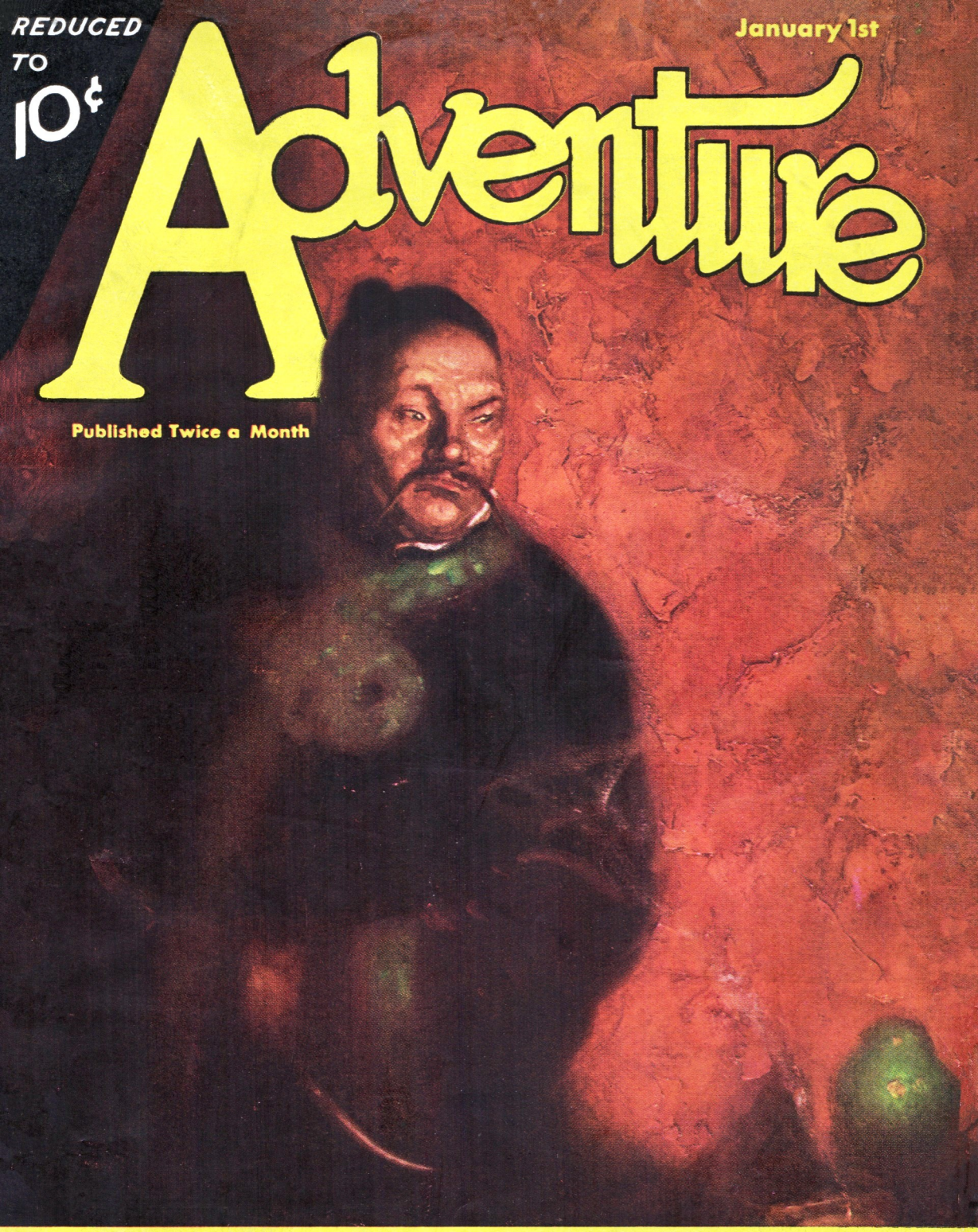
REDUCED TO 10¢

January 1st

Adventure

Published Twice a Month



Distinctive Stories By

GORDON YOUNG · HUGH PENDEXTER · GEORGES SURDEZ

WALT COBURN · HENRY G. LAMOND · RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

STEPHEN ALLEN REYNOLDS

Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

CONTENTS

1933
VOL. LXXXV No. 2

for January 1st

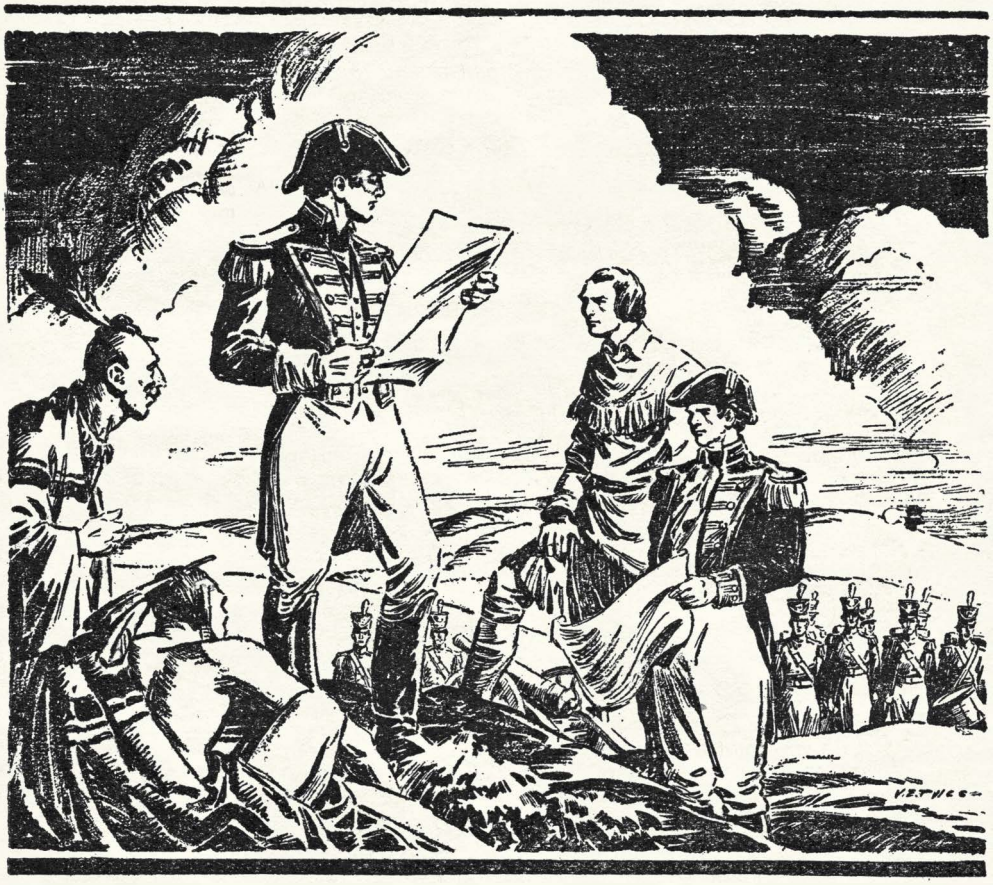
A. A. Proctor
EDITOR

Cover Design by Duncan MacMillan *Headings by V. E. Pyles*

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, $2.25 in advance. Single copy, Ten Cents. Foreign postage, $2.00 additional.

Beginning

The BUNGLERS



By HUGH PENDEXTER

CHAPTER I

THE BIG NOSES

SMALL events sometimes swing on big hinges. Had not England, at war with France, persisted in seizing American shipping and seamen, there would have been no prearranged meeting between Ramblin' Peevy and Jim Cald at the cooking fire of a mutual friend on the outskirts of the frontier Ohio town of Urbana. It was amazing that such world-racking causes should be necessary for such a minor effect. Yet if not for the war, fated to entangle the young United States with Great Britain, there would have been no excuse for one Tennesseean to travel north and for the other to return to the States after years spent in Canada.

Peevy—tall, loose jointed, and so constituted as to find himself often at the vortex of trouble—continued an argu-

ment, which was already worn ragged, by insisting:

"I'd never sent that writin' for you to meet me here, Jim, if I'd known you was so soft in the head. Just as sure as I can lick my weight in wildcats an' give each critter the first bite, Canada will stay out of this fuss."

Cald rubbed the handle of his hunting knife against his hawk's beak of a nose and insisted—

"Ramblin', you're wrong as usual."

"Jim, I'm righter when I'm wrong then you be when you're right."

"But I tell you I've traveled for years, all over Canada. From the mouth of the St. Lawrence to the Western Ocean. When I got your letter at the Northwest Company's station on Mackinac I hustled down here to meet you. But your fool talk makes me wish I'd stayed north. Canada will be on our backs in this war, if war comes. An' Canada has the Injuns."

Isaac Bills, stirring the big kettle, groaned and complained:

"Wish you two dodderheads would close your traps. Enough dodderheads down in Washington without you two rantin'. Old Nappy's as bad as King George, so far as he finds a chance."

Cald rubbed his nose more vigorously and grumbled—

"I'm half sorry I come."

"You won't have any nose left if you keep on pesterin' it with that knife handle," said Peevy.

"You're argified into a corner an' are tryin' to back out."

"A war what ain't arrived ain't so important as a champeen nose that's bein' spoiled."

"You're dodgin' war talk," sneered Cald. "It's *my* nose."

"But you oughter let it live an' do all the good it can. The side with the biggest noses will win any war they git into. Take animals. Ever see a wild critter with a short, snubby nose—"

"Oh, shut up, Ramblin'. Why didn't we make war talk to France as well as to England? I've got more friends in Canada than I have down here. Wish I'd stayed up there."

"I still hold that noses count," gravely insisted Peevy. "An' you've got a rival up here, somewhere. A nose rival. Young Jim Cassy by name. You quit Tennessee so long ago you've plumb forgot Annie Cassy, on Little Briar Run. Prettiest gal in western Tennessee. Most likely lookin' young woman down there now."

Cald stared at his friend as if beholding a specter. His voice was scarcely above a whisper as he demanded:

"So your foolish talk was leadin' up to that! Who'd she marry?"

"She never married, Jim. But her seventeen year old boy is up here somewheres. I'm here to find the young hound an' sort of watch over him an' pack him back home, if he'll go."

"Never married," mumbled Cald.

"No— Judas, Cald! If you'd cut the hair off your face, young Jim would be the spit image of you. Or what you must 'a' looked at his age. Poor Annie! Nicest gal one ever see, but she met up with some two-legged skunk."

"No gal an' her young-un goin' to settle this war," grumbled Bills.

"Ike, President Madison told Congress he was dependin' on you to take care of the war," said Peevy gravely. "He repeated the same to me out in the cookhouse. His words was, 'If I knew Ike Bills was ready to git the jump on 'em—' "

"Shut up!" roared Cald, his eyes glowing.

"Every time we talk you light them battle lanterns. We're a nation of bunglers, Jim. I'm one. You're one. Bills would be one, if he knew enough. But you're the worst bungler of the lot, Jim. Now, the Peevys—"

"Stop!" Cald cried hoarsely as he came to his feet. "Without any more funny talk you tell me now where that boy is. Annie's boy."

Peevy surveyed him through half closed eyes, and in a low voice prompted—

"An who else's boy?"

"Mine! God, I never dreamed it! She sent me away—some triflin' quarrel. It oughter been patched up offhand. But—"

"But your damned big nose made you stubborn," interrupted Peevy.

