sections of western and northeastern Paris when the drifting ghost passed east over Pantin, beyond the city limits. The *LL-C*'s entire bomb load had been dropped, and never a single searchlight had swept the sky. Fact is, the *LL-C* was beyond Bondy, five miles past the outskirts, before the first light came into action. And that light was down near Arcueil, fully ten miles away.

Old Wind-Rider continued to ride that wind, motorless and deathly quiet. Other searchlights now came into action, at different scattered points. And at 4:20, when the *LL-C* was between Claye and Meaux, the sound of an airplane's motor reached her. Then Papa Muller decided to take the great ship a little higher. More fuel was dropped, and 20,000 feet was soon reached. The sound of that motor was still with them at 4:30. The winning of altitude went on, and 22,000 was reached by 4:30. That, under the present trim of the *LL-C,* seemed to be the ceiling.

For a moment the thing had Papa Muller stopped, then the watch officer called his attention to the barometer. The brains of the ship had a great surprise; the barometer had fallen. Here was where their dead wireless operator had been missed. If that man had been still among the living, the *LL-C* would have received an Admiralty warning, shortly before midnight, which told of a center of low pressure moving southward from the North Sea. Anyway, with that low barometer, Papa Muller was face to face with the fact that the air was thin and that the ceiling of the ship was very limited. However, thin air for Papa would be thin air for heavier-than-air craft. But not so for the anti-aircraft guns. And there'd be plenty of those up front. Also, the piercing beams of probing searchlights don't mind thin air. These were real dangers.

In the silence, and from the north now, there came the drone of other airplane engines. Those barking, climbing motors were still at a distance. The crew of the *LL-C* surmised that the men flying those ships knew that it was a Zeppelin, and not a big gun, that had dumped stuff on Paris.

Papa Muller wanted more altitude. But he couldn't afford to drop any more gasoline; and there was no water ballast left. There were two dead motors being carried, however. They were both rear engines, one on either side of the stern. With gondolas and fittings, those two power units aggregated a dead weight in excess of two tons. Papa Muller gave the order, and those two aft motors were dropped. Then the old head watched his altimeter and saw the *LL-C* balloon to 25,000 feet. It was a safe altitude. It was beyond the ceiling of the best Allied ship. But the wind up there was from the southwest, and to continue free-ballooning to the northeast would keep the ship over France and Belgium too long. It was time to use power and make a bee-line flight for home.

The crew was back at oxygen eating. And the hellish cold of early morning was in the air. Suffering was with them again. At 4:50 the motors were started, and the *LL-C* took new life. But the new life was more or less erratic. The ship wasn't handling in a manner to cause joy. What with the propeller blast gone from the elevators and rudders, due to the loss of those rear motors, and with the weight of those units off the stern, the *LL-C* was bow-heavy and control-logy.

Papa Muller sent the crew of the three dead engines, with the bombing officer and his two handlers, aft. In all, nine men went as far back on the catwalk as they could possibly travel. They even climbed up among the girders, under the tail service. That movement of weight, nearly three-quarters of a ton, helped trim ship to a certain extent. However, the proud *LL-C* was now little better than a high flying cripple. But she was going home. And she was sitting atop the flying world too.

At five o'clock, when the late Fall day was just beginning to pink the east, the first heavy clouds began to drift down along the Marne. The searchlights had lost their likely usefulness; and no longer could the crew of the raider hear any airplane motors beyond the roar of their own five supercharged power plants. And even with the coming of first light, they were unable to locate any hostile flying enemy. Those trooping clouds, however, began to troop in a bit faster; and the lower visibility went out with their coming. Soon the *LL-C* was alone again.

She wasn't alone for long, though. Presently those clouds swelled up to join her; and the first tossing, bumpy wind of a storm came down on her from the north. So suddenly did things happen, Papa Muller and aids had no time to get set, or know how to meet it. Before they had time to think, the *LL-C* was back at 22,000 feet, with a loss of altitude that made their heads swim. Hence the quick change of wind. No Zeppelin had ever gone to pieces in the air, but the wonder is that the *LL-C* wasn't in a hundred small parts after the thumping and twisting she took in that maneuver.

The five motors were coughing and spitting, choking in spite of their superchargers. No air! There must have been the devil of an empty spot in the sky. Men were picking themselves off the floor, and the helmsman's leather belt was tangled in the grips of his wheel. The compass and inclinometers were dancing; and Papa Wind-Rider's own air charts were falling from the ceiling of the car. Then the control car's telephone was calling, and old Wind-Rider answered. The lookout on the top-side machine-gun platform, aft near the tail service, was reporting that one of the two gunners stationed there had been sucked into space.

At the same time a midship engine gondola was trying to speak the car. It was more bad news: a supercharger man had gone out through the side window. That was all very bad, and Papa Muller was as sad as man can be. Down through the storm those two men had gone, and a strange wartime theory was to have its rise in this tragic double death: some were to think, and say, that Papa Muller and other Zeppelin commanders had lightened ship by forcing men to walk the plank.

There was wind from every quarter now. Floor boards rattled, and the exhaust gases from the motors eddied all through the ship and control car. The *LL-C* had no direction, and there was no sign of control on the surfaces. Power was of no use, so old Wind-Rider signaled all five engines to idle, till such time as the control car could make sure whether it were bucking or running with the wind.

With the engines silenced, the *LL-C* shook and swayed to the buffeting of the gale. But she was out of the fall, and once out of that, no wind could really toss her great bulk. She was steady enough now to bring compass and inclinometers back to normal. Her nose was into the west. A Very shot proved the wind to be almost directly from the north. So the great length of craft was taking that buffeting broadside and being carried south-southeast. Papa Muller signaled all power units. They roared and whistled into supercharged life; and the bow of the drifter was brought up into the storm.

With a low barometer and a wind out of the north-northwest, Papa Wind-Rider knew that he was not going to find any homeward bound winds down lower. But down lower, in late September, there wouldn't be anything like a really violent storm at this time of day. Very likely, toward the ground, more or less ideal weather would be prevailing. If that were the case, though, the dawn patrols of the Allied air forces would be aloft; and those dawn patrols now had the upper hand in air fighting. Germany's heavier-than-air mastery was a thing of the past.

Should Papa Muller take a chance and send his cripple down there, he could hardly hope to win through to the border. The chance was too great. Then again, the *LL-C* wasn't going to last forever in the present sky. She wasn't controlling; she was quivering. No ship could take such punishment for long. Something had to be done.

Higher up, say beyond the 25,000 level where this trouble had hit the craft, there might be a different wind. Very likely there would be a clear sky at 30,000. Old Wind-Rider's faith was in altitude, and he'd stick to that faith. Getting up there, however, was going to be a job. There was nothing in the line of ballast that could be dropped. What fuel they had, they needed. Nothing remained but to fly up. They could at least get back to their former 25,000, then hope for luck beyond and higher than that.

Five-thirty was at hand and daylight was strong when the ship again returned to 25,000. Motors labored and she fought on, and higher. The storm had her every foot of the way; and now there was lightning and rain. Lightning streaking the sky, and a hydrogen-filled craft trying to fight through. Darkness came back, and it seemed as though the *LL-C* had plunged into another night. Flash after flash cut the blackness; and every piece of metal aboard the ship sparked and glowed with purple light. At 5:40 the front midship gondola, starboard side, telephoned that the motor had been hit. It was dead. Its ignition system had fused and blown. And one man was hurt.

Four motors left now, and the cripple battled on and up.

Again Papa Muller decided to trim ship. Two motors were gone from the port side already. One from the starboard. Now he ordered this fourth dead one dropped. It took the watch officer just five minutes to handle that cutting away assignment; and more altitude came to the *LL-C.* The men relieved from the dropped gondola, upon orders, went aft to join the live ballast in the tail. Tail down and with 1200 horsepower still on the job, the struggler faced the storm. The control car knew that she was merely holding her nose into the blow. Of course, she was winning some ceiling, but making no headway. In spite of all the altitude she was gaining, the storm was not ceasing. The rain at times gave way to sleet. The lightning never stopped; and twice, between 5:30 and six o'clock, the topside platform telephoned down, saying that the envelop had been struck. And the lookout said he and the gunner were giving off sparks too. He meant St. Elmo's fire.

* * *

HOW a ship, hydrogen-filled, could live in such a sky is almost beyond understanding. Other Zeppelins, though, had done the same thing. They'd won through too. This knowledge kept the spark of faith burning in Papa Muller and his crew.

Shortly after six o'clock the old Wind-Rider and his officers agreed that the *LL-C* had won her ceiling, at 26,500 feet. The air was as rare there, with the present barometrical conditions, as a normal sky would be at a far greater altitude. Even with the superchargers, the motors were too weak to make headway. There was nothing, therefore, to be gained by holding the great craft into the wind. They weren't at all sure of their position over France, so they agreed to try a desperate run downwind with a hope of working out of the hell that had caught up with them.

Just before six-thirty they made the turnabout. It was a wild maneuver, but its accomplishment seemed to lift some of the strain and tension from both ship and crew. The motors were still working at top speed—sending as much propeller blast as possible back on the control surfaces—and the course was made slightly cross wind for Germany. The *LL-C* was bowling along at a speed greater than one hundred and ten miles per hour, but still at the mercy of the storm.

For more than an hour the *LL-C* raced helplessly before the wind. That black sky was lashed by lightning every mile of the way. Other reports, of the ship's being struck, were telephoned to the control car. In spite of it all, no telling damage had been done. In desperation, at eight o'clock, Papa Muller ordered all machine guns and their ammunition thrown overside. The wireless outfit went too. All spare clothing, blankets and hammocks followed. Then the tools and heavy boots. Some food was gulped by each man, then the surplus tossed out. Altitude! More altitude! The *LL-C* could not stand this hell much longer.

Finally, having won 28,000 feet only to find the storm every bit as bad there, Papa Muller order another fuel tank jettisoned. He couldn't afford to drop that fuel. Without it, he could hardly hope to bring his craft back to Germany. On the other hand, if he didn't take every last chance, his ship wasn't going to get back to Germany. Papa Muller was satisfied that nothing but a miracle was going to bring her through. And as for miracles: the fact that the lightning hadn't sent the *LL-C* down in the red was miracle enough.

The storm and the lightning, strange to say, were soon to be one of Papa Muller's lesser worries. Before half past eight a telephone call came from the front starboard gondola. The motor man there complained that he and his supercharger man were getting no oxygen. A moment later, before Papa Muller could tell his watch officer, the live ballast back in the tail telephoned forward and made a like report. They were panicky!

A map board that had folded and fallen, in that great drop that came as the storm first struck the ship, was hanging, by its hinges, in such a manner as to hide the oxygen pressure gage. Till now everybody had taken that oxygen supply for granted; and nobody had thought to lift the map board from the face of the hidden gage. The watch officer did so now. There was no pressure on the dial.

Papa Muller spoke the different stations of his ship—power gondolas, platform and rear end of catwalk. He told them that he'd see what could be done about the shortage. But Papa Muller knew that little or nothing was going to be done. The entire crew had been on oxygen for so long that the normal time limit had almost been exceeded. But worst of all, the oxygen supply had been tapped twice: once when the aft midship motor, port side, had splintered its propeller and torn gondola and all away, and a second time when the rear starboard motor had burned out its supercharger and tossed its rear end overboard. Each time, as soon as possible, the fuel and oxygen lines had been pinched and capped by the fast working repair mechanics. But the repairs hadn't been fast enough to prevent what was to prove a tragic loss of oxygen.

The men were ordered down from topside and told to examine all oxygen tanks as they came forward. Five minutes later one of them staggered to the head of the leading down ladder and half tumbled to the control car's floor. He said that one midship oxygen tank had been hit and creased from top to bottom, as though worked upon by a can opener. His mates, he mumbled, were aft, sitting on the catwalk, bleeding from mouth, nose and ears. Then this man went down.

The helmsman drooped, then slid from the wheel to the floor. The watch officer took the wheel. Papa Muller telephoned back to the bombing officer in the tail. That officer answered feebly, saying that his men were strapped to cross members, some unconscious, all weak. Only one of the power gondolas answered old Wind-Rider's call; and the voice in that one car halted before half a dozen words had been uttered.

Papa Muller braced himself against the watch officer at the wheel and fought hard to make himself heard and understood. They had to get the *LL-C* down lower. But it was against all lighter-than-air rules and regulations to valve off hydrogen with a lightning-filled sky. And the sky was filled with lightning! Lightning that crashed and flashed from every quarter. Lightning that seemed right inside the control car. The elevator man was on his knees. Papa Muller staggered over and joined him. The watch officer, Papa Wind-Rider and the elevator man, with one other strong and standing crew man, managed to put the nose of the *LL-C* a bit lower.

But when nine o'clock found the once-proud queen of the service, and ended the first full day aloft, the *LL-C* was hardly more than a phantom ship. Four motors roared at full gun, with their engine men out on the floor boards. Racing and yawing, plunging through cloud bank after cloud bank, the phantom ran its unchartered course across that unmarked sky. A thing of death and the dead, carrying others still living onward to certain destruction.

Papa Muller saw his elevator man go down. Then the single strong crew man tried to take over that control. A few minutes later, when the *LL-C* was in a smother of driving snow, the watch officer crumbled and fell across the helmsman at his feet. Then, at 9:20, just as Papa Wind-Rider Muller was slipping to the floor, passing into the black void of unconsciousness, he mumbled a last order to the single strong man left. Papa Muller, with everything lost, told that man to valve off. That is, if that lone man could still stay with the fight long enough to perform that ordinarily quite simple duty.

People in Lausanne, on the north shore of Lake Geneva, said that they heard motors pass overhead, in the clouds, at 9:35. Those listeners agreed that the ship carrying the motors could not have been at an extreme height at the time. Fact is, those engines must have been quite low to be heard through the whistling of wind that swept that high, storm lashed country.

It is only fifty miles from Lausanne to Mont Blanc and the high tops of the Pennine Alps that stretch eastward. During the *LL-C*'s race through those last miles the single strong man—if he were still conscious and able to accomplish the act—must have valved off, and valved off exceedingly. If it wasn't the valving off of hydrogen, then the weight of accumulating ice and snow brought the supership down. At any rate, sometime during the next half hour the *LL-C* lost enough altitude to bring her lower than Mont Blanc's 15,780-foot crest. Some eighteen or twenty miles east of that crest, still on the Swiss side of the trans-Alps border, the death ship hit a mountainside above a small hamlet in the Ferrex Valley. In striking that mountainside the control car and one portside power gondola were separated from the doomed *LL-C*. Freed of that weight, she again took altitude, cleared the Alps and was never seen again. Very likely she and her remaining cargo of men found a final resting place somewhere in the waters of the Adriatic or Mediterranean.

Papa Wind-Rider Muller, his watch officer, the single strong man and four others lived to be brought down from that mountainside. Being in neutral Switzerland, the war was over for them; and it's an even bet that they were well satisfied to let things ride that way.

# *The* ICE PATROL

*Strange Adventures of the Newsreel Men —by One of Them*

CHARLES PEDEN

IT WAS an intolerably hot day. By the time I had finished covering the official welcome to a current public idol I was pretty well beaten down to a nub. City Hall Park is far from a choice spot on a sizzling day. While breaking down my camera, Bill Carey (he is of the opposition) shouted over to me, "How about a long cool one up at the club?"

"Not a bad idea," I agreed, promising to meet him after I'd turned in my negative. An hour or so later I found Carey sprawled out on a comfortable divan trying to console himself with the feeble breeze coaxed from wide spread casement windows; even at a forty-five story elevation it was none too good.

"Try one of these," he suggested, shoving a tall glass toward me. Its frost covered sides and top surmounted with a sprig of crisp green mint sure looked inviting. In answer to my nod of approval as I sampled the contents, Carey remarked, "God bless the man who discovered ice."

"You mean the man who discovered what he could do with it when it was all chopped up," I corrected.

"Check," Bill affirmed. Then; "Which reminds me, I'd like to be up where they crack it on a large scale. I sure could go for an assignment to the ice patrol in this weather."

Carey referred to one of the most thrilling and dangerous jobs a newsreel man covers. Every Spring an outfit is detailed to sail with one of the Coast Guard cutters that annually sweep the area immediately north of the great steamer lanes in search of icebergs. It is their mission to destroy when possible, or to check the course of the monsters as they drift down from the Arctic following the course of the Labrador current.

"By the way, Bill, how come you solicit that job every year?" I asked. It had always struck me as peculiar that Carey, who I knew loved comfort, always represented his company on that far from cushy assignment.

"The reason," Bill answered, "dates back to something that occurred several years ago, back in the days when your present news editor, Eddie Reardon, was also on the camera."

"In the good old days of silents when we cranked instead of snapping switches, eh?"

"Yeah. Eddie and myself were assigned by our respective companies to cover the activities of the ice patrol," Bill began. "It was my first big story, and I guess Reardon was amused by my enthusiasm. We drove up to Halifax in his car, and believe me, that's a lousy drive at best. Due to Spring thaws the last three hundred miles is one mudhole after another. Shoveling our way out every so often made me realize what an awful lot of missionary work was attached to the job.

"We arrived in Halifax on an April tenth and after hours of searching for the pier, located the cutters. My heart sank as I viewed what was going to be our home for the next three weeks. The boats are small, ranging from one hundred and twenty to two hundred feet in length. They are wooden and have many years of service behind them. Boarding the *Mojave,* we introduced ourselves to the captain, who in turn acquainted us with the ship and its personnel. We selected our bunks which were located up forward, and spent the rest of the evening yarning with the men in our quarters. There was the oceanographer, radio man and a still photographer representing one of the big syndicates.

"Early the next morning the *Mojave,* in company with the *Modoc,* steamed out of the harbor. It was quite warm, considering the latitude, and a smooth sea helped to make it pleasant. We pushed along at about a ten knot gait and, after getting my sea legs, this being my first ocean trip, I really enjoyed it.

" 'When will we see ice, Eddie?' I asked.

" 'Time enough for that,' Reardon replied. 'This is only the prelude.'

"We pursued an easterly course and on the third day, while lounging on a coil of rope up forward, I happened to notice the captain making some very careful observations.

" 'You boys better get your cameras topside,' he suggested in answer to my obvious curiosity.

" 'Are we getting near ice?' I inquired.

" 'No; but we are about to stand by and perform a duty that is directly connected with the motive for founding the ice patrol,' he explained. His face was very grave as he continued, 'On this spot, this date April fourteenth, nineteen hundred and twelve, the steamer *Titanic* rammed its speeding prow into a derelict iceberg.' Turning, he issued an order to his assistant, 'Mr. Kendall, please have all hands muster on the aft deck at once.'

"Reardon and I set up our cameras to photograph the ceremony. It was a mighty impressive one, too. Engines barely turning over, the cutter hovered in one spot as the captain intoned a benediction and the crew stood bareheaded at attention. The solemn service was terminated with the blowing of Taps and as the last faint note faded away, a wreath of immortelles was cast upon the waves. I've witnessed it many times since, and it has always moved me; but that being the first time, it was doubly impressive. The horrible spectacle of those unfortunate passengers struggling in the icy darkness of that awful night occurred to me; this, coupled with a strange feeling in the pit of my stomach caused by the wallowing ship, had its effect. I packed up hurriedly and went below to rest. I was weak and trembling all over.

"THAT night we veered north and ran into rough weather. Never have I put in such a hellish time. It was my first real taste of seasickness. The little ship tossed and rolled incessantly. I could hear the wind howl and feel the cutter quiver as sea after sea broke over the bow. The danger we courted was greatly amplified by my terror.

" 'Here we are,' I thought, 'a thousand miles from land and blindly groping farther into perilous waters. What if our wooden hull scraped over some submerged growler?'

"I could not blot the thought of the *Titanic* tragedy from my mind. I was in a funk, and being seasick didn't help matters any. Dawn found me still awake, and I must have looked pretty wretched for Reardon seemed concerned and urged a breakfast on me which I promptly lost. My appearance on deck called for a lot of kidding as you might imagine.

"It was a foggy day and the water

had taken on a deeper tinge of green. Whitecaps were numerous, but the wind had subsided. Cautiously, the *Mojave* nosed ahead, the hoarse roar of her siren blasting the quiet periodically. After each signal, the crew would listen sharply for an echo. This is one of the ways icebergs are located in foggy weather. Sound travels about 1,060 feet per second at zero temperature; making allowances for weather conditions a fairly accurate idea of the distance and direction of any strange bodies can be determined by this method. At frequent intervals the oceanographer examined samples of water. This went on for a week, in which time I recovered from my illness and fear.

"We were about in the vicinity of 38 longitude and 55th parallel when the lookout called, 'Growlers ahead!' Every one was jubilant. Here was something to break the deadly monotony. Rushing up on deck, we searched the mists for a sight of the ice. We were rewarded. Every so often a big slab would silently drift by. A death-like chill permeated the atmosphere and the growlers seemed to assume phantom shapes as they emerged from the murky vapors. It was eery. Quite business-like, however, were the activities aboard the *Mojave*. Wireless warnings crackled out to the other ships in the patrol, and an efficient gun crew was clearing for action.

"'Here is where we get our preliminary stuff,' Reardon advised. 'They will shatter the biggest of these growlers.'

"All day we cranked as the gunners demolished the bergs. They sure were proficient with a five-inch gun. Nightfall found us a tired and happy bunch. Reardon and I rigged up a dark room and, on inspecting a developed strip of negative, we congratulated ourselves with the results obtained by using the then new panchromatic stock.

"Good weather broke the next morning, and it found us eagerly scanning the horizon for bigger prey. The visibility was very high, but nary a berg could be sighted. For hours, the cutter pursued a square course. Finally, just as two bells struck, the captain handed me his telescope and pointed over the starboard rail.

"'Take a squint at that baby,' he said. 'I'll bet she's as big as an armory.'

"Sure enough, I could discern a white mass. Our course was changed and in a short time we overhauled the berg.

"What a monster! Towering fully seventy feet, it presented an awesome sight. The sheer smooth sides shone like polished marble and a thousand graceful spires decorated its crown. The sun's rays playing upon it created a shimmering aura of dazzling color. Every tone of the spectrum was refracted from its surface and the emerald hue of the water seemed to attain a deeper shape where it lapped the alabaster white base of the berg. Delicate purple shadows lurked in the depths of its crevices. A masterpiece in ice, but looking at it through the eyes of the patrol it presented a terrible menace. Just such an iceberg, the captain pointed out, had been the Nemesis of the *Titanic,* for extending out from the berg below the surface would be long cruel tongues of ice forming a reef capable of ripping a gaping hole in the stoutest hull.

"Little time was wasted in maneuvering the cutter to a favorable position, and then the gun crew went into action again. We focused long telephoto lenses on the berg, the better to photograph the effect of the major calibar shells. At the first bark of the guns we started cranking. Through the Akeley finder we could see the results. Hit after hit was scored; but aside from dislodging large fragments of ice, no particular damage was wrought.

"'That's a dynamite job,' exclaimed the captain. 'Here, men, cease firing and stand by to plant mines.'

"Two dories containing working crews and mining gear were launched. This offered a new angle for us, and we kept our lenses trained on the boats as they approached the frozen mass. With the aid of a harpoon gun a light line was shot over the berg. By means of this line a heavy hawser was hauled back, the grapnel at its end finding a foothold somewhere in the crannies atop the berg. Using the heavy rope as an anchorage, two mines loaded with TNT were attached and sunk to a level midway between the surface of the water and the berg's base. The proper depth is determined by measuring the exposed height of an iceberg, which represents one-eighth of its bulk. Slowly paying out the detonating wire, the dories moved to a safe position. One of the men wigwagged a warning. They were about to throw the switch. We started to crank. *Buuuuuung!* went the mines.

Our ship rocked violently at the concussion but, save for a heavy lurch, the berg remained adamant. A string of good old seafaring oaths rent the air. It was the skipper.

" 'Not a chance to scuttle that brute,' he wound up. 'Call in the boats. We'll convoy the berg. A few days will probably see it swing northward with the current or disintegrate when we reach warmer waters.'

"For three days we followed the course of the berg, keeping an alert eye on its every move. Now and then a fissure caused by the dynamiting would widen, and a section of ice would slough off into the sea. Realizing it would soon be lost to us, Reardon and I hit upon a plan to get some good close-ups of the formation.

"Our idea called for a boat and the captain, though at first reluctant, furnished us with a small one. Inspecting the tiny craft, it was evident that only one camera at a time could be set up safely. Reardon offered to row out while I made the approach shots, then we were to reverse, he using his camera as I rowed. Slowly we approached the big berg. The sea was choppy and it was difficult to keep a footing. Standing there in that bobbing dinghy I began to realize the magnitude of the icy pile.

"Suddenly, with a sharp report, the berg split asunder. The ponderous mass toppled toward us. The inevitable was apparent. Transfixed with horror I stood rigid for a moment, then my knees buckled and I slumped to the bottom of the boat in terror. Reardon, however, seemed fascinated with the spectacle. Oblivious of the danger, he grabbed the camera and started cranking coolly. Through some miracle, the berg missed us and though the boat careened madly, Reardon ground until the last piece of ice had disappeared.

" 'Well, it looks like I've lost a good show,' he remarked, dropping wearily to a thwart.

"I had recovered a bit and managed to murmur, 'What do you mean? You shot it.'

" 'Yes, but it was your camera.'

" 'Nevertheless, you did the job, Eddie. Take the film,' I urged.

" 'Nope. You keep it, kid. Come on. If you're up to it let's row back.'

"Once on the cutter, I tried again to press the negative on him, but he would not take it. The *Mojave*, her work now finished, headed for Halifax to refuel. Realizing we would soon be disembarking, I pleaded with Reardon to reconsider, but he would have none of it. He was very kind about the whole matter. Needless to say the picture was a sensation with my office and Eddie's outfit must have felt pretty bad about it. Now do you see why I take that assignment? Every year since, I have hoped to run into a like dangerous predicament that I may prove to myself whether or not I can stand the gaff. It is the only way I will ever appease my self-respect."

I realized how Carey felt and with a friendly pat on the back, left him to his thoughts. A few days later while in Reardon's office, I chanced to recall the incident. He looked sort of sheepish for a moment and his only comment was, "Aw, I would have been as scared as Bill if I had been watching that big thing loom up, instead of being so darn busy rowing the boat."

"Oh, yeah?" I retorted.

# A Two-Part Story of the Brazilian Jungle

WALLACE SPARHAWK, a young American business man traveling in Brazil, became fired by a magazine article telling of the strange disappearance of Anton LeBaron, famous explorer and author, in the jungles of the Amazon. Craving adventure, he set forth on a quest for the missing scientist.

Deserted by treacherous guides on the jungle-bound and little known Rio Ricapuyo, Sparhawk, after wandering for days, lost consciousness from fever and starvation. When he awoke he found himself in a native hut, a black man closely studying him.

The black, who spoke Portuguese, questioned the American suspiciously and, when Sparhawk explained his mission, said shortly:

"Anton LeBaron is dead. You are a captive of the Surucairis. I am their chief."

Surucairis! Wallace Sparhawk had heard of the tribe: man-eaters, cannibals . . .

Days passed, and Sparhawk began to win the trust of the strange black chief who, despite his negroid skin, had the features of a white man. The black said his name was Homem dos Remédios—Man of Remedies. Otherwise he revealed little concerning himself. Every sixth day he disappeared, returning on the eighth. Sparhawk could not draw him out as to his periodic absences; or learn the identity of the nearly white child which he saw playing occasionally about the chief's house.

Was it the missing LeBaron's boy? Or, by some quirk of fate, Homem's? Or that of a mad Brazilian, Macedo, who was known to be roving these jungles?

One night, unable to sleep, Sparhawk went out into the village clearing. And there, plain in the bright moonlight, standing with poised spear before the black chief's house, was a bearded, emaciated white man.

Sparhawk crept up on the strange, savage creature; closed with him and, after a terrific struggle, succeeded in dragging his growling, clawing captive back to his own shelter. And there he was surprised at the declaration that burst from the animal-like white.

"I am Macedo! I come for my boy! Let us all go together—we escape!"

Sparhawk demurred, distrusting the madman. Instantly the maniac renewed his fight—broke free—and was gone in the jungle.

Behind him he left his spear; and a few minutes later two arrows quivered

# *The* FATE *of* ANTON LEBARON

### By ARTHUR O. FRIEL

into the wall of the American's hut . . .

The next morning the black chief, Homem, came to Sparhawk's shelter. He heard the story of the night's encounter, and warmed visibly toward the American.

"Had you gone with Macedo," he said, "you would have made a grisly feast for him—he runs with the Kukapotin cannibals, our enemies. Mad brains go from bad to worse. The madman has now become a mad dog. And I shall kill him at first sight!"

WITH that unemotional announcement Remédios walked back to the door, leaned in his usual place beside the jamb, shifted his cud and ruminated. Sparhawk, following, squatted on the sill and relighted his pipe, which had gone out. After a puff or two he bluntly said:

"See here, Remédios. It's time for us to have an understanding. As you say, I am strong now—thanks to you. That fellow Macedo was strong too, and hard as wire, but I handled him easily. I'm fit. Now just what do you mean to do with me?"

"I was thinking," replied the black, "of that very same thing."

He chewed again, gazing at Indians, male and female, engaged in various ways outside the *malocas.*

"We do not wish to kill you," he then volunteered. "My people have come to like you."

"Like me? Well, that's cheerful news."