"Sure she never married?"

"Lives in the old cabin where she was born, on the Little Briar. Strangers take

her an' the boy to be brother an' sister—Hi! Where you reckon you're goin'?"

"To find my son. To send him home, an' leave this cussed business for his pap an' others to settle."

"Wait a trifle. When you pop up afore him an' say, 'I'm your daddy,' will he bust into tears of joy? You've been missin' quite awhile out of his life. The whole seventeen years. The job ahead of you is harder than for us to git the Shawnees to quit the English an' pick up our white wampum."

Cald's voice was humble and weak as he asked—

"In God's great mercy, what can I do?"

Peevy frowned, then confessed:

"It's beyond me. If you went back to Annie, an' she was glad to see you, an' you hustled to git a circuit rider, or peace justice, the younker wouldn't kill you on the premises. That is, I don't think he would."

"Is that all you can say?" mumbled Cald.

"It's about all I can think of just this minute. My medicine tells me that what you oughter do is to locate the younker, keep close to him, without him knowin' who you be, or what you're up to. Lots of young fellers goin' to need help when the Injuns pick up England's belts an' come a-hootin' down on us. If we can fetch the younker out of this fuss alive he may take a likin' to you. Odds agin it, with that nose you passed on to him, even if you hadn't quit his mother an'—"

"We quarreled," interrupted Cald. "She sent me away. I was a young fool."

"Of course, of course," patiently agreed Peevy. "But the younker will need time to git your slant of it. Then he'll foller his mother, of course. If she hands out red belts, he'll do the same. You just remain plain Jim till you git acquainted with the boy an' he shows a likin' for you."

"You think I'll know him when I see him?" mumbled Cald.

"Would you know the Big Smokies when you see 'em? When you see a nose comin' round a tree, an' then a face behind it, that's your boy, young Jim."

"He's named after me!"

"Mebbe. But there's lots of Jims in the world. He may take a notion to change his handle when he knows yours is the same."

"Oh, if I only could do somethin'! I'm goin' into Urbana, night or no night."

"Now that you're primed an' know how to act up, I'll dog along with you."

"An' leave this kettle of meat?" demanded Bills.

"You might save a hunk for me an' pack it along till we meet ag'in, Bills," Peevy suggested.

Cald turned, glared at the hunter and said—

"You've heard too much, if you can't keep your trap shet."

"My folks never was talkers," growled Bills. "But you're two fools to leave a good camp an' hot meat to go to that hoorah of a camp."

DID the United States have any advantage over an invader it consisted of settlers in western Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio, and in the North country embraced by the huge Territory of Michigan. These people had served in the frontier armies led against the Indians by Harmar, Crawford, McIntosh, St. Clair and Wayne. They were to the long rifle born, and their children were reared in a knowledge of this deadly weapon.

Peevy and Cald were excellent specimens of this type. At a forest lope they entered Urbana and proceeded to the camp of the army which was springing up around Judge Elisha Berry's home on the east side of the town. They arrived in time to behold the ridiculous spectacle of a Chicago company riding one of its officers on a rail.

"I begin to feel a red ax stickin' in my head," said Peevy, his gaze wrathful as he watched the insolent behavior of the soldiers. "What sort of a rinktum is this?"

As he spoke and glared at the boisterous group he fingered a silver pendant at the neck of his hunting shirt so that his free hand might not wander to the ax in his belt.

"I'd like to be cap'n of that company for just five minutes."

"They don't seem to like the officer," mumbled Cald. "Where you s'pose the younker is?" His voice trembled as he put the query.

"We'll walk round an' do some snoopin'. But don't make yourself known, or he may say things that'll pile you a-straddlin' a rail," warned Peevy.

They had not proceeded far before they were pausing to read a proclamation affixed to the side of a store. Peevy grinned sardonically as he read aloud:

"The general is persuaded that there will be no other contention in this army but as to who will most excel in discipline and bravery."

The cheering, insubordinate soldiers were dropping the rail to rush a hogshead of cider now being broached.

"Hear the fools howl!" grunted Peevy in disgust. "We'll see what tune they yelp when they make for Detroit for two hundred miles through the wilderness an' a black swamp what is a terror. They won't feel like ridin' some poor devil on rail after they've covered that walk."

"An' the swamps on the watershed," added Cald. "Worst spot in the whole journey. It's just one hell after another. I come down that way—"

Peevy cut him short by clapping a hand on his shoulder and drawing him back.

"There's the younker! Steady, steady!"

A youth of seventeen, carrying a long rifle and moving with the easy gait of a forest runner, came along, his coonskin hat worn at a rakish angle, his bold eyes gleaming with interest as he swung his head from side to side to miss nothing of the various activities. His profile was a duplicate of his father's. He came to a halt where the rail and victim had been discarded in favor of the cider. Throwing back his head, he began singing in a pleasing, mellow voice the border ballad of "St. Clair's Defeat," a lengthy rehearsal of doggerel of that fearful setback to the white race in America.

"Twas November the fourth in the year ninety-one,
We had a sore engagement near to Fort Jefferson;
Sinclair was our commander, which may remembered be,
For there we left nine hundred men in Western Territoree."

Before he could give the second stanza a Chicago man whirled about and ordered—

"Stop that damn yappin'."

Peevy seized Cald by the arms, standing behind him, held him back and warned—

"He'd hate you forever if you tried to help him."

"He's only a boy," muttered Cald, his eyes glaring murderously at the Chicago man.

Young Cassy surveyed the interrupter curiously for a moment and then asked in a low drawling voice—

"You don't like my singin', mister?"

"I don't like catwaulin', nor nobody what makes it. Keep that big yawp closed."

The youth turned as if to leave the scene. Cald groaned audibly, and it required all of Peevy's great strength to hold him back. Some of the onlookers laughed loudly at what was accepted as a sign of weakness. Young Cassy glanced about, caught a glimpse of Peevy, now standing in front of Cald, and tossed him the long rifle, cheerily crying:

"Catch! Be back for it in a half minute. Look after these 'ere war weepins too."

The hunting knife and an ax fell at Peevy's feet. Then the youth faced about. He stared with dilated eyes at the Chicago man, then threw back his head and, howling like a wolf, leaped upon the fellow.

The spectators cheered lustily and gave ground, forming a ring as man and youth interlocked their limbs and proceeded to give battle. Peevy tripped his friend off his feet to keep him from interfering and then helped him to arise.

"Damn your hide! Make another move an' I'll let you sp'ile what little chance you have. Gorry mighty! Waugh!"

The exclamation was wrung from Peevy as the youth lifted the man from the ground and hurled him violently to earth. The man came back to his feet and, shrieking most profanely, leaped at his young adversary. They met breast

to breast, and it was the man who staggered back from the impact of the shock. Then the lad had him again, his long arms seeming to possess the strength of many men. He secured a crotch hold and lifted the struggling, kicking figure clear of the ground and hurled him head foremost into the hogshead of cider.

Container and victim toppled over, the latter choking and fighting for the breath of life. With a wide grin eliminating the ferocity from his young face, the youth pounded his victim on the back and worked his arms up and down. Satisfied the fellow would continue breathing, he turned to Peevy and recovered his gun and belt weapons. He gave no heed to the trembling figure of his victim.

"Mighty good music, young-un," said Peevy. "You'll make a good wrestler when you grow up and git your strength."

"He shouldn't 'a' fussed me—but it was all good fun. An' these folks who don't like my singin' has just got to like it. Only thing what keeps me cheerful up here. An' there's 'bout eighty verses to it an' I know 'em all."

"Son, after you grow up an' pack more muscle on that pindlin' frame, you can outwrestle old Satan hisself. What command you with?" asked Peevy.

"Colonel McArthur's regiment—There goes the drum! We're off to have a whack of fun with the lobsterbacks."

"An' where be you marchin', young corn-fed?"

"To cut a road across the devil's own country, granddaddy," pertly replied the youth.

Then he raced off to answer the peremptory voice of the drum.

"Granddaddy, eh?" mused Peevy. "He oughter be well birched for such unrespect for his elders."

"If he'd talk like that to me I'd stay awake all night from happiness!" groaned Cald.

"Well, you found him mighty quick. That ought to perk you up."

"Found him up here in this devil's country—an' I can't even go to him an' walk beside him an' ease him of much hard work! Was ever a mortal cursed like I be?"

"You might 'a' found him a rascal," Peevy reminded philosophically. "You mightn't found him at all; or you might 'a' found him dead. But what's worse than all else, you might 'a' found him a coward. You're a very lucky man."

"Goodby, Peevy. I bless you for tellin' me the truth. I only hope I don't live to curse you for tellin' me."

"Cuss all you want to. I may be cussin' myself afore this business is over. But save your goodbys. Where you reckon you're goin'?"

"Along with the road builders. I can keep clear of the younker. But I must be on hand if things go mighty bad."

"Lord pity me an' help me to dodge the hardest work," groaned Peevy. "An', Jim, don't hurry. Let the boy git a fair start of you—of us. I'm a road builder, too."

CHAPTER II

THE BLIND ARMY

NO MESSENGER had reached General Hull's camp with the expected announcement that war had been declared. Rank and file knew it would be but a matter of a few days, although Hull's plunge into the wilderness, so as to be at the enemy as soon as the momentous message arrived, would increase the lapse between the act of declaring war in Washington and the first move against Canada. The rank of the army were nervously alert to receive the word. The file felt no responsibilities and were content so long as kettles supplied sufficient meat and the whisky held out.

If Hull and his staff were proceeding blindly, Colonel Duncan McArthur's regiment was composed of blind men. There was every danger of a premature clash in the Northern forest. The proposed road, which McArthur's men were to build to Detroit, was to lead through a most miserable terrain. There was not even a path to furnish geographical guidance. It was sickening, killing work. Even those who were border-born, and used to all physical hardships, grew grim of mien and gaunt of face. There was no laughter, no merrymaking.

The monsters which made the back breaking work a continual hell were the

black flies and mosquitos. There was no surcease in the activities of these pests. A small cloud was ever whirling about each man's head. They plastered mud and ooze on their faces, hands and wrists. When back in camp, at the end of a day's labor, high and low sought refuge in the smoke of fires heaped with green boughs.

Peevy and Cald kept out ahead of the workers, scouting for hostile signs. From nowhere had come the belief that Canadian troops were endeavoring to steal a march on the Republic's forces, and even then were but a few miles away. Still the scouts failed to find any hostile signs; they turned hunters and brought in much meat for the great kettles. Wooden roads were laid over the black swamps. Bridges were thrown across nameless streams. Blockhouses were erected to shelter the sick and hold the provisions brought up by long trains.

Some of the leading red men came to the shifting camps. They said little, but saw much. They came as spies, yet the officers dared not attempt to detain them. One day, while Fort McArthur was being built on the Scioto River in a low, flat section of the forest, Ramblin' Peevy was scouting alone some two miles ahead of the road builders. Now that the quartermaster's men were quite regularly bringing up provisions, the question of food was not foremost; but the soldiers vastly preferred venison and wild turkey to very salty pork and flinty bread.

The Tennessee man apprehended no danger. The tribes had not lifted the red ax. Suddenly, and taken entirely by surprise, he was confronted in the gloomy forest aisle by an Indian whom he at once recognized.

The man wore a red cap decorated with porcupine quills. In the front of this covering was a single eagle's feather, black with a white tip. Breech clout, red leggings and buckskin moccasins completed his attire. In the Shawnee tongue he said—

"The Hawk Nose wanders far."

"His road is short when it leads to the great Tecumseh."

The greatest of all Indians, greater even than Pontiac, orator, statesman and war genius, stared at the small silver pendant at the throat of Peevy's hunting shirt and said gravely:

"The sky was red with blood when the sun went down last night. The Hawk Nose should be with his squaw in Tennessee."

"There is no war," said Peevy. "The man from the Tennessee fire is glad to meet a brother who belongs to the Great Medicine Panther family of the Shawnee. Tecumseh is not the enemy of the white people."

"His father was killed at the Point Pleasant fighting. His uncle was killed on the Tennessee border. His brother was killed while fighting Mad Wayne. Why should Tecumseh love white men?" quietly asked the chief.

"Many men from the Tennessee fire have been killed by the Shawnee, yet the Hawk Nose is glad to meet his friend."

For an instant the eyes of the red patriot glowed with a softer light. He said—

"There was a squaw in the cabin of the Hawk Nose who fed Tecumseh when he was hungry."

Inwardly Peevy winced as he visioned Mrs. Peevy standing in the cabin doorway, arms akimbo, and waiting for his return. He never had loved any woman except his wife. But homecomings, after unannounced absences, were ever trying. Tecumseh continued, saying:

"Let my tall friend go back. Why are the Long Knives up here in the red man's country? No war belts have been passed. Why do they come to kill and frighten the game and build houses in the red man's country? The *Englishmanake* are not here. Why do your people come with long knives and big guns? What do you want?" The chief's bearing was becoming haughty.

Peevy endeavored to explain the affronts the Republic had suffered at the hands of England. But Tecumseh clung to his one line of thought. He sternly insisted:

"But why come here to fight the *Englishmanake?* Is there no room on the big salt water? Is there no room beside the Virginia and Tennessee fires where they can fight? Tecumseh has tried to stop torture of white prisoners. He has tried to stop the white men from buying

land on the Ohio from any one tribe of Indians. The Ohio lands belong to all the tribes. Let your Long Knives agree to that on white belts and there will be no more killings."

"Your friend is only a common Long Knife. He is no chief to tell his people what to do and what not to do."

"But his squaw fed a chief," cut in Tecumseh, and again his expressive eyes beamed with friendliness for an instant. "The white man from the Tennessee fire wears at his throat what the Shooting Star gave him."

His gaze rested on the silver pendant. He continued—

"If there is fighting let my friend keep out of the fighting and wear the gift of Tecumseh. And no red man will hurt him."

"What he wears at his throat is worn because a great chief has worn it. He will not hide behind it and use it as shield when there is fighting. He may give it to another to wear."

Tecumseh bowed gravely and said:

"War is coming. I can hear it running softly, like a squaw, through the forest. Soon it will run with the noise of many buffaloes. Soon it will be heard like the howling of starved wolves in Winter. If my friend will not wear a chief's gift, to stop ax, arrow or bullet, then let him wear it next to his heart. So when he is found dead, and men would strip him, they will know he was Tecumseh's friend and leave him as they found him. He must not give it to cover another man. For Tecumseh has worn it. Let him take this and cover one man's life if he would keep a friend from death."

As he finished speaking he produced three small strings of red and white wampum and placed them in Peevy's hand. Then he stepped back among the trees and vanished.

AS Peevy walked toward the fort he came upon tracks in the forest mold, and he knew he was being watched, just as the army was being spied upon by war lusting Indians. He had no doubt but that his meeting with Tecumseh had been witnessed, and because of this espionage his return path held no ambush. From his knowledge of red geography he believed these spies to be Wyandots, a division of the ferocious Hurons. No attacks had been made upon the army, but receipt of the word that war had been declared would be the signal for the onslaught.

In reporting to Colonel Findlay, Peevy made no mention of his meeting with Tecumseh, as he believed he would be set down as a liar, or suspected of being in secret league with the prospective enemy. Findlay said—

"If the Indians don't like our coming up here, they can try to stop us."

"If they git word afore we do that war's busted loose, they'll jump us most mortal."

"That is not the talk I care to hear," said Findlay sharply. "I have orders to take my regiment and extend the road to Blanchard's Fork of the Auglaiz."

"An' the Glaiz flows into the Maumee," mused Peevy.

"I'm quite familiar with that fact. To what regiment are you attached?"

"Can't just say. Been out ahead of all of 'em," said Peevy. "When I come in I make my talk to the first officer I meet."

"Such lack of order and discipline won't do at all," said the colonel.

"Just what I've been thinkin'," heartily agreed Peevy. "Woods are fuller of spyin' Injuns than my last year's grain box down home is full of Connecticut wooden pegs. Think of a people so tarnal smart in a mean way as to sell wooden oats to a poor hoss!"

"You report here for duty tomorrow," ordered the colonel.

"I'll be right here on this very spot." Peevy drew a cross with the toe of his moccasin in the damp forest mold. "When you want me, look at this mark. If I ain't standin' on it you'll know somethin's holdin' me back. But, Cunnel, if we keep on headin' for Detroit we're goin' to run into a war with the reds, even if England backs down."

"That's for your superiors to worry about."

"Don't I know it! An' glad I be to have it so. For it shows our officers are wide awake an' won't let us poor ignerant fellers walk into a bloody trap. On t'other hand, I sort of seem to have

some private worryin' I can't let anybody do for me."

Being dismissed, the Tennesseean sought Cald and experienced some difficulty in finding him. Cald, torn between the desire to be near his son, yet fearing his identity would be discovered and denounced, was in hiding. When Peevy came upon him, and would have related his adventures, Cald interrupted him and begged:

"Go to the boy, won't you? Talk with him. Sound him. L'arn what he knows about his pap. Prob'ly he's been brought up to hate me."

Peevy gravely reminded his friend:

"Well, Big Nose, from Annie's p'int of view you ain't been very neighborly. Seventeen years is quite a chunk of time to be away from the home fire. I was away five months once an' still have the scars. But I'll drop in on the boy for you."

The men were scattered through the growth, and the Tennessee man might have searched for some time had not the sound of singing provided him with a clue.

"Thank God I've missed the first verses!" softly exclaimed Peevy before breaking through the circle of gloomy faced men. One soldier said:

"It's a noble tune when heard back East where there ain't no Injuns. But out here it gives me the frets."

"Then you don't know good music, an' my young friend won't sing any more. Ah! There's homely Ike Bills. Young Cassy, you trail along with me an' ease your throat with some of Ike's home cookin'. T'others can hunt up their own mess kettles."

Young Cassy was seized by the arm and hurried close to the big kettle before he could think of refusing the invitation. Then it was too late. He wrinkled his nose and demanded—

"What's bubblin' an' stewin' an' smellin' so tarnal good in that kettle, mister?"

"Should be wild turkey an' deer meat. Have a dish?"

"If I ain't broke all my teeth a-gnawin' our ration bread. Some they had left over from the Revolution War, I reckon."

Ignoring Bills's indignant gaze, Peevy filled an earthenware bowl with the savory stew and motioned for the lad to sit and eat. Again Peevy marveled that the lad's profile was so closely patterned after his father's. He remarked—

"Your folks must 'a' had strong features."

"Take after my pap, who was killed by Injuns," the lad explained between mouthfuls.

"How you know he was killed?"

"That's foolish, mister. Wouldn't he 'a' come home to his wife, my mother, if he'd been alive?"

"Cassy—name's sort of familiar," mused Peevy. "But I can't remember meetin' him."

"That's my mother's name afore she was married. Pap's name is Cald. My folks had a quarrel an' he went away. Mam took her fambly name."

"Lots of married folks quarrel. But your pap mayn't be dead. Most likely he was took a prisoner an' held in some red village far down the Ohio."

"No, sirree! Mam says pap's dead. She says he was the fightenest man in all Tennessee. No parcel of Injuns could keep him from headin' for home. My big nose comes from him. My mother's a little woman. Mighty pretty, too."

WHEN the boy nodded his head as a farewell, or in thanks for his supper, and drifted back to find his company, Peevy hunted for Cald. He found him miserable in spirits and dangerously apart from his companions, now that darkness would permit red scouts to draw close.

Peevy bluntly announced:

"You're dead, Jim. Either that, or caught by Injuns and held a prisoner all these years. Younker says he took his nose from you an' that you're a very brave man. That nothin' could keep you from home if you was alive. His ma has told him his pap was Jim Cald, that you two quarreled an' you went away. She's wearin' the name of Cassy, an' the boy does the same."

"Lawd, that's bad hearin'."

"Good hearin'. Easiest thing in the world. Just pop in on Little Briar Run an' say you've just busted loose from a

Shawnee village way off in the West."

"An' have the boy say he saw me up here? He must 'a' seen me. When I show up as his pap he'll remember seein' me. But if I fixed it with him, about me bein' held by redskins, what would happen when I went home with him? Annie would slam the door in my face. Reckon I must stay dead for good. Hope I git killed in this damn war!"

"That'll help Annie an' the boy a heap."

"Oh, I can't stand this sad business, Peevy. Seems if it must kill me!"

"Mebbe you'll git killed. You can have that to hope for. Looks most sartain that quite a parcel of us will peg out, even if we never see a enemy. You know, when I die I'm goin' to live in the moon. In them dark places where all the niggers go to. Before my little woman can hit me in that blackness she'll have to do a lot of practisin'. First courier back will take a line from me to her, askin' her to look up Annie an' git her to go an' live in our cabin. Neither of 'em will feel so lonesome. I'd feel better, too, if I knew Annie was off Briar Run while this wring is goin' on. If the Cherokees kick in, quite some Tennessee folks is goin' to wake up bald headed."

"Now you've filled me with more trouble!" groaned the unhappy man.

"Like gittin' wet. Fall in an' have it over with. War hasn't busted loose yet. Git me somethin' to write with."

Cald vanished. When he returned he brought a quartermaster's lead bottle of ink, several quills, two sheets of paper and some official wax. Peevy remarked—

"I opine you fetched everything 'cept the gentleman's sword."

Then he ripped a board from a box and used it as a table. He twisted his tongue curiously as he wrote his epistle to the only woman he had ever loved. After sealing it he gravely informed his friend:

"I've dated it Detroit, an' said you 'n' me was held prisoners there. Now I'll sly it into Cunnel Findlay's Government letters an' hope a special messenger will tote it out to our clearin'."

He was soon back, grinning broadly and gleefully rubbing his hands.

"The cunnel is a smart, fine gentleman. His papers was all ready to be sealed up when I called his attention to somethin' the men was doin' an' slipped the letter among his papers. If it ain't delivered to old Madison by mistake, my little woman will soon be ridin' out to Briar Run."

"Peevy, I'll never forget how you've tried to help me!" softly exclaimed Cald. "With Annie safe in your cabin it don't much matter what happens to me."

"Stuff! Nothin' will happen to you. As to Annie, I'm doin' the missus a good turn. The little woman won't be so lonesome. Mebbe I've done myself a good turn."

THE army slowly followed the road builders, with the exception of the sick and a small garrison left at Fort McArthur. A heavy rain set in, and the forest roof leaked dismally. The straggling infantry would have welcomed open warfare gladly, could the sun return and the end of the big woods be left behind. The black flies and mosquitos were worse than any red ambushes. Men were nearly driven mad by these persistent pests.