"It is truth. You have acted wisely, giving no offense. You now could live long here unharmed. *Si,* and be most comfortable. A better house could be built for you. A woman could be yours. There are several girls not yet mated. There are many interesting things to learn and write in the book." A touch of satire showed in the bushman's tone. "Many things you have not seen nor heard. Perhaps in time you might even find somewhere the papers of the man LeBaron. *Quem sabe?*"

Sparhawk sat amazed, letting his pipe die again. The offer of fellowship in the tribe seemed incredible. Suspiciously he eyed the chief, seeking signs of derision. He found none. Remédios continued gazing placidly across the open.

"Thanks," acknowledged the American, recovering himself. "But I don't want all that. I'm quite comfortable here in jail, with no wild women. And what would be the end of that sort of life?"

"The end of all life is death. When or how, who knows?"

"Meaning that I could never leave here?"

"Nobody wishes you to leave here."

That quiet statement held Sparhawk silent again for several slow breaths. Whether or not he became a white Surucairi, he was not to go.

"I see," he then said. "Speaking of LeBaron, where do you think I might find those papers?"

"Possibly among the Huitainas. You say he had a woman there. I have been thinking of visiting them."

Sparhawk eyed him askance. The Huitainas would hardly receive a Surucairi chieftain cordially.

"My men need exercise," added the negro. "Too much time at home breeds sluggishness. Too little red meat saps strength. As one of us you could use your gun. For you would be the papers you want. For us—"

He grinned and rubbed his dusky stomach. The white man's hands closed hard.

"No!" he said.

"*Não?* You do not care for the papers enough to kill for them?"

"No! Let the Huitainas alone!"

"*Pois bem,* as you will. But think it over. Think over all I have said. When your mind changes, tell me."

"It won't change."

"Everything changes. Now I go."

He went, showing no resentment of the other's bluntness. Until his inky shape was swallowed by a *maloca* doorway, Sparhawk stared steadily at it. Thereafter he cleaned his pipe, refilled it, sat again and, as bidden, thought it all over.

The thinking changed none of his determinations, but led to the conclusion:

"Well, that takes a big load off my mind, anyway. Nothing to worry about now, except how to get away; and there's no rush about that. Things seem to be getting more interesting. And, Homem, you black brute, you're not completely callous, are you? That woman and her kid must mean a lot to you. And I'm glad I was on the job, since you appreciate it."

As the day wore on he saw signs that others appreciated it or, at least, felt more friendly. Men came over, drove the protruding arrow through the wall, muttered about it and its mate and the spear, and eyed the nonchalant Northerner more amicably than ever before. Departing, they took the arrows but left the spear, tacitly acknowledging that it was his by right of conquest. When he bathed, several warriors marched down and swam with him, wordless, yet companionable. His serving woman, fetching his meals, was less mechanical, more woman-like in look and movement. And two or three of the unmated girls came near him when he strolled, seemingly artless, yet momentarily meeting his gaze by covert side glances. Whether or not all these small occurrences came about by the will of the chief, it was evident that the community knew he had attacked and disarmed a nocturnal marauder, and that for the time he stood high in savage minds.

Of Remédios, the pale woman and the child, however, he saw little more that day, and then only at a distance. When night came he retired as usual with the door wedged. For a time he slept untroubled. At length he awoke, listening. Something, he felt, was just outside; something which had caused a squeak of the inclined bar against his door.

Quietly arising, he groped about, found his spear and moved over to the barrier. With stealthy care he raised the leaning bar. The door gave slightly, as if something rested against the outside. Then the pressure was gone. Weapon up, he yanked the portal open.

Slowly his spear sank. Outside, motionless, stood the chief, javelin in hand, point resting on the ground. He had been sitting on the sill, back against the wood, and risen when he felt it move. Now, rigid as a statue, he looked into the astonished face gaping at him in the moonlight.

"Oh, hullo!" exclaimed Sparhawk, awkwardly. "Come in?"

The negro voiced no response. For a long minute he continued gazing at the white. Then his empty hand rose, waved doorward, dropped loosely. The unspoken order was plain: to step back and shut up.

Slowly Sparhawk obeyed, replacing the bar. For a long time after that he lay wondering. At last he got up and again looked out. The clearing now was vacant.

He puzzled anew, shook his head, went back to his hammock. Remedios had not come there to repay a debt in kind; to guard the sleeper against further attacks by the vindictive maniac. There was no debt; and that strong house needed no protection. No, the negro had walked over only to rest on the white man's usual lounging spot and think unguessable thoughts in the late solitude. And in his sooty face and somber dark eyes that white man had seen a haunting sadness which lingered in memory now that he was gone.

"Poor devil, he's lonesome," concluded Sparhawk. "Cursed by his mongrel ancestry; white fighting black and brown. But I can't help that. And tomorrow he'll probably be ugly as hell again. So—"

He slept.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ALARM

DAYS passed; days like those which had gone before, yet somewhat different. The difference lay in Sparhawk's new mental attitude toward his environment. Now that the subconscious strain of suspense was ended, he found his captivity oddly pleasant.

The unbroken peace, the quiet friendliness, the slow drift of idle hours formed a monotone which seldom grew tedious. The thought of escape, which previously had gnawed often at his mind, now came less frequently and much less vividly; it seemed a sort of duty, to be attended to when necessary, but not immediately imperative. Conversely, the thought of returning home and reentering the bustle of business was growing distasteful. It had been a keen desire and a stubborn hope, giving him incentive to rebuild himself. Now, somehow, it had gone flat.

For this alteration there were reasons psychologic and climatic. For some time he had compelled his mind to accept philosophically his situation; and banishment of anxiety made it actually enjoyable. And, imperceptible, insidious, inexorable, the lulling lassitude of Amazonia was beginning to creep about his brain, slow as the growth of a thread-like jungle vine which, entwining itself on a vigorous tree, gradually tightens, thickens, becomes a serpentine destroyer. He did not realize this. Northerners never do, until they have stayed too long in equatorial regions. Then knowledge comes too late.

Now, carefree, he did whatsoever he pleased—within self-imposed limits. He swam, he fished, he loafed and day dreamed; he walked about and watched whatever work went on, taking particular interest in the laborious hollowing of a new canoe from a tree trunk, the building of another work shed and all such outdoor activities. Yet he held to his former way of living, keeping out of the tribe houses, encouraging nobody to enter his own shelter, making or accepting no advances, maintaining the reserve which had proven so useful.

Sometimes, physically exuberant, he felt like indulging in an impromptu wrestling match with some young warrior or flirting openly with some shapely girl. But he repressed all such impulses. A grapple between white and Indian, he realized, might begin in good humor but end in savage combat. Momentary flirtation would undoubtedly be even more misunderstood. Hence he started nothing.

Of Remédios he now saw even less than before. The customary morning visits of the chief became irregular and very short. Since that day when he had offered complete friendship, only to have it rejected, he was almost uncommunicative. Now, when he did call, he asked only one question—

"Is your mind unchanged?"

"Quite," declared the white man.

"*Bem.* All right." And soon, close mouthed, the black went.

This continued curtness and repression were new in him. Hitherto his manner had seldom been the same for two successive days; frequently it had changed tempestuously within a few minutes. Now, although he showed no cordiality, he also exhibited none of the tigerish temper or the sneering sarcasm previously characteristic. The silent somberness which had been upon him that night when he stood alone outside Sparhawk's hut seemed to be still weighting his mind. But he made no more of those late visits, Sparhawk was quite sure. Night rains had set in again, making all outdoors dismal and gloomy.

Throughout these days and nights the surrounding jungle withheld from the tranquil settlement whatever deadly creatures it sheltered. The mad Macedo, baffled in his efforts to kidnap and kill, was gone without trace. If any other malignant wanderer, legged or legless, approached at any time, it retreated unseen. Yet sometimes Sparhawk thought that the younger men looked forestward more intently than usual, that the older ones were more absorbed in making arrows, that the morning conferences over at the chief's door lasted longer; and at such times the ever present feeling of invisible danger seemed more palpable. But, in his new luxury of mental indolence, Sparhawk shrugged aside the momentary impressions. They might be mere imagination. And if not, what of it?

Thus had he changed from the quick brained, accurately interpretative investigator whom an American firm had sent forth to read eyes, tones, gestures, other fleeting indications, before deciding on its business policy toward Brazil; from the energetic enthusiast who, accidentally hearing of a lost explorer, had started alone on a quixotic quest; from the tenacious man who recently had rebuilt himself physically in order to carry on, or, at least, carry himself out. Now he was content to wait for something to happen.

It happened with the suddenness of a snake striking.

That morning Homem dos Remédios seemed more like his former self. With one cheek bulging and jaw slowly working, he leaned easily against the front wall, instead of standing with his recent rigidity. And, in bantering tone, he inquired—

"How goes the book?"

"It's not going. It's stopped," drawled Sparhawk.

"How is that?"

"Oh, there's nothing new. And it's grown a little tiresome."

"*Si?* The toy ceases to amuse? But perhaps it might amuse me. Read to me what you have written about me."

"As it happens, I haven't written anything about you, Homem."

"*Não?* But why not?"

"Well, I just jot down things I might forget. I'm not likely to forget you."

"I am flattered," dryly remarked the chief. Then, for a moment or two, he lounged wordless, looking across the open at the farther wall of forest.

"Are you a good shot?" he presently asked.

The Northerner eyed him askance, wondering what lay behind the complete change of topic. In a certain National Guard regiment back in the States Sparhawk rated as sharpshooter. But to the negro's previously suggested project of attacking the peaceable Huitainas he still was fixedly opposed. Hence he warily replied:

"Fair. Why?"

The black glanced sidewise at him, smiled faintly, went on chewing.

"I have been thinking that we might go hunting and see whether—"

He stopped short, straightened, stood intent. Over at a *maloca* was sudden activity.

Squatters had sprung up. A tall young fellow was running past them toward the house of the chief. Voices broke out in sharp calls. The runner snapped back some reply, swerved, sprinted toward the hut where stood his ruler. Halting there he panted terse dialect, flinging one arm toward the rear of the clearing.

His lungs were laboring, his body sweaty, his hair awry and spotted with fragments of leaf, twig, spiderweb, denoting a hard run through the forest. One hand gripped a bow, but no arrows. Evidently he had, while out hunting, met more than he sought.

A rapid question from his commander brought several emphatic grunts. Remédios voiced one decisive word. The runner dashed back toward the *malocas*. Over there every Indian had vanished, bolting into the houses.

"It seems that we need not go hunting," stated Remédios. "Our game comes to us. *Vamos!*"

He started away, striding fast, yet not running. Sparhawk swung after him.

"What comes?" he demanded. "Huitainas?"

"Huitainas? *Não!* Kukapotins!"

"The devil!"

"*Si.* He comes also."

With that sardonic jest the chief leaped into a run, as if tardily realizing something urgent. Sparhawk increased his own pace; but the black left him behind with amazing speed. Into his own doorway he plunged without pause. An instant later sudden thunder broke over the clearing.

Deep, hard, heavy booms of a hidden log drum roared in imperative signal, filling the air with rolling concussions of noise. Abruptly they ceased. The ensuing quiet seemed doubly tense.

As Sparhawk reached the open door it was blocked by the negro, lunging forth again. One black fist now gripped the American's cartridge belt, whence dangled the holstered revolver and sheathed *machete;* the other held his own hardwood javelin. Without a word he threw the belt to its owner, then swiftly surveyed the surroundings.

"Calling help?" laconically asked Sparhawk, buckling on the belt. Although he had never seen a savage war drum, he knew that their sonorous notes were audible for miles.

"Help? *Não, por Deus!*" snapped the chief. "Warning the women. Some are out at the plantation—*Bom!* They come!"

Out from a forest edge darted several lithe girls, racing homeward with the speed of terror. And now out from the tribe houses poured men, armed for battle. They bristled with wooden weapons: bows, arrows, blowguns, long lances, shorter stabbing spears, axes, bludgeons. After them came boys, half grown, too young to combat warriors, but sallying forth as resolutely as their elders, and bearing extra weapons—principally arrows—to pass to the fighters as needed.

Gasping, the girls reached the front door of the nearer *maloca* and threw themselves inside. As the last one disappeared, a man yanked that door shut. From the other tribe house, like an echo, sounded another knock of wood on wood. And Homem dos Remédios reached to his own heavy barrier and pulled it tight. No bar slid behind it. The closing of his untenanted house was a gesture, but wordlessly eloquent—self-explanatory.

Women and babes were in shelter. Men and boys were outside to defend them. Unless those defenders won, none of them was again to cross a threshold. All this Sparhawk saw and marveled at; the laws here in this wilderness, thousands of miles from the life he had always known, were as fixed and exact as the laws of his own civilization.

## CHAPTER X

### BATTLE

GRUFF orders snapped from the chief. Short grunts answered from sub-chiefs at each *maloca.* Swiftly, without confusion, warriors lined the walls of the tribe houses, covering ends and inner sides, but leaving bare the long outer sides toward the jungle. Every man carried bow in hand and arrow quiver on his back. Some, the most expert archers, clustered thick at corners, attended by the boy ammunition carriers. Others laid down their auxiliary weapons and waited in line. With all in place the whole array froze. Over the settlement brooded ominous silence.

Remédios, walking around his earth platform, eyed the arrangement shrewdly, then glanced at Sparhawk, following with revolver in hand.

"Save cartridges," he counseled. "Hold your fire for the finish."

The Northerner nodded. His belt held about fifteen rounds. Aside from the six in his gun, there were no more.

The negro's gaze rose from the gun to the face of his captive, surveying it as judicially as if diagnosing a medical case. The white man, taut with expectant excitement, grinned. The black lips twitched in fleeting response. Then both men looked toward the forest.

Hardly five minutes had passed since the roving hunter had dashed into the clearing with news of what he had spied sneaking along a dim trail. But the haste of defensive preparation and the tense attitude of all defenders indicated that the assailants ought already to be here. Yet nothing showed at the jungle edge. Warned by the thunders of the war drum that their approach was known, the raiders perhaps were proceeding more cautiously, had halted for conference, or possibly were even in retreat. So Sparhawk thought. And as the minutes dragged past he impatiently wondered why Remédios had not rushed his men to meet their enemies on the known route of advance, fight them in the woods, beat them back from the clearing, instead of holding them in cover behind the *malocas* and awaiting offense. He was soon to learn.

Suddenly a hideous discord of bloodthirsty yells burst from three sides of the settlement. Only the front, partly protected by the deep creek, remained quiet. Elsewhere racketed a ferocious uproar of voices howling hateful menace. And now from the shadows flew a bombardment of arrows, curving high, shooting downward to stop in thick thatch or to quiver on the ground. Few of these completely cleared the long slant of the roofs; and none hit human flesh. The range was too far for any but the strongest archers, and the aerial assault amounted only to a waste of missiles.

A harsh shout of mockery broke from the unharmed warriors waiting. Some of them surged toward the corners, only to be sharply halted by a bark from the negro. Eyes darting here and there, head cocked to one side, he was evidently gaging the strength of the attacking force by its preliminary clamor and judging whether it were evenly distributed along all three sides. Several times he glanced toward the creek, as if suspecting existence of reserves beyond it, awaiting their turn to swim silently across and charge up the slope. But then, having estimated the situation, he stood more easily.

"We are much outnumbered," he coolly remarked. "But in the end the odds may be even."

With that he again scanned the forest and waited.

Sparhawk made no reply. It was quite evident that the bushman had outguessed the assailants, who, although aware that their attack was expected, were going through with their assault in accordance with predetermined plan; the usual jungle plan to surround a settlement, suddenly loose a nerve shocking noise and a rain of arrows, and then rush in to finish the demoralized victims.

Against unprepared foes that plan, old as humanity, would almost invariably work. Lacking the element of surprise, it was not so good. With all details worked out days ago, however, the raiders were unable to change their strategy at the last moment. Wherein they were, in truth, no more stupid than many an army of white men thrown into battle by officers who adhered to methods learned by rote from antiquated text books.

For some minutes the futile uproar and wasteful hail of arrows continued. Then both dwindled. At once the black chief called a command. The taut shapes along the walls snatched up their close-quarter weapons, shoved them under arms and, bows ready, sprinted around corners to new positions on the hitherto unprotected sides. As they did so the jungle spewed forth a multitude of strange, fierce shapes.

Short, but stocky and strong, the attackers were mottled with various shades of paint or clay, forming a confusion of colors adapted to blend with variant lights and shadows of the forest; a crude camouflage effective in cover, but futile in the open. Bodies totally naked, mouths agape with screeching howls, arms brandishing crude weapons, they charged from all three sides into a hail of death.

The defenders, hitherto held back by orders, now reaped the reward of their restraint. Under the disordered medley of Kukapotin voices rumbled a changeless thrum of Surucairi bow cords. No arrows now flew high or went to waste. Hard jawed, silent, straight shooting, the clean brown men snapped shafts into the dirty ones with marvelous rapidity and unerring aim. Bodies pitched headlong as if smitten by bullets from a machine gun; lay still, or squirmed in mortal agony. But others—many others—unhit, charged on. Nearer—nearer . . .

The noise diminished. Charging survivors no longer yelled. Saving breath, gritting teeth, they raced harder than ever to come to grips. The twang of bow cords also decreased. Arrows had grown few. But now a quiet, somewhat slower, but no less deadly fire flitted forth. Blowguns, grabbed up as bows became useless, shot their slender poisoned darts in swift succession. Their range was less than fifty yards, their killing power not instantaneous. But no Kukapotin struck by one of those long needles lived long enough to avenge his wound.

THEN arose a new roar of savage hatred, more powerful than the first. The surviving invaders had reached their opponents. And those antagonists, hitherto fighting with voiceless concentration, now gave tongue. Seizing their spears, axes, clubs, they leaped at their foes with bellowing rage. Those foes answered with snarls, yells, screams of fury or pain. Around the houses now rioted the pandemonium of merciless jungle war.

At the headquarters of the commander, exposed by its advanced position, yet protected by the long flanks of the *malocas,* the black and the white man stood alert, watching in all directions, but doing nothing. The tumultuous mêlée now raging was beyond control; and the negro wasted no energy in useless efforts to direct it. Nor, although he was chief, did he feel obliged to plunge into it, as the subchiefs had done. Still less did the American.

At the rear and along both sides the confused combat brawled in indiscriminate attack and retaliation, swirling around the ends of the *malocas,* eddying into the hitherto clear space between them, sweeping nearer to the house of the chief. The invading force, although much shrunken by the deadly archery of the defenders, still outnumbered their opponents. But the tall home warriors, loosing their brawny power on the shorter mottled men, wrought frightful havoc.

Stabbing, chopping, clubbing, dodging, parrying, swinging instantly from a smitten foe to one still unhurt, they struck down more and more of the Kukapotins, even though forced slowly to give ground. The boys, no longer mere bearers of ammunition, fought like men; seizing fallen spears or axes, they struck, shouting shrill defiance, until slain. Boy or man, every defender who fell left behind him more than one spotted corpse.

The front of the clearing still remained open. The woods beyond the creek obviously concealed no assailants; and the maelstrom of battle had happened to swing around the backs of the long houses. Now suddenly came work for the pair at headquarters.

Around the fore end of one *maloca* charged a small but compact body of painted, red eyed, greasy haired Kukapotins heading for the domicile of the commander of their enemies. Leading them was a long, lank, unpainted man whose appearance evoked from both beholders a grim exclamation.

Macedo had returned!

The murderous maniac who had left behind him a Kukapotin spear and Kukapotin arrows now had guided a Kukapotin war party to massacre the habitants of this community. Teeth gleaming through his unkempt beard, knotty bludgeon gripped in sinewy fist, he led his bunched gang at headlong speed toward the house which he had tried to conquer alone. But all at once he stopped.

Bare heels sliding, eyes wide, mouth agape, he stared at the negro chief as if stricken by mental paralysis. Then he reeled, lost footing, fell sprawling, knocked down by the impact of unchecked cannibals behind him. They had not halted. They came on, swift and fierce as starved wolves. And the black captor and his white captive rushed together to meet the assault. Shoulder to shoulder, they met it.

Six shots, swift but accurate, hammered from Sparhawk's gun. Empty, that long revolver rose and fell hard on a greasy head. Bodies toppled. Dropping the firearm, he stabbed, slashed, chopped furiously with his *machete.* Beside him Remédios, thrusting and sidestepping like a skilled bayonet fighter, plunged his spear home, withdrew, jabbed again with elusive celerity. Borne backward, the two contested every inch of ground gained by their assailants. All at once they had the ground to themselves. The gang was down.

Panting, bleeding from several unnoticed flesh wounds, the pair rested a few seconds. Then Remédios leaped forward. Macedo, overthrown, trampled by his followers, was again up and active. Club raised, he sprang at the black chief. But that chief was too fast for him. As the bludgeon struck downward in a skull smashing stroke, Remédios dived under it, ramming his point through the white belly and far out at the back.

With a ghastly screech the madman fell, dropping his club, clutching at the shaft jutting from his abdomen, doubling in anguish. Remédios rolled aside, snapped to a stand, eyed his victim a second, then bounded back to his platform, snatching up a Kukapotin war club as he came. Sparhawk, heaving aside a body, now was retrieving his fallen gun. Unspeaking, he rapidly reloaded it. When the cylinder clicked shut the pair stood again on guard.

Macedo, writhing more and more weakly, soon grew still. His last movement was to lift his head, stare again at Remédios, let it drop. Near him a Kukapotin, dying from a low bullet wound, struggled up on elbows, spat hatefully toward Sparhawk, flattened out on his face. All others of that detached band were already limp.

No more charging savages came from the front. But now developed an unorganized rush of scattered Kukapotins from the rear. Cannibals who had sifted through the confusion of individual fighters converged toward the small house. After them ran vengeful Surucairis hurling bloody weapons, throwing themselves headlong, downing their men for hand-to-hand combat to the death. But some of the queerly painted Kukapotins evaded missiles and pursuers and leaped with inflexible purpose at the oddly allied pair on the chief's platform. Again that pair met the onslaught side by side.

The revolver spat its six bullets into the charging mob. The *machete* struck and lunged in desperate butchery. The war club thudded with terrific force on skulls or into faces. Feet, booted or bare, kicked viciously into naked groins. Snarling, panting, frothing, raiders still leaped from nowhere to overpower the fighting black and white, pull them down, tear and mutilate while their prey still lived. Battling with the fury of extremity, the two were forced back to a wall.

Sparhawk, shoving his *machete* to the hilt in an evil smelling body, left it there and punched fiercely with empty fist and empty gun. The fist smacked on a jaw, the steel muzzle sank into a bloodshot eye. The toppling body pulled the weapon from his grasp. Now it was fist and boot—fist—boot—nothing else left—breath gone—sight blurring . . .

Something heavy hampered Sparhawk's left shoulder. He shoved it aside, then suddenly seized it, pulled it behind him, fought forward. The weight was Remédios, senseless, perhaps lifeless, fallen against him. With a last burst of energy the American shot both fists into a slavering enemy face and knocked it away, spurting blood from its nose; clinched with another dimly seen shape, felt another blow from somewhere and sank in a daze, weakly striving to knee his latest foe. Then he was down.

Above him raged some sort of struggle. Blows, kicks, or trampling feet struck him. Curling up, he got one arm around his face, the other across his stomach, and was still. Vaguely came more impacts. Then on him fell a weight which briefly squirmed, was quiet. Another came, and another, piling up, crushing him. But he did not care. He was through . . .

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PRICE OF VICTORY

"OH, HULLO!"

Sparhawk blinked up at an anxious face, grinned, sat up, winced from sudden pains. Light and life had come back to him.

The face above him was black, bruised, bloody. The open space around him was thickly littered with corpses. But the hellish tumult of war was gone. High, hot, hard, the sun blazed down on a clearing to which had returned quietness, if not serenity. The disturbers of peace had died or fled. And the inky chief, although reddened by many wounds yet unbound, still lived.

*"Saudões, amigo!"* he responded. *"Como vae?"*

*"Vou bem,"* asserted the Northerner, struggling to his feet. "I'm all right. And you?"

A quick grin stretched the red-black lips, split and swollen by blows. Without other reply Remédios turned to further medical work. There was plenty.

Close beside the earth platform lay warriors motionless, with mouths tight, eyes set, hands pressed to fearful wounds. Others, borne by hobbling comrades, were coming around corners to be laid down in regular order. Glancing over them, the Northerner noted that serious wounds in arms or legs were already bound by ligatures; bow cords, clouts, any sort of tourniquet available to the bearers. Body hurts were unbandaged, the edges of the wounds held in place by the sufferers themselves. Elementary first aid, probably taught by the renegade chief, had been applied wherever possible. Further life saving measures now were up to the Man of Remedies.

Heedless of his own injuries, which, though numerous, were superficial, the bush doctor rapidly scanned the cases already lined up, then barked a string of orders. At once men hastened to the *maloca* doors, there to rap some signal with imperative clubs. The barriers opened; and out flocked women carrying rolls of bark cloth, long thorns for use as pins, jars of water, and similar articles which they well knew must be needed. Outside they hesitated a moment, looking anxiously around for their mates or male relatives; then, spurred by a command from the chief, hurried to bathe and bind the stricken fighters before his door. Stoically silent, they concentrated on the urgent work with the impersonal zeal of trained nurses, showing no discrimination in favor of their own men, wasting no time in vain search for faces not there. The fates of the missing would be known soon enough. Now every speeding moment must be devoted to those in dire need.

Terse, decisive, unhesitant, Remédios voiced instructions for treatment of each supine man, glancing sidewise as other helpless survivors were brought around corners, estimating their injuries swiftly, telling what to do for them almost before they were laid down. Meanwhile Sparhawk examined himself, finding himself cut and wofully bruised from head to foot, with muscles wrenched and joints racked, but with bones intact. His head ached fiercely, his legs felt feeble, his entire body seemed drained of force. But, in the presence of so many men more dangerously hurt, he ignored his own pains and held himself straight.

"You had better go and rest, *amigo*," prompted Remédios.

"Rest? Humph! There's work to do."

The other smiled faintly, studied him keenly, turned doorward.

"*Si.* There is work," he replied. "Come, then."

In he went. And for the first time the white man crossed the forbidden threshold.

Inside was a wide room divided by a cane partition, a closed door beyond which must be at least one other room. Near one sidewall was the signal drum, a length of hollow log suspended horizontally by fiber cords; near the other a long, strong table, dark brown, and a chair of the same wood. Up the partition were several shelves in regular tiers, on which were neatly arranged wicker boxes of varying size, clay bottles, and packets wrapped in sections of animal hides. Crude, yet clean and efficient, the place was a backwoods doctor's office.

For a second the doctor hesitated, again eyeing his volunteer assistant. Then, glancing outside at his waiting cases, he tightened his lips and reached for a hide bound box on the table. From it he scooped into one palm a mixture of brown leaf fragments and grayish powder.

"Open your mouth!" he ordered. Complying, Sparhawk found the mixture slapped on his tongue.

"Hold it! Swallow the saliva!"

With that Remédios threw some of the same stuff into his own mouth, stowed it in a cheek, and set the box up on a shelf.

"Sit down."

Sparhawk complied, shoving the rather unpleasant dose to one side of his mouth. Swiftly the negro cleared the table of a few nondescript articles, pulled a sizable box from a shelf, and emptied from it a rough but clean set of knives, scissors, forceps, probes, and other surgical instruments, some of which looked to be home made. These he rapidly arranged on a small three-legged stand nearby. With unerring hands he snatched certain packets from the various shelves, opened them, disclosed broken leaves, strips of thin bark, pulverized herbs of different hues, and other concoctions strange to the observer. Bottles followed, tight wooden plugs coming out, containers swinging to rest beside the wall or under the table at seeming haphazard. A momentary pause while Remédios scanned all the array, then he drew a long breath, faced the door, called several short commands.

"*Como vae?*" he added, shooting another glance at Sparhawk.

"*Muito bem!*" Sparhawk arose, feeling stronger. "What do I do?"

"Do what you are told. If you can not stand it, go. Ready!"

In at the door came four bearers. Down on the table they laid the first case; a brawny fellow who seemed cut almost to pieces and broken into a hopeless wreck. Eyes dull, jaw loose, breath shallow, the victim lay virtually comatose, yet stubbornly holding to life. Viewing him, the American thought—

"If you can save that and make it a man again, Homem, you're certainly good!"

But he did not say it. Nor, for unmeasured time after that, did he say anything. He was too busy.

Remédios himself hesitated a few seconds on that first case; hesitated long enough to lay hand over the warrior's heart, look hard into his opaque eyes, gage his innate determination and stamina. Thereafter he worked fast.

Into the lax mouth he poured a short drink from one of the bottles. The potion took effect almost immediately; the lips closed, the eyes cleared, the respiration strengthened. At once Remédios went mercilessly to work, tossing into some gashes a powder which instantly became styptic, cutting others farther open, swabbing them out, tying arteries, swiftly sewing up a gaping side slash, adjusting splints, doing a dozen things so rapidly that they seemed all one operation. Sparhawk, keyed up to a strange nervous excitement, set bones as directed, passed tools, found himself anticipating wants and performing with a celerity and dexterity inexplicable but exhilarating. Through it all the big Indian lay soundless, unflinching, betraying no feeling. When at length he was lifted and carried out he gave his rough surgeon a thin grin.

* * *

OTHER cases came in ceaseless succession, giving the operator and his amateur assistant hardly a moment of rest. There were other hands now to aid in minor work: several mature women, who, entering from the rear room when called, fetched fresh water, washed instruments, furnished new bandages, but neither touched the wounded men nor stood watching; they took themselves out of the way immediately after doing their duties and awaited further orders. Nor did the men who bore in their crippled comrades aid in handling them while on the operating table. Mute, they went forth when each burden was delivered, leaving all further labor to the sweating, persistent black and white. And, despite the arduous activity and the muscular and mental strain of the cheerless toil, Sparhawk felt tireless, tranquil, endowed with limitless strength, as unflagging as the energy of the indefatigable surgeon.