When the weary column reached the broad swamp on the height of land, it had covered only sixteen miles. To every soldier the distance had been interminable. Then the army was faced with a sea of mud, muck and mire, through which it did not seem humanly possible for any body of men to pass. There was but little feed for the thin cattle, and the horses were in a deplorable condition. The entire expedition dragged through forest and swamp. On the watershed a fort was erected and aptly named Fort Necessity.

To add to the discomforts of the heavy rain, the fearful scourge of insect life, and the rapidly decreasing supplies, there came disheartening news from Detroit, brought by General Robert Lucas and William Denny. These two men had been sent by Hull to Governor Atwater, while the army was at Dayton. Now they were back with bad news for Hull.

The conference was held apart from the curious soldiers, but the file as well

as the rank were soon in possession of the evil tidings. Walk-in-the-Water, principal chief of the Wyandots, had spoken with much hostility of the Americans. The British, too, were preparing for war, and had drawn in a large body of Indians to Malden, and had fed and feasted and armed these red allies. Tecumseh was using his great influence to cement friendship between the powerful Shawnees and the British. Detroit must speedily pass into the hands of the enemy unless the imminent danger was met and overcome by Hull's troops.

To cause graver worries was the news brought by an eccentric appearing and acting individual, who gave his name as Joel Andrew. He was closeted with General Hull and his staff for more than an hour, and the officers betrayed their concern when they emerged from the fort. After the messenger had mingled with the soldiers, had indulged in an eccentric dance and sung a humorous border song, he was given the name of Merry Andrew. He claimed to be an American, just returning from Canada with the latest news of that province's war preparations. His fun-making activities caused much laughter where men had laughed but little.

"Hot Tophet and blamenation!" exclaimed Peevy. "With that critter around I almost forgit I'm tired of eatin' hawg meat an' bein' chawed to pieces by the pesky flies."

Cald, untouched by the grotesque comedy of Andrew's appearance and lively chatter, drew Peevy aside and lamented:

"I have a feelin' I am goin' to git killed. Just because there's the shadder of a chance of life meanin' a heap to me after this business is over."

Peevy, instead of striving to erase this gloomy impression, replied:

"But that ain't so bad as it sounds. When a man's dead he has a right smart chance of bein' somebody. He has all etarnity to use in buildin' up a reputation."

"Such talk don't help me any. I'm burnin' up with heat what comes from worry."

"See here. You must try to keep cool like I do. I'm cooler than old Hen Fowler down home. An' he was so cool, after they stretched him on a hickory limb for stealin' a side of pork, an' went to bury him, he froze the whole dern graveyard." Shifting his gaze to the grinning countenance of Andrew, he added, "Little man, what we need is some of that blue ruin the officers be drinkin'. I'd spill a quart of human grease for a man's size snort of that army liquor."

The newcomer, with a whimsical contortion of his thin face, slowly winked a pale gray eye and danced away. When he came back he was carrying a blanket. Wrapped in this was a jug of stout rum. He explained to Peevy and Cald—

"Found it layin' round loose in that tent beyond the fort."

"Land o' Goshen!" mumbled Peevy. "From the cunnel's tent! Boys, we must git rid of the evidence."

He suited action to his advice and drank generously. As he passed the jug to Cald, he glared about the circle and exclaimed:

"Fetch on all your pisenous snakes! They'll never find me better prepared! Good land, what a lift it has!"

The messenger drank and pirouetted gaily away. Cald's son came up, and the father drew back from the fire. The lad's face was bleak with the misery of homesickness. Peevy began some fantastic story telling and concluded with a vivid description of one of his rough and tumble fights with a border bully.

The lad laughed heartily, and to encourage more of the whimsicalities he prompted—

"You must 'a' whanged him mighty hard."

"Son, I hit him so hard that I knocked him back into the day before."

There followed a lull, and the lad's face again was woebegone. In a low voice, as if speaking to himself, he said:

"I wish my pap hadn't got killed. A boy needs his father when growin' up, like a gal does her mother."

"That he does, son," gravely agreed Peevy. "But I reckon your pap's alive. He might be showin' up any time."

"Oh, not up here! He'd make for Little Briar Run, where my mother is. If he didn't do that he wouldn't be any pap of mine."

The figure in the shadows stirred un-

easily and drew back deeper into the black growth.

The circle around the camp-fire was suddenly disrupted by a loud outcry resounding above all camp noises. It was a discovery cry. Then Bills, the hunter, pounded in among the fires and shouted:

"One of our poor boys murdered out in the woods! Shot through the neck with a long arrer! Had his gun in his hands, but hadn't had time to cock it!"

The dead man was brought in to the nearest camp-fire. He was a new recruit and presumably had wandered away from the camp in search of game. While the officers were stationing the men against a surprise attack, a scout arrived and informed General Hull that the tracks near the dead man were not made by an Indian. He described the impressions as having been made by a long, narrow shoe. He deduced that the assassin was a white scout sent down from the north, a man who had been unable to resist murder. Young Cassy seized the scout's arm, led him to a wet patch of ground between two fires and pointed at some tracks.

"See them tracks! Made by a long, narrer shoe!"

"Just like the murderer's tracks," said the scout.

"Them tracks was made by that danged Merry Andrew!" roared Peevy. "Come on, boys! Spread out an' rustle! We'll catch the scut!"

So weak was the discipline that no officer sought to deter the men from rushing into the growth. Peevy was the first of these to return. He reported that the dead man's pockets were turned inside out and that his blanket roll had been torn apart. He volunteered the opinion:

"Must 'a' been fetchin' a talk to Gineral Hull. A enemy spy, our Merry Andrew knew his errand an' got ahead of him without catchin' him. He was in camp here long enough to know the feller hadn't come in. He slipped away to meet him."

It was too dark for an intelligent pursuit. The assassin only had to keep away from all men, while a searcher dared not fire on a suspect without first hailing him to learn if he were an American.

The excitement had not entirely subsided when Bills and two riflemen dragged a stranger to the general's quarters and announced they had captured a spy. The man, somewhat bruised by rough treatment, angrily shouted:

"You stupid fools! You came near to killing me. I am a dispatch bearer from the War Department to General Hull."

"War's declared! We're at war with England!" roared the soldiers.

General Hull, surrounded by his eager staff, with trembling fingers ripped open the message. His staff scarcely breathed. The soldiers ceased their clamor. Slowly the general's eyes scanned the written page. *Folding the message, he lifted his head and huskily told his staff:

"Gentlemen, it's from the War Department. But it contains no mention of war having been declared. It simply urges that we proceed to Detroit. What can we make of that? I am utterly dumfounded!"

CHAPTER III

FATHER AND SON

IT WAS not until the army was nearing Frenchtown† on the evening of July 2nd that the War Department's second dispatch overtook the army. This belated information, commonly known in Canada for some days, was read aloud to the staff by General Hull:

> "Sir: War is declared against Great Britain. You will be on your guard. Proceed to your post with all possible expedition; make such arrangements for the defense of the country as in your judgment may be necessary, and await further orders."

Listening soldiers heard it and repeated it, and a mighty cheering roared through the army.

"That's plain enough, and mighty

*Two dispatches were sent to Hull, each dated on the morning of the day when war was declared. The one received at Fort Findlay contained no mention of the all important step. A week later the other message was received by Hull at Frenchtown. This announced the declaration of war and warned Hull to be on his guard. The first message, useless to Hull, was sent by special courier from Washington. The second and all important was sent by mail to Cleveland, to be forwarded through one hundred miles of wilderness by such conveyance as "accident might supply". This delay, plus the egregious blunder, remains inexplicable to this day. Canada knew a week ahead of Hull that war had been declared.

†Monroe, Michigan

good hearing," exclaimed Colonel McArthur.

"But this was started after us on the same day the first message was sent. I can't understand why the first message did not contain mention of such vital importance," said Hull, his brows worried into a frown.

"Regardless of all mysteries, you now have full power to go ahead, General," said Colonel Findlay.

"It would seem so, and yet—" Hull paused and pursed his lips, studied the paper, then slowly quoted, " 'Make such arrangements for the defense of the country as in your judgment may be necessary.' "

"Plain as the nose on my face that you have absolute power," declared McArthur.

"No question about that, General," added another.

The gaping, curious militia read impatience in this speaker's voice.

"It would seem to be so," mused Hull. "But is it? We must not ignore the rest of the sentence, to wit, 'and await further orders'. Gentlemen, I find this belated message somewhat perplexing."

"Why, sir, it gives you absolute power up here," insisted McArthur, who displayed a touch of impatience in his tone.

"Gentlemen, despite your assurance, I must interpret this writing as I find it. The last four words can only be interpreted as nullifying any initiative I might wish to take. It urges me to take the defensive, not the offensive."

The field officers made small effort to conceal their chagrin. Peevy nudged young Jim Cassy and commented:

"Seems to go round in a circle like a hen with her head chopped off. Son, all dumb critters don't walk on four legs. Some such work for the Government down in Washington. The gineral's right in a way. He can do anything he wants to, but he mustn't."

The high spirit of the soldiers, however, could not be clouded by any pessimistic doubts as to just how far Hull's authority extended. War was officially declared. Again the hoarse clamor of huzzas exploded the entire length of the column. The transition from the many miseries of the black swamps to the very pleasing open country was in itself sufficient to brush away all gloom and doubt.

Yet there remained cause for a grave apprehension. The *Cuyahoga,* a small craft, had sailed for Detroit with the baggage of Hull and his staff. Also aboard were the hospital stores and many important papers. Among the latter was the general's commission, the War Department's instruction and the complete muster rolls of the army. And even while the file were firing a rejoicing volley a messenger arrived and announced that the *Cuyahoga* had been captured while it was passing Malden, where the enemy was feverishly throwing up earthworks.

All soldiers in the immediate vicinity of the group of officers heard the bitter argument between the staff and General Hull. The latter stoutly insisted he could not cross into Canada without specific orders from the War Department.

"You are expressly instructed, sir, to make such arrangements as you may believe to be necessary," impatiently reminded a colonel.

"And as specifically instructed to make them for the defense of the country, and to wait for further orders," countered Hull. "But let us retire where we can discuss the situation in a more seemly environment."

"All wars fit this way, Ramblin'?" whispered young Cassy.

"The Lawd forbid! Only this war, Jim," answered Peevy. "But it's sorter bad they should have our muster rolls. Now they know more 'bout this army than the officers do. My notion of war is to go ahead an' make a successful blunder an' be forgiven by them who stay at home an' never do any fightin'. If Hull would listen to me he'd go ahead, forgit all 'bout Washington an' do his best, an' let the President's cabinet forgive or go an' sit on a thorn bush."

"If we win we'd be forgiven most anything."

"Jim, you got a head. Fetch home the venison an' starvin' folks won't be fussy as to how you bagged the game. You know, we ain't just a common army. We're all *tasembo,* as my old Choctaw friends would put it."

"Sounds like praise."

"It is, in a way. Depends on how you look at it. That queer word means crazy. Crazy army. Crazy War Department. Canada knew what we was up to afore we knew it. That ain't no way to plan a war. Can't hear any more fightin' among the officers, so we might as well drift 'round an' find what mess has the best smellin' kettle."