At length the gory work ended with the black's only refusal to attempt a cure. The last man brought in was senseless, and on his cranium was a noticeable depression. Remédios felt it, thumbed up an eyelid, looked for an instant into the lackluster pupil, stepped back, grunted a monosyllable. The bearers, unquestioning, lifted the limp form again and trudged out with it. That one curt grunt was obviously a sentence to death.

"No chance?" queried Sparhawk, breaking his long taciturnity.

"*Não*. He would be insane. Madmen are better dead."

With that ruthless judgment Remédios stepped doorward, looked all about, and drew a long breath of relief. Sparhawk, following, did likewise. The work was over.

The space where had lain the badly

hurt was empty. All men operated on had been afterward borne into the *malocas,* there to rest in their own hammocks. All men whose wounds could be attended by themselves or by their women had scorned to ask service from their overworked medicine-man. And all men still able to walk about and labor were doing so, moving slowly, perhaps limping, perhaps using only one arm, but taking care of the most urgent task: the collection of the dead. In this work, as in that of carrying the seriously wounded, no woman helped. The toil of war was the prerogative of warriors, and pride forbade aid by squaws while those warriors still could carry themselves and their comrades. As yet the lifeless shapes journeying to lie in shade all were light brown. The painted corpses thickly scattered about the clearing had, while living, wrought fearful destruction.

Viewing the devastation, observing the dogged efforts of the lamed survivors to carry on, Sparhawk felt a sudden diminution of the seemingly inexhaustible strength which had supported him thus far. Too, he became aware of a thick mess in his cheek, and spat it out: the dregs of the unknown combination tossed into his mouth by the bush doctor. Remédios glanced at him, turned aside and expectorated the same sort of residue. He breathed deeply again and said—

"*Vamos.*"

Disregarding all else, he walked straight to the creek. His steps were springless, his feet slightly slow in swinging forward. And Sparhawk, a pace behind, observed that his skin seemed oddly pale, lacking its former deep blackness, looking washed out. He himself felt even less energetic than Remédios looked. His boots grew in weight at every step. At the waterside he found it heavy labor to unlace them and pull them off.

Remédios, unhampered by footwear, plunged in; came up, swam a moment, returned to knee depth, and studiously washed every cut, scratch, lump on his body. Sparhawk, at last free of his impediments—consisting now of boots, nearly empty cartridge belt, wholly empty sheaths for revolver and *machete,* and shreds of clothing—dived in with little concern as to whether he ever arose. Revived by the cool water, he did arise, then followed the black's example of thorough laving. Remédios keenly surveyed him, ran hands over him, spent several seconds carefully inspecting his battered head, gave a short nod.

"You will do," he declared. "Go now and rest. I shall see you later."

"All right," wearily assented the Northerner. "If I can't help any more—"

His voice trailed off. On the swollen lips of Remédios dawned and died his characteristic crooked smile.

"You have helped more than you realize," he responded. "These people are fast at killing but slow and clumsy at curing. For such work is needed a quick brain. And for that—and for other things—you shall have your reward."

He turned abruptly away, to march back up the hillside.

"Oh, yes?" drawled Sparhawk. "And what's the reward?"

No answer came. The black figure receded, driving itself back to more work at inspection of living and dead. The white man looked down at his boots and belt, yawned and, leaving them behind, walked toward his prison. Arriving there, he stumbled through the doorway, staggered to the hammock, fell into the yielding cords and, with another yawn, was gone in sleep, utterly fagged.

Some time later the negro stepped silently through the unclosed entrance. He bore two bottles, a wicker box, a roll of clean bark cloth, a handful of thorn pins. Setting these down, he grasped the sleeper's upper shoulder, squeezed a lax hand, lightly struck a knee. Reactions came, but all were subconscious.

Thereupon Remedios uncorked a bottle, raised the recumbent head and held the vial beneath the nostrils. Sparhawk's breathing grew more stertorous. Then the administrator poured between the pale lips a slow, carefully measured drink from the same bottle. Automatically the Northerner swallowed. The other laid him back, smiled grimly and went to work on him.

Studiously examining every injury, he powdered and salved and dressed all hurts likely to develop infection. At the end he uncorked the second bottle and dampened certain bandages with a greenish fluid; inspected all his work, eyed the unconscious man again and, with extreme care, gave him one more measure of opiate. Thereafter he put his paraphernalia outside, took forth the heavy bar, shut the door, and set the bar in its outer hooks and sockets.

Locked in, surrounded by dimness which eventually became the darkness of night, deadened by the two potions, Sparhawk knew nothing of time. He did not hear the hiss of midnight rain, the animal racket of a new dawn, the varying sounds of another day. Completely senseless, he comprehended nothing at all for exactly thirty hours.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE REWARD

IF THE medicine-man's purposes in drugging his captive were only to hasten recuperation and to exclude from memory knowledge of everything outside, his sly dosages succeeded. But if he meant also to deceive the Northerner concerning the passage of time, he failed.

Lame, hungry, heavy eyed, somewhat ill tempered, Sparhawk sat up near sunset, scowling at the closed door, then glancing down at himself. At sight of his bandages he blinked, striving to recall when they had been applied; then, shaking his head to banish lingering sleepiness, he got up and walked to the door. Excepting dull twinges here and there, languor, and gnawing emptiness, he felt quite normal. When he found the door locked, however, he flew into sudden fury.

With bare fists and feet he assaulted that door, and with roaring voice he swore. Answer came promptly. From outside sounded slow thumps of something hard and ominous, then a slide of the heavy bar. The door swung inward. Beyond stood a bandaged but ready warrior with lowered spear and a boy with a covered cook pot.

While Sparhawk frowned at both, the boy set the pot inside the threshold and stepped back. The warrior waited a moment, then lightly touched the white chest with his spear point. Astounded, the American stared at him. The brown fellow was one of those who had repeatedly swum with him; and his expression now was not unfriendly. But the weapon pressed harder and harder between the white man's left ribs, pushing him back, mutely promising a deadly shove if he attempted antagonism. Perforce the unarmed captive gave ground. The spear withdrew, the door reclosed, the clay vessel waited. After a long moment of mingled astonishment and wrath the prisoner attacked the pot of food and ate ravenously.

Finishing, he arose full of new strength and determination. There was some mistake in this queer treatment, and he meant to learn forthwith the reason. But the door again was barred. Yells, kicks, thumps, brought no response. So at length, cursing the ingratitude of the savages whom he had helped to save, Sparhawk went back to bed.

Lying there in darkness, he puzzled over his confinement, absently rubbing his jaw. All at once the moving fingers halted; then, exploratory, interpretative, they felt along cheeks, chin, throat. Abruptly he arose, found flashlight and shaving mirror, stared at the phenomenal growth of stubble since his last shave. When he returned to his hammock he no longer supposed that he had slept only one afternoon.

"Doped!" he muttered. "But how? And when? And why?"

After a period of useless conjecture he gave it up. But, on arising the next morning, he made no effort to shave. The lacerations on his face, although somewhat cicatrized, were too numerous and sore to permit use of his razor; and he had a purpose in retaining the stubbly growth. When breakfast came, borne by the same wary boy, guarded by the same watchful warrior, he gave each of them a hard look, accepted the food without comment, ate in silence and smoked. Thereafter, with smoldering resentment, he awaited visitation and explanation by Remédios.

At length the bar slid back and the door reopened, and the chief stood in the portal. At sight of him the prisoner's frown deepened with mingled puzzlement and anger. For the first time the negro was clothed, wearing old, baggy, coarse shirt and trousers similar to those of rubber workers; and he bore his javelin, loosely held but pointed forward. Behind him was an Indian armed with a heavy club.

Unspeaking, the black regarded the white, who returned his gaze stonily. When he stepped inside his movements were stiff muscled, and it was quite apparent that his unwonted garments concealed many bandaged injuries. Beyond the threshold he paused again, eyeing anew the unkempt, hard mouthed Northerner. Then, with a short grunt at his bodyguard, he swung the door, closing out the clubman.

"*Excellente!*" he remarked.

"I am glad you think so," retorted the prisoner.

"*Si, excellente!* You rested well yesterday, I hope?"

"So well that my beard grew marvelously."

Sparhawk stroked his chin, mockingly looking the medicine-man straight in the eye. The inky lids narrowed. Then the dusky lips twisted in a wry smile, and he spoke calmly.

"So I see. Now let me see your hurts. After that we shall talk."

"It's about time we did."

To that the black made no reply. Setting his weapon against a wall, he drew from a rear pocket a small clay bottle. Scanning the bandages on the white skin, he found several stuck to the wounds beneath. On these he carefully poured yellowish liquid.

"It has been necessary to neglect you," he said. "There has been much to do."

The tone was coolly casual. But, as the glued cloths loosened their grip, the fixed resentment of the listener also softened. There must indeed have been much for the Man of Remedies to do; and his hollow eyes, sunken cheeks, stiff motions testified that he had not spared himself.

"Of course," assented the white, more companionably. But then his gaze went to the leaning spear and the shut door, and his mouth again grew thin.

Remédios spoke no more until all bandages were off and all injuries inspected. Pushing the discarded rags aside with a foot, he then repeated—

"*Excellente!*"

SPARHAWK said nothing. Again he looked the negro in the eye. The chief met the gaze, glanced doorward, looked up at the ventilation holes as if gaging their power of transmitting sound to attentive ears outside. In a slightly lowered tone he went on:

"In all ways you are responding well to the treatment given you. Your body heals with admirable speed. Your mind operates as it should, leading you to batter the door and yell, to look threateningly at those you see, to neglect your appearance. In short, to act as usual in cases of madness."

"Huh?" ejaculated Sparhawk.

"*Si.* You are quite crazed again, senhor. The blows on your head in the recent fight have manifestly ruined your reason. You will remain insane."

Dumbfounded, the American gaped. Slowly a red flush rose on his battered face and anger grew again under his drawn brows. Remédios chuckled.

"Swear if you like, senhor. Curse me loudly—the more loudly the better. But do not assault me, or I must call the guard. I am not in good fighting condition at present. There is some infection—"

He paused, a hand involuntarily going to his left leg.

"But forget that," he swiftly added. "The point is that you are insane. Continue so, and you may soon see the Rio Amazon again. Otherwise you never will."

Again Sparhawk stared, mute. Harsh words on his tongue stopped short. A silence ensued. At length he said—

"I don't understand."

"Not yet—but you will. Let us sit. Standing grows tiresome."

The white man sat in his hammock. The black sank beside him, breathing quick relief. Evidently he was, as he had said, not in good condition; for never before had he invited himself to rest while visiting his prisoner. But he said nothing further about himself. Instead he plunged at matters more pertinent to the outlander.

"You came here to learn the end of one LeBaron," he concisely reminded. "That matter was not your business. It still is not your business. The man LeBaron is dead. Just what brought about his end is the business of nobody. *Pois bem,* that is all of that.

"You have had your excursion out of your own world into another. Now your only real concern is to return to your world and live your life there. The life here is not for you. But your only chance to renew that other life of yours is to forget this one. We people of the bush have our reasons to keep our own lives to ourselves."

He paused, studying the listener. Sparhawk nodded.

"Perfectly comprehensible," he agreed. "Go on. I am interested."

"*Bom.* I myself, senhor, have not always lived here. I have known a few white men who could be completely trusted; who, if they gave a promise, would keep it. But these people of mine have never known such white men. So they will not believe there is one such. They may learn to like a white man, to trust him as far as they can see him, but no farther. It is born in them to believe no promises."

Again Sparhawk nodded, remembering what he had heard about the atrocities perpetrated on the aborigines of this region by white or mongrel fortune seekers.

"To me," immediately resumed the other, "your own word, senhor, to tell nothing which should not be told would be enough. I have observed you for some time. I am satisfied that whatever promise you might give would be kept."

"And what sort of promise do you want?"

"That you will tell nobody that you ever saw or heard of me."

"Oh—" and Sparhawk smiled. "That's quite comprehensible, too. And you have my promise, Homem. I've seen nobody but Indians here."

"*Bom.* I accept that. But these Indians, as I have said, believe no promises. Also they—"

"Wait a minute. You're their chief, aren't you?"

The negro's rapid talk halted. The inference of the question was plain: that, as chief, he had but to declare the captive free. Long seconds dragged past before his reply came; and then it was not a direct answer.

"I am not an Indian."

The Northerner considered that statement—a quasi confession that the power of the black ruler was limited. While he still was considering it, the dusky Brazilian resumed his interrupted sentence.

"Also, as I was saying, these Indians like you. Little by little you have made yourself better liked. When you over-came Macedo with your bare hands you earned the respect of the fighting men. When you fought the Kukapotins and then worked over our hurt ones, you became tremendously popular. But popularity has penalties. Those who like you do not wish to lose you. So they will oppose your going."

He paused again, letting the words sink in. Then he continued:

"But nobody likes a lunatic. Especially since the mad Macedo brought the Kukapotins here. That man Macedo, I will tell you, was picked up in the forest just as you were. He was crazed by the jungle, as you were. He lived here for some time, well treated; seemed to become sane, grew crazy again, ran off. And at the end he—"

"Hold on," again interrupted Sparhawk. "It's none of my business—but is that white boy Macedo's son, as he claimed?"

"*Não!*" The vigorous denial snapped. "That was a foul lie. Macedo was father of nothing but evil. And at the end, as I was saying, he led those Kukapotin beasts here to destroy us who had been kind to him. And so, senhor, no more madmen are wanted here. *Não, por Deus!*

"So you are mad. Remain so, and you may go forth as soon as men are able to convey you. Nobody here yet wishes to kill you. Every one hopes you may recover from your brain injury and stay among us all your life. If you can not recover you must be disposed of. While every one remembers your fight for us you may be carried down the river and released there, to find your way farther if you can. I will see to it that you are landed where you can go on. Otherwise—but there is no otherwise. You are mad. In such matters I am the final judge. You go to the Amazon or to hell. Take your choice!"

His voice hardened. He stood up, winced from a leg pain, then froze. The two pairs of eyes locked. Then the Northerner also arose, smiling.

"There's not much choice," said he. "I'd still like to know what killed LeBaron, and whether his records still exist. And I've grown to like this place and its folks—especially you, Homem. But you're quite right. This is not my world, and what happens here is not my business. So I'm crazy, and my memory is a complete blank."

"*Bom!*" Remédios seized his javelin and stepped to the door. There he prompted—

"Rave, madman, rave!"

Sparhawk bellowed in response. As the door swung open he advanced, eyes glaring, hands hooked. Remédios backed out, spear raised. The Indian outside, face suddenly grim, swung up his club and stepped between his medicine-man and the maniac. Snarling, the lunatic retreated. Then the door shut, the bar clattered, and the prisoner was once more locked in his jail.

## CHAPTER XIII

### OUTWARD BOUND

DOWN a shadowed river plowed a long dark canoe, steadily driven by a dozen powerful brown paddlers. Amidships hunched two men who did no work; one black, one white.

The black man sat behind the white one, attitude vigilant, javelin lying ready at his right hand. The alien lolled in apparent apathy, bearded chin propped on motionless hands, elbows on knees, eyes ahead, tongue silent. The savages, plying their blades, watching water and shore, gave no attention to their passengers. So none of them perceived that, paradoxically, the gaze of the madman was sanely alert while that of his watcher was somberly blank; that the first looked forward to things not yet visible, while the second anticipated nothing beyond the eternal jungle.

White, black, brown, all were newly scarred from head to foot. Of the tall savages, less than half were those who had formed the gang of the negroid commander when he found the starved wanderer under the *massaranduba* tree. The others of that original crew were dead, with many of their fellow tribesmen. Their restless leader, formerly so swift and sure of foot and hand, now sat with one leg straightened before him, and made no movements not essential. He still wore the ugly but useful garments looted, perhaps, from some slain spy of a downriver rubber company, stored for possible need, and now needed to cover himself from attacks of bloodthirsty insects, if not from the eyes of men. The dugout now had reentered the region where *piums, motucas,* and other ravenous flies swarmed by millions.

The white man also was clothed, but unarmed. His boots, though dirty, still were little worn. His hat, though shapeless, was whole. His shirt and breeches, however, were mere rags, interspersed by patches of bark cloth. If those patches were held in place by many laborious stitches made by some savage maiden who had liked him, only the perceptive eyes of another woman would discern that labor. The white man himself had never thought about that, and never would. His clothes would hold together until he could obtain others. That was enough.

Propelled by the ceaseless swing of the broad paddles, aided by the current, unhindered by any opposition animate or inanimate, the shell swam fast. Yesterday it had swung from one stream into another, from that into still another, and so on, with bewildering changes of direction but with unerring certainty of the paddlers. Today, out on the main river, it sped mile after mile, league after league, hour after hour, with never a halt.

At last, however, the rhythm of the brown backs slowed. All at once they stopped. Skilfully guided by the steersman, the boat swerved shoreward, nestled alongside the bank and was still.

Remedios grunted. Two men arose, armed themselves with bows and arrows, scrambled up the bank, were gone. All others waited. In the quiet, rumbled a low roar downstream. The madman, head down, hands across face, grinned against a masking palm. The roar was that of the rapids above Cachoeira, highest rubber camp on the Rio Ricapuyo. He knew this spot. It was the place whence he had launched himself on the last leg of his exploratory journey.

Some time passed. With increasing difficulty the white man maintained his outward lethargy. Then the absent scouts reappeared. Briefly they muttered something. Their chief grunted, arose and got ashore, spear in hand.

"*Vamos!*" he prompted, prodding the captive lightly with his point.

The quiescent maniac, supposedly under the influence of some sedative drug administered by the medicine-man, obediently stepped aground. The Indians aboard followed him, all bearing weapons. With the two scouts ahead and the other warriors behind, the white and the black began marching along a narrow riverside path. The black walked with visible difficulty, but with unflagging resolution. As the file moved southward he quietly said:

"Luck is with you. The men report a launch at the landing. You will not have to wait."

The white, plodding stolidly, made no reply.

For a mile or more the column swung through the shadows, meeting no man or beast. At their left brawled the rapids, masked from view by dense brush, but drowning all sound except their own. At length the roar diminished and the density ahead thinned, light shining through interstices among tree trunks, low leaves, and vines. Beyond must be a clearing.

The negro grunted again. The moving chain stopped. The advance guard turned, looked into the face of the white, stepped aside. He moved on for a few paces, still followed by the black; then paused, faced about, and looked his last at the brown men among whom he had recently lived.

Hard, cold, grim, they returned his gaze without change of expression. Yet somehow their concentrated regard brought to him a feeling of wistful regret at parting. Savages, killers, cannibals they might be, but they were men—clean men, with clean hearts deep inside their tough bodies. They now liked and respected him as a fellow fighter and, but for his insanity, would never . . .

"*Vamos!*" repeated the Man of Remedies, who had watched his eyes. The spear point again lifted suggestively. And, after a quick look at him, the docile maniac once more faced forward and trudged on. Again his keeper followed. The brown men remained behind.

THE path angled abruptly aside, evading an outcrop of rock, vanishing from the view of all the waiting warriors. Beyond that masking boulder the pair halted again. The chief discarded his spear, leaning it against the stone. And from his back he unslung a burden which, unnoticed by Sparhawk, he had taken on himself somewhere along the way. It was the American's knapsack.

"Your gun and belt are at the top," Remédios rapidly said. "You had best put them on. At the bottom are certain supplies which you should reserve. I advise you to keep them hidden. And so *adeus!* Farewell!"

He turned away, leaving the pack on the ground; grasped his javelin, started back beyond the boulder. Then he stopped short. Strong hands had clamped on his shoulders.

"Not so fast!" disputed the white. "You're not going like that!"

The black lurched forward, wrenched free from the restraining clutch, then turned with mouth set. A tanned white hand waited, palm open. Remédios looked down at it, suddenly dropped his spear, grabbed the extended hand with a fierce grip. As suddenly he flung it away, snatched up the weapon, stood on guard.

"Get out!" he rasped. "Quickly!"

His spear darted forward, giving the Northerner a nasty jab in the ribs. Then he backed away, hobbled around the boulder, and was gone.

Angered by the thrust, the white man stood a moment with fists closed; then, relaxing, he strode forward. There were more things he wished to say, and they were not angry. But beyond the rock he found only empty wilderness. Black man, brown men, all had vanished into the dim green shadows.

Slowly he walked back to his pack-sack, drew from it the gun belt, inspected the revolver. It was fully loaded. After buckling it on he shouldered the bag, which proved heavy. The reserve supplies evidently were solidly concentrated.

"No danger of my starving again, with that to fall back on," he muttered. "Homem, you certainly think of everything."

With that he trudged forward. A few yards farther on he emerged into the broad clearing of Cachoeira.

Men were working there; working at the wide headquarters building, at the storage sheds, at the landing where lay the stubby launch; all working to finish loading the ugly vessel with rubber. Smoke floated from her dingy stack, and the stocky brown *caboclos* moved busily at their carrying and stowing. Suddenly, however, as if an inaudible message had flashed among them, all ceased motion to stare at the advancing apparition: the wordless ghost of the *Americano,* who, deserted on an obscure *igarapé,* must have perished weeks ago, but now stalked forth from the depths of the green hell.

Unspeaking, the specter walked steadily toward the launch, ignoring all beholders. He had covered half the distance when the paralysis fettering the watchers broke. At the landing three *caboclos* jumped for the edge and dropped from sight, perhaps into the river, perhaps into a canoe. Back toward the storage sheds others ran to concealment. In the open several more threw off burdens and, though holding their ground, poised ready to flee. The ghost's mouth thinned. He was almost sure that the trio jumping riverward had been members of his faithless crew.

Now came a shout from the headquarters:

"*Senhor! Para!* Wait!"

Glancing aside, the Northerner saw a short, swarthy, bulky Brazilian running toward him, hatless, coatless, apparently weaponless, but with right hand beside a bulging trousers pocket. Sparhawk's right hand rose in a casual wave of greeting, sank again beside his gun. The Brazilian was the local superintendent, quickest thinker in the settlement. Walking on, the returning dead man watched him narrowly.

The friendly wave of the hand took swift effect on the company official. His gun arm swung more freely, and a grin widened his sweaty visage. At the wharf he overtook the steady plodder and threw both arms around him in effusive embrace.

"Senhor Sparrahk! *Graças a Deus,* you live! *Valhame,* we have mourned you as dead! Ever since your canoe came floating back, splintered by the rapids, we have thought you lost!"

"I was," laconically answered Sparhawk, loosing the other's over affectionate arms.

"*Como?* But yes, of course! With all your *caboclos* dead you must have wandered. Tell me, senhor, what happened to you all?"

A CAUSTIC retort rose to the American's tongue; but he swallowed it. Instead he replied indifferently:

"The men disappeared by night. What happened to them afterward I don't know. Perhaps savages—"

"*Como?* Do you tell me, senhor, that the men I gave you deserted you?"

"Exactly."

"*Diabo!* I can hardly believe it. The cowardly curs! If ever they come back they will suffer, I promise you."

His eyes strayed toward the wharf, found none of the missing crew, darted again to meet the outlander's uncommunicative gaze.

"Savages," repeated Sparhawk, "probably got them, as they got me. And now, with thanks for all you did for me, I'll go aboard. *Adeus!*"

He turned toward the launch. But the other, by a quick step, blocked him. On the wharf the crowd had thickened; and on the boat the captain, a hook nosed, slit mouthed mongrel, stood with hand resting idly near the hilt of a belt knife.

"You must not rush away, *amigo!*" objected the superintendent. "You are fatigued. Come, dine with us at headquarters, refresh yourself, tell us the story. We can not allow so illustrious a visitor to depart without partaking of such hospitality as we can—"

"Do I understand that you refuse to let me get aboard?" snapped Sparhawk.

The superintendent looked down, found the other's hand just over his revolver, swiftly surveyed the few cartridges in the belt loops; few indeed, but evidence that the gun was not empty. He looked up again, gaging the bleak Northern eyes; then stepped back.

"But no, no; certainly not, senhor. You misunderstand—"

"Excuse me. I have been among savages so long that I forget myself." Sparhawk smiled with his lips, but his eyes and hand remained unchanged. "The story is that I was caught by some Indians, but finally escaped after some fighting."

His left hand touched his scarred face. The company official shrewdly scanned the marks under the ragged beard.

"Ah, *si.* Who were those savages, *amigo?*"

"I don't know. And I don't care. They are all alike: dirty beasts who ought to be killed. And if I were not so sick of this whole river that I never want to see it again I'd come back with a gang and do plenty of killing!"

His gun hand closed; and his hard tone, hard face, hard eyes left no doubt of the sincerity of his vengeful words. The superintendent and the captain glanced at each other, subtly relaxing. Neither of them realized that those whom the foreigner would enjoy killing comprised cannibal Kukapotins, treacherous *caboclos,* and perhaps a certain company official and a launch commander.

"If you should wish to return, senhor, we might—ah—assist you in hunting those beasts," hinted the fat slave driver.

"No. I'm through. I've found nothing but misery here, and I want to forget it all quickly."

The Northerner looked toward the boat. The superintendent laid his right hand on his uncovered head, which the sun was assailing with full force.

"Ah—quite natural, certainly," he purred. "So your journey here is a failure? You have learned nothing about that one—ah—Baron was the name?"

"LeBaron. He's dead. I heard that much, but no more. And I'll let him stay dead."

"*Si, si.* With a dead man one can hardly do otherwise. *Pois bem, senhor,* if you must go so soon, it is not hospitable to delay you. You have suffered much here, that is plain. So go with God! And I trust that your unpleasant memories of the Ricapuyo will be brightened by the recollection that here at Cachoeira you were treated as a gentleman should be."

"No doubt of that. *Adeus!*"

"*Adeus, senhor! Capitão!* Do not wait for more cargo! Go at once, and convey the gentleman with all speed and comfort! *Presto!*"

The captain turned to his job. The *caboclos* cluttering the wharf stood aside. The American strode aboard. Ropes were cast off; the launch drifted back, sputtered around, plowed heavily but powerfully downstream. The superintendent, on the landing, gesticulated amiable farewell. The departing adventurer waved ironic reply.

"I'd rather like to blow your brains out, Mister Super," he softly murmured. "But what's the use? And if you want to go hunting the Surucairis, hop to it! What they'll do to you will be plenty."

His gaze ranged on up the river, unreasonably seeking some last sight of the fearless savages who had escorted him to the very threshold of hated enemies armed with guns. Instead he saw only the tumbling white water where ended the long, twisting rapid. Far beyond that roaring barrier, drawing farther away with every surge at their paddles, the wild men were gone from his sight forever.

So he turned forward, now eyeing the fish mouthed commander. That ill favored individual met his probing scrutiny with imperturbable composure.

"You heard my orders, senhor," he remarked. "I always obey orders."

And, whatever his faults, he spoke truth. The order to convey his passenger with such speed and comfort as the dirty tub could muster was literally obeyed.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ANTON LEBARON'S RECORDS

NOT for several days did Sparhawk reach into the bottom of his bag. Indeed, he seldom even glanced into it, and then only to assure himself that no sly hands had been in it. Since shaving was not only unnecessary but inconvenient while aboard, he let his beard continue to grow. And since the food, though crude, was good enough, he had no reason to dig out the reserve rations packed by the black chief. Therefore he let all contents lie undisturbed.

At last the malodorous vessel swung out of the tawny Amazon into the black waters of the Rio Negro, and a few miles ahead waited Manáos, metropolis of midriver Brazil. Sparhawk, lounging aft, sat up sharply and leaned far out, suddenly smitten by intense hunger for the sight of civilization. All the way down the great river he had looked forward to it, but dreamily, as if it were some storied town never to be really reached. Now the nearness of streets, parks, ornate buildings, electric cars, business establishments, other creations of modern life aroused him from fanciful lethargy and snapped him back into his own world.

After a few minutes of joyous realization he drew back, took off his gun belt, rolled it up, shoved it into the top of his bag, and tried to refasten the flap. The strap now proved too short. Only by precise folding and stowing of the bulky belt would he be able to rebuckle the sack. And he was in no mood for finicky readjustments.

Impatiently he pulled forth the upper contents, burrowing for the food supply, which, now totally unnecessary, might as well be dropped overboard. All at once he paused, staring at his notebook. It looked thin. With sudden misgiving he jerked it open.

"Damnation!" he ejaculated.

The book was blank.

Only empty pages met his gaze. Every notation, every sketch he had made while captive of the savages was gone. Scowling down at the vacant sheets, he saw again the cynical smile quirking the dusky lips of Homem dos Remédios as he viewed the useless chroniclings. The negro had never intended to let them go forth; and, even while bringing the writer out to freedom, had quietly abstracted them.

Sparhawk growled wrathfully, then dug again for the chief's parting gift. That would certainly go overboard now, as far as he could hurl it. His fingers closed on a hard package. Yanking it forth, he swung up his arm for a fierce throw.

But then he halted the swing, let his hand sink, peered at what he held. Oblong, wrapped in jaguar hide, tied with thongs, it was, for its size, remarkably weighty. He loosed the wrapping and found a box. Somewhat larger than a cigar box, it was of about the same shape, made of thin but tough wood, with a lid unhinged but held firmly by cords of palm fiber. Breaking the bindings, he lifted the lid, looked inside, took out the contents. His eyes widened.