Veteran and youth strolled idly among the scattered groups and on every side heard hot condemnation of all military technique which held fighting men in idleness. Across the river was Malden. There was nothing to prevent Hull from taking that town. The fort was weak, the garrison weaker. The militia and the Indians had either left or were ready to run. A prompt crossing and attack, with victory certain, would have had a strong effect on the red tribes already gathering to aid the British, and would have promptly halted any further strength from the red villages. For the Indian ever loved a winner.

THE two came to their own mess, where Bills was glumly feeding the fire and ready to dish up the stew of salt pork and venison. Jim Cald was at the hogshead of water and about to dip a gourd when Cassy and Peevy came along. Cald would have retired, but could not well do so without appearing to be avoiding the two. It was the reflection of his father's face in the water that caused the lad to straighten in amazement and exclaim:

"Land o' Goshen! I never noticed it afore. Here, let's look into that water looking-glass together. Ain't that the funniest thing! Hard to tell which is you an' which is me!"

Cald held his breath till he was red in the face. Peevy attempted to create a diversion by laughing loudly and pointing to two soldiers who were engaged in a wrestling match.

"Bet you I can throw both of 'em at once," he cried.

The youth did not hear him. He was staring intently at Cald. Again he expressed amazement at the similarity of their features. He added—

"Can't you see, mister, we both look most tarnally alike?"

Cald mopped the sweat from his forehead to prevent the great fear he was experiencing from showing in his countenance. He replied—

"We both happen to have strong noses."

"This nation's run by big noses," spoke up Peevy. "All big Injun chiefs have big noses. Tecumseh's nose landed him on top of the heap. Here, take a squint at my nose. Prob'ly the weakest that any Peevy ever growed on a face. But it's fair size. But if I had my uncle Lige's nose I'd never be scared of a little red headed woman no bigger'n my two fists."

Neither Cald nor his son appeared to be conscious of Peevy's presence. The youth insisted:

"Hi, mister, step up to this barrel ag'in. Let's take another look at our homely faces."

Cald, trembling because of a mixture of strong emotions, did as bid, although Peevy, unseen by the youth, gestured for him to retire. But some mysterious power pulled him to the hogshead to stand beside his son. Again the two stared down into the visages mirrored under the sunlight.

"Dawggone my boots!" exclaimed the youth, his voice sounding shrill because of his amazement. "We sartain do look all-fired alike."

"Our noses do seem to be pretty big," muttered Cald.

And Peevy noticed that the brown hand resting on the chime of the hogshead was contracted so violently as to leave the knuckles white.

"Ho-ho! Look! See them fool wrestlers. Watch me dig in an' land both of 'em on their backs!" boisterously cried Peevy.

Young Cassy straightened and stepped back. He stared in Cald's face and said:

"You must 'a' been some relation to my pap. Funny I never heard any one call you by name. What is your name? Can't be just Jim. An' that's funny, too. That's my first name. Funnier 'n' funnier. What you say your name is?"

"Cald—"

The word was out before the distraught man knew he had spoken.

The youth's eyes opened widely.

"I vow, if that ain't master queer! My pap was named Cald. He went away an' never come back. He must most mightily been to blame, or else killed by Injuns. Mam wouldn't call herself Cassy if pap hadn't been to blame. I can't make it out."

"But she named you after your pap," spoke up Peevy. "Life's full of queer things. What say to seein' how Fuss 'n' Feathers is plannin' to do with this rantankous army."

"Lots of queer happenstances in life," mumbled Cald as he wiped his shirt sleeve violently across his nose as if he would eliminate that prominent feature altogether. "I know of quite a few of my tribe that was killed by Injuns. Cald's a common name down in Tennessee. Your pap may be some sort of a relation of mine. We should keep together durin' this war."

"Sure as jumpin' catfish. An' what say to eatin' together?"

For a moment Cald was deliriously happy; then he turned his head to conceal the misery in his eyes. His voice was hoarse as he said:

"That would be mighty fine. But when a young warrior is the friend of an old warrior, he usually gits somethin' to wear from the old warrior, to show they belong to the same tribe. Here's somethin' that Peevy give me. Somethin' that'll fetch you good luck. Some strings of wampum. Wear 'em round your neck."

"What! Me wear a mess of danged beads? Who wants to wear Injun beads? Then ag'in, what about t'other fellers who don't have any?"

Peevy entered the conversation by stoutly saying:

"Most every man in this army believes in luck, in some charm. All but our gineral, who believes only in the War Department; an' some of his officers, who don't believe in him. See this silver thingumjig I wear at my throat? A mighty chief once wore it. He give it to me an' wanted me to wear it. No one in this neck of the woods is callin' me any coward."

"You've proved to folks that you don't ever scare, Mr. Peevy. Hooray for the war! We'll be in old Canada soon. Let's start a song. Everybody hop in when I repeat the chorus!"

Peevy soon withdrew, wondering how this companionship of father and son would terminate. If the boy was like his father he might be very stiff willed. Peevy was uneasy. He preferred any phase of warfare to being present when the boy learned the truth. Yet, as he wandered, he found his steps were ever turning back toward Bills's fire and the Calds. Not until he had made sure that young Jim had left the fire did he return. Cald was sitting with his elbows on his knees, his chin cupped in his hands. This attitude suggested great depression of spirits. Peevy slowly walked toward the bowed figure. He sensed tragedy. He sensed disaster as he drew closer. When his roving eyes discovered Tecumseh's strings of wampum on the ground he knew the worst.

Clapping a hand on Cald's bowed shoulder, he demanded—

"What's wrong now?"

Without lifting his head Cald answered:

"Everything's wrong. My whole life. All the world. I thought it better to tell him part of the truth; that after a few weeks of married life his ma an' me had separated."

Peevy glared impotently. His voice was broken as he mumbled:

"I don't know if it was the worst thing you could 'a' done, or the best. Question now is, what you doin' next?"

"Git myself killed." Cald's voice was flat and monotonous.

"You'd do that just to have folks say you was a hero," said Peevy viciously. "Just so some one would write a mile of verses about Jim Cald's defeat that we poor livin' devils would have to listen to." He clamped a powerful hand on the bowed shoulder; his voice was harsh as he continued:

"See here. It mebbe don't matter much if you spile your own life. You're full grown, white and free. But you can't spile the boy's life. You git down to my clearin', ahead of the boy. Your woman will be livin' there with my wife. You be there when he gits home. You 'n' Annie had some dis'greement, says she, or you, to him. You find old John, the circuit rider, an' tell him from me he's to give you a writin' that shows

you 'n' Annie be man an' wife, an' that he's to date that writin' 1794. Old John will understand. He'll do it as he knows the Lawd will bless him. He may be fussy enough to make you two stand up an' be hitched. As a justice of the peace I can half marry you, you bein' the half."

Cald shook his head and mumbled—

"I can do just one thing—git myself killed."

"If you do I'll write the song about you myself. Only you won't be no hero. Just what does the boy believe?"

"That I was caught by Injuns; that I escaped, but was too much of a skunk to go back to my wife. That I ain't given her a thought all these years—Peevy, this is my own partic'lar hell. Don't fuss round tryin' to make it better."

"You pick up Tecumseh's wampum. Save it. If ever you want to save a human life in this war, that wampum will turn the trick."

"I'll never move my head to dodge the ax."

"Who's askin' you to? I don't know of anybody who wants to save your life, less it's old Hull. An' he won't move a finger less he gits orders from the War Department. An' all his orders come in sort of late. But put that wampum in your pouch. If this war keeps on them beads may come in damn han'some in savin' some poor younker's life, who never should 'a' come up here."

Cald slowly straightened his bowed shoulders and glared about as if expecting to behold a cloud of red men assailing the camp. Then he picked up the beads and thrust them into the blouse of his hunting shirt. Peevy then told him:

"You're no good to the army. Not much more'n Hull is. You need a change of air. Remember that Merry Andrew? I talked with a Canadian, who come to this side under a flag to see about some property. He says that murderer is in or near Sandwich. He killed a younker back in the swamps, who might 'a' been your boy. Now, you 'n' me will go huntin' on Hawg Island, only three miles above Detroit. Place is overrun with wild hawgs. We may take a notion to slip over to Sandwich on the dark of the moon an' stir up a little ruckus. We may run across our peg shaped man an' blow his candle out. Git your rifle. Wild hawgs up there just beggin' to be killed, bein' that skeered lest they'll have to listen to our army a-singin' 'Sinclair's Defeat'."

"I'm ready," Cald wearily said.

"We'll scout ahead of the army. Every one will be afoot now."

The long column at last was in motion, and in due time passed Aux Ecorces and the Rouge River, going into camp at Spring Wells the more euphonious Belle Fontaine.

Diagonally across the river was Sandwich, where the enemy was busily throwing up earthworks. There had been much discontent and condemnation among rank and file because no attempt was made to capture Malden, down the river. The fort was weak and the garrison weaker. Firmly believing that the Americans would promptly assault this post, the militia and Indians had deserted in large numbers. From the new position General Hull could look across to Sandwich. Again the army clamored to be led into Canada. The spectacle of laborers throwing up earthworks and mounting guns which would command the little settlement and the fort of Detroit all but incited the army to make an attack upon the enemy, regardless of Hull's orders.

Hull remained firm against the arguments of his field officers that he cross the Detroit River and destroy the menace of the commanding artillery. He was set in his determination not to take any initiative until he had heard from Washington. He suggested that the men use their leisure in washing their clothing and in repairing all damaged guns.

Peevy told Cald:

"We'll see more fightin' on Hawg Island than we will down here. We'll take a peek at this fort an' then go upstream."

Cald made no reply, and his eyes were dull and spiritless as he followed his friend through the big gates. Neither sensed any romance of history as they looked out upon the ancient Western gateway of old France. To the Tennessee men Fort Detroit was but an-

other structure of logs, excellent against an Indian attack, perhaps, but helpless against the guns rapidly being mounted at Sandwich.

There was a twenty-foot embankment and a deep ditch, with a double row of tall pickets surrounding the entire works. The settlement itself was dubiously protected by a similar stockade. Peevy counted a hundred and sixty houses, and was told by a Frenchman that the population in and about Detroit numbered nearly a thousand, largely French. The garrison consisted of less than a hundred men.

"Looks sort of stout," mused Cald as he dolefully followed Peevy about.

"Looks like a man I know back home. Has one leg. When at the table an' you see him only from his waist up you'd vow he could squelch giants. But when he stands on his one leg you know a child can push him over. This would look right smart in Pontiac's time. I'll never be cooped up in this place, with less than a mile of water between it and the guns at Sandwich. We've seen enough."

Returning to the settlement between the fort and the river, Peevy quickly secured the use of a canoe on his promise to pay in dressed hogs, or in hard money if the hunting venture proved to be a failure.

None in the army questioned them, or sought to detain them, as they took to the water. They kept close to the west shore, but when they were a mile above the town a boat came out from the Canadian side. This craft quickly put back when a bullet from Peevy's rifle sang dangerously close. Peevy boasted:

"I'll bet a prime coonskin that I fired the first shot in this war." Then he added, "But I hope the War Department don't l'arn about it."

"Lawd! But I do hope the younker won't run into danger. Think of it! All these years I had a son an' never knew it!"

"Dawggone, stop talkin' like that. You can't turn time backward. If you could there wouldn't be any mistakes to be forgiven. Can't have any happiness without forgiveness. I love to forgive folks if I can select those to be forgiven. I can't stand broodin'."