The supplies which Remédios had bidden him keep concealed were not food. They were papers. Folded exactly, fitting the container snugly, were many sheets of writing. Stowed with equal skill and compactness had been many tiny but sharp photographs, tied in packets. Papers, old but carefully kept, stained by jungle damp but still serviceable . . .

The amazed beholder opened a few sheets of writing, finding them crammed with small but clearly legible characters which he swiftly read. He glanced at the bunches of photographs, seeing that the topmost sheets depicted Indian life, while the backs of the lowest bore laconic words of identification. Dazed, he muttered—

"LeBaron's records!"

For several minutes he stared blankly at nothing. Then, snapping awake, he eyed the hard mouthed captain and the villainous crew. All were looking ahead to the end of their journey, forgetful of the traveler aft, unaware of the existence of papers which a certain rubber company might earnestly wish suppressed. Forthwith that traveler crowded those papers down into his bag, pulled his revolver from its holster, shoved it inside his waistband, dropped the belt and the box overside; then he rammed his other belongings into the packsack and strapped it tight. The canvas, previously overstrained, now yielded readily to pressure and pull.

As the boat clanked onward he sat with eyes vacant, mind far behind the foaming wake. Good old Homem! No wonder he had torn the amateurish notes from the book of Sparhawk, when he knew that beneath it rested the expert observations and exact pictures of LeBaron! But where had the negro got those records? Why had he gone to get them? How did he know what they said? He could not read. Even if he could, he certainly would be unable to translate into his native language the explorer's writings, which were in English. So how could he know whether LeBaron had spoken well or ill of him and his adopted people? To be sure, LeBaron had been respected and trusted, while Sparhawk was a self-confessed novice, untrained for judicious observation and understanding of primitive folk. But still . . .

The more he wondered, the deeper he floundered in a morass of bewilderment. Suddenly he found himself beside the floating dock of Manáos and bruskly requested to get off. Shouldering his bag, he complied, pausing long enough to say—

*"Graças, Capitão!"*

"Thank me for nothing," indifferently replied the captain. "I had my orders."

WITH that the Brazilian turned to his job of unloading. The American strode away toward the hotel where he could clean up, unpack a trunk, don good clothes and delve into the records of LeBaron. He walked fast, filled with pleasant anticipation and consciousness of success. Somehow or other he had muddled through to achievement. Although LeBaron's fate still was unknown, his work was here, riding in a dingy bag, on its way to—

"Hullo, Yank!"

Sparhawk stopped, narrowly regarding a black man, a tall, lank, sharp featured black man in baggy clothes, worn, stained, but better than his own. Dreaming, looking straight ahead, he had almost crossed the Praça, the riverside park of Manáos. Now this fellow had hailed him from a seat in the shade of a broad palm.

Battered hat over one eye, cigaret burning between inky fingers, long legs stretched wide, the lounger remained seated, grinning indolently up at the white. Conversationally he continued:

"Seems damn good to see a real Yank face again. And you look like you'd been somewheres, buddy. How'd you find tricks?"

Sparhawk regarded him even more narrowly. The stranger's color was negroid, but his face and voice were not. Guardedly the white replied—

"Plenty tough."

"Oh, yeah? Want a couple o' milreis to help you out?"

The black right hand slid into a pocket and drew forth a fat roll of Brazilian paper money. Sparhawk glanced at it, eyed the questioner anew, shook his head. The loafer was no bum. Therefore he was all the more a puzzle.

"Nope? Awright." The roll vanished. "Thought you might be flat. I been that way lots o' times, and I hate like hell to see another white man go shy on eats."

He drew again at his cigaret, looked away, tacitly dismissing the battered Northerner whom he had accosted. The latter reddened.

"Another *white* man?" he challenged.

"You heard me the first time. Now go on— Oh, wait a minute. I sort of forgot. I'm still black. And you're fussy about colors, hey? You ain't been here long, then. There's many a clean heart under a dirty hide, as the feller says. And take a peek at this, buddy!"

A black hand pulled open the faded blue shirt, disclosing a bony chest. All the skin thus revealed was white.

While Sparhawk stared, the black white man chuckled and went on:

"*Genipapa,* that's all. You no savvy *genipapa?*"

Speechless, the other again shook his head.

"It's a fruit," enlightened the lounger. "You rub the pulp over your face and hands, and it helps a lot to keep off the bugs. Or if you've got so tough you don't mind bites, you smear it on a few days before you hit a town, and it takes off your old skin, all full of black *pium* spots, and makes you look decent. It takes six days to work, but then it peels off and fetches all the dirty skin with it, and the next day you're the answer to a maiden's prayer. Meanwhiles you can't wash it off or sweat it off or do anything else about it. It's there, and you're black as the hinges of hell, and that's that. I got in here one day early this trip—the river's running fast now—so I got to wait till tomorrow before I peel. That's what I'm waiting for. I been off in the woods eight months, and — Hey! What's the matter? Sick?"

The lanky form started up, then sank back. Once more the bearded, ragged stranger had shaken his head; and now he resumed his course to the hotel. He had suddenly turned pale; he staggered a little as he started on. But what ailed him was, of course, his own business. So the blackened lounger shrugged, lazily smoked again, and forgot him.

Mechanically Sparhawk reached the hostelry, got his room, went to it. Alone inside, he dropped into a chair and vacantly regarded his bag.

"Six days," he mumbled. "Keeps off bugs. Can't wash it away. Peels in six days. Old black Homem disappeared every six days. That's it. He's no nigger. He's white! He's LeBaron!"

His mind coursed fast along a trail hitherto unseen, now suddenly plain.

Traveling down into the bug infested lower reaches of the Ricapuyo, the white chief, long used to going virtually unclothed, but still vulnerable to insect attacks, must have defensively dyed himself with the *genipapa*. Returning with his captive, he had continued the use of the dye, now using it as a disguise while, day by day, he weighed the stranger in the balance. His disappearance every sixth day was not to go forth on trips, but to hide in his house while he peeled. His absence on the seventh was necessary to rest his new, tender skin, then repaint it. Successive peelings of that sort must be rather bad for a man. Perhaps that was why he had been so ugly at times. Certainly it was why he had so violently repelled the captive on that one moonlit night when he caught the Northerner snooping at his door. The white shape which the latter had momentarily glimpsed inside had been no outsider, not even the pale Indian woman; it had been the chief himself, in his natural color.

* * *

PROOFS were plenty, if the thinker needed such. There was the grayish paleness of the inky skin on the day of the Kukapotin battle—which, he now remembered, was a fifth day. The dye, although still tenacious, was thin; the skin beneath it was almost ready to begin shedding and, moreover, blanched by fatigue and loss of blood. That, too, was the reason for drugging and confining Sparhawk on the following day; the medicine man must carry on his curative work, skin or no skin, and would not let the Northerner discover his disguise. Another corroboration was the astounded halt of crazy Macedo in mid-charge, his blank stare at the chief whom he knew to be white but who had miraculously turned black. That incident, brief and half noticed at the moment, now stood forth clearly in memory, as did many another evidence previously incomprehensible, now clear. Most important proof of all was the mysterious child, almost white, who, with his fair mother, slept in the chief's house. Sturdily independent, early aware of his superior status, he was the chief's own son. And she, the queenly woman, was the handsome Huitaina whom LeBaron was known to have —

"Huitaina?" ejaculated Sparhawk. "Huitaina? Living among Surucairis? How come?"

His gaze sharpened. Lunging forward, he jerked open his packsack, grasped packets of pictures, pulled them forth, broke cords. Swiftly he scanned many photographs of Indians and the terse inscriptions on the backs. At length he sat back with a sickly smile.

"Of all the blind, blundering babes in the woods, I'm the dumbest," he confessed. "LeBaron, you cynical cuss, you kidded me to a fare-ye-well! You're no cannibal, and neither are your people. They're the Huitainas! Hard as nails, tough as tripe, killers of white men, but the best tribe in the Ricapuyo country! Clean, decent, square shooters! And I thought I was an explorer! Oh, hell!"

He laughed jeeringly at himself, forgetting that he had been in as real danger of death among the hard Huitainas as he might have been among the man-eating Surucairis, and unaware that the Huitainas who found him under the *massaranduba* tree would have mercilessly left him to die there. That they really were Huitainas there could be no doubt. The photographs proved it beyond question, every picture showing a tall, symmetrical man or shapely woman such as he had seen was labeled "Huitaina". There were camera shots also of Surucairis, of Kukapotins, of other savages whose written tribe names were new to him; and all those others were much inferior, in both physique and feature, to the wild folk with whom he had lived. The Surucairis were a scrawny lot, skinny limbed, beady eyed, brutal mouthed, manifestly of very low intelligence; jungle animals in human form. The other strange tribes were little better, or even worse.

"But why?" demanded Sparhawk, suddenly sobering. "Why should a man with LeBaron's brain sink himself forever in here? There's the woman and the boy—but that needn't stop him. And he was damned unhappy. Why didn't he break loose and—"

He stopped short, listening. Some one had knocked at his door. As he waited, the sound came again; the rap of knuckles, soft, somewhat apologetic, disturbing but discreet.

"*Que é?*" he snapped. "What is it?"

"*Perdão, senhor!*" responded the voice of a, hotel boy. "A steamship from up the river has been sighted and will be here very soon, and there is not much freight to load, and if you wish to journey to the sea on her—"

"*Bom!*" broke in the Northerner, springing up. "Good! Come back in ten minutes!"

"*Positivo, senhor!*"

Barely audible, feet went away. The American dived for his bag, yanked forth his shaving tools, then strode to the wardrobe trunk which he had left here on starting upriver. On the floor lay the records of LeBaron, scattered, temporarily forgotten. Their turn would come. Meanwhile the amateur adventurer to whom they had been entrusted was going away.

## CHAPTER XV

### SPARHAWK'S LAST QUESTION

A STEAMSHIP was about to go out. Swarthy passengers lined her shoreward rails, grinning, gesticulating, bearing huge bouquets, acting as if about to depart for Cathay, or other places they had never heard of, instead of some minor port a few leagues down the Amazon. Above them, on the topmost deck, a foreigner smoked a pipe and gazed languidly at the motley throng on the wharf. Clean shaven, immaculately dressed, coolly aloof, he regarded the scene with the bored air of a far traveler who had witnessed many more crowded sailings.

Suddenly his brown eyes fixed, narrowed, sharpened. Back on the landing stood a lank, phlegmatic native, thumbs under belt, jaws slowly moving. He was the captain of the launch which very recently had brought both rubber and an unkempt *Americano* down the Amazon from the half known Rio Ricapuyo. And he was chewing . . .

The foreigner vanished from the upper deck. The dock laborers, about to haul the gangway, stopped in involuntary obedience to a curt order—

"Hold it!"

And the well dressed outlander with

the pipe swung past them, elbowed his way through the jam, strode straight to the launch commander.

*"Adeus, Capitão!"* he greeted. "I go away. Luck to you!"

The slit eyed native scanned him from head to foot, looked again at his scarred face, then grinned.

"Ah, *si*," he drawled. "I did not recognize you, senhor. You are much cleaner than you were. Well, good luck to you also."

"Thanks. Before I go I wish to ask a question. What are you chewing? Tobacco?"

*"Não.* But may I ask—what is that to you?"

Sparhawk smiled.

"Oh, not much. But while I was up the Ricapuyo I saw other men chewing. I chewed a little myself. It was not tobacco. It made me feel very strong. I don't know just what it was. Perhaps you could tell me."

The narrow eyes glinted quizzically. Then the slit of a mouth opened and dumped a wet wad into a dirty hand.

"Was it like this, senhor?"

Sparhawk looked at a grayish brown mixture.

"*Si.* The same."

"Coca," said the chewer.

"Coca?"

"*Si.* Leaves of the coca plant, roasted, broken up, mixed with wood ash. It kills hunger and fatigue, gives strength and calmness. A powerful servant—but a merciless master. I use it only when tired, as I am now, after unloading cargo. If once it becomes a fixed habit there is no escape—"

*Toooooot!*

The vessel's steam whistle blew angrily at the foreigner delaying departure. With a short nod the American turned and reembarked. The gangway was withdrawn. The ship floated free, vibrated, swung southeastward.

Alone again on the topside, Sparhawk gazed somberly across the inky Negro at the dark green jungle mass to the west. Now, at last, he thoroughly understood the fate of Anton LeBaron; a fate which Homem dos Remédios had thought he never would know, and which, but for the chance encounter with a blackened jungle rover and the random glance at a chewer, would have remained unguessed.

LeBaron, explorer, scholar, writer, member of learned societies in America and Europe, was dead forever to his world. Dead—and in hell. The green hell of the Amazon, and the gloomy hell of slavery.

Slavery to jungle savages whom he commanded, yet who held him captive. Slavery to the serpentine clutch of the jungle, which, grown too strong to throw off, now gripped him in unbreakable coils. Slavery, above all, to the merciless hold of a drug: coca, the primitive form of cocaine.

Skilled explorer that he was, LeBaron had known how to ingratiate himself with savages; and the best way, as Sparhawk knew from extensive reading, was to cure the sicknesses of such folk. By this ability alone a white man might travel among the fiercest tribes and pursue his real purpose. Student that he was, LeBaron had learned all he could about local remedies, their derivations, preparations and uses. Resolute investigator that he was, flinching from nothing, enduring everything, subordinating himself and all others to the consummation of his mission, he had not hesitated to make use of whatever would carry him on.

He had stayed too long. The people and things he had used as servants had combined to become his masters. The jungle he had come to explore, the Indians he had chosen as aides, the woman he had taken to himself, the drug he had relied upon for steady strength, all had refused to let him go; and all of them together could not be overcome by any lone man. So that lone man had become Homem dos Remédios, the man of remedies, ruler of a tiny community by virtue of superior knowledge, yet a thrall, nevermore to go forth.

TO GO forth, even if he could manage it, meant only to return to his own Northern world as a drug addict, misunderstood and despised by cold brained scientists who previously had honored him. The unconquerable craving for cocaine would soon betray him. Better, far better, would be mysterious disappearance, conjectural death, silent resignation to his fate; a fate perhaps made bearable by the woman who mothered his child and who was primitively loyal and obedient to his every wish. She never could be his mental equal but, by instinctive responses to his moods, she might help much to dull the keen edge of recurrent remorse. Still more pacifying would be the habitual use of the coca.

Thus he had died from the knowledge of white men. But then had come from afar an adventurer who, though a rash novice, typified his own dead self: fearless, tenacious, obsessed by the quaint idea that exploration of obscure places was worth more than mere moneymaking. And the coming of that fellow spirit had reawakened dormant yearnings. Although long suspicious that the self-confessed business scout was actuated by some commercial scheme, that some Northern publisher had commissioned the traveler to dig up the truth and thereby provide the foundation of a sensational book, he had saved the newcomer, rebuilt him, and striven to reconstruct himself, hoping at last to go forth with this man of his own blood to new life.

And in that final struggle to come back, LeBaron had gone through the uttermost depths of his private hell. Sparhawk knew that now. He recalled that whenever Homem dos Remédios had shown hard restraint, temperamental ugliness, or satanic enjoyment of the prisoner's expectation of death and devourment, he had not been chewing; that when, on the contrary, he had been genially companionable and entirely at ease, a cud of the soothing herb had been in the blackened cheek.

He remembered, too, the lonely, dour figure sitting at his door in the late silence, the long, wordless look, the half menacing withdrawal; and, still more vividly, the tense final handshake at Cachoeira, followed by harsh, almost violent dismissal. These and other betrayals of mental travail all told the same tale now: a tale of repeated nerve wracking fights to master an indomitable habit, of repeated defeats, of consequent self-despisal and depression, of agonized conviction that he could never again be a white man among white men.

Had he been able to break the grip of the drug, he could have managed somehow to snap his other chains and escape with his fellow American. True, he might later have come back, irresistibly drawn by memories of his woman and boy and by the haunting lure of his jungle. But at least he would have faced his own world as a conqueror and returned content.

Failing, always failing, knowing at times that despite himself he must fail, he had once tried in sheer desperation to keep one white man with him as comrade. That, the other white man now realized, had been the real reason for the surprising proffer of a new house, a shapely girl, whatever other comforts were available; the reason, too, why both girls and warriors had become, in their dumb way, more openly friendly. Upon their slow, suspicious minds the chief had imposed the idea that this new white man, who conquered armed prowlers by sheer bodily strength, was well worth taking into the tribe; and, convinced, they had made inaudible but visible overtures. Thereafter, day by day, their ruler had tested anew the determination of the unanimously desired outlander.

Had he persisted, he might have won; the Northerner was slowly slipping under the spell of Amazonian lassitude, and would have slipped much faster if his food had been slyly drugged. But, smitten by revulsion against dragging another man of his own world into his own depths, he then had determined to send that man out and, with him, the records of the lost LeBaron. And so he had done; and, so doing, made his final sacrifice and sank into eternal oblivion.

The scarred ex-captive on the top deck drew a long breath and walked farther aft. The steamer had swung into the Amazon and was speeding eastward. The black water of the Negro was gone astern. So was the blackness of another negro—far, far astern. Blackness of body which now must have peeled for the last time, but blackness of mind which could be lightened only by whatever new life waited beyond the grim gulf of death. Perhaps that gulf had already been crossed. That infection in the leg, caught by personal neglect while fighting to save his surviving warriors, might now have finished the Man of Remedies. If so, it was merciful release. LeBaron was dead. So the black chief had repeatedly asserted, and so it was. And the sooner Homem dos Remédios followed him into oblivion, the better for both.

"He saved others," softly quoted the traveler. "Himself he could not save."

Then, with another deep breath, he turned from the retreating west and paced forward to face the approaching east.

The ship hurtled on. At either side the gloomy green jungle slid past. Ahead waited the rolling ocean and, beyond it, the critical men who would guardedly receive, keenly analyze, and at length enthusiastically accept the findings of Anton LeBaron—but who would never know the real fate of the explorer.

Only two white men would ever know that. And somewhere far behind, somewhere far ahead, the lost one would rest more easily in his unknown grave, the returning one resume active life with new zest, because each had known the other, and because each knew his work in Brazil to be well done.

THE END

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure* published twice a month at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1931. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Fred Lewis, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Treasurer of The Butterick Publishing Company, publisher of *Adventure*, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, The Butterick Publishing Company, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Editor, A. A. Proctor, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Managing Editor, Victor Weybright, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Business Managers, None. 2. That the owner is: The Butterick Publishing Company, a corporation, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City, whose stockholder is: The Butterick Company, a corporation, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City, whose stockholders are: J. S. Bache & Co., 42 Broadway, New York City, John P. Boyle, c/o Moore & Schley, 100 Broadway, N. Y. C., Eddy & Co., 16 Wall Street, New York City, Effie Phelps Hoover, Ray Phelps Hoover and Howard Earl Hoover, ex. of the estate of Frank K. Hoover, Dec'd, c/o Tr. No. 14004 First Union Tr. & Savings Bk., Dearborn & Monroe St., Chicago, Illinois, John J. Johnston, c/o Continental Illinois Bk. Tr. Co., Chicago, Illinois, Merrick & Co., c/o Customers Securities Dept., N. Y. Tr. Co., 100 Broadway, New York City, Jos. A. Moore, 300 Park Avenue, New York City, Moore & Schley, 100 Broadway, New York City, Samuel Schwarz, 18 Renner Avenue, Newark, N. J., E. A. Pierce & Co., 11 Wall Street, New York City, John I. Shaw, 2900 Willoughby Tower, 8 So. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, Shearson Hammill & Co., 71 Broadway, New York City, Webb Walker, Medical Arts Bldg., Ft. Worth, Texas, Warwick Corp., 910 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois, Stanley R. Latshaw, 161 Sixth Ave., New York City. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: The Bowery Savings Bank, 110 East 42nd Street, New York City, (Holder of mortgage on real property). 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. Fred Lewis, Treasurer. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1931. Chappell Cory, Jr. Notary Public, New York County; County Clerk's No. 202, Reg. No. 2-C-359; Kings County Clerk's No. 174, Reg. No. 2208. (My commission expires March 30, 1932. [*Seal*]—Form 3526—Ed. 1924.)

# *A Duel With* KIT CARSON

### By SAMUEL HENDERSON NICKELS

KIT CARSON, even though a fearless fighter and an expert with either rifle or bowie knife, never killed a man when it could possibly be avoided, as will be noted by the following incident:

One day in early spring, Kit had sold his winter's catch of furs to a trader near Taos, New Mexico, and as there was quite a crowd of others, trappers like himself, already collected at the little Mexican settlement, he decided to stay there for awhile and enjoy himself.

Next morning a big halfbreed came in with a batch of furs and, as soon as he had disposed of them, he immediately proceeded to get fighting drunk.

He had never seen Kit Carson, but he had heard a great deal about the wonderful skill and terrible fighting reputation of the famous scout and plainsman. That afternoon he met Carson and, after one astonished look at the little scout, at once decided to pick a fight with him. Accordingly, he began to get abusive.

The big halfbreed stood well over six feet in height. From the shock of coarse black hair which hung like a lion's mane about his bull-like shoulders to the buckskin moccasins on his huge feet, the ignorant fellow was a picture of animal strength and ferocity.

Carson was a small man and he well knew that if he and the powerful stranger should come to blows, there would be but one thing for him to do. He would be forced to kill him, a thing he decided to avoid, if possible.

"Call yerself a fighter?" the halfbreed sneered contemptuously. "Why, you little gopher, I could stick you in my pocket an' fergit I had you."

"Think so?" Kit laughed.

"No, I don't think so. I *know* so," the other shouted with an oath.

Kit smiled tolerantly and turned as if to walk away.

"Come back here, you little runt," the breed bellowed, thinking that he had Carson frightened. "Pull that knife out o' yer belt an' stand up to me. I'm a-goin' to prove to these here folks that you ain't nothin' but a bluffer."

"My friend," Kit replied quietly, "you had better go away somewhere and sober up. I don't want to have to hurt you."

"Sober up? Me? Say," the bully roared, "I'll just carve yer heart out fer that."

He snatched a murderous looking hunting knife from his belt and lunged toward the smiling Kit with the glittering blade clutched in his hairy fist.

"Hold on a minute," Kit called. "When you challenge a man to fight a duel, it is always customary to give him his choice of weapons."

"Name yer weepons then." The big man paused to strop his huge knife on the leg of his buckskin pants.

"Well, suppose you let me step back here and throw my knife at a spot a couple of times. If I'm as good as I used to be, we'll fight with them. Will that suit you?" asked Kit.

Growling, the breed agreed.

"All right," said Kit, "come around behind this house and help me find something to throw at."

Kit led the way around behind a little adobe shack to where an old goat corral stood in the backyard. He looked everywhere, seemingly undecided as to just what to practise on. Finally he pointed to a cedar post which had a large knot sticking out on it.

"I'm going to throw my knife at that knot," announced Kit.

"Hurry up," snapped the breed.

"Darn, but I'm thirsty," Kit remarked. "I believe I'll get a drink first."

He stepped to the door of the house and asked the Mexican for water. As it was handed to him, he leaned forward and whispered something in the fellow's ear. With a wide grin, the Mexican nodded understandingly.

"Ain't you ready yit?" the breed called impatiently.

"I'm ready now," Kit replied. "Come on around to the other side of the house so you can watch me."

"What?" the fellow ejaculated. "Other side of the house? I thought you was goin' to throw at this post here."

"I am, but I'm going to throw across the house at it."

"Huh? Say, do you mean to tell me you're goin' to stand out in front o' this house an' fling yer knife clear over the roof at that post?"

"At the knot on that post."

"At the— Say, feller, you can't even see the post from where you're goin' to stand, let alone the knot."

"What difference does that make?" Carson retorted, as if what he was about to do were the simplest thing in the world.

"By cracky, you can't do 'er."

"Shucks, that's as easy as falling off a log. Come on around here and watch me do it. I don't want you to be going around telling folks that you didn't see it done."

The big trapper gave a disgusted grunt and followed Kit around to the other side of the house.

The Mexican who had given Kit the drink of water watched until they were out of sight. Then, with a chuckle of delight, he darted to the corral and stood waiting.

"Now watch me carefully to see that I don't cheat," Kit called to the breed.

"I'm a-watchin'."

"All right, here it goes."

Kit drew back and sent the big knife whizzing across the housetop.

The Mexican saw it coming and, as soon as it struck the ground, he snatched it up. Running to the post, he carefully stuck it squarely in the knot. Then, darting back into the house, he softly closed the door.

"Huh! I'll bet you didn't hit within twenty steps o' that post," the breed scoffed.

"What?" Kit retorted. "I'll bet you the price of twenty beaver skins that you'll find my knife sticking square in that knot."

"Make it a hundred beaver skins."

"Two hundred, if you want to."

"Two hundred she is. The price o' two hundred beaver skins you ain't hit the post."

Kit took him up instantly.

"Taken," he snapped. "Now, let's go look."

The big fellow dashed around the house on a dead run, but as he caught sight of the long knife standing buried in the knot, he staggered back with a gasp of awe.

"By the holy jumpin' jerusha, he's done it," he panted. "The price o' two hundred beaver skins gone plumb to hell."

"That was an easy throw." Kit laughed as he stepped forward to recover his knife. "Darn it!" he cried suddenly. "Now look what I've done. I never did such a trick as that before. That's what happens when I get out of practise," he complained bitterly.

"Out o' practise? What in hell do you call out o' practise?"

"Look at this knife," Kit replied disgustedly. "By gosh, I've missed the center of that knot by almost half an inch. Confound it, I reckon we'll have to fight our duel with rifles after all. I never miss with that."

"Huh? What's that?" The half-breed gulped, now almost entirely sober. "Listen here, Kit Carson, if you fight any duels around here, you'll dang certain fight 'em with somebody else. I done gone plumb out o' the duelin' business."

# *The* DESERTERS

## *A Story of the Foreign Legion*

By CLAUDE FARRÈRE

IT WAS at Toulon that I first met them, almost thirty years ago. I was on duty at the Naval Office, in the orderly room, and had started to open the morning's mail, when they entered without knocking, walking one behind the other, so utterly dirty that I was unable at first to distinguish the color of their rags.

The sergeant of the guard escorted them. Noticing my presence somewhat late, he quickly stood at attention, brought his hand up to the vizor of his *képi*. I then saw that the two tramps had snapped their heels together and were saluting. They saluted much better than the sergeant of the guard, as a matter of fact, and I understood that they were soldiers—real soldiers.

Nevertheless, I asked—

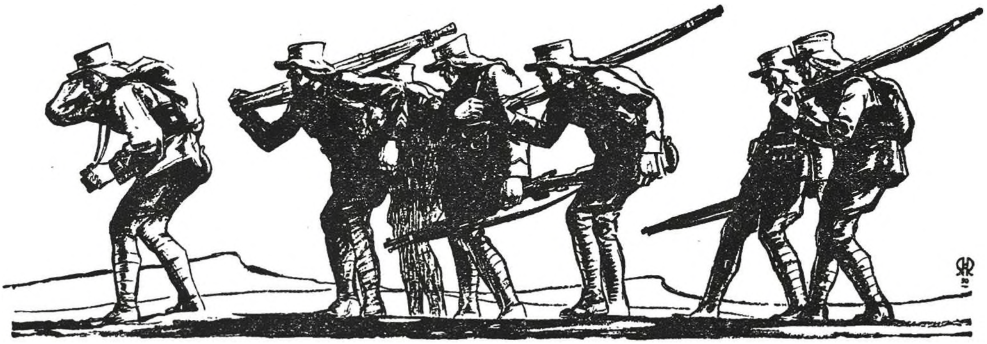
"What's this, Sergeant?"

"Captain, these two are German deserters," came the expected answer, "who wish to enlist in the Foreign Legion."

One of the men nodded assent. Evidently he understood French. I questioned him. His comrade had not moved, and throughout the interview he did not move.

The other, on the contrary, was talkative. He answered freely. I judged him rapidly: an alert and clever lad, not at all clumsy, not burdened with cares, on the whole likable, a tough soldier, tanned, blue eyed, who met one's glance squarely and smiled in his yellow beard. When I noted he was willing to speak, I decided to allow him to talk. His story—their story—was not devoid of interest.

Who were they? Two privates of the Nth of the Line, stationed, as everybody must know, at Sohrau in Silesia,



on the frontier. How had they come so far? On foot, of course! Through Austria, Hungary, Austria again, Trieste, Venice, Milan, the Alps. How had they existed on the way? On chickens they had encountered, surely! There are many chickens in Hungary, more in Italy, very few among the Checkos, none at all in the mountains. What were their names? The orator was Wilhelm Schwartz; and his mute comrade was Friedrich Goertz.

Then I asked the delicate question, that which is seldom answered, but which is the surest source of information from deserters.

"Why did you desert?"

Naturally, I received no answer at first. Wilhelm Schwartz winked one eye and was quiet. As for Friedrich Goertz, he was still at attention; had he been on guard before the Kaiser's door, he could not have been stiffer. I started the usual insinuations, sure that their silence would not last long. Germans or Frenchmen, all true soldiers are alike, and on both sides of the Rhine react to the same treatment.

"Bah! I ask you that—but, after all, what do I care! You deserted because your sergeants beat you, or because your lieutenant bore down on you—"

"No! Not because of that, Mr. Captain!"

"Bah! That or anything else. You had a sweetheart and—"

"Not that, either."

"Come! It was that—or else what could it have been?"

Wilhelm Schwartz hesitated but a second longer, then, his pride touched, blurted everything he knew.

"Mr. Captain, it wasn't that! Desert—we did—because—because we wanted to be Legionnaires."

"Naturally. So I see! But why?"

"Ah, that's it; Because—*we know why*, we do!"

"What? What is it you know?"

"Things!"

"What things?"

"Things of the Legion!"

I did not understand at all. Wilhelm Schwartz, very sly, blinked his eyes alternatively, and would talk no more. This lasted fifteen minutes, at the end of which I painfully untangled the thoughts of this chap.

Over in Silesia, men often talked of the Legion, that Foreign Legion of France, the bravest of the brave legions of the world. And beheld from afar by superstitious eyes, it appeared ever greater than it is, more beautiful, more heroic, fabulous in a way, almost supernatural. Yes, and the Legionnaires of that Legion ceased to be merely men: they became demi-gods; or at least they became devils, beings who surely passed through diabolical and miraculous experiences, experiences such as never fall to the lot of those poor chaps who are neither devils, demi-gods nor Legionnaires. Wilhelm Schwartz had deserted to know superhuman things which are known only by superhuman beings.

When I understood at last, I heaved a sigh of relief. Then a scruple swayed me. Could I, a Frenchman, an officer of the Republic—could I honorably leave these poor fellows in their incongruous belief? No! I leaned back in my chair, lighted a cigaret, and to start with, I shrugged my shoulders as high as I could. After which, to be believed the more if not better understood, I used my school German and started the praise of the Legion. And concluded very eloquently:

"THE Legion? The Legion is the noblest and proudest troop which ever set bayonet to rifle since powder has been used. No soldiers in the world fight oftener or better. You two, if you have red blood in your hearts, forward march! You have chosen the right path and you shall regret nothing, I'm telling you. But as for sorcery, fairy tales and other yarns, you are not stupid enough to believe them, eh? There are no werwolves in Silesia? Legionnaires are men, tough men, granted, but nothing more. And, by the Almighty, that's enough to win battles anywhere in the world."

I stopped to draw breath and cast a glance at the two. Friedrich Goertz was still rigid as a stake and did not bat an eye. It seemed as if he had not heard a word of my speech. After all, perhaps he understood my German no better than my French.

As for Wilhelm Schwartz, he nodded his head with enthusiasm in evident approval. And I thought at first that I had enlightened him. However, he was so quiet now that I believed his lips stitched together. Then, deep in his pupils, I saw, clear as day, the mocking irony of a soldier too clever to swallow all the official stories that chiefs always relate to subordinates. Yes, yes, he seemed to think, go on and talk, my lad! You can't kid Wilhelm Schwartz!

And Wilhelm Schwartz, without hesitation or protests, clung the more to his deeply rooted beliefs, to his unshakable trusts in the *things* of the Legion. Seeing this, I almost yielded to useless anger. Then, I almost laughed. In imagination, I saw these two idiotic lads landing at Sidi-bel-Abbès, heard the classic jokes raining on their simple beliefs. There would be some fun, out there!

I controlled my amusement with an effort and said shortly:

"All right. Enough. Right about face, and go to the recruiting office for medical inspection."

They saluted together and with precision brought the left foot before the right foot, according to regulations. My curiosity won out.

"Halt!" I ordered. "Schwartz, you in particular, what special thing do you hope to find in the Legion?"

In that second, a smile of intense pride twisted the lips of Wilhelm Schwartz. And Wilhelm Schwartz, drunk with triumph, reddened like a ripe tomato. Eh! Who had won, the lying officer or the smart soldier? In his opinion, I tacitly admitted myself beaten by the cleverness of Wilhelm Schwartz; I had decided not to attempt to fool this man, too subtle for me, despite my gold stripes!

He was so pleased with his victory that he forgot to hide his feelings.

"I?" he said rapidly. "I, Mr. Captain? Oh, I'll explain if you wish. At Auschwitz—Auschwitz is near to Sohrau, but on the other side of the border, in Galicia—there's a Silesian girl I want. And to get this Silesian girl, I must earn a lot of money first."

"You don't say!"

"Much money, Mr. Captain! Therefore, I come to be a Legionnaire and to find a treasure."

He smiled with absolute faith. I approved of him. You would have approved of him as I did.

"A treasure? Good idea, Schwartz! Find a treasure! And your comrade, Goertz, who is deaf, it seems—did comrade Goertz come with you to be a Legionnaire and to find a treasure also?"

To my intense astonishment Comrade Goertz, evidently no deafer than I was, opened his mouth for the first and last time and answered in good enough French, although his voice was a bit hoarse.

"No, Mr. Captain. Not for a treasure have I come. For something else, harder to find."

He said no more.

And they left, the two deserters, one behind the other, keeping the parade step.

THE life of a soldier is not a well constructed novel in which, from chapter to chapter, each character reappears as needed and when needed from start to finish. Of the two German deserters I had met in Toulon, in the orderly room of the Naval Office, one, Friedrich Goertz, I never saw again, alive or dead. The other, Wilhelm Schwartz, the treasure hunter, reappeared before my eyes once and once only, after ten full years. It's this second meeting with Wilhelm Schwartz I wish to relate—not that it will surprise any one greatly—but because it surprised me beyond reason at the time.

I recall clearly the date, the spot, even the torrential rain which fell on that day, for I had taken over, at Son-Tay, in the Tonkin, on May 1st, 1890, the command of the expedition which won for me the fifth stripe and my decoration. It was a small expedition, organized solely to bring back upon the straight and narrow path one Doc-Tho, pirate by profession, who operated too successfully on the banks of the Claire River.

And it was four weeks after that first of May that I entered at the head of my troops, in a pouring rain, the imperial city of Tuyen-Quan, there to spend the night. Before the crenelated walls my slim native Tirailleurs filed, while my pith helmet, drenched by the rain, smeared my face with white clay. Just a joke of the Tonkinese climate, which I appreciated so little at the time that I enjoyed not at all the splendid panorama of the forbidding mountains surrounding the town and the somber majesty of the black and red sunset, streaked like a tiger pelt by the downpour.

Fifteen minutes later, a European dressed in fresh linen greeted me with many bows on the threshold of the only inn of the city. I saw a blond face which the Asian sun had tanned without darkening it, two blue eyes which glanced straight, and a healthy mouth parted in a wide smile. All this was not unknown to me, and I halted on the veranda, my eyes meeting those of the European. Then he clucked his tongue.

"The Major has a good memory!" he said, hissing in admiration, Japanese fashion. (There is, naturally, a sort of small Yoshiwara at Tuyen-Quan, and the Nipponese ladies teach good manners and proper behavior.) "Yes, to be sure," the man went on, "for the Major has seen me but once, in Toulon, ten, twelve years ago, no less! And he knows me! Why, yes, I am the man you think, Major—Wilhelm Schwartz."

I remembered him instantly. The episode had amused me, and ten or twelve years had not wiped it from my brain. I discovered, intact within me, my former curiosity. I stepped forward to look at Wilhelm Schwartz closely. He did not seem greatly changed, save for his garments.

If not a treasure, I reflected, his roamings as a Legionnaire had at least brought him new clothes to replace his rags.

Doubtless business was good at Tuyen-Quan. I was about to congratulate him. But he was running toward the rear of the inn, shouting.

"Magda! Magda! Come quickly and kiss the major's hands! He is the one who greeted me in France, in the past, when I deserted to win a treasure and marry you, Magda!"

On the teak planking, light steps trotted. Magda was coming. I saw a pretty girl, Polish rather than Austrian. She laughed loudly, and Wilhelm Schwartz laughed louder than she. As for me, I was utterly astounded. What was this? Magda was the little sweetheart of yore, the fiancée from Auschwitz, she who could not be obtained save for much, much money? In that case, Wilhelm Schwartz had found his treasure.

I could not keep from asking questions.

Less talkative than formerly, the man was in no haste to answer. At last, he consented to speak.

"To the Major who first greeted me in France in the past, I can't refuse anything! I shall tell the real truth," he added after a hesitation, "but only after the Major shall have eaten and drunk. That's needed to listen to a yarn. Therefore, the Major shall dine, and then—"

And then, Wilhelm Schwartz spoke. His French, still a bit stiff, had become fluent nevertheless. And the devil—I'm not going to alter a syllable of the story I heard that night and which I repeat faithfully tonight.

“MAJOR—” Wilhelm Schwartz held a finger in the air—“when I enlisted in the Legion, I was a fool. Yes, just that. The Major knows, for he saw me, eh? Surely, the Major laughed at me then, and it was just. At Bel-Abbès, when I got there, I was a joke. They all kidded me—all the Legionnaires. For I, the fool, had told from the start all about Magda and the money, about the treasure—everything, in fact. Then, of course, the Legionnaires put the foolishness out of my head, by laughing at me sometimes, by kicking me often. After that, naturally, I grew sulky. But later the Legion went to fight, there, elsewhere and other places. And my sadness vanished, killed in those battles. So that I became a very happy Legionnaire, save that I did not know how I would ever get Magda. Because I still wanted her.

“But never mind! The Major knows, doesn't he, that the Legion itself, the true Legion, as it is, is still an extraordinary thing, and that I had courage despite all.

“At war, for instance, other units are always mixed up, to eat, to find shelter, and we of the Legion never are. They never have anything—no bread, no chickens, no fires, and their blankets are always wet. We—we have everything, and the best. Therefore, I thought this about Magda: ‘The others shall not have her. And I, a Legionnaire, shall have her. It must be so.’ The Major understand me, eh? Now, I'll tell you the end of the story. That is a real *thing* of the Legion, like the things I believed in when I was a fool, like those talked about at Sohrau, in Silesia, during evenings spent in barracks. Just listen:

“It happened out here, Major, and it's getting to be quite a while ago. It was when we and the Chinese made war. The Legion, therefore, had come to the Tonkin. I came with it. And soldiers from France had come also. And those, they didn't know how to fight. They would have known in France, of course, but here they didn't know because this is a different kind of war. The Major knows that, certainly! The French generals did not know either. Therefore, that meant battles lost. You remember, eh?

“One night, it happened that one of those lost battles had been fought—a big battle. The general commanding chief had been killed or wounded, something like that. And another general ordered retreat because he believed that the Chinese army would pursue us. Ideas that have no place out here—European ideas! It was too happy to have won as easily as that, the Chinese army. But the Major understands what happened, a damned confusion and everybody beating it. As for us of the Legion, we weren't so stupid. We retired, but we halted to make soup—because we knew what it was, that Chinese army. So my squad lighted a fire. It was raining! As much as today.

“After a while stragglers come up. Infantrymen. Dirty? I'm telling you! And you should have seen them run. We—we just watched them go by. They yelled at us.

“ ‘Every man for himself, there, the Legion! Don't stay there! The Black Flags* are coming!’

“When we laughed they got sore.

“ ‘Boobs! Squareheads! You'll get your throats cut! Just wait! Every man for himself, you saps! It's the Grand Marshal of China that's coming after us! The proof is that everything has been left behind to run quicker—the artillery, the ambulance, the treasury!’

“I stopped laughing and cocked an ear.

“ ‘The treasury! What treasury?’

“ ‘The army treasury,’ they say. ‘A million in gold, at least! We left it at Lang-Son.’

“Lang-Son—I knew where that was; four or five leagues upstream. You could not miss the way. I rose and asked the infantrymen: ‘You're sure? The treasure is there, at Lang-Son?’

---

*Chinese partisan regiments.

" 'Sure,' they answered. 'We turned over trucks and caissons into the big ravine just outside the village.'

"Thereupon, the infantrymen beat it. It was colossal, the way they were scared of the Chinese! See, they had never seen many, and knew no better.

"But I knew better, and I was not scared. I started by kicking the pot into the fire, and yelling '*hoch!*' Then I spoke to the rest of the squad.

" 'Who's coming to Lang-Son with me to get the army's treasure? I'm going.'

"We were seven in that squad. The two of us, me and Goertz—Goertz, the Major remembers him?—a Spaniard, an Arab and three Frenchmen. One of the Frenchmen says to me—

" 'To go back there, Schwartz, means to desert, you know?'

" 'Desert?' I tell him. "I know all about deserting. I've done it before, you nut, and I'll do it again.'

"Then they all spoke together.

" 'He's right. Let's go!'

"So, Major, we went there. And that's how I found my treasure. Thunder! There it was at Lang-Son, by the thousand and the hundred! The whole squad was rich. Moreover, we had not deserted, for when we came back, we found there had been no roll call.

"And that's the real truth, Major. I've told all."

Wilhelm Schwartz, ex-Legionnaire, was silent.

The story was finished, certainly. And I don't know why—like a kid always asking for more—I asked two superfluous questions.

"You managed to bring back that treasure? Yet gold is heavy."

"Gold that belongs to oneself, Major? No, it's not heavy."

"And the Chinese? There were Chinese in Lang-Son. Didn't they bother you?"

Wilhelm Schwartz smiled:

"Chinese? Yes, Major, there were some at Lang-Son when we reached the place. But there were no more when we left."

This time, it was my turn to be silent. Later, however, I thought of the second deserter.

"Schwartz," I asked, "and comrade Goertz? After getting rich, what became of him? I recall that it was not to find a treasure that he had become a Legionnaire."

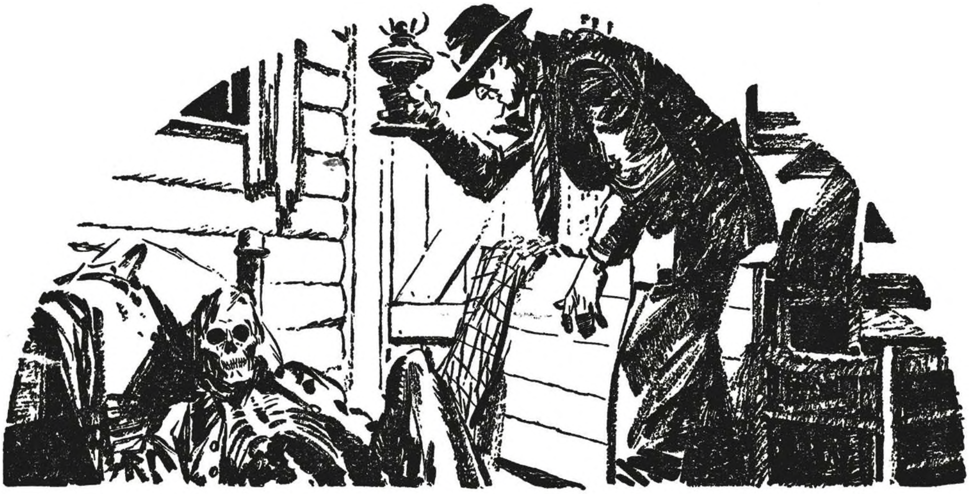
"Ah! Yes, Major What a fine memory! Poor old Goertz, it's true he was seeking something else, harder to find."

"What?"

"It's this way, Major. Goertz—in his own country there was a woman he loved—and she did not love him. That made him sad. It was *that* he sought—not to be sad any more."

"And so?"

"So he found it in the Legion. Because, a week after Lang-Son, he received a bullet through the heart. And he died, naturally."



# FREEZEOUT

## A Mystery Story

### By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

ALTHOUGH the automatic wiper was swinging back and forth on the windshield, snow was frosting the glass almost as fast as it could be wiped away. I was therefore advancing in low gear with the utmost caution.

In the ditches the drifts were deep. It was about an hour or so after dark, on a lonely, pine fringed road in the hinterland of western Pennsylvania. However bad the going, I was determined to keep on. I, Egbert Canby, must not be the first to miss a roll call of the Restless Ramblers. Today was the 20th of March; for eight successive years, always at the vernal equinox, Farr, Frasier, Quince, Westgaard and I had convened at Westgaard's Alleghany lodge. For some odd reason it had become one of the vital rituals of my life.

Would the others be there? Captain Farr from the Aleutians? Frasier from Brazil? Quince from Yucatan? Westgaard from Bolivia?

After awhile the driving, sticky snow clogged my wiper. I stopped, got out and took a few swipes with a rag on the outside of the glass. Suddenly from the night ahead came a hail. I recognized the voice. It was Farr's.

I drove on a little way and found that Farr, in a roadster, had skidded into the ditch.

"Got a tow rope, Canby?" he inquired.

That was his only greeting after a year. It was typical of Farr. He was a human icicle. No more warmth than a fish. Maybe it was because he had dedicated his life to explorations in the Far North. Just now, as he stood ankle deep in the snow, tall, thin and with the soggy flakes frosting his beard, he resembled an icicle fully as much as a human.

From my rumble I produced a tow rope. He attached it axle to axle, and in a short while I had snaked him out of the ditch.

"I presume we'll be the last arrivals, Farr," I said. For it was the custom of the Restless Ramblers to gather at about noon of the 20th and to remain at the lodge until after breakfast, the 22nd of March.

"On the contrary," he countered, "I'm afraid that our host himself will fail to answer the roll call."

"What makes you think that?"

"I dropped in at the Camp-fire Club in New York yesterday," Farr told me. "Westgaard is a member there. On returning from Bolivia it's the first place he would have gone. Yet they've seen nothing of him."

"What about his family?" I asked. "There's a Mrs. Westgaard, isn't there?"

"There *was,*" returned Farr, accenting the verb. He detached the tow rope and tossed it into my rumble.

After swabbing my windshield again, I drove on. Farr followed closely. Our lights flooded the whiteness of the night, throwing into relief the laden limbs which reached from the gaunt masts of pine.

As I drove I gave thought to the strange genesis of our group, the Restless Ramblers. Nine years ago the five of us had chanced to meet at a hotel in the Pennine Alps, near Mt. Blanc. We were, at that time, total strangers to one another. Each of us had been cruising about alone, except Westgaard, who had been accompanied by his wife.

For a week we five fraternized around the hearth and in the billiard room of that Alpine hotel. We learned that we were all Americans of modestly independent means and that we all lived in cities near the Atlantic seaboard. We discovered a common flair for adventure and exploration. That we had assembled there was not so strange. There was an international ski-jumping contest being held nearby in which Quince and Frasier had competed, while Farr and the Westgaards had merely looked on. I, a fiction writer, had been digging up color for a book.

At that time one of us, I forget which, was planning a year in China. The immediate horizon for another, on that particular occasion, had been Persia. Borneo for another. And so on. And yet it had developed that each of us made it a point to be home in March, perennially, March being a logical time to attend to such bothers as leases and taxes.

Thus on parting, after a week at the Alpine inn, Westgaard had said:

"Gentlemen, we are going separately to the five corners of the earth. Why not meet a year from now and recount our several adventures?"

The upshot was that we had arranged to come to an isolated lodge of Westgaard's in western Pennsylvania. For a date we had set the vernal equinox, because it was an easy day to remember.

That first meeting at Westgaard's lodge had been eight years ago, and every one of us had kept the tryst. Each of us had told a worthwhile story. Westgaard had dubbed us the "Restless Ramblers."

"Why not," he suggested, "meet here once a year?"

Being by that time in something of a mellow mood, we had all agreed to report once a year, on the same date, at Westgaard's lodge.

The strange thing about it was that we had actually done so. Strange because, with the passing of the years, some remote and intangible mystery seemed to have been attendant to our gatherings. I could not even vaguely define this mystery. I merely sensed a false note somewhere, a missing motive, a sham, a spark of conflict whose poles I could not locate, for all of my intense observation. Personally, however, I had a clean and clear motive for keeping punctual tryst, each year, with the Restless Ramblers. I am a writer of fiction, and it was therefore well worth my while to take stock at this mart of adventure, held each year at Westgaard's lodge.

Except for our annual tenancy the lodge was deserted. It was only an outpost of Westgaard's life, a two-story log house in a timbered section surrounded by many sections of unworked coal land. Westgaard had furnished each of us with a key, so that whoever arrived first might let himself in. There was no servant or caretaker. All eight of our gatherings there had been strictly stag parties; I had never seen Westgaard's wife since that occasion nine years ago at the Alpine inn.

WITH Captain Farr churning along in my wake, we drove now to attend a ninth gathering of the Ramblers. The snow was getting deeper, the going becoming more difficult all the while. Finally at a bend in the route my lights played upon a gate through which a trail turned off into Westgaard's private section.

The gate was open, causing me to assume that at least one of our group had preceded me to the lodge. If so, his tire tracks were covered with the latest snowfall. I drove through the gate in low gear and more than once I was temporarily stalled. The only indication of the lane was a narrow trail amid dense, second growth pine.

Fortunately the lodge was only half a mile from the gate. There was a cheerful welcome in the lamp which shone from its living room window. The bleakness of the night, the soddenness of the storm but made the glow brighter. I felt an answering glow warming my own heart. For a moment I forgot that vague feeling of mystery which had sometimes seemed to blight; in its place came the elation of homecoming, of rekindling a cold camp-fire with valiant comrades.

There were outbuildings. Of these I did not choose the small one-car garage as a shelter, knowing that Westgaard would need it for his own vehicle. Farr and I parked under a long shed beneath which was a roadster which I immediately recognized as Frank Frasier's.

"I was right. Westgaard hasn't showed up," said Farr, pointing to the nearby garage. His deduction came from the deep snowdrift against the garage door, which could not have been recently opened.

After draining our radiators to keep them from freezing, Farr and I took our satchels and trudged to the house.

As we stamped on the porch the front door was thrown open, revealing Frasier, and behind him a crackling log fire on the hearth.

"Ramble in, ye Ramblers," chanted Frasier, "and warm your shivering bones!"

His broad, red face was beaming, no less cheering than the fire. I had always felt more closely drawn to Frasier than to Farr. Frasier was human. His face was ruddy and round, with a chubbiness which belied his hardiness as an adventurer. He was a good seven inches shorter than Farr, and I think about five years older.

After greetings, Farr asked colorlessly—

"Any word from Westgaard?"

We learned that Frasier had arrived only an hour before, finding the house without occupant. He had let himself in with his own key, and had used the hour as a seasoned camper would—had brought in six armloads of firewood, had lighted all the oil lamps downstairs, had wound and set the mantel clock. He now gestured toward a trio of cocktails arranged on the living room table.

"I mixed 'em," he said, "the instant I saw two pair of headlights coming up the trail."

"Here's to our two missing comrades," I offered, raising my own potion.

"May they mush into camp hale and sound!" added Frasier heartily.

Farr gulped his liquor without comment. There was not a whit of sentiment in Farr. Here in the room, the frost of snow on his beard was beginning to thaw; but the man himself was as cold as ever. Why, I wondered, had he ever joined our order of Restless Ramblers? He was a rambler and he was restless, true enough, but he was not a clubman.

He was as much at home as any of us, though, and I caught an expression of content on his lean face as he warmed himself by the fire. Then he went to a large closet off the living room, opened it, hung up his hat, coat and overcoat and took out a smoking jacket which he had left there a year ago. He lighted a pipe. The pipe and that old moth-eaten smoking jacket were the most human things about him.

"When I was hanging up my own coat in that closet, an hour ago," remarked Frasier, "I smelled a dead rat in there. But I couldn't find it; it must be under the floor. That's why I opened a living room window."

I saw Farr sniffing with his long sensitive nose. He cocked an eye at the closet, but made no comment. Frasier now closed the window, because snow was drifting in upon the rug.

"A light coming up the trail, mates!" announced Frasier a minute later. He had lingered at the window. "No doubt here comes Westgaard, our belated host."

We joined him and saw the light.

An auto chugged up and was driven under the long shed.

"It must be Arnie Quince," said Frasier. "Westgaard would have driven into the garage."

"On the contrary," contradicted Farr, "he would have seen at a glance the deep drift against the garage door. Rather than shovel away at that drift, he would have parked under the shed."

The newcomer came stamping to the porch. We threw open the door and saw that it was Arnold Quince.

Quince was the youngest of our group, tall, blond, clean shaven, handsome. Unlike most adventurers, he was extremely fastidious in his dress. He was even dudish, and I knew that Frasier, who was rough and ready, had little use for him. He now set down his silver buckled Gladstone bag beside the rather battered satchels of Frasier, Farr and myself, and hung his expensive, fur collared and fur lapelled overcoat in the closet.

"Whewee!" he exclaimed, wrinkling his nose. "The joint smells like dead rats. Where's Westgaard?"

We told him that Westgaard was late.

The information seemed to worry Quince. When he learned from Farr that Westgaard had not registered recently at the Camp-fire Club in New York, he asked:

"Why the devil didn't you call up his home, Farr, on long distance? Hasn't he a house and a family in Baltimore? Or is it Wilmington?"

"It is I who live in Wilmington," corrected Frasier. "I think Westgaard maintains an apartment in Baltimore. As for a family, I don't know."

None of us knew. My own guess was that Westgaard had divorced, or separated from, or been deserted by, the Mrs. Westgaard whom we had all met nine years ago at the Alpine inn.

A year after that contact I had politely inquired as to the lady's health. Westgaard had been gruffly evasive and I had let the matter drop. I mentioned the opinion that if Westgaard had a wife he had never brought her, in our time, to this retreat in the woods.

Quince agreed with me. Frasier was equally certain that the lodge had never been opened these last nine years, except for our annual gatherings.

"It certainly has not been opened since we five men walked out a year ago, right after breakfast on the 22nd of March," added Frasier.

"That reminds me," I said, "that I took a kodak picture of the four of you, just as we were leaving. I lined you up on the front porch. I later developed it and, while I think of it, I'll give you each a print of the film."

After rummaging in my bag, I produced and distributed the pictures. The view reminded us of the weather a year ago, for it showed long, sword-like icicles hanging from the porch eaves. It was a warm morning after a freeze; the icicles were thawing, dripping in the sunlight.

"I remember one of 'em fell, while we were posing, and nearly beaned me," remarked Frasier.

"While we're waiting for Westgaard," Frasier suggested later, "what about a little draw poker?"

For an hour we played poker, rather listlessly.

A PECULIAR incident broke up the game. For chips we were using our pocket change, and Quince, just after raking in a pot which contained contributions from us all, complained that some one had anted a no-good quarter.

"But hold on," he added, after looking more closely at the coin. "It's not a quarter after all. It's a veinte; I mean a twenty centavo piece minted by the Bolivian government. Who's been rambling in Bolivia?"

We all denied having rambled in Bolivia.

"Bolivia," remarked Frasier, "is the stamping ground of our absent host, Westgaard."

"Anyway," agreed Quince, "we know he went there on his last two rambles. Nevertheless, it's a cinch one of you three men anted this veinte."

"I didn't," insisted Farr.

"Nor I," echoed Frasier.

As for me, I had never handled a Bolivian coin in my life.

It was only a minor mystery, and soon forgotten. Yet it slowed our game and centered our thoughts on Westgaard. It forcibly reminded us of the hazards of that particular adventure on which, to our knowledge, Westgaard had set forth a year ago.

"Ten to one some pampa carabinero took a pot shot at him," worried Frasier. "That's why he's not here."

"Bah!" deprecated Captain Farr. "You refer to Westgaard's yarn about unearthing an Inca cache? I think he was either pulling our leg or else he was guilty of a gross exaggeration." Farr was an habitual doubter.

"But he showed us a gold plate!" objected Quince.

Indeed he had, and a gold plate which might well have been beaten into shape by the stone hammers of the ancient Incas.

Last year, following our custom, we had in turn recited our latest adventure. The only unique one had been Westgaard's. Westgaard, after digging into a certain ruin on the desert east of Lake Titicaca, had turned up three or four plates of beaten gold. They were of rude craftsmanship and each about six inches in diameter. Westgaard, being versed in Incan history and legends, had become intensely excited.

He remembered that the *conquistador,* Pizarro, about 1550, had wrested much treasure from the desert tribes and that much other treasure had been secreted from him.

He had been particularly mindful of the legend which insists that a fabulous treasure in gold plate had been thrown into Lake Titicaca as a ruse to cheat the Spaniards. Therefore, having turned up a few ancient plates, beaten from gold, under a ruin not far from Titicaca, Westgaard had been confident of finding an even greater treasure if he would but dig deeper.

But he would need a crew of diggers, mules and muleteers for transportation. What he could transport single handed would not be a very great treasure. Could he trust such natives as he might hire? Wouldn't they turn upon him in mutiny, claiming Bolivian treasure for Bolivians? In any case, wouldn't he have trouble getting it past jealous officials at the border? There were many problems. The thing had to be planned cautiously. In the end Westgaard had covered his cache, taking from it only one plate. This would be an exhibit to show at the next meeting of the Restless Ramblers. He had made a detailed map of the region to guide him back to the cache. Then he had come away.

A year ago he had displayed to us the one gold plate and the map. He had worked out, so he told us, a practical plan for exploiting the treasure, wherein the following year he would make many solo trips in a monoplane from a Chilean base.

Hearing that story a year ago, Frasier and Quince had been eagerly credulous. Farr, on the other hand, had scoffed. His scoffings had offended Westgaard.

What I myself had failed to understand was this: Why had Westgaard not invited the four of us, his fellow Ramblers, to join his expedition? He was normally generous; it wasn't like him to tell us of such a prospect and then leave us out in the cold.

A possible explanation was that Westgaard, in the ardor of recital, had exaggerated his find, and disliked to expose his exaggeration. For at the outset of his story he had been jubilant, talking in big figures.

"It's an historic fact," he had exclaimed, "that the Inca once filled a room ceiling high with gold to ransom a prince captured by the Spaniards. Therefore, it wouldn't surprise me if I dug up a ton of gold."

Whereupon Farr had jeered—

"If you do, I'll eat it."

All this we rehashed now, a year later. It was still only about ten o'clock and we agreed that there was an even chance that Westgaard might yet appear. I went to a window, but my eyes could not penetrate the black void of night. I could hear, though, the thud of the fat flakes as they struck the pane. It was a heavy, wet snow, typical of March storms.