They arrived at Hog Island without hindrance, concealed the canoe and selected a hidden spot for a sleeping place. At some distance from this, and on the west side of the island, they arranged their kettle and gathered dry wood. They made their supper of hard bread and cold meat and retired for the night.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUEST

THE sun was barely clear of the eastern forest when Cald and Peevy were finishing their breakfast of the cold meat and bread they had brought from Detroit. Cald had been slow to talk and scarcely seemed to hear Peevy's flow of pictorial exaggerations. When his companion paused for breath Cald morosely vowed—

"If Gineral Hull gits my boy killed in this business I'll line my rifle on him an' give him his eternal come-uppance."

Peevy beamed genially on his friend.

"Hull can't take all the blame for what happens up here. Shoot the War Department first, then the gineral. Our army's made up of raw milishy. They don't have any confidence in their officers an' but mighty little in themselves. They ain't had a chance to l'arn how to fight a war. Officers mostly wear swords because they was prime hands at playin' politics. Any good stump speaker can be a colonel. Yet we'll have to worry along somehow. Let's look this place over afore we do any hawg shootin'."

"Wonder if the boy knows I'm gone."

"I'm wonderin' what my little woman thinks. She knows about me bein' gone," added Peevy, and for a moment his long angular face was heavy with gloom.

They set forth to explore the island and at the outset were charged by a boar. Peevy was compelled to fire his rifle.

"Dead on the field of battle," he grimly remarked. "In the mem'ry of all other hawgs he'll be a patriot. But if that shot was heard he may be a damn expensive hero for us."

They proceeded cautiously so as not to be surprised by another attack. As

they came to a small opening Cald was first in discovering signs of human occupancy—the charred remains of a small cooking fire. He thrust a hand into the ashes and found them dry. He said:

"New fire. Let's look farther."

They scouted the surrounding growth and came upon what appeared to be the beginning of a small log house. The logs had not been notched to fit closely together. This structure was about five feet in height and had no roof. It would have made a stout pen had there been an opening other than that through the top.

"No sense to it," said Cald. "My son might 'a' made something like it out of corn cobs when he was a little shaver."

"Let's git into the true inwardness of it, as a neighbor of mine said when he fell into his well." Peevy peered over the top log and discovered a pallet of blankets. "Some one sleeps in there at times, an' don't want any hawg neighbors droppin' in on him. Must be some hunter what comes here often."

They passed on and, within a few rods of the log structure, came to a bubbling spring. Cald, who was in advance, paused. After a sharp scrutiny he called over his shoulder—

"Just look here a bit."

Peevy deflected his gaze and searched the sodden ground surrounding the spring. He beheld what had attracted the attention of his friend, and his thin nostrils dilated. His rifle came up for instant action.

"His tracks," muttered Cald.

"If they ain't, then our army can whip all Europe," said Peevy grimly. There could not be any mistaking the several long, narrow imprints in the wet soil. There was not another man in Michigan Territory who had feet like those that made the tracks.

"That place of logs was Merry Andrew's hideout," whispered Cald. His eyes now blazed with rage as he realized how easily it might have been his son whom the killer had left on the forest floor. "He breaks his journey here quite reg'lar, else he wouldn't have a pen to keep the hawgs from runnin' over him."

"I most mortally hone to meet Brother Andrew an' doctor him with lead pills for what's ailin' him," murmured Peevy. "That poor lad he killed!"

"Just by chance it wasn't my boy," said Cald. "I wish I knew if he was up here, or down sneakin' around our army. I'd go after him if I had to go alone."

"You'll be spryer then old Tost down home was, if you can git to him ahead of me," growled Peevy. Then in his usual quizzical manner he explained, "Old Tost was so quick an' fast he could circle round an' catch his shadder. I've seen him to do it."

Cald had no ears for nonsense. He thought it all out aloud.

"Comes here from Sandwich, or from west of the river, an' stays all night, when he's goin' to, or returnin' from, our army often committin' one of his bloody murders. I'll bag him!"

"Then he'll have to be twins, as I'm bound on the same business. I sartainly will notch my rifle barrel to celebrate his goin' down to his reward."

"He's my meat," growled Cald. "You haven't any boy in danger from him an' his kind. You shoot hawgs. I'll shoot that critter."

"One who sees him first most likely will git him," prophesied Peevy. "We can't tell from these signs whether he's hangin' round our army now, or has gone back to Sandwich."

Cald's face crinkled with a sudden fear. His voice was hoarse as he said:

"You think he may be makin' for our army an' will be up to his bloody tricks at Detroit. Reckon I don't hanker to hang round this place to shoot hawgs. Reckon I'll be goin' down the river."

"But he can't go round slewin' folks in broad daylight," argued Peevy. "No forest an' swamps down there for him to hide in. If he's downriver he's keepin' well back from the army. He's hidin' in some Frenchman's house an' l'arnin' what he can from the settlement people. Let's look to the east side of the island."

They scouted through the growth with the skill of red men. The grunting and squealing of pigs and hogs sounded louder as they gained the eastern shore and secured an excellent view of Sandwich. At the water's edge were

signs of a boat having been dragged into the river. The marks left by the keel appeared fresh, and with much confidence Peevy said:

"He's crossed to Sandwich. He's over there now."

"He's come back," said Cald. "Wonder who he killed this time. Prob'ly a younker."

"If he's there we'll dig him out tonight," said Peevy. "Hawg huntin' must wait, I opine."

"Let's scout to the north end of this hunk of dirt," suggested Cald, whose uneasiness was a strong witness to his brooding fears.

Peevy was quick to read his morose thoughts. He said:

"That Merry Andrew won't go near our boys ag'in. Too many of our soldiers know him."

"I think just different," gloomily insisted Cald. "Detroit has so many fine hidin' places for such as him. He can keep under cover in any one of the Frenchmen's houses an' see all that's goin' on. At night he can slip out an' knife some poor lad an' come up here."

THE Americans then advanced to the upper end of the island, and discovered a small sailboat lazily making for the Canadian shore.

"Comin' down from Lake Sinclair," mused Cald.

"Runnin' to Peach Island. No—puttin' in to the Canadian shore. Mebbe our man's in it. If so, I hope he makes us a call. No. Not interested in this hunk of dirt. Reckon we'll cross to Sandwich after dark an' have some fun."

Cald did not seem to hear his companion's buoyant suggestion. He switched his gaze to the enemy shore; but it was no thought of war and its horrors that was carving deep lines of sorrow in his strong face. With a sigh he remarked, as if thinking aloud:

"I oughter managed different. Spiled what slim chance I might have had."

He worked along the timbered bank. Peevy watched him sympathetically, but with no idea as to what was being sought. Suddenly Cald straightened, his eyes alight with a definite purpose.

"I found it!" he declared. "Knew he must have one hid here some where."

"Canoe?"

"Dugout."

"Same thing, only different. What of it?"

"I'm goin' to take it an' float down to the army. You'll have the boat left."

Peevy displayed no surprise.

"Still a-frettin'?"

"Most mortal. I reckon you won't want to come. I wouldn't ask you to go back an' lose your fun. But now we've got a boat apiece."

Peevy nodded and said:

"Boat apiece is enough unless a man happens to be twins. Then he'd need two. I don't think you'll be doin' yourself any good by goin' back, Jim. But I'm a master hand to mind my own business. You hit dead center 'bout me stayin' here for a spell. I'm goin' to hunt this island an' see if the merry one has any other sleepin' place besides what we've already found. Our friend is mighty sly. Most likely he don't use the same sleepin' place right along. That shows he's a coward. Just as his killin' that poor boy shows he's the devil's fav'rite son. Huntin' round for more of his hideouts will help me kill time till it's dark enough to cross over to Sandwich."

Cald was much disturbed. His heart inexorably demanded that he return to Detroit, where he might, surreptitiously, keep an eye on his son. His border sense of loyalty was urging him to remain with his friend and share in the dangers of the nocturnal visit to Sandwich.

"I feel like a yaller dawg," he mumbled.

"I had one once when I was scoutin' down in hostile Creek country. I'd rather you wouldn't slander yaller dawgs. Thought a heap of that feller. Saved my life. He was rangin' on ahead an' took on hisself to pry into a hornet's nest. Then he come a-ragin' back to me, with all the yallerjackets after him. A parcel of reds hopped me from a ambush an' made for me. Them hornets, that my faithful dawg fetched down on me, give me such nimble heels I outrun the Injuns by two miles."

"You know what I mean, Ramblin'.

The heart's torn out of me. I'd be a hindrance to you."

"Jim, don't excuse yourself any more. You'd be a damned nuisance if you went along with me while your mind's down the river. You ain't like old Missus Peas, down home. She could make a hoecake with one hand while milkin' a cow with t'other. You pull out any time you want to."

"I knew you'd understand, Ramblin'. But I'll help you hunt for whatever you're huntin' for." Now his tone was almost buoyant.

Peevy repeated his belief that the killer spy was a coward, as proven by his slaying of the young recruit. The two began a close search of the island from end to end. Several times they had to avoid the vicious charges by wild boars. Finally Cald expressed his belief that there were no more hiding places to be found. Peevy insisted that the man must have some rainproof shelter. Cald remained unconvinced and, curiously enough, was the one who stumbled upon the hidden retreat. He literally was upon it when he followed Peevy in scrambling down a pile of fallen timbers. He happened to observe the regularity of the projecting tops. Peevy would have passed on had not his companion kneeled at the foot of the débris.

"Lost something?" patiently inquired Peevy, his gaze scanning the larger growth with the idea that Andrew might have improvised a platform in the crotch of some tree. Any such refuge was sure to be carefully concealed by thick foliage.

"Ramblin', I opine there's a little log hut under this heap of timber. Come here." He knelt among the leafy tops of the fallen trees. Only his head and shoulders were visible when his friend joined him. "This mess wa'n't caused by any strong wind. Too sheltered. Leaves ain't dry yet. Look at this." He pulled some of the branches aside and revealed an opening under the débris.

Peevy squatted beside him and investigated.

"Reckon you've hit it. Reg'lar tunnel under these tops. Sap's still oozin' where branches have been cut away. Blacker'n the inside of a cat. How long is this hole?"

"Only a few feet. He cribbed up three low walls, with the ledge makin' the fourth. Weak rooted trees felled so's to rest on the ledge an' the ground down here. In that space he has his best hidin' place."

"Here's some chips he didn't git rid of," mused Peevy. "He dragged in some small growth to cover all, but this hole is where he goes in."

"Let's go in."

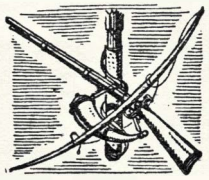
Peevy quickly objected:

"Not just yet, Jim. I'll bet a gallon of blue ruin that we'll find another hole that he uses as a back door. But we must look out for tricks."

He trimmed a sapling into a stout pole, and thrust this several feet into the funnel of a hole, and almost instantly was startled by a savage click. The pole jerked under the gripping, crunching power of steel jaws.

Savagely hurling his worn hat on the ground, Peevy declared:

"That makes me madder then as if he'd taken a shot at me! Think of a poor devil's fix if he started to crawl in there! May be a gun trap, too. We'll swing some of these timbers aside."



TO BE CONTINUED

Member-at-Large

By GEORGES SURDEZ

JEROME COQUELIN'S career in the French Foreign Legion seemed fated to be influenced by Captain Bardouin and Legionnaire Zurbok. When he had reached Sidi bel Abbès with a draft of recruits from Marseilles, Coquelin had been assigned to Bardouin's company for training and Zurbok had occupied the cot next to his. And when Coquelin broke out of the military jail at Ait-Terwal—risking punishment as a deserter if recaptured, gambling his head among the hostile tribes of the Moroccan Middle Atlas if not—it was to escape from the same pair. He was doomed to look into their faces again, months later, under unexpected circumstances, with results unforeseen by any one, least of all by himself.

Coquelin was not a remarkable soldier, but he was a remarkable Legionnaire. The two are not necessarily synonymous. In four years with the Corps, while he had won no particular fame for valor, he had achieved a certain reputation as a Legion character. Of medium height, lanky, all bones and sinews, his silhouette was somewhat grotesque, attracting attention. His face was a clown-like mask, lengthened by a lantern jaw, lighted by soft, appealing brown eyes, resembling those of a puppy. As his long skull was cropped as closely as his cheeks and chin, nothing detracted from the conspicuous, sail sized ears or from the jutting prow of his nose.

His distinction rested on a special sort of courage. While men who faced lead and steel unflinchingly became timid before officers of high rank, Coquelin suffered no such embarrassment; he seemed inspired, on the contrary, to bold speech and witty remarks. A dozen anecdotes circulated the barrack-rooms of North Africa. There was the time when he had failed to salute a major on the main avenue of Meknes. The irritated officer had recalled him sharply, to point with mute indignation at the four braids on

his sleeve. Coquelin had nodded and said:

"Gold! Some wear it on their sleeves, others in their hearts."

The few days in prison had been a light price for the prestige won by Coquelin. Not long after, a general pinned the colonial cross on his chest, an award granted his combat group collectively. And as he clasped the great warrior's hand, the Legionnaire said:

"Nice! But if it's all the same to you, *mon Général*, I'd sooner have a barrel of wine."

The general was pleased to witness, at last, a manifestation of that rough wit and soldierly humor he had heard prevailed in the Legion. He laughed and had a dozen bottles of vintage wine sent to Coquelin's group. Because of such episodes the Legionnaire was forgiven for being lazy and inclined to dodge hardships and danger if possible.

At Ait-Terwal he caused trouble in the company—made for discontent. Veterans in the company admired him, but were careful not to listen too long to his yarns. Coquelin, who managed to get along in every language spoken in Europe, and was eloquent in each one, used that talent to coax loans from the unwary. When a young chap would receive a money order from home, Coquelin would appear very soon, as if warned by an instinct similar to that of the vulture for carrion. He would cajole, plead, make promises and fleece the man.

Captain Bardouin, a rather young, very alert officer, saw this very soon. He warned Coquelin twice; but there was nothing he could do, it appeared. Freely granted loans were the men's private business; and if they went without the minor luxuries that made existence bearable as a price for their foolishness, it was their fault. Yet it was irritating to see Coquelin frequent the cafés of the town, smoking and drinking what he liked, playing cards, while his victims wandered about puzzled and gloomy.

It was soon after the last warning that Zurbok interfered. His exact origin was unknown; he was a very tall, very broad, extremely muscular man of thirty-six, with enormous, toil hardened hands and a face that did not lure the love of women or the trust of small children. His devotion to his captain was patent, and it is probable that an imagination keener than his own devised the trick that trapped Coquelin. Zurbok contrived to lend him eight francs, then organized an association of creditors of which he appointed himself the delegate.

"Pay up by the fifteenth or I'll beat you up," he told Coquelin.

"Here's your eight francs, old chap."

"No. You pay everybody."

Coquelin nodded amiably.

"We'll talk it over in any case. You know I can't pay back everything on my pay! In confidence, I'll tell you that I expected money from one of my girls back home. I think she's dropped me. It's hard to face; it hurts. But you, Zurbok, know how women are—far from their eyes, far from their hearts."

"Sure, I know." Zurbok grinned uneasily, flattered and puzzled at the same time. "But you pay up by the fifteenth or I'll beat you up."

Coquelin started to explain schemes by which he hoped to obtain money, pointed out that he needed a longer delay. But Zurbok repeated his threat. Coquelin grew discouraged, frightened. The big fellow loved to use his strength when given authority, and the captain was certainly behind him. Sooner or later that irresistible mass of flesh would bear down upon Coquelin; those mighty fists would strike into his face; those thick fingers would maul him.

Something must be done.

ON THE fourteenth of the month, after drill, Zurbok repeated his threat. Coquelin doubled to the captain's office and asked to see Bardouin. The officer consented to an interview immediately, as was his custom. If the call were unjustified in his opinion, the man who wasted his time went to prison for a few days.

"Make it short, my lad," Bardouin suggested.

He was thickset, dark of skin and eyes, tanned like leather. His clear eyes stabbed through a man's skull and guessed thoughts, many believed.

"Captain," Coquelin started boldly,

"I'd like to get sent back to Algeria immediately. In a month the Legion's band, the greatest in the world, composed of over one hundred instruments, brass, string and—"

"What's that to you?"

"I play the oboe—"

"You should have applied to the bandmaster sooner. Can't grant your request. If you wish, make an official application in writing. You may go."

"Failing transfer, can I have a leave, Captain?"

"Not your turn. Visit unjustified. Four days. Next man."

Coquelin went to the prison happily. He had expected that Bardouin would refuse him transfer or leave, but he had secured safety for the following days, well past the dreaded fifteenth. In four days he would have time to think of a scheme to prevent Zurbok from carrying out his threats.

This was a vain hope. On the night of the fifteenth Zurbok entered his cell. The Legionnaire on guard was one of Coquelin's creditors and had allowed him to enter.

"I'll go easy this time, because I don't want to mark you up bad while you're in prison," Zurbok stated. "That would lead to investigation and get the guards into a mess. First, hand over all you have in your pockets and sign this receipt for your pay."

"I need cash for soap and tobacco."

"You can do without them awhile."

Coquelin complied, and hoped Zurbok would leave. But the big Legionnaire hung his tunic on a nail in the door.

"Now for a sample of what's coming to you every pay day until you've paid what you owe."

"You have no right—"

"A guy who fleeces Legionnaires when he's supposed to be one himself has it coming."

Zurbok stepped forward resolutely. Coquelin weighed one hundred and forty-five pounds, while Zurbok probably passed two hundred and twenty. The smaller man hesitated to defend himself in the narrow cell, fearful that a stinging blow would lash the giant to fury. So Zurbok merely reached out, drew Coquelin close, sat on the plank cot and set to work. He wrenched Coquelin's arms, rubbed hard knuckles over his skull, twisted his ears into tight, aching rolls of purplish flesh. Twice, for variety, he slapped him over the abdomen with an open hand, knocking the breath out of him.

"All right until the thirty-first," he said as he left.

When the door was locked, the prisoner slumped to the floor, sick with pain and humiliation. His misery made him forget that his creditors had gone without writing paper, without wine and soap, to pay for his comforts and his pleasures. Moreover, whether he deserved it or not, the prospect of a fortnightly beating was terrifying. And it would take three months to pay what he owed, even should he deprive himself of cigarets. He had reached the end of the rope.

"I'll have to leave," he thought, "to desert—"

While Coquelin was neither Casanova nor Monte Cristo, the prison at Ait-Terwal was neither the Château d'If nor the Leads of Venice. The Legionnaire had a screwdriver on his knife to remove the hinges from doors. He knew the habits of his guards. On the night of the sixteenth he escaped.

He stopped in town for a few minutes to open the door of the largest café with the bent end of a sardine key. In the pantry, he stuffed his bags with food and bottles of wine. Then he stole the billiard balls from a locker.

It was two-thirty in the morning when he leaped over the chain stretched each night across the automobile road. He knew that he had three hours before his departure would be signaled. If he went toward Meknes, he would be overhauled and arrested by a patrol before noon. Consequently he headed south, straight for the hostile zone. He ran the risk of being beheaded by the tribesmen; but such a quick fate seemed preferable to the physical pain of beatings at regular intervals—to the humiliation of public punishment.

He walked rapidly all night, passing the spots where the fatigue parties were sent to gather wood, hay and building stones. By sunrise he had crossed valleys, waded streams, climbed hills, trotted through ravines and gullies.

Coquelin trusted in his luck to get through the first encounter with the enemy alive. He had certain talents which would help him. Down on the regimental records as thirty-two, he was nearer forty. In another age, when the need for men of his type was acute, he would have lived freely and pleasantly, alternately in prosperity and starvation.

Modern society had played him a shabby trick; he had come to the world too late. Born in a drab town on the outskirts of Paris, his parents ragpickers, mongers of old metal and rabbit skins, he had lost even their scanty protection very soon. At the time when luckier boys still ran to their mothers to have their aprons pinned up, he had peddled newspapers and been intelligent enough to put himself on a budget. His existence had been a continuous fight—against business rivals who grabbed the best corners; against larger boys who preyed on his kind; against the law, which would have picked him up and sent him to that dreaded hell, a home.

At eight, he had joined a tent show as the rear end of the sea monster, a fearsome animal created of old hides and yellowed tusks, animated by a pair of boys. At ten, he had become the front end, his colleague having outgrown the job, and had been trusted to do the realistic roaring. After that he had been general utility man, barker and, during the World War, an undistinguished infantryman.

Following the Armistice, he had been a victim of world readjustment. Country fairs were not as popular as they had been; and he had eked out a living as a street hawker until weariness had come and he had tried the Legion. For a man of his sort the life had been tolerable, save when faced with Zurbok.

"These hillmen can't have much amusement," Coquelin had thought. "If you can give them something to watch, to laugh at, they'll lay off a man."

He remembered the good old days before the War, when no one had ever asked him—an entertainer, a wandering artist in song, monologue and tricks—what his race, his faith might be. No one, that is, save an occasional policeman; and there was none of that despised caste in the dissident zone of the Middle Atlas.

A short distance from the first hamlet in the hostile territory, he stopped long enough to strip off tunic and képi. He walked forward with the stolen billiard balls ready.

BEFORE long three natives approached cautiously. They were tall, lean, with the bones and muscles very distinct on their half naked frames. They wore rags tied about their temples; their skulls were nude and closely shaved. Beards bristled beneath their coarse lips and hooked noses. Each was armed with a flintlock rifle. But Coquelin was comforted by their expressions. They were curious, if mistrustful, resembling certain peasants of Europe.

Coquelin tossed the balls into the air and caught them. He seemed unbelievably awkward and ridiculous, yet never missed. Lured by the glitter of the ivories in the sunlight, by the rapid thumping of the balls against the deserter's palms, by his whistling, the hillmen came nearer. They halted ten feet away, as if fascinated.

The deserter juggled for a few minutes. He knew that the moment of danger would come when he stopped, when their attention centered on him, an alien, rather than on the spectacle offered. Suddenly he gathered two balls in one hand, tossed the third to the nearest man with a challenging grin. The hillman drew back hastily, missed the catch, and his friends laughed.

"*Haja sahela*—" Coquelin assured them—"it's easy. Behold: The red ball goes up, the white, the white, the red again—one, two three—*haja sahela!*"

He demonstrated as he kept up his talk. Then, having tossed the red ball high, he pretended to take it in his mouth when it dropped, contorted the muscles of his neck, patted his stomach with a wry grimace of dismay. He appeared to have swallowed the sphere.

"*Wahar*—difficult!" he panted.