"In case we get marooned here for a couple of days, what about eats?" inquired Arnold Quince.

On other years Westgaard had arrived first and brought along a supply of food. We now trooped to the kitchen to see what canned goods, if any, might be left over from the last convention.

We saw on the kitchen table five soiled plates and five stained coffee cups. I recalled that the meat of our last breakfast, three hundred and sixty-three days ago, had been fried rabbit. Here were the rabbit bones, still on the plates. In the interim they had been picked clean by insects or mice.

"And Wes was a regular old woman about tidying up a camp!" said Quince.

Coaxing our memories, we remembered that just after that last breakfast we four had departed.

"I'll stick around and slick up the camp. See you next year," had been our final word from Westgaard.

Yet he hadn't even washed the breakfast dishes.

"Maybe vandals broke in some time this last year," suggested Frasier, "and ate a meal or two."

"Hardly. Coffee and rabbit for five would be too coincidental a combination," refuted Farr.

"Say, what was that other chore Westgaard mentioned, just before we left?" asked Quince. "Some repair on the house, wasn't it?"

"Why, yes, there was a warm thaw after icy weather, that morning, don't you remember?" returned Frasier. "The thaw developed a leak in the roof; Westgaard said he'd patch it before it got worse."

The thaw was proven by my snapshot showing the dripping icicles dangling from the porch eaves.

"Right you are," agreed Quince. "The leak was in my room, directly over my bed. The drip woke me up. I told Westgaard about it at breakfast."

A disturbing thought struck me. Patching the leak would have been a more urgent chore than washing the breakfast dishes. Suppose that Westgaard had climbed immediately to the roof! Suppose that he had slipped on the thawing ice up there, falling thirty feet to the ground! That would account for the unwashed breakfast dishes.

I mentioned this possibility.

Quince said:

"Well, if he did not repair the leak, my room will show it. Subsequent leaks throughout the year would have made the bed quilts moldy. I'll go up and see."

HE TOOK one of the lamps and went to the front. We heard him tramping upstairs.

"You're borrowing trouble, Canby," deprecated Farr. "A sure footed rat of the Andes like Westgaard wouldn't fall off a roof."

Yet his words were barely uttered before we heard a cry, which seemed to be of genuine horror, from Quince on the floor above.

We rushed to the front room. Quince came catapulting down the stairs and I saw that his cheeks were ashen.

"Westgaard came to grief," he reported in an unsteady voice. "He's up there—dead."

"What?" cried Frasier. "You mean he arrived ahead of us, after all?"

"I mean," said Quince, after moistening his lips, "that he never left here a year ago. I first looked in my own room. The bed covers are not noticeably moldy; therefore Wes must have repaired the leak without delay. Then I looked into *his* room. I saw—what remains of him. He's been dead a year, undiscovered until now."

I was too shocked for comment. So also, it seemed, was Frasier. It was the human icicle, Farr, who remarked crisply—

"*Nothing* would remain of him after a year except his boots and bones."

Whereupon he turned and tramped somberly up the stairs. Quince followed, then Frasier. I was the last of the ascending file, and so completely unnerved that I held to the pine pole bannister.

Quince had left his lamp in the upper corridor. Farr took it and strode into the death room. Quince and Frasier followed him; I myself went no farther than the portal. We all saw the ghastly exhibit which lay, breast up, on the uncarpeted bedroom floor.

Not one of us could entertain the slightest doubt that the victim was our missing comrade. Although there was no skin or flesh, there were a score of clues which identified the skeleton as Westgaard's. Most grimly eloquent of these was an upper front gold tooth; we were all familiar with Westgaard's gold-toothed smile—thus one may conceive the effect of this grinning, gold-toothed skull. Then there were Westgaard's watch, his monogrammed belt buckle and coins from his pockets. His elkhide boots were well preserved. So were the skirts and flaps of his leather hunting coat. He had died on his back with his coat unbuttoned and thrown back, on either side, in a spread on the floor. Such of the leather as had not been in direct contact with his flesh was still in evidence.

Thus the breast pocket of this leather coat and a leather wallet therein were intact. Farr plucked out the wallet to complete the identification. It was Westgaard's.

Farr then took from his own pocket the snapshot I had given him an hour or so ago, showing Westgaard, Farr, Frasier and Quince posed on the lodge porch directly after breakfast a year ago. In the picture Westgaard wore this same leather hunting coat and these same elkhide boots.

"He must have come to grief later that morning," mused Farr.

A window giving on to a screened sleeping porch was open. Thus there had been sufficient ventilation to dissipate the odors of decomposition, except such as had seeped downward into small locked closets of the first floor. Complete decay, I realized, in this damp climate would have occurred in about three months. After that, rodents, as well as the larvæ of flies, would have long since done away with everything except bones, metal and leather out of direct contact with flesh.

Westgaard's satchel, half filled with extra linen, was on a chair. His soiled shaving kit was spread in disarray on the bureau. Also on the bureau lay his ring of keys.

"No great rush to fetch the coroner," remarked Farr matter-of-factly, "since the case is already a year old." He took the ring of keys from the bureau to make sure they were Westgaard's.

"Also," he added, "that we may finally satisfy ourselves of the identity I think we're justified in taking an inventory of this wallet."

Together we checked the contents of the wallet. There were sixty dollars in currency, a small memorandum booklet, a few receipts and letters; all except the money was easily identified as Westgaard's.

By this time I was in a state of nausea quite similar to acute seasickness. Again I had to hold fast to the pine pole bannister as, after covering the remains with a blanket, we retreated down to the living room.

There Farr tossed the articles we had taken from the wallet upon the table. Frasier replenished the hearth fire and then set to work mixing a round of rye highballs.

"Time of death was probably the 22nd of last March," stated Farr, more to himself than to us. "But here is a clue which should help fix the date exactly."

He was glancing within the memo booklet taken from the wallet. Its pages were ruled into three columns, respectively headed: "Date"; "Place"; "Mileage".

Here the methodical rambler, Westgaard, had kept track of the gross readings of his automobile speedometer on successive trips. The last group of entries, written in Westgaard's hand, were:

| Date | Place | Mileage |
|---|---|---|
| 3-20-28 | Alleghany Lodge | 39555 |

"If he died on the 22nd," deduced Farr, "his car should still be in the garage and its speedometer should read 39555."

Farr donned his overcoat and found a lantern. Quince went to the rear of the house and came back with a scoop shovel. They went out to dig away the drift in front of the garage door.

Shortly they returned.

"Westgaard's coupé is there, well rusted and with dead batteries," reported Quince. "The speedometer reads 39555."

Here was reasonable proof that Westgaard had not driven away, returning later to meet death at the lodge.

"Since the breakfast dishes aren't washed, it probably happened before noon on March 22nd," opined Quince. "Frasier said something about notifying the coroner. What about relatives—wife, children?"

The question directed our attention to the several letters taken from the wallet, since one of them might furnish the address of a relative.

"Hello," exclaimed Quince, as he sorted through the papers. "Here's part of a letter Westgaard received from his wife. Wasn't her name Effie?"

We all recalled that nine years ago, in the Spring of 1920 at the Alpine inn, we had heard Westgaard address his wife as Effie.

The scrap of letter mentioned by Quince read:

> and you may be sure, my dear, that I'm counting the days until you come.
>
> Love,
>
> February 11, 1921 —EFFIE

Here was merely the conclusion of a letter about eight years old, or about seven years old at the death of Westgaard.

The question immediately arose: Why should Westgaard carry such a comparatively unimportant letter around for seven years?

"Do you find any other letters from her, Quince?" inquired Frasier.

"No. And say, it's deuced queer that I don't find the map of Westgaard's Inca treasure cache."

We all remembered that Westgaard,

at breakfast that fatal morning a year ago, had displayed to us a map, drawn by himself, which accurately referenced that particular spot on the Bolivian plateau whence he had come and to which he would straightway return. At Farr's scoffing, "If you bring out that ton of gold, I'll eat it," Westgaard had put the map away in this same leather wallet and then, plainly offended, had spoken no more of his treasure.

"But if the corpse had been undisturbed and undiscovered," I exclaimed, "why didn't we find the map in the wallet?"

Farr cocked one of his eyes at me and began tapping five lean fingers against five, evidently in shrewd consideration of the missing map.

"What about the gold plate?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes," I agreed, "what about it? I remember that Westgaard, after showing it to us, locked it in that desk over there."

Farr took Westgaard's ring of keys, went over and unlocked the desk. The gold plate was not within.

"Some one," blurted Frasier, "swiped it. You can bet it was the same scoundrel who swiped the map."

"Meaning any one in particular?" asked Quince stiffly.

"Figure it out yourself!" challenged Frasier. "No one knew anything about that map and plate except us Restless Ramblers. Westgaard so stated himself. And what about that Bolivian veinte which turned up earlier this evening in a poker pot? It looks very much as if one of us, though he denies it, has been rambling in Bolivia!"

"True," echoed Farr harshly. "It happens that my own ramble was in Alaska."

"You can leave me out of it," I exclaimed hotly, "for I was in Africa."

"As for me," offered Arnold Quince, "I did not leave the States during the past year. Took a holiday from rambling. Spent the entire year in a beach cabin at Rockport, Maine, and can prove it."

"Rockport, Maine, eh?" prodded Frasier suspiciously. "Changed your mind, did you Quince? When we met last year, you were all steamed up about an exploration in Yucatan."

"Yes, I changed my mind," retorted Quince. "Any law against that? And do I understand that you insinuate murder by one of us?"

"Evidently he does," inserted Farr before Frasier could speak. "His scenario seems to be this: that to get that salvage of gold, some comrade sneaked back here just after we four left the last 22nd of March; perhaps he begged Westgaard to cut him in on the exploitation, was refused, and in an ensuing altercation struck or shot Westgaard dead; he then stole the map and the sample plate, later going to Bolivia. He brazenly shows up this year, so that his absence won't accuse him. A nice plot, except for one startling flaw right at its core."

"What flaw?" barked Frasier.

"That Westgaard, I think, faked his map and his story of the Inca treasure. He was pulling our leg."

"Why should he do that?" challenged Frasier.

Farr shrugged, spreading his palms.

"Anyway," he said, "I've got a peach of a personal alibi. I've been hibernating on a Bering Sea beach, in the frozen North, and can furnish half a dozen Aleuts to prove it."

"You can, can you?" retorted Frasier. "It'd take about three months to get 'em here, though, wouldn't it? That alibi, I'd say, is a little too damned far fetched."

"What about yours?" challenged Quince.

Frasier whirled at him, his roast-beef English face as red as fire.

"I was on the upper Amazon," he stated, "just where I said I would be. I didn't change my mind like you did, Quince. Rockport, Maine, eh? And you didn't leave there for as long as a month?"

"Not for as long as a week," insisted Quince. "And by the way, Frasier, I presume you have an abundance of native guides who can prove you were in western Brazil this last season?"

Frasier only glared at him.

"Was part of your equipment, by any chance, an airplane?" pursued Quince.

"As a matter of fact, it was," admitted Frasier. "But I did *not* fly it from Brazil to Bolivia. I can prove it by—"

"You can prove it by a troupe of halfbreeds, providing they could be subpoenaed from the jungles, who can't speak English and don't keep diaries."

Before Frasier could retort, Quince turned to me.

"You, Canby, were in Morocco the entire year?"

"Yes," I said.

There ensued a bickering between Frasier and Quince. Quince kept his temper; Frasier didn't. They had never liked each other. Farr remained aloof and cool. Finally he went to the door, opened it, looked out. It was still snowing and a drift was forming on the porch.

I saw him look at the mantel clock, arching his brows in surprise that the night was so young. It was only ten-thirty. Our arrival at the lodge must have been shortly after seven.

LEAVING Frasier and Quince to their bickerings, I joined Farr.

"Farr," I demanded, "why do you assert that Westgaard was pulling our leg about that Inca treasure? You scoffed even to his face, offending him."

"Because," answered Farr, "the thing was too utterly implausible. A ton of gold! Bah!" he snapped his fingers.

"But why implausible?" I disagreed. "Gold plates have been found in many other hinterlands back from the old Spanish Main. Why not in Bolivia? To me, Farr, there was only one false note. Why did the normally generous Westgaard omit inviting us to join his extraordinary Bolivian expedition?"

Again Farr answered merely with a Frenchman-like spread of his palms. I was certain that Frasier and Quince, absorbed with their own bickerings, had not heard our brief discussion. Frasier now turned our way, addressing Farr:

"Let's find out just how Wes came to grief. If it's murder, he was either shot, knifed or clubbed. If clubbed, there should be a mark on his skull. If shot, there should be a bullet somewhere; and a stabber usually leaves his blade on the job."

Personally I preferred leaving that to the coroner, and so stated. Quince echoed me. But Farr, without a word, turned up the stairs. He was followed by Frasier.

They returned in about ten minutes. As he joined us, I noted that Frasier seemed pacified. There was a sheepish smile on his round face. Even Farr's habitually severe features gave an expression of distinct relief.

"I'm sorry, men," apologized Frasier, "for popping off with a halfcocked theory of violence. Westgaard simply fell off the roof, broke his leg, crawled up to his room, fainted from weakness and there died."

"He was neither shot, stabbed nor clubbed," amplified Farr. "At least, there's no sign of assault. Conceivably he might have been strangled, a means of murder which would not now show. But we may dismiss strangulation because Frasier and I find that his right leg bone, just below the hip, is broken cleanly. As cleanly as that."

To illustrate, Farr snapped a match into two pieces.

Quince was mopping cold sweat from his brow. His sigh was apparently of infinite relief. As terrible as had been the fate of Westgaard, it was not nearly so frightful as if he had been murdered by a comrade.

"To think," bemoaned Frasier, "that old Westgaard, hardy scaler of the Alps and Andes, should fall from the roof of his own house!"

"More likely the ladder slipped from under him as he was descending," suggested Farr. "That thawy morning would have made bad footing for a ladder."

"We can easily check the ladder theory," agreed Quince. "If it's correct, the ladder should now be lying beside the house, just where it fell."

Again he lighted the lantern. We all followed him from the house. The storm had now taken on the aspect of a blizzard. As we rounded the corner of the house, snow beat against us in a well nigh horizontal volley. It was pitch dark. But for the lantern we could not even have seen the flying flakes.

We circled the lodge, keeping close to the wall and kicking in the snow. At the rear Quince kicked against a prone ladder; after pawing in the snow we raised it to view.

It was a thirty-six-foot ladder, long enough, if inclined steeply, to reach the eaves of the house. I was sure that it had lain there a year after slipping under the weight of Westgaard.

We returned, shivering, to the living room and replenished the fire. How hellishly slow, I thought, was the passage of the night! For it still lacked ten minutes of eleven o'clock.

"Admitting that the fall broke Westgaard's leg, and admitting that it might also have bruised him and wrenched his back, yet why," I asked, "did he not crawl to his automobile instead of upstairs? Once in his car, he might hope to reach a doctor."

Farr picked up Westgaard's keys and jangled them.

"These," he theorized, "were probably up in his room. Without them he could not have started his ignition. In his pain he might also have sought the stimulation of liquor."

"Bull's-eye," agreed Frasier. "So with an exhausting effort he mounted to his room. Leg broken. Back possibly sprained, and we don't know how many bruises or internal injuries. In his room he fainted from sheer weakness. No doubt he became constantly weaker, even though he may intermittently have regained consciousness."

"Unquestionably he died there, helpless," assented Quince.

Captain Farr pursed his lips, staring into the fire without comment.

It was I who first expressed the obvious fallacy of the theory.

"If he died alone," I said, "what became of the treasure map, which he had shown us at breakfast and which we saw him pocket within the wallet in that very coat?"

"Maybe he put it in a safe place before going to the roof?" suggested Quince lamely.

"What place would be safer than his pocket?" I countered. "And what became of the plate of beaten gold?"

"A tramp or vandal," offered Frasier, "might have broken in, long after the body had become decomposed. The gold plate would mint three or four hundred dollars and was worth pilfering."

"But the desk where it was locked was not crashed," I objected. "Isn't it a little absurd to think that a vandal took the keys from the corpse, or from Westgaard's table, came down, unlocked the desk, stole the gold plate, relocked the desk and then returned the keys to the room upstairs? And if a vandal were on the job, why didn't he steal Westgaard's sixty-odd dollars of cash?"

Those were posers. Nevertheless Frasier tried to reconcile them.

"Maybe Westgaard," he suggested, "immediately after our departure put both the plate and the map in a safe place. We've only made a superficial search."

"All right, shoot at this one, then," I challenged. "Tonight, a year after the tragedy, we return. Frasier, you arrived first. You found the lodge locked did you?"

"Yes. I used my own key to enter."

"But the door has no spring lock," I reminded him. "It needs to be locked with a key. Who locked it? Certainly not Westgaard. He would not have locked the door after crawling through it, dragging a broken leg. In fact he could not have done so if his keys were upstairs. Too, his best chance of being rescued would be to leave the door invitingly open. And by our theory, he never returned downstairs."

They were all grave again, even grim. Quince was getting nervous; Frasier was or seemed to be getting suspicious. Farr became studious, five lean fingers tapping against those of the opposite hand; apparently he was absorbed in deep speculation.

"As for a vandal intruder," I went on, "what would the map have meant to him? Nothing. Westgaard explained it only to us. And what about a Bolivian coin which, tonight, was inadvertently tossed into a poker pot?"

Quince started.

"The coin?" he exclaimed. "Oh, yes, the coin!" Apparently he had forgotten.

FRASIER whacked a fist into his open palm.

"Canby," he cried, "you've led us right back to my original theory. Except that Westgaard was not assaulted. When one of us Restless Ramblers rambled back here, possibly to retrieve something personal he had forgotten, or possibly to talk Westgaard into including him in the Bolivian venture, he found Westgaard dead. Too late to help Westgaard, but it wasn't too late to help himself to both the map and the plate. He locked the lodge after his exit, with his own key, merely to delay discovery. He went to Bolivia, where he may or may not have unearthed the treasure. It makes no great difference; his major crime was in deserting the corpse of a comrade. This year he had to show up to keep from being suspected. In the poker game he might have unintentionally anted the veinte, thinking it a quarter. Or he might have done so intentionally, to equalize potential guilt among the four of us."

"Yes, and it was you, Frasier," said Quince in a tone of insinuation, "who suggested the poker game."

"Don't we always play poker?" retorted Frasier. "Anyway, I went to Brazil, where I said I was going. I didn't change my mind, building an alibi at Rockport, Maine."

As they fell to bickering I realized that Quince's cast iron alibi at a Maine village was in no way indicative that he had not stolen the map and plate. He could have remained snugly at home, saving the Bolivian salvage for a future year. And yet he could have created the impression that one of us had *already gone* to Bolivia by putting a Bolivian coin, bought at any coin shop, in the jackpot.

In that light, Frasier's alibi in Brazil and Farr's in Alaska were really more convincing than Quince's, who had intended a trip to Yucatan.

It still lacked five minutes of eleven. Never had I known a night to drag so slowly.

I joined Farr, who was stretched out in a deep chair at the end of the room. He seemed to have dismissed the mystery from his mind. His eyes were closed in apparent apathy, his entire attitude one of cold detachment.

"Once again I ask you, Farr, why from the very first you have refused to credit the treasure story?"

"Simply because I don't believe in fairy tales," he answered colorlessly. Try as I would, that was all I could get out of him. He closed his eyes, dismissing me.

For lack of better occupation, I went to the table and began to re-examine the booklet and papers taken from Westgaard's wallet.

What about this final page of an old letter from Westgaard's wife? Was it a potent clue? Why had Westgaard carried that half sentence around with him for seven years?

Then I took up the memo booklet in which the man had methodically logged his auto mileage. We had already perused the last entry. I now looked further back. I read a score of entries and, as I did so, I was struck by certain recurrent destinations. Rockport, Maine. Wilmington, Delaware. Poughkeepsie, New York. I became excited. I saw notations which destroyed every theory thus far expressed.

Then, as I continued to flip through the pages of the booklet, I came upon a faded and folded column clipped from a newspaper. There was a photograph illustrating the item; as I stared at it my senses began to reel. In a moment my wits returned, and I caught a flash of the truth.

I arose to pace the floor. I had found a lead, a convincing lead, and it furnished the foundation for a convincing theory. On it my brain started to work like a hot engine. Certain basic motives, heretofore obscure, suddenly became clear as crystal.

They dovetailed. They made sense. Their logic clicked, like the true tumblers of a safe, falling into place and revealing to me a hidden drama in Westgaard's life.

"Men," I cried, "I see daylight. At last I see why Westgaard had us, the Restless Ramblers, here year after year at his lodge."

Quince whipped around nervously. Frasier gaped at me. Farr, reclining in the deep chair with his long legs outstretched, did not move a muscle except to open his eyes.

"Didn't it ever seem strange to you," I expounded, "that Westgaard should have fostered these meetings? Didn't you ever have a feeling that there was a sham, a false note, somewhere?"

They only stared at me. I resumed:

"Our gatherings were promoted, mainly, by Westgaard, who was always host. Without him to reopen the invitation each year, we would soon have dispersed never to meet again. Isn't that a fact?"

Their silence seemed to concede the point.

"We're all globetrotters," I pursued, "but we each, I believe, have a home anchor. Mine's a room in New York. Quince keeps a bungalow on the Maine coast. Farr has a flat in Poughkeepsie, Frasier one in Wilmington. Yet Westgaard, who lived conveniently in Baltimore, never dropped in on any of us. Right?"

In turn they admitted that I was right.

"Which suggests," I went on, "that something other than sheer comradeship prompted Westgaard to promote our annual gatherings. I'm convinced now that he was rounding us up for an annual inspection. I'm convinced that his ritual of having us recite our adventures of the past year, and of having us discuss our plans for the succeeding year, was a ruse to check up on us."

"Spying on us?" bellowed Frasier.

"If you will, spying on us. Although no doubt the first meeting here in 1921 was a genuine gesture of hospitality, a follow-up of our chance meeting at the Alpine inn in 1920. That 1921 meeting should naturally have been the first, last and only convention here at the lodge. But on that occasion Westgaard stumbled upon evidence of a villainy which victimized him, which four years later caused the murder of his young wife, and which in the end brought doom to Westgaard himself. At the 1921 session, Westgaard learned that the villain was *one of us four men.* He did not know which. He spent the last seven years of his life trying, futilely, to find out. It was to watch us, to keep a string on us, that he urged us to come back year after year!"

Frasier's eyes were bulging; his mouth was a perfect circle in his beet-red face. Quince was pallid, so nervous that he was twisting his cigaret into bits. Farr sat watching me, unmoved. He was still the human icicle.

Yet he made the first comment:

"Canby, go write a book about that. But don't confuse fiction with real life."

"What I am mixing," I shot back at him, "are the only really natural motives yet advanced. They hold water. They click. Listen. A year ago Westgaard told us he had just come from Bolivia. But by the log of motorings shown in this mileage book—" I waved the little booklet at them—"he was never out of this country from March, 1927, to March, 1928. No pair of entries for that year are more than a week apart, and each motor destination is a town in the United States. Therefore Westgaard could not possibly have been on the Bolivian pampa."

"I told you he was pulling our leg," said Farr.

Quince and Frasier were speechless.

"At the Alpine inn in 1920," I recounted, "we became well acquainted with Westgaard's young, pretty and frivolous wife. For a week we were all of a gay party. A year later Westgaard evaded my inquiries about her. I presumed a separation. Now let us suppose that one of us, here at the lodge in 1921, inadvertently dropped this sheet of paper. Westgaard picked it up. He recognized the name, Effie, as well as his wife's handwriting."

Holding in reserve my real bombshell, the faded and folded news clipping featuring a photograph, I held up the scrap of letter which read:

> and you may be sure, my dear, that I'm counting the days until you come.
>
> Love,
>
> February 11, 1921 —EFFIE

"An inconsequential note from wife to husband!" commented Frasier.

"Inconsequential *if* from wife to husband," I retorted. "But does a man carry around an inconsequential letter for seven years? No. Yet he might well have carried around a letter from his wife to an interloper whose identity he, the husband, was constantly pursuing."

After letting them digest that, I went on:

"If the letter was dropped on this floor at the 1921 meeting, it certainly was dropped by one of us four men. Which? That was the problem which confronted Westgaard. Until he found it, he had not dreamed that guilt lay within our company. Then, picking up the letter, he saw that it must be so. And why not? What did he know of us? Only that we were adventurers, opportunists, soldiers-of-fortune, taking our fun where we found it. And he recalled the significant fact that it was just after meeting us at the Alpine inn that his wife deserted him. For whom? He did not know.

"So he proposed that we call ourselves the Restless Ramblers and meet here year after year. Thus he flung a subtle challenge at his wife's unknown lover. He no doubt thought that the man would, in shame, duck the 1922 meeting. But he didn't. He came brazenly. So Westgaard urged us all back the next year. And the next. And the next. Can't you hear the tumblers click, Farr?"

There was a faint amusement forming about the lips of Farr; nothing more. I continued:

"At each convention our host watched us covertly, listened to our stories, sized us up, found out about Quince's cabin on the Maine coast, about Farr's flat in Poughkeepsie and about Frasier's in Wilmington. He undoubtedly took steps to learn whether or not Effie Westgaard was living at one of those three places, while the man rambled."

I showed them entries in Westgaard's booklet of motor trip loggings. Many times the destination of a drive had been Rockport, Maine. As frequently it had been Poughkeepsie, New York. Also as frequently it had been Wilmington, Delaware.

"Spying on us, eh?" said Frasier.

"You seem to have doped it out about right, Canby," admitted Quince.

"Humph!" from Captain Farr. Then he yawned.

He seemed as bored as though I were telling a bedtime story. He was still stretched in the chair, languidly, eyes half closed, five lean fingers tapping against their mates.

FARR, the human icicle! Would he have attracted a young and frivolous woman like Effie Westgaard? Who could tell? He was tall, rugged, mysterious. A strong silent man of the North! Some women, I have heard, like that kind. And nine years ago Farr would only have been about forty. Though he was not handsome like Arnold Quince, he was more distinguished, certainly more virile. His coldly superior and grand dukish manner might easily have fascinated a girl of twenty-six. I decided that Farr, from a strictly romantic angle, could not be crossed from this list of eligibles.

Frasier. Too fat and stocky. But nine years ago, at the Alpine inn he had been rather slim. Just out of the Army, too, and still wearing his Sam Browne belt. I recalled that he had done a good deal of dancing that gay week, with Effie Westgaard.

Quince? The youngest of us, and the only one of us who might be called handsome. A smooth dresser and a natural mixer. Plenty of money, too.

Being innocent myself, it was Quince, Frasier or Farr. I didn't know which. And I felt sure that Westgaard had not known which, even at the hour of his death.

"Where does the Inca gold racket come in, then?" inquired Frasier testily.

"Since we now know that he had not been in Bolivia," I answered, "Westgaard must have displayed to us the gold plate for some guileful purpose. By theorizing a little, we can clearly expose the purpose. Let us suppose that Westgaard, in Italy in 1920, picked up a gold plate and presented it to his wife, the plate being the work of, say, a Florentine goldsmith of the 16th Century.

"A few months later the wife deserted Westgaard, taking along with her jewelry and other valuable belongings, including the gold plate. With these she joined her new favorite, who—"

"Wait a minute," broke in Frasier querulously. "Are you holding something up your sleeve, Canby?"

"Only one clue," I answered grimly. "I shall produce it now."

I took from the memo booklet the folded and faded news clipping.

"The date line," I told them, "is Los Angeles, the *Times,* issue of April 3rd, 1926." I read the clipping aloud:

### "TRASKMAN MURDER STILL UNSOLVED

#### No Clue to Identity of Sophie Traskman, Woman of Mystery

"Police are still looking for J. J. Traskman, alleged to have murdered his wife approximately a year ago in their Hollywood apartment.

"In spite of the fact that the Traskmans kept the apartment from the Spring of 1921 to the Spring of 1925, no surviving witness seems competent to identify, or even vaguely describe, Traskman. Unfortunately the manageress who rented the apartment to Traskman in 1921 was an elderly lady who died in 1924.

"Mrs. Traskman was well known to her neighbors. She often complained to them that her husband's travels kept him away most of the year. Beyond that, she never spoke of him. The apartment furnished no photograph of him, nor any clue as to his business."

At this point in the column there was inserted a cut of Mrs. Traskman. I passed the clipping first to Farr, then to Frasier, then to Quince. In turn they stared at the picture, amazed, agitated; even Farr showed a distinct shock.

Every one of them, as did I, recognized the likeness of Westgaard's wife, here portrayed only a few years older than when we had seen her at the Alpine inn. Effie Westgaard had beyond a doubt become Sophie Traskman.

I reclaimed the clipping and continued to read:

"On March 4th, 1925, Mrs. Traskman elatedly told her neighbor in the next apartment that Traskman was due home that evening after a long absence. The neighbor did not see him arrive, but, through the partition, she heard the Traskmans conversing. For awhile they were companionable, seemed to be celebrating with champagne. Then they

**began to quarrel. The woman begged Traskman to take her with him on his next trip. He refused. She wept, accusing him of being tired of her.**

**"Finally Mrs. Traskman threatened to return and ask the forgiveness of some person whose name the neighbor did not catch. This angered Traskman. The couple were still quarreling when the neighbor went to sleep.**

**"Four days later the apartment manageress went in with the weekly change of linens. She found the body of Mrs. Traskman upright in the bed closet, supported by a hook.**

**"Traskman was never found.**

**"During the inquiry, his victim became dubbed 'woman of mystery,' because no friend or kinsman ever came forward to offer testimony as to her origin. Detectives have in vain tried to trace this origin through an odd plate, about six inches in diameter and of beaten gold, which was found decorating the apartment plate rail. Goldware experts testified that the plate was probably the handiwork of some Florentine goldsmith of about the 16th Century.**

**"Since Mrs. Traskman died without any cash estate, and since she owed large charge accounts at various shops, her furnishings, including the gold plate, will soon be sold at auction to satisfy creditors."**

For a full minute after I finished reading, the room had the stillness of a tomb. The tension finally was broken, or rather aggravated, by Frasier.

"Do you mean to insinuate, Canby, that the man Traskman is now in this room?"

Before I could answer, Quince, in a tone unnaturally shrill, exclaimed—

"Why couldn't Westgaard himself have been Traskman?"

"No good, Quince," said Farr, who suddenly came to life. "If the Westgaards had for some reason taken on the Traskman alias, in which rôles husband had murdered wife, Westgaard wouldn't have been lugging around that clipping and gold plate. It's undoubtedly the same gold plate he showed us last year. Didn't I tell you his Inca story was a hoax?"

"But I don't grasp his motives!" complained Quince.

"Follow them through," I said. "From 1921 to 1925 the case contained no capital crime. Westgaard naturally wanted to know the name of the man who had despoiled his home, but until 1926 I doubt if he wanted any drastic vengeance. Most likely he did not want his wife back. He would be satisfied if he could merely solve the man's identity and denounce him. Yet when the villain had the consummate nerve to report in 1922, '23, '24, '25 and '26 as a guest under Westgaard's roof, when he continued to confront Westgaard with an air of bland innocence, the solution must have become more and more of an obsession with Westgaard. The longer the puzzle baffled him the more stubbornly he pursued it.

"But in the Spring of 1926 Westgaard returned from a *bona fide* ramble and chanced on the clipping I have just read. He went to Los Angeles; by then the woman had been dead and buried for a year.

"Why claim her? She had deserted him; he owed her nothing. Why shame the name of Westgaard by admitting that Sophie Traskman was Effie Westgaard?

"Yet he had a personal score to settle with Traskman, hypocrite of parts, who must be one of the Restless Ramblers. The score was now a grim one, born of a conflict which had long challenged Westgaard's wits. He would stalk it alone. Single-handed he would run the scoundrel down.

"So in Los Angeles he merely attended the creditors' auction and bid in the gold plate. He joined us here a year ago. He faked a map. He faked his story of Inca treasure. Then, when he had us agog with interest, he flashed the gold plate."

"Why?" inquired Quince.

"Because he knew that the one among us who had borne the alias of Traskman would know it for what it really was. Thus Westgaard challenged the man's guilt. He thought that the murderer would take hasty leave from our presence, which would have been a tacit confession. But he didn't. He stood pat. He pretended to swallow the Bolivian yarn, thereby leaving Westgaard right where he started."

"So *that's* why poor old Wes didn't invite us to join his expedition!" exclaimed Arnold Quince.

Frasier said—

"So after all it doesn't make any difference whether I was in Brazil this past year, or in—er, Alaska!" He fixed his eyes insinuatingly on Captain Farr.

Farr said nothing at all.

Which of them, I wondered, was so bafflingly acting a part? Naturally I recalled that Farr was the one of us who had not swallowed the Bolivian treasure yarn. He had scoffed from the first, even to the face of Westgaard. But he was deep. Had he foreseen all this? Had he scoffed in the interest of a later effect?

* * *

"PRODUCE your theory a little further, Canby," invited Quince. "What happened after we left here a year ago?"

"I think Westgaard broke his leg while descending a ladder after patching a leak on the roof. Probably he suffered other and internal injuries. He crawled up to his room for his key ring. There he expired. In the meantime our villain, traveling away from the lodge, was worried. Had Westgaard found him out? Just how much did Westgaard know? The gold plate was definite proof that Westgaard had visited the scene of the Traskman crime.

"By keeping a poker face, the man had avoided a showdown in our company. But he wasn't afraid to face Westgaard alone. The outrageous Inca story, patently a bait, was playing havoc with the murderer's nerves. It was plain that Westgaard knew something else which he hadn't tipped. What? Why not go back, pretending to return for some trinket, and face Westgaard alone?

He did. But he found Westgaard dead. Or possibly he found him unconscious and dying. Let us hope he found him dead."

There was a grunt from Captain Farr. I couldn't tell whether it was of scorn or consent. When I turned to him he was again reclining at ease, his eyes closed.

"What," I pursued, "would have been the murderer's mental reaction? Relief that Westgaard had not lived, or would not live, to expose him! The renegade alone knew that the Bolivian story was a hoax. The hoax was in his own favor, since the real history of the gold plate would, if known, mean a stirring and an airing of the Traskman crime. How best, then, could he keep the hoax from being revealed? That, he reasoned, could be accomplished by taking away the map and the gold plate. With the plate gone, no expert in goldware could be brought in to refute the Incan origin. With the map gone, no one could proceed to the physical landmarks described and thus learn that no cache existed. In brief, he could perpetuate the hoax by removing the only two exhibits which might expose it.

"So our man took the map from the wallet, overlooking the scrap of letter and the memo booklet. He took Westgaard's keys, came downstairs, unlocked the desk, removed the plate, relocked the desk, returned the keys upstairs and left the house, locking the door behind him."

"The infernal fiend!" said Frasier.

"As bad as the murder of the woman!" echoed Quince.

Farr looked from one to the other of them, amusedly, as much to say—

"That kind of talk will get you nowhere, my fine murderer!"

"Our villain," I continued, "presumed that some intruder would find the body. But yesterday, when Westgaard's fate was still unknown at his various clubs, he realized that the discovery would await the ninth convention of the Ramblers. By that time he realized the inevitability of the theory first expressed by Frasier—that a traitorous Rambler had stolen map and plate. That did not worry the renegade, who was confident that he had an airtight alibi against Bolivia. So he bought a Bolivian coin in a coin shop. When we convened he tossed it in a poker pot. Anything which dragged a herring over the real issue, the Traskman murder, was good grist for his mill."

Again came a grunt, either of scorn or assent, from Captain Farr.

Quince was nervous, perspiring, and wore the pallor of a ghost.

Frasier was far from ruddy. He said—

"Thank God I, for one, have a cast iron alibi against being in Los Angeles in March, 1925."

"So have I," echoed Quince.

Farr did not even bother to advance an echo of his own.

I said:

"No doubt the murderer has a perfect alibi against being there. He lived a double life. One of his lives was that of Traskman and he's proof against it. He is clever. No doubt he has a way of proving that his other identity was far away from California on March 5, 1925."

Frasier replenished the fire, then took a deck of cards and began playing Canfield.

The clock lacked twenty-five minutes of midnight. Must I keep this hideous vigil until morning? To avoid it I must either brave the storm or go to bed. I went to the door, opened it. A wall of wet, white crystals fell into the room. The snow was still driving. I waded through the porch drift and stepped into deeper snow on the ground. The fat flakes spanked my cheeks; shivering, I tramped back into the house and closed the door.

"Stay up as long as you like, men," I said. "I'm going to bed." I picked up my satchel, for I was resolved to isolate myself from a trio which surely included a murderer.

Quince flinched.

"You got more nerve than I have, Canby," he said. "I'm sticking right here by the fire."

I saw Frasier glance uneasily at the ceiling, Westgaard's room, containing the skeleton, being directly overhead.

Farr opened his eyes and said—

"Goodnight, Canby."

I took one of the oil lamps and mounted the stairs. Upon reaching the upper corridor, I gave a wide berth to the door of Westgaard's room, which was at the front, and passed swiftly to a rear compartment which on earlier visits I had called my own.

Its door was not locked. When I entered, it seemed to be just as I had left it a year ago. I closed the door, shooting the bolt; I was as squeamish, I confess, as a small boy who goes to bed in the dark.

I set down my lamp and satchel, then stooped to unlace my shoes. It was then that every sense went rigid; an appalling panic seized me, for I heard a human whisper. Only a mortal funk stifled my scream. For the whisper came in the voice of my old friend and host, Wesley Westgaard.

"Hush, Canby!" he cautioned. "For God's sake, don't give me away. It's I, Westgaard, and I'm no wraith. I'm as sound as you."

He appeared before me suddenly, very much alive. Whether he emerged from the closet or merely from a gloomy corner I did not know. Sight of him steadied me; the touch of him, as he put a warm finger on my lips, steadied me still more.

I saw that he wore upon his head a contraption similar to that worn by radio operators on ships.

"Don't speak above a whisper, Canby," he cautioned. "A year ago I broke my leg, but I've been sound for the last eight months."

He smiled his normal, gold-toothed smile.

"But what," I gasped, "does it all mean?"

"It means I'm challenging Traskman," he answered, becoming grim. "I challenged him last year with a gold plate. It didn't work. It was too mild; it did not pack sufficient punch to crash the mask of Traskman. The irony of it. Canby, is that I still don't know which of that trio I'm challenging. Somehow I've felt assured all along of your own innocence; that's why I'm here in your room."

HE SAW me staring at his headpiece. He took it off and tossed it on the bed.

"I rigged a telephonic diaphragm in the living room," he explained, "with wires leading here. I listened in on every word of your discourse, hoping that the man might make some slip which would give him away. But he hasn't. Traskman might be Frasier; he might be Farr; he might be Quince."

"You've confided in the police?" I managed to gasp.

"No, for two good reasons. First, when Effie deserted me in 1920, she also deserted our six-year-old child. Since then I've maintained the child, a girl, in a boarding school. She's still there, fifteen years old. She was twelve when I learned of the Traskman crime in 1926, Put yourself in my place, Canby. To the child, her mother had just "gone away"; gradually I had let her assume a natural death. Don't you see that twenty-four hours after I consulted the police, my daughter and the whole world would inevitably know all about this awful business?"

I did see it, perfectly. Suddenly a great pity welled in my heart, and I laid a consoling hand on Westgaard's shoulder. Knowing about the child gave me an insight into the man's mental state, explained much of the fervor and persistence with which, single handed, he was out to strip a mask from Traskman.

"Moreover," he continued, "to let the police in on this would do no good. I heard your theory tonight, Canby. Up to a certain point it's substantially true, but it does not make a case which would convict in court. There's only my word to prove that I picked up the scrap of letter here at the lodge in 1921. When each of you denied dropping it, a grand jury would say I must have dropped it myself. They might even say I'm Traskman."

"But alibis—" I began.

He cut me short.

"I've spent years trying to check them. Every one seems to have an alibi, which means that one of them must be a cleverly erected illusion."

"But how did you survive the broken leg?"

"I really fell from the ladder and broke it," he assured me, "and fainted on the floor of my room. When I came to, the gold plate and the faked map had been stolen. The facts that nothing else had been stolen and that the lodge door had been locked during my unconsciousness indicated a visit by Traskman. I might have died there on the floor; would have but for a bottle of brandy in a lower bureau drawer. That gave me the strength to reach my car; after driving it a mile I fainted again and crashed into a tree. The motorist who found me presumed that I had broken the leg in the crash. He got me to a hospital and, as I lay there, I saw how I might make capital of Traskman's act of deserting me to die at the lodge with a broken leg. I saw material for a real challenge, drastic, startling, inevitably certain to expose Traskman."

I began to see rifts of light. Westgaard resumed:

"So I gave an assumed name at the hospital, made no mention of this lodge and let them suppose that the auto crash was responsible for the broken leg. After discharge from the hospital I kept away from all clubs and resorts where I'm known. My ruse was to let Traskman, when he met here this year with the Ramblers, seem to discover the corpse of his victimized comrade."

"But how?"

He nodded grimly in the direction of his own room at the front.

"It was easy," he explained, "to procure a skeleton from a medical museum, easy to break its leg, easier yet to buy a gold tooth from a dental surgeon, and to utilize a quantity of raw, boneless beef to decompose in exactly the same clothing in which Traskman last saw me."

I shivered. Westgaard said:

"Tonight, Canby, I hope to startle Traskman into a shameful retreat. He'll hardly dare stand his ground when I confront him in the flesh."

"What? Let him escape?" I protested.

"Afoot, floundering in the drifts, he won't get far tonight," answered Westgaard. He nodded toward the bureau. On it I saw a heap of spark plugs. Also I became aware of wet snow sticking to Westgaard's boots. Evidently he had descended via the rear stairs in the past hour and stripped the spark plugs from every automobile on the premises.

Outside the storm had found voice. A driving, relentless blizzard now, and I could hear it whistling through the pines. It made me shiver, though I was well nigh past shivering. Surely no fugitive would get far tonight.

"Go down and join those three men, Canby," instructed Westgaard. "Watch them. On the last stroke of midnight I shall come, personally, to challenge Traskman."

I went back downstairs.

In the living room I found Frasier still playing solitaire. Quince was standing by the fire. Farr continued to recline in the long, deep chair, eyes closed, muscles relaxed, the spike of his beard resting on his chest.

"It's no use," I told them, "I can't sleep. Too ghastly an atmosphere!"

Which was the blessed truth.

I sat down, took an old magazine and pretended to read. Over it I saw that the clock registered nine minutes of midnight.

Nine creeping, ghoulish minutes must go by; then Westgaard would come with his final challenge. Only one of them had elapsed when Farr opened his eyes and asked, ironically—

"Did you look in on the cadaver, Canby, and pick up any new clues?"

"You bet my life I didn't," I assured him.

From Frasier came a hoarse, unnatural chuckle.

Quince moistened his lips and ran a finger around between his collar and a perspiring neck. He said nothing.

"Since we've got to keep this beastly vigil," suddenly suggested Frasier, "why not deal a little poker?"

Quince answered querulously:

"Why? Want to get rid of another Bolivian coin?"

"No," snapped Frasier. "Just wanted to see if *you* had any more of 'em."

It was no temper for a poker game, and we did not play.

The long hand of the clock crawled slowly toward the zenith of its arc. Nearer came the crisis, when a final and infinitely bold challenge would confront Traskman. Could the renegade stand his ground? Could the murderer of Westgaard's wife stand pat while the very ghost of Westgaard stalked down those stairs? What human flesh could meet a test like that? Even I, guiltless and expectant of the challenge, could barely survive the suspense.

Frasier? Quince? Farr?

Or was it none of them? Was there some foreign solution which cheated all our logic?

It was four minutes of the hour. My blood was like mercury, my nerves like taut wires. My brain throbbed in chaos. Was I dreaming? Had I really seen Westgaard in the flesh upstairs? Had I gone mad? In mounting dread I sat there with eyes glued upon the stairs down which must descend the challenger of Traskman.

When the clock struck the first note of the hour I nearly jumped from my chair. I whirled, facing Farr. He seemed to be asleep. I turned to Frasier, saw him calmly dealing a new layout of Canfield. Quince was lighting a cigaret, using for a torch a scrap of paper which he had held to the coals of the hearth.

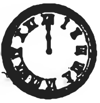
Noting the character of this scrap, I sprang forward and struck it from his hand.

"What the devil are you up to,

Quince?" For what he had burned was the final page of the letter signed "Effie," a vital exhibit of the evidence. Since not one of us had had authority to appoint himself custodian of the exhibits, they had lain all this while on the table.

"Sorry," answered Quince defensively. "I didn't notice what it was. I—"

"Caught him in the act, did you?" barked Frasier. "Burned his love letter while we weren't looking, eh? Well, Farr, I guess that lets you and me out."



THEN chimed the twelfth and last stroke of midnight. Farr slightly aroused himself, opened one eye and stared cockeyed at Quince.

At that same instant I distinctly heard a sound in the room above us. It came from Westgaard's room, and was a scraping, shuffling sound as though some one were awkwardly arising from the floor.

Considering that we had all seen a skeleton stretched on that floor, it was a sound of ominous import. Evidently the others were attentive to it. Farr's chin had tilted upward and he stared at the ceiling. Quince jumped, cocked an ear and cried—

"What was that?"

"Damn!" came hoarsely from Frasier. His lips parted and his pipe clattered to the floor.

Immediately I heard a second shuffle above, and then steps crossing the room. By its tempo it was a limping tread. A heavy tread followed quickly by a light one, an interval as though a lame walker were regaining his balance, then the heavy clump followed quickly by a light step. Then we heard a door slam. The slam rang eerily through the house and even I felt a tinge of panic. Quince jumped as if he had been shot. Frasier shuddered as though worms were creeping up his back. Farr kept his seat, but he was plainly startled.

The limping footsteps had by now emerged from Westgaard's room and were in the upper hall. Deliberately they proceeded to the head of the stairs.

Then they began a painfully slow descent. It seemed an age before the lame descender reached the bend of the stairs. Suddenly he came in full sight on the landing. We saw Westgaard.

There he stood, gold tooth and all.

He wore a white flannel nightgown, slippers and an old-fashioned sleeping cap. He took a limping step on the landing and then came on down. His hands were slightly outstretched, as though groping. He descended with slow caution, giving the impression of a man walking in his sleep.

His eyes were wide open, though. He stared straight ahead of him. He seemed to look through us rather than at us. When he reached the lower hall, Frasier cried hoarsely—

"Is it you, Westgaard?"

No answer from Westgaard.

Quince, at my right elbow, was breathing like an engine. Near my left, Frasier leaned heavily against the table and stared over it at the intruding apparition. Farr sat up quite straight, but he did not arise from his chair.

Westgaard, having reached the lower hall, limped across it without paying us the slightest attention. He limped to the front door. He shot its bolt as though he were a householder who had come down to lock up for the night.

Near the door was a hall window. Westgaard tried the fastening of this window and found it secure. He pulled down its shade. He turned, directly facing us, still looking through us rather than at us, and came limping on into the main room.

He limped one by one to its two windows, tried each fastening, pulled down each shade. He then turned and limped to the mantel. As he passed Quince, Quince shrank from him.

"Wes, you aren't—?" words failed Quince.

Westgaard seemed not to have heard him. Not one word did he speak. Arriving at the mantel, he took down the big clock and wound it. He then stooped. There was a small hearth shovel among the tools of the poker rack. With this he began covering up what few embers remained of our fire. He buried every glow in dead ashes.

Next he arose and came to the table. He took up the oil lamp while we, his four guests, gaped like dolts. Originally there had been three lamps. One was in the kitchen now and the other had been taken upstairs. Westgaard thus commandeered our only remaining light. With this held aloft, he limped to the foot of the stairs.

Step by step he ascended. He rounded the landing and passed out of sight, though we could still hear his progress on the upper flight. Not until the steps were crossing the upper hallway did I realize he had left us completely in the dark.

Again we heard a door slam. Again we heard steps crossing the room directly over us. They stopped at its center. I heard a sound more like a sob than an oath; it might have come from either Quince or Frasier.

We stood in inky darkness; there was not even a faint glow from the hearth. I groped a step or two forward. I heard some one else moving. He stumbled. Suddenly Farr's voice spoke gruffly—

"There ought to be a candle on the mantel."

I groped for the mantel, reached it and felt along its length for a candle. My hand touched the icy fingers of another man, likewise groping, and I heard Farr say:

"I've found it. Got a match?"

I fumbled for a match, tried to strike it, broke it and then fumbled for another.

This time I lighted it, but instantly a cold draft swept by and blew it out. I lighted another by cupping it under my palm. There stood Farr facing me with a candle. I held the match to the wick until the candle took flame.

In its feeble, flickering glow I saw Farr and I saw Quince. I also saw that the front door, only a few minutes ago bolted by Westgaard, was standing wide open. The storm was drifting in. *Frasier was not in the room.*

None saw him go. No one heard him go. We saw only that he was gone.

He had fled like a renegade into the night. I could feel the tenseness as the full shock of his absence struck both Farr and Quince.

Frasier was gone. Only an open door accused him. Its voice was but a silent, frigid breath, yet it read clearly aloud the title of a felon. It spoke more potently than any hundred of tricky clues. It stunned me with conviction.

Only for a brief ten seconds did I see that open door. Then it belched a gust that extinguished the candle which Farr held aloft.

I heard Westgaard call out from the landing of the stairs:

"The door is open. Some one left the house; who was it?"

Standing in total darkness Farr, Quince and I answered in a single voice—

"Traskman!"

# The CAMP-FIRE

## *A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers*

A FEW words, by way of introduction to the members of Camp-fire, from Donald Barr Chidsey, whose serial, "Glenallan of the Clans" beginning in this issue, is his first story in our pages:

Kawela Bay, Oahu, Hawaiian Islands

For years I'd been fascinated by Charles Edward Stuart, and I'd read every book available on the subject. But I'd never been to Scotland; and being a mere wandering newspaper reporter, of course I had no money. In time, however, by selling everything I owned except the very clothes on my back—selling even some of my books—I managed to scrape together a few hundred dollars; and off I went.

I went without any baggage. The only difficulty was that of convincing baggage men, porters, customs agents and the like—not to mention fellow passengers—that I really didn't have even a knapsack. Time and again I was obliged to explain that there was room in my flannel shirt pockets for a folding toothbrush, shaving materials, a comb and a nailfile, and room in the hip pockets of my tweed trousers for an extra pair of socks and two handkerchiefs. This was plenty. I used to wash one pair of socks and my underwear each night at the inns. Sometimes the underwear wouldn't be altogether dry by morning; and this was a shame.

AFTER a tour of London bookshops, I hit the Great North Road for Edinburgh, and there I visited divers cousins, and then departed for the Highlands. *That* was the beginning of the real walk! I tramped over the country where Prince Charlie had fled for his life, poked my head into caves where he had crouched while the searching redcoats passed, snooped along the wild west coast, drank a toast to the Jacobite cause (in Johnny Walker Black Label, if you please) at the western end of Loch Finnan, where Charlie had stood when he rallied the clans, and otherwise gathered unto myself the local color I sought.

Oddly enough, I still had a little money left. So I took in Paris, went broke promptly, got a job on the *Paris Times,* and started "Bonnie Prince Charlie." A year later it was published in New York and London.

Comparative prosperity having descended upon me, trips to Europe and elsewhere are almost commonplace these days; but there can be never another like the first one. I've written about greater men since then—Marlborough and Sir Walter Raleigh and others—but I've never got so much fun from orthodox research work as I got from that hike through the bleak Highlands.

"GLENALLAN of the Clans" I wrote not so much to show the personality of Charles Edward Stuart, which is sufficiently well known, but rather to show the nature of those grim fighters who followed Charles Edward through the terrible hardships of a civil war and the even more terrible hardships of that subsequent hide-and-seek game he played in western Scotland with the whole British army.

Incidentally, contemporary narratives describe Prince Charles as the greatest hiker of them all. He had long legs and the body of an athlete, and it was not at all uncommon for him to keep going all day and all night and part of the next day. Born and bred in southern Italy, he still managed to wear out the hardy Scottish mountaineers in their own territory. Maybe this means more to me than the ordinary reader. Many's the night I lay in bed, in some remote inn of Lochaber, listening to the rain on the roof, feeling my leg muscles ache, and shivering with the cold—though it was April or May. I think they were tough babies in those days, even the princes and kings, even the Stuarts. Perhaps especially the Stuarts. —DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

* * *

IN connection with his story, "House of the Dead", in this issue, William Corcoran sends in the following letter:

New Preston, Connecticut

Narratives of prison escape are likely to verge so on the incredible that I feel compelled to add a footnote to "House of the Dead". Since penology became almost a minor hobby of mine, I have no need to stretch the imagination to manufacture astounding instances of escape. Those of record far exceed in ingenuity any that could be invented. There is, just for an instance, the German convict who gnawed at two enormous timbers in his cell for three persistent months in 1907 and literally chewed his way to freedom. When recaptured three weeks later his teeth were found to be worn to stumps and his jaw muscles developed to gorilla-like proportions. Even more incredible than this feat would be the nerve of the author inventing such a story. The prisoner spending months alone in his cell has much more time for the exercise of the inventive faculty than any author.

The man whose persistence gave me the idea for the story in this issue was known during the height of his notoriety as "the most dangerous man in North America". He is still alive. He is—by a coincidence also beyond any writer's privilege to invent—now enjoying freedom on a pardon which was granted to him as I was halfway through the writing of my story. I was a little taken aback to read of his release in the daily press, but I went on with the tale. For obvious reasons I shall not identify him further. I wish him well. His prison break was long ago, and I am indebted to him for a yarn.

Certain details in the story are fact, others are not. There is such a place as the "ice-box" in the story, and the routine of administration is practically the same. The actual steel saw in the real escape was smuggled in as narrated. It was the inevitable flaw in the "Impregnable Brandon", the human factor that never can be entirely forfended. Naturally most of the rest of the narrative is imaginary. The whole amounts to pure fiction, but it can be taken without a single grain of salt.

To sustain that statement let me produce the following letter, which was forwarded in care of *Adventure* following the publication of my story, "The Blue Wall". After a brief salutation the writer goes on to say:

"I was interested in both the story and your Camp-fire letter, as the two instances you cited somewhat paralleled an experience of mine of much more recent date. Perhaps a brief outline might interest you as ammunition to forestall some skeptical reader's doubt as to whether such a project as the tunnel you mention could be made under the noses of prison guards.

"One year ago I, together with eighteen others, tunneled out of——, a State prison farm in——, and during the course of our work, which took a month, no guard or official suspected us, nor were we disturbed in any way during the completion of a 65 ft. tunnel 4 ft. deep. We were held in a wire enclosure, an acre or so, with armed guard at 100 ft. intervals outside. Our tools consisted of a homemade pick battered out of the leg of a bed and a blanket to pull back the dirt, which was distributed in the attic of one of the three buildings inside the fence.

"I just skim the facts, as space forbids all the details. I mention it all merely to bear out your contention that such an escape is possible. Incidentally, every one escaped, and none were caught for days, something new in the annals of ——prison history. Some few were eventually caught, I don't know how many, because, as you may imagine, —— is not a part of the country I hanker for just now.

"Use this as you please except for my name. It isn't my real name but I'd rather not see it in print none the less. Sometime I may be unlucky enough to be taken back, and even an occasional prison guard reads *Adventure* (or has some prisoner read it for him!).

(signed)——

"The name, merely that you may know the facts as related here are facts and not something second hand."

The letter appears as he wrote it, except for the substitution of dashes for names. The State in question might as well share the anonymity of the writer. The postmark on the envelop was of a city far removed from the scenes of his misdeeds. If he has mended his ways in his new surroundings, let this convey to him the thanks of one who remains professionally impartial. I can not condone the flaunting of duly constituted authority—but escapes certainly do make thrilling fiction material.

—WILLIAM CORCORAN

* * *

THE other day I happened to be talking to a well known explorer about explorers. During our chat, I mentioned a book about a jungle expedition, which was currently receiving a good deal of notice in the newspapers.

"I know the author," said the explorer. "A good chap, and knows how to write. I met him just after he got back from the trip. It was the first one of the kind he'd ever taken, you know. Had always worked in an office before that, until he came into a little money. Told me that wild bit of country had always fascinated him, from what he'd heard of it. So he decided he must go down there. Said he always felt the place was a distinct challenge to him.

"Here's the funny thing about it: He admitted to me that all the time he was thinking of the trip, all the time he was making preparations, he was fearfully *afraid* of the jungle, and all it may connote. He confessed to me that not one moment during his several months in the bush did he feel entirely at ease; that a good part of the time he was in something of a cold sweat. In fact, I could see he hadn't got over the feeling yet! I'm not belittling the man, understand. I think he deserves every kind of credit. And I doubt he could have written such a vivid, absorbing book if he'd felt as hardboiled about it as most of the rest of us explorer chumps."

I smiled, and said to him:

"But I don't understand. What do explorers and adventurers go places for? Aren't they drawn by the irresistible element of danger? Don't they all feel it a challenge?"

He shrugged, and it was obvious it wasn't a pose.

"I don't know," he replied. "I go only *because it's good fun.*"

The above conversation recurred to my mind when I read the following letter from Gordon Young of our Writers' Brigade. I think it answers, either directly or by implication, some of the interesting questions Mr. Young poses. I'm sure that most of you, writers and readers both, have strong personal views about the real meaning of the word "courage", which is the chief topic of Mr. Young's letter:

Los Angeles, California

The theme of a great number of *Adventure* stories is courage and personal bravery. That has been the theme of epics, sagas, romances, ballads, from the time when men first gathered about camp-fires in the forest and caves and listened to the songs and tales of their fellows. Such stories, or at least stories about such themes, seem never to become stale from being often heard. And I wonder what the men of our own Camp-fire would care to say about the instances of bravery and courage that seem most splendid and admirable?

The longer I live the more sure I become that nearly all men and women are brave. I think the sustained popularity of stories that tell of heroism can be possible only because of the often secret and modestly concealed response in the feelings of those who read.

IN MOST cases I believe that what is called *cowardice* is nothing but unfamiliarity with danger. A kind of stage fright. The actor is not called a coward because his knees shake and mouth goes dry as he stands in the wing waiting for his cue. The experienced soldier doesn't call the recruit a coward because he is squeamish the first few times under fire.

Contempt for death seems to be the basis for most of the conspicuous instances of heroism. I do not think that many people are actually afraid of death. I think that nearly every one shirks from the shock that causes death. The distinction that I have in mind is that what men fear is the pain of the fatal blow rather than the result of the blow. Every one realizes that death must come sooner or later; and on the whole very few people seem greatly to dread dying, but nearly everyone tries desperately to avoid the shock, the pain, the blow, that brings death.

I HAVE been told by a man who has been greatly honored for heroism that as a matter of fact he went into the battle wanting to be killed, trying to get himself killed. He had the luck to do crazy, reckless things and escape unhurt. In other words, in trying to be wounded, or even killed, so he would escape from the hardships of the soldier's life, he won medals for conspicuous gallantry. I wonder if he was in any sense really a hero?