The others leaned on their forgotten rifles, laughing. When Coquelin produced the ball again, seemingly with a tremendous effort, their joy was limitless.

"Got them with that one," the deserter thought. "Let's try further."

He walked into the village where a crowd gathered around him. By noon Coquelin knew he was safe. These unspoiled people appreciated entertainment. He was given food and a place to sleep in one of the houses.

At the end of a week he was popular with all the inhabitants, entertained the kaid and the village council after the grave meetings. But he felt too near the French lines, recognized among the natives men who had visited the Intelligence Office at Ait-Terwal. His presence would be reported; he might be surrendered for a reward.

He started out again, visiting village after village, until he reached the hills near the Sahara. There he settled. Months passed. Coquelin had discarded the last of his European garments, wore the loincloth, the *gandoura* and the rag turban around his temples. His beard had grown.

He longed to escape to Europe; but that meant that he had to cross the French zone. He had no money, and he could not earn any in the hills. His tricks no longer drew crowds, for all had seen him many times; and he had to earn his shelter and food by helping the women run the hand-sewing-machines brought back by the men from visits to the cities.

Hostilities against the French had been resumed with the return of good weather. Armed bands from the south, composed of fierce, swarthy warriors, passed through the village on their way to the wars, boiling with ardor. Their religious intolerance was extreme; and when they heard that a stranger from Europe was about, they sought him with knives in their hands. Coquelin had to hide during the first explosions of hatred. His flights amused the villagers more than his tricks, and they would report him to all newcomers. Coquelin grew very tired of repeating the profession of faith with a blade resting on his throat, its owner waiting for the first mistake to push it forward.

"Allah is Allah and Mohammed is his prophet!"

The French columns were forging nearer, one from the north, the other from Midelt, on the south. Coquelin feared capture. Having taken refuge with the enemy, he might be suspected of having turned traitor. If he escaped alive it would be to go to prison for life. He must flee, and he decided to reach Tafilalet, haven of deserters.

On the eve of his departure, several warriors returned from the fighting zone twenty miles away. The entire masculine population massed around fires in the central place to greet them. There were grown warriors and beardless boys; many of them were wounded. No one paid attention to Coquelin when he sat down among the rest. He was of no importance, being a renegade, a fugitive, good only to amuse children. And he listened to the tales of the fight which had taken place that morning.

A man acknowledged to be the leader of the warriors, Salim, spoke oftener than the others:

"We are all wounded, hurt in some way. But praise Allah that we returned at all. They are good fighters—"

He would pucker his lips, spit into a fire, wait until the sputter had died out to resume:

"Many earned paradise this morning. I myself killed one of their chiefs. I drew aside, knelt and aimed, neither at his head nor at his chest, for a man may survive such a wound, but at the bowels. At the third shot he fell! Our defeat was not complete, for he fell, that beloved chief!

"I said beloved, and beloved he was. For even as he fell, those nearest him came to help him. None reached him, so fast did we shoot, save a big man with a small head, who had been doing us much hurt. When he lifted his chief, he saw he was alone. He might have saved himself without the burden, but even a man so strong could not be nimbler than we mountain people, carrying the body of a man. We caught him. He fought us off with one hand, holding a rifle barrel, the stock being broken by other blows struck before. He hurt several more in those few moments. But some got at him from below, some from the sides, some from behind, and a score of knives pierced his body. We were mad as he, and our blows kept him standing. My own blade was tearing at his belly after the light went out of his eyes. Steel met steel inside his body. No man

might have counted the stabs, so many had he received. Moha, show them!"

A younger warrior stepped into the light, untied the fastening of a sack and produced two large lumps from the bundle.

"Their heads," Salim said.

Coquelin's teeth clashed together. He tried to rise, to call, but his knees melted under his weight. Bardouin, eyes closed, calm as if scornful, hung from Moha's left hand. And from the right was suspended the small, scowling head of Legionnaire Zurbok. The deserter retched, closed his eyes.

Salim laughed fiercely; his followers grinned.

"*Ya!* Their bodies shall be buried stripped of their heads. To their shame, the heads are ours. They were brave men, those who followed this chief, but they could not keep us from taking his head, and the head of their bravest comrade." Salim spat again, but not into the fire. "*Ya!* That is what we may do to their chief. They failed to keep his head!"

Coquelin found himself erect, dazed and ill.

"Stop—stop—"

"It's only the juggler," said a voice.

Rough hands pushed him aside.

"Bring stakes, that we may place them where all can see," Salim said. "And thou, offspring of dogs, draw aside for warriors to pass." He brushed Coquelin from his path without anger.

The deserter walked dumbly away. There was nothing he could do. Nothing. But had another man been in his place, a real Legionnaire, Zurbok, for instance, would he have allowed the desecration to continue while he was alive? Salim was right. The company was shamed, had lost the head of its chief to the enemy. Whether present at formation or not, he, Coquelin, was a member of that company. Desertion was not discharge. Salim said that the company had been unable to protect its leader. That was perhaps right, but the company had a representative here tonight —an unworthy Legionnaire, who stole from his trusting friends; but nevertheless a Legionnaire!

"It would be madness," he thought.

Human reasoning was against what he planned; his instinct rebelled. But something stronger had taken charge of his soul—Corps solidarity, Legion spirit. A new consciousness possessed him—honor! He walked as if in a dream to the spot where the warriors had piled their weapons. No one paid attention to him, since they were erecting the stakes.

COQUELIN'S groping hands felt among the rifle stocks, and he identified the arms one by one: An American carbine—Salim's—a Mauser, a second, a Gras, a third Mauser; then came the touch he sought, the familiar bole of a Lebel. A brief search uncovered ammunition, a bandoleer stuffed with clips, from which was hung a heavy pouch. In all, there were probably more than a hundred cartridges.

"Carbine, model 16," he murmured. "I'd have liked an old 86 rifle better. But this loads quicker, and I may have a chance to reload."

He hesitated, drenched with perspiration. He was alone against sixty-odd warriors. It would mean, simply, that a third head would be cut.

"I'll be in good company, in that case," he concluded recklessly.

He inserted a clip into the magazine. The oily bolt opened and closed without perceptible sound. What he planned was impossible, insane, but it was worth trying. He was only the juggler here, but he would prove himself a Legionnaire like Zurbok. He shouldered the gun. The red light of the fire, thirty yards away, licked at the foresight, slid down the length of the barrel. He sought for Salim, who was talking, gesticulating.

"Salim!"

The warrior paused at the call from the darkness. Coquelin's index finger pressed on the trigger according to regulations: "while holding one's breath, with a slow and steady pull."

Salim fell forward.

For a moment all the men were still, petrified by surprise. They had heard the detonation; many had seen the flame; Salim had dropped. But their startled brains refused to understand. The light flickered on their eyes, on their

gaping mouths. Coquelin laughed, steadied, and Moha fell face down into the fire. The third cartridge in the clip dropped a third warrior.

The natives rushed forward as Coquelin inserted a fresh clip. Three cartridges were enough for three men. And the rest took shelter.

The village place was deserted, empty save for the bodies of the slain, and the two stakes waiting for the grim trophies.

Coquelin sped forward, picked up the heads, dropped them into the sack. Shots followed him as he fled into the night, and he felt an impact on his side. He thought grimly that a flank wound would not help his wind. He consoled himself with the thought that whatever befell him had been paid for in advance.

Luckily he knew the country as well as the natives. He scrambled down the first slope, waded in a brook, climbed the bank a half mile farther. Shouts sounded behind him. He trotted, guiding himself by the stars. He had twenty miles to cover, with the weight of the rifle dragging at his arms, with the heavy bandoleer and pouch sagging against his thighs and the bumping heads against the small of his back.

At daybreak the whine of a bullet warned him that some of his pursuers were near. He was spent; for he had jogged and walked nine hours, and lost considerable blood.

There was no sign of the French. He halted behind a boulder. His eyes swept the limpid sky, the grass, the trees. The day was beautiful. He would not see the end of it, but he had only himself to blame. He cast a glance at the stained sack and grinned, for he did not regret what he had done. He could not have acted otherwise and lived to face himself, day after day and year after year. After all, a man needed a certain self-esteem!

He handled his carbine musingly. The shortest route would be to shoot himself. But that was not proper, as his mission was not finished. He was strangely calm and resigned as he adjusted the sights at three hundred meters. Save for the throbbing of the wound in his side, he was comfortable enough.

The first of his pursuers appeared. Coquelin fired and hit.

Minutes later several others arrived, but remained out of effective range. When they were near enough, Coquelin counted them. There were seven. They scattered, probably to flank him. The Legionnaire propped his képi on the boulder, picked up the bundle, and ran to the nearest bushes, crouching low. From his new hiding place, he emptied a magazine at a careless native, who remained sprawled in sight.

At the same time an answering shot shattered his left shoulder. He rested awhile, his head whirling with weakness and pain, then abandoned rifle and ammunition to flee with the sack. All morning he dodged his dogged pursuers. There were times when he forgot where he was, what he was doing. But the others still believed him armed and dangerous, and exposed themselves only with great caution.

At noon a cavalry patrol from the French column found a bearded man squatted in the middle of a clump of bushes, bloody, haggard, a man who laughed insanely when they arrived.

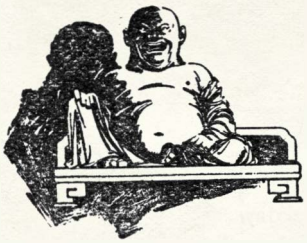
The young Frenchman in command handed him a flask of brandy and examined the bundle indicated by the stranger. He grew very white, but nodded.

"French, aren't you, deserter?"

"Legionnaire, Lieutenant." Coquelin winced as a man washed out his shoulder wound. "Thought it best to bring them back. Looks bad for the Corps to have the swine get away with it."

"True enough. What outfit do you belong to, Legionnaire?"

"Bardouin's company," Coquelin said proudly. He added in explanation, "Member-at-large."



IN THE SEATS *Of the Mighty*

By JAMES W. BENNETT

I POSSESS the highly problematical distinction of having played tennis in the Orient with a Rhodes Scholar who in turn had played tennis at Windsor with the Duke of York. At least, the duke and the Rhodes Scholar had played—on such occasions as they could locate a tennis net. Sometimes they had searched in vain for one, and the English prince had muttered in newly learned American slang—

"You know, you never can find anything around this dump!"

If my acquaintance with royalty is third hand, I have nevertheless slept—so to speak—in the seats of the mighty.

This same Rhodes Scholar had advised me, when I was contemplating a trip to Japan, that I must go to Koyasan. It was, he declared, one of the world's most magnificent sights, yet one that was practically unknown to foreigners.

When I cautiously questioned him concerning expenses, he pointed to his shabby tweed coat and said:

"If it were a costly trip, do you think that I could have afforded it?" Then he added, "You just walk up the side of a mountain, from Nara, on an excellent trail. At the summit, you stop at any one of fifty Buddhist monasteries. When you leave, you make a donation—what you think it's been worth or what you can afford. They are grateful for any amount, since most of the pilgrims pay nothing."

With these rather vague instructions, I started on my trip. My first error was in making the ascent to Koyasan by rickshaw, with three coolies to pull and three to push from behind. Lack of time compelled this mode of locomotion, but I arrived at the summit with a retinue that plainly suggested pomp and circumstance. And, with the exception of an occasional decrepit old Japanese woman in a palanquin, the other pilgrims had made the journey solely under their own steam