Some general, sometimes said to have been Napoleon, described the ideal soldier as one who fought as if trying to get himself killed.

DURING the Great War the hardboiled top-soldiers would often snarl in half friendly jeering, "Who wants to live forever? Come, on, let's go!" The first historical record of that remark places it in the mouth of Frederick the Great, who shouted at a retreating soldier, "Scoundrel, would you live forever! Get back into battle." It is known that Frederick himself ran from his first battle—but never from another. There is also the classic story of Ney, named by Napoleon as the bravest of brave, who once as a battle was beginning looked down at his trembling knees and said, "Shake, you cowards! And if you knew where I was going to take you before this day is over you would shake worse than that!"

I wonder if it is the opinion of our Camp-fire that a man who is described as "fearless" can be anything like as courageous as one who determinedly carries his trembling knees into battle? I do not at all infer that it is only in battle that one can show courage; but I would like to know what some of our readers think is the highest type and instances of courage.

NEARLY every one knows the story of Arnold von Winkelried. Certain historians discredit its authenticity, but the story is nevertheless typical of what is generally considered the highest kind of heorism. At the battle of Sempaeh the mail-clad Austrians presented such an unbroken array of pikes that the Swiss mountaineers could not break through. Winkelried with the cry of "Make way for liberty!" threw away his sword and rushed forward, grasping all the pikes he could reach and burying them in his own body, thus making a breach in the Austrian ranks; and the Swiss charged over his dead body.

Now probably every Swiss in the forefront of the battle was as willing to die as Winkelried, and many did; yet his name alone has been immortalized. I would not detract in the least from his traditional glory. I do inquire as to why he should seem so conspicuously superior to all of his companions who were quite as ready to die as he? For after all, why should the dramatic touch, the almost theatrical flare, seem so essential to our admiring appraisal of heroism? I am not trying to kick up an argument, but would like to see a discussion.

For many years I have been familiar with the story of what seems to me quite as admirable an instance of bravery as is humanly possible. If there is any Camp-fire interest in the various types and instances of heroism I shall be glad to recite the facts. All that is known of them was related by the hero himself, and having reread the account many times, I am sure that he did not have the faintest feeling that he did anything heroic.

I shall be much interested in what others will have to say. —GORDON YOUNG

* * *

ONE of you asked an effective way to deal with polecat neighbors with too social tendencies. Here are a couple of suggestions:

Cooperstown, New York

In the Ask Adventure section I read Brice Toole's letter desiring to eliminate skunks without the perfume. Am making bold to write you my methods of doing same:

I have caught thousands of animals, and have found the safe way is to catch them in a box-trap and then sink the trap in water deep enough to cover the trap. A rock heavy enough to sink trap when placed on the cover does the trick very nicely.

In drowning a skunk in this fashion, there will be some perfume, but if the trap is left in the water for an hour or so it will not be very noticeable. A skunk caught in this kind of a trap may be carried most any distance if it isn't thrown about. I have carried them a mile on a wheel-barrow and never had the skunk scent.

SHOOTING is no good, at least not with the Eastern brand of skunk. Have literally blown the fore parts of them away with a shotgun, at very close range, and they always perfume.

A blow across the back with a club or a piece of gaspipe will do the trick if it breaks the back. I doubt very much if the skunk will eat the phosphorus rat poisons, though I have never tried them.

I always use the box-trap and have taken them from grain bins, barns, out of cellars and most every place that a skunk can get, and never had one perfume up a place yet.

Hope you will pass this along to the folks bothered with the skunk pest.

—J. S. GAZLEY

P.S.—In using the box-trap, trap should be made long enough to take in skunk, tail and all.

New London, Connecticut

We were able to drive skunks from under a house in Arizona in the following manner:

The house was on a low stone foundation, no cellar. We bored a hole over the place where we could hear the young ones "crying" and poured a good sized bottle of ammonia down through the hole. The skunks disappeared—no bad after effects.

—MRS. T. E. PEACOCK

* * *

A BIT from L. G. Blochman, in connection with his story, "Quicker Than the Eye", in this issue:

New York City

Should any one take me to task for writing "Peking" in "Quicker Than the Eye", instead of "Peiping," which is the new official spelling, all I can say is that I am just an incorrigible sentimentalist. While I am not one of those reactionaries who refuses to write Oslo for Christiania, Leningrad for St. Petersburg, Istanbul for Constantinople—I will even write Liubliana for Laibach—the twisting of the last syllable of Peking (which means *capital*) arouses me. It seems to me a vain effort to strip the prestige and glory from the Northern Capital to the advantage of Nanking's "rococo facade." It will take more than the name "Northern Peace" to remove from Peking that imperial air that has been centuries in accumulating. And anyhow, the Pekingese never called his city Peking. The accepted transliteration of the Chinese characters is "Pei-ching", which is pronounced "Bay-jing".

—L. G. BLOCHMAN

* * *

A READER'S letter taking exception to some of the statements in William Wells' recent article in our pages about mountain lions:

Salem, Oregon

In your September 15th issue is an article by one William Wells under the caption "The Myth of the American Panther". In effect, at least, he states the panther does not scream. This statement is absolutely false. He gives the impression he has killed them with knives, clubs and rocks. Such statements conclusively prove to me that he has probably never seen a panther.

No lion that ever lived can catch a deer, though lying down, if the lion has to make two jumps to get to the deer.

The lion, as it is called in the Rocky Mountain States and in California, is known as cougar in Oregon. It is the male panther. A female is neither lion nor cougar. The cougar sometimes reaches the length of 11 ft. 8 in. Panthers do destroy some deer, but not many.

These statements of fact are based on over 65 years experience in this State, where I was born in a log cabin. I am fed up with such silly stories as the one of Wells, so misleading to those who read them.

—L. H. McMAHAN

According to our custom, I passed the above on to the author, and here is Mr. Wells' reply:

Portland, Oregon

The editor of *Adventure* has forwarded a letter in which you take exceptions to statements concerning cougar (mountain lion, *Felis concolor*) in an article of mine appearing recently in that magazine. As to my never having heard a cougar scream, you will have to take my word for that because, you know, I really never did.

Your statement that apparently I know nothing about the animals is not, however, entirely correct; and I shall endeavor to set you right on that point:

AS FAR as I know I was the first person to use foxhounds for cougar hunting in the Rocky Mountains, sending to Kentucky for some in 1888, not being able to hear of any in the West. From that time until 1905 I maintained the pack, hunting cougar extensively in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and Montana. I never kept any record of the number of cougar I killed, but it is probable over a thousand, as they were very plentiful, and I have killed as many as four adult cougar in a day.

During 1893-4-5-6, in company with Mr. A. G. Wallihan, of Lay, Colorado, the noted photographer of Rocky Mountain game in their native haunts, we photographed many cougar, the collection being claimed by the late President Roosevelt, and many other well known sportsmen, as being the finest ever taken.

ABOUT 1897 Mr. Wallihan published a book, "Camera Shots at Big Game", the introduction being by Mr. Roosevelt (as he was then).

Owing to a typographical error in the introduction—in the first copies—my name was given as Frank, but this was corrected in the later editions, and of course in the body of the book my correct name was used. I do not know where a copy of this book could now be obtained but, being copyrighted, it is of course in the Congressional Library at Washington.

An illustrated article on cougar, using some of these photographs, will soon appear in *Field and Stream,* and I have suggested to the editor of *Adventure* that if he cares to do so, he ask the editor of *Field and Stream* to be allowed to look at the photographs.

ALSO, the files of *Forest and Stream* during the nineties, when the noted authority on the West, George Bird Grinnell, was editor, and my friend Emerson Hough a contributor, contain some articles of mine on cougar. As a matter of fact, my dear sir, I am considered an authority on the game animals of the Rocky Mountains.

All this happened more than thirty years ago, some of it forty-five, but if any of the gentlemen named below are still alive, I have no doubt they will confirm what I say:

H. D. Sheldan of Detroit, Mich. Mr. Sheldan was the son-in-law of Gen. Russell Alger, at one time secretary of war, and has killed many cougar while hunting with me.

Ambrose Oldland of Meeker, Colorado.

A. G. Wallihan of Lay, Colorado.

To iudentify myself, I am the William Wells who, together with S. C. Patterson and my brother Frank, ran the famous Marvine Lodge on the White River in Colorado, to which sportsmen came from all over the world to hunt in the Rocky Mountains.

NOW let us take up other of your statements: I know from actual tests that a cougar, from a standing start, can for two hundred yards outrun the fastest greyhound or staghound—dogs which have proved that if they could get within fifty yards of an antelope (which was easily done in those days) they could overhaul and pull down the antelope. And a deer is much slower than an antelope. Mr. Wallihan and myself made repeated attempts to photograph a speeding cougar, but no lens, shutter or plate obtainable at that time—and we used the best—was fast enough; all we could get being a blur.

All this is fully covered in my forthcoming article on photographing cougar, and I shall take pleasure in letting you know when it appears.

As to your statement that cougar reach a length of over eleven feet from end of nose to tip of tail, that is absurd, as that would make them equal in size to the tiger of India, which rarely reaches eleven feet.

I challenge you to produce a cougar, dead, alive or mounted, even nine feet from tip to tip. Failing that, produce a skin which a competent taxidermist will declare came from a cougar nine feet in length.

I HAVE seen mounted skins eleven feet in length, but any one could see that they had been stretched at least three feet, and the only true test is measuring the animal itself.

Personally I know little of the number of deer killed in Oregon by cougar, although woodsmen of my acquaintance tell me that it is very large. In the old days in the Rocky Mountains, before the country was settled and cattle and horses brought in, the cougar lived principally on the deer, which swarmed by hundreds of thousands. Afterward the cougar became very destructive to live stock, especially to colts and the younger horses. In fact, in certain localities it was impossible to raise horses on the open range, the cougar getting all the colts and many of the mares. This was the reason why I built up a pack of dogs to hunt cougar, it being the only successful method of cleaning them out, for it was get rid of the cougar or go out of horse raising, one or the other.

—WILLIAM WELLS

*OUR Camp-fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance.*

*If you are come to our Camp-fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.*

# ASK Adventure

## *For Free Information and Services You Can't Get Elsewhere*

### Mississippi Steamboatin'

A PILOT'S job has not changed much since Mark Twain's day.

*Request:*—"In several of the local newspapers recently there have been articles and editorials commenting on the greatly increased traffic on the Mississippi and its Midwestern tributaries, notably the Illinois; this increase being due to the Federal Government's interest in the St. Lawrence-to-the-Gulf system. These newspaper accounts have stated that, in spite of the present business depression, river traffic of the heavier type has increased six fold in the past twelve months. They also stated that, owing to the falling off of river traffic in the past decade, there is at present a great scarcity of competent pilots, and that young men are being trained now for these positions. In connection with this, will you please answer the following questions:

What are the general duties of a river pilot? Where and to whom does one apply for a position as apprentice, and is it true that these are in demand at present?"

—H. A. SINCLAIR, Bloomington, Illinois

*Reply*, by Mr. George A. Zerr:—It will take several years of hard work before you will be able to read the water.

The general duties of a river pilot are to stand watch in the pilot house, from eight to twelve and more hours, depending on what section of the inland rivers the pilot is on duty. He must know every bend in the river, every mark on shore, including rocks, houses, towns, Government light aids; every obstruction to navigation, such as sand bars, water intake piers, bridge piers, locks and dams; and he must be able to distinguish shoal from deep water and must be able to judge distances, especially if he is pushing a tow of barges 800 feet or more.

The depression now prevalent also exists on the rivers. There are a lot of first class pilots out of work now and, if there will be a demand for more boats to be placed in the trade, these will be called on first. However, apprentices generally apply to the transportation master or the landing boss. It is almost certain that pilots will be in demand in years to come. To become a striker pilot on the Federal Barge Line boats, operating on the Mississippi river, later on the Illinois and Missouri rivers, one must already have a first class pilot's license. Applications must be made to Captain C. E. Patton, general superintendent of operations, Memphis. I believe the wages are $92.50 per month; naturally board is included. Private concerns do not require a striker pilot to have a license and generally they do not carry one; however, they must have served on deck of steamboats.

I am quoting a paragraph from the General Rules and Regulations prescribed by the Board of Supervising Inspectors, U. S. Department of Commerce, Steamboat Inspection service.

"Experience Required for License as Pilot: Paragraph 34:—No original license for pilot of any class shall be issued to any person, except for special license for steamers of 10 gross tons and under, who has not served at least three years in the deck department of a steam vessel, motor vessel, sail vessel, one year of which experience must have been obtained within the three years next preceding date of application for license, which fact the inspectors shall require, when practicable, to be verified by the certificate, in writing, of the licensed master or pilot under whom the applicant has served, such certificate to be filed with the application of the candidate: Provided, that one year's experience as quartermaster or wheelsman while holding a second class pilot license shall entitle the holder of such license to examination for license as first class pilot.

The local inspectors shall, before granting a license as pilot satisfy themselves that the applicant is qualified to steer."

Holding a pilot's license secured for a certain river or stretch thereof, will not permit you to stand watch or steer on all inland rivers. I am further quoting from the same rules:

"Extension of Pilot's Route:
Paragraph 35:—Whenever any pilot applies to a board of local inspectors for an extension of route over waters within their jurisdiction, he shall make written application on form furnished by the department, stating the extension desired, and shall be examined, in writing, on the aids to navigation on such extension and upon such other matters as they may deem necessary, and, if found qualified, such extensions shall be indorsed upon his license."

## Radio

UNDERGROUND antenna, and a note on ground wires.

*Request:*—"I find my radio will produce much more tone volume when the ground wire is disconnected. I would like to know whether it is injurious to run the set with the ground disconnected.

Please give me directions for the construction of an underground antenna."

—W. A. COLLAWN, Delbarton, West Virginia

*Reply,* by Mr. Donald McNicol:—It does no harm to remove the ground wire from your radio. Often it is possible to bring in music better without antenna, or ground. This is particularly true from broadcast stations not far away.

An underground antenna may be 100 feet of rubber covered, weatherproofed No. 10 or 12 electric light wire laid straight and buried about 12 inches beneath the surface of the earth, one end to the radio set, the other buried end wrapped well in tape to prevent copper touching earth.

## Navajo Blankets

BETTER than they used to be, because the traders are more particular.

*Request:*—"I have lately become interested in the purchase of a Navajo blanket and will appreciate any information you can give me in answer to the following questions:

1. Are recently made blankets the equal in fastness of color, strength of weave, etc., of those made, say, twenty-five years ago?

2. What type dyes are used in coloring present day yarns: mineral or vegetable? Are the ordinary chemical dyes of commerce used to any extent?

3. Do the Navajos, in making present day blankets, use yarns spun by themselves, or do they use the yarns of commerce?

4. What features, other than size, govern market price?"

—J. C. HEGENAUER, Bay City, Michigan

*Reply,* by Mr. H. F. Robinson:—1. Recently made Navajo blankets are in every way just as good today as those made twenty-five years ago. As a matter of fact, I believe that they will average better, as most of the traders will not buy poor quality blankets, or give such low prices that the Indians soon quit making them.

2. In most cases the commercial aniline dyes are used. Very few, if any, use the old Indian vegetable or mineral dyes.

3. The yarn used in all the Navajo weaving, excepting a very few, are from their own wool, cleaned by themselves, dyed, carded and spun as the blanket progresses. When they occasionally use the yarn of commerce it can readily be told, and such blankets are termed in the trade "Germantown", alluding to the commercial name used for the yarn.

4. The price of a blanket is governed by size, fineness of weave, pattern, purity of the whites—that is whether the wool was well scoured before making into yarn, and perhaps several other minor points.

## Burma

"THOSE dank miasmic fastnesses untrodden by foot of man" are hard to find, and you might never see a hostile native or a venomous snake. But the big game hunting is of the best.

*Request:*—"I would appreciate such information as you could give me regarding the Irrawaddy jungles in Burma.

Possibly you can suggest a book that will give me the information I desire. I should like to know something of the conditions one has to contend with in exploring them, such as animal life, natives, climate and seasons. Are the natives hostile? Is there a rainy and dry season? I have heard that these jungles are infested with poisonous reptiles; is this true? Are the rivers navigable by motor launch?"

—LOUIS CLINTON BUTTERFIELD, Yonkers, N. Y.

*Reply,* by Mr. Gordon MacCreagh:—Irrawaddy jungles you want to know about. Jungles are there and plenty; but I'm afraid you will be disappointed if you hope to go into those dank miasmic fastnesses untrodden by foot of man. There is little that hasn't been very thoroughly "explored" by government survey parties, and unofficially by countless traders, hunters, lumbermen and so on.

An expensive and well equipped scientific party, prepared to spend time and money, could, of course, discover territory that hasn't been thoroughly mapped; but I am sure that they would find nothing very startling or new.

I'm guessing that you are not outfitting a scientific expedition; but you just want to go looksee.

You will find the country full of interest; though there will be no hairbreadth escapes from hostile savages. The natives are some of the best ever. I doubt if you could find trouble if you looked for it. Even the Was are tame now. Karens, Kachins, Shans, all the Upper Burma tribes are easy going and fun loving. Dacoits are no more.

But there still remains some very fine hunting; and cheap enough for an ordinary human to enjoy. Not like African big game, which is a sport for millionaires. Burma contains anything up to tiger and wild buffalo. Elephants are there; but are carefully protected by the government.

Snakes are plentiful; but it is quite possible to spend a year in the jungle without seeing one. They are nothing to worry about; though a snake bite outfit is advisable in case of the unforeseen accident. In six years of messing around Burma and contiguous tropic parts I was bitten only once; and that was my own fault for fooling with a snake that I should have let alone.

The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company covers pretty well all the waters in Burma. The monsoon rain season—approximately mid-May to September, varying in Upper and Lower Burma—cuts down the scope of water travel while it lasts; but you naturally would choose the dry season.

If you go, you will be able to buy *all outfit* in Rangoon or Mandalay.

Since you live in Yonkers, why not run in to the N. Y. Public Library. I hesitate to mention any books because there are so many that are good and complete.

## Buckshot

OLD-TIMERS have added tallow or corn meal to their buckshot loads to keep the shot from spreading—but, if you try it, remember that they used black powder.

*Request:*—"While I was out West, I was told that in the old days it was the custom to keep buckshot loaded shells, with tallow poured around the shot, handy for prowlers, and that such shells were used effectively even against bear. Could that be done without exploding the shotgun, and could any degree of accuracy in aim be attained? Would it be legal to use such prepared shot on deer in New Jersey?"

—JOHN BARNES ABBOTT, Beachwood, New Jersey

*Reply,* by Mr. John B. Thompson:—I have loaded buckshot shells in the old days with tallow, and often corn meal, to keep the load from spreading too much. Then I used black powder. But, while it may be safe, I would not dare do it with modern smokeless powder. I would rather someone else experimented with it. Such loads with black powder we used for deer and black bear and range hogs.

Write your State game warden; though a copy of New Jersey game laws before me shows no prohibition against such a load as you speak of being used on deer.

It would be impossible to confine smokeless powder gases in a muzzle loader to get their fullest powers.

## Drinking Water

BOIL it, chlorinate it or test it.

*Request:*—"How can I tell whether water is pure or not?"

—ROGER C. SULLIVAN, Keystone, West Virginia

*Reply,* by Dr. Claude P. Fordyce:—One simple test for the purity of water is to put some weak potassium permanganate solution in the suspected water. If the water turns a muddy yellow it is impure. If pure, it should remain purplish. Do not take chances with water—boil it or use the halazone tablets which chlorinate it.

## New Guinea

COURAGE and energy are no good without dollars behind them in New Guinea, for the gold fields lie beyond civilization. A prospector requires fifteen porters; roughly $5,000 for a year.

*Request:*—"1. What is the climate of New Guinea?

2. Where are the gold fields?

3. What are the prospecting laws?

4. What chances are there for an American in that country?

5. Is there any hunting there?

6. How are the white natives toward a stranger?

7. What is the firearm law there?

8. Are there any poisonous snakes there?

9. How much money do you think I need for six months? For one year?"

—BARNEY SWEEDBURG, Patton, Pennsylvania

*Reply,* by Mr. L. P. B. Armit:—1. The climate of New Guinea is tropical.

2. There are gold fields in the Territory of New Guinea, also in the Territory of Papua, both territories being on the one island of Papua, or New Guinea. The richest finds have been made in the Territory of New Guinea, and there is considerable development now in progress there by big corporations; although there are still a considerable number of men working the alluvial claims.

3. Mining laws are very liberal and simple. Any *white* man can mine anywhere, provided he first

takes out a miner's right, for which he pays a small annual fee of a few dollars.

4. An American has just the same chance that any other white man has; so long as he holds a valid miner's right, he can mine anywhere, excepting, of course, the private land, of which there is very little in the island.

5. Little hunting, the only large animal being the wild pig. Birds of many species are plentiful, but shooting them, owing to the dense jungle, is a difficult business.

6. The resident white people are just as courteous and friendly to the stranger as you Americans are. So long as a man behaves himself, he is given the glad hand—which is the rule in every part of the world, I have found.

7. There is no restriction on the use of firearms, except that no white man is permitted to give, sell or otherwise supply an aboriginal Papuan or any other colored person with a firearm, explosives, or intoxicating liquor. The penalty for a breach of this law is a heavy fine and a long term of imprisonment. The same law covers the use of opium, etc.

8. The jungle contains a great many species of venomous and non-venomous snakes. The most deadly snakes are the tiger, brown, red-bellied black, black, diamond, with the death-adder leading them all for venom. A thick pair of puttees, or strong leggings, are good protection from snakes. A snake-bite outfit of lancet, potassium permanganate, and a ligature (you can carry the latter round your hat) are handy things when you are in the jungle.

9. Prospecting in New Guinea is very expensive. It would cost about $2,500 for one white man and fifteen native porters, with supplies for a six months' trip; for a year you would double the cost, so about $5,000 would not be too much to properly finance you. You will see that New Guinea is no place for the lone hand prospector who has few dollars but plenty of energy. Energy is no good without a lot of dollars behind it in New Guinea.

Before closing off I must mention one thing: Don't think of coming to New Guinea on the off chance of securing employment when you get here. Jobs are as scarce in the island as snowballs in h—. Unless you have plenty of money, and I mean thousands of dollars, don't bother to come here. You can do better in America—without the fear of pegging out from malaria.

There are at present three vacancies on the Ask Adventure staff:

1. South Sea Islands
2. Canada, Part 2 (Southeastern Quebec)
3. Africa, Part 7 (Sierra Leone to Old Calabar; West Africa; Southern and Northern Nigeria)

Readers who feel that they are qualified to serve as experts on these subjects are invited to state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure*, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

**Our Experts**—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

***A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the issue of the fifteenth of each month***

## THE TRAIL AHEAD—THE NEXT ISSUE OF *ADVENTURE,* DECEMBER 15th

A tapir's thigh-bone containing a chart, and closed at both ends with beaten gold; secret messages to the unknown host of the Green House, whom the village priest fearfully called "The Ghost"; and a weird duel in a riverfront dive at the edge of the *gomales,* the notorious rubber camps of the Beni—all these were destined to figure strangely in the hunt for the most important treasure cache still tempting mortal explorers. This brilliant full-length novel of the merciless jungles of Bolivia and Peru will appear *complete* in this issue.

# *The* WEB *of* GOLD

By DIOMEDES
DE PEREYRA

## *And These Other Fine Stories*

At Sunrise, a story of the World War spies, by Ared White; Tiger's Orphan, a story of tiger hunting in India, by Gordon MacCreagh; The Chumpeen, a humorous story of the prize ring, by Thomson Burtis; Mistral, a story of crime on the Riviera, by Raoul Whitfield; River Bank, a story of the Mississippi bayous, by James Mitchell Clarke; The Prince and the Rebel, a story of Imperial Russia, by Natalie B. Sokoloff; Ballast, a story of the sea, by Jacland Marmur; and Part II of Glenallan of the Clans, a novel of the Scottish Highlands, by Donald Barr Chidsey.

# SOLDIER of FORTUNE

To A. C. [illegible]
with [illegible] Rafael de Nogales
N. York
II-2-31

**GEN. RAFAEL de NOGALES**

General Rafael de Nogales, of Venezuela, author of "Memoirs of a Soldier of Fortune", is one of the most picturesque characters in the world today.

He is an army staff officer and a scholar by profession, and a citizen of the world by avocation. He has served as a soldier of fortune under many flags; as a cowboy, miner, world traveler and explorer; was second lieutenant in the Spanish Army, at eighteen, Spanish-American War; exile from Venezuela since 1901, except when fighting the government; with the Turkish Army in many battles during the World War, advancing to divisional commander; was the last Turkish military governor of Egyptian Sinai; Knight of the Iron Cross first class, Knight Commander of the Order of Mejedieh with golden swords.

Gun running in the Caribbean; cattle rustling along the Rio Grande; racing for gold in Alaska and Nevada; big game hunting in West Africa; fighting in Mexico, Venezuela; directing the siege of Van, capital of Armenia, during the World War; and standing up to the barrage of Allenby's guns in Palestine. From Alaska to Cairo, from Siberia to Cape Horn—a journey for Nogales is only a jaunt for more danger and the crack of rifles, or the cheating of death. Somebody has described him as "the last of cavaliers". If he does not become a President he will probably wind up with his back to a wall and a cigarette between his lips, directing the fire of the squad that is to shoot him . . . To YOU, he is no stranger. YOU have joined the rest of us within the charmed circle and spellbound, have hung on his every word. How about your FRIEND? Write his name and address below, tear off the coupon, mail it to us—ADVENTURE, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York, N. Y.—and we will initiate him by sending him free, a complimentary copy of ADVENTURE.

● ● ●

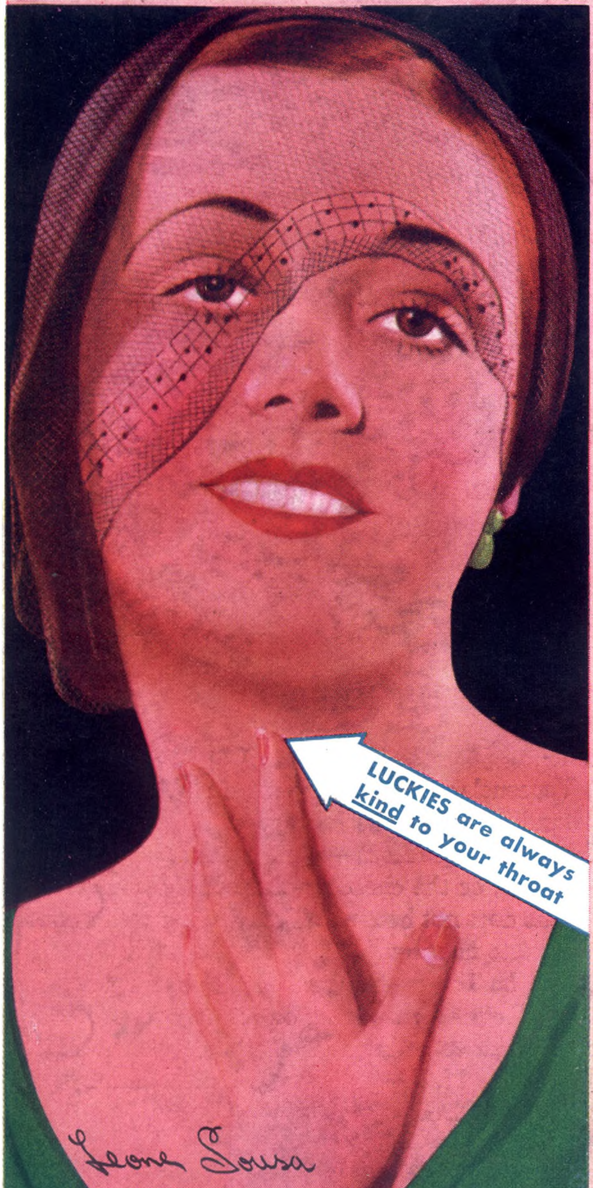
*Name*________________________________

*Address*________________________________

Adventure

AC-121

## *Consider your Adam's Apple!!**


LUCKIES are always kind to your throat
Leone Sousa
ELSINORE, CAL

# Don't Rasp Your Throat With Harsh Irritants

***"Reach for a LUCKY instead"***

**The great Lord Tennyson in a beautiful poem refers to a woman's Adam's Apple as "The warm white apple of her throat." Consider your Adam's Apple. Touch it—your Adam's Apple—That is your larynx—your voice box—it contains your vocal chords. When you consider your Adam's Apple you are considering your throat—your vocal chords. Protect the delicate tissues within your throat. Be careful in your choice of cigarettes. Don't rasp your throat with harsh irritants! Reach for a LUCKY instead. Here in America LUCKY STRIKE is the only cigarette which brings you the added benefit of the exclusive "TOASTING" Process, which includes the use of modern Ultra Violet Rays. It is this exclusive process that expels certain harsh irritants present in all raw tobaccos. These expelled irritants are sold to manufacturers of chemical compounds. They are not present in your LUCKY STRIKE. And so we say "Consider your Adam's Apple."**

# "It's toasted"

Including the use of Ultra Violet Rays

Sunshine Mellows—Heat Purifies

**Your Throat Protection—against irritation—against cough**

LUCKY STRIKE
"IT'S TOASTED"
CIGARETTES

© 1931,
The A. T. Co.,
Mfrs.

TUNE IN—
The Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evening over N. B. C. networks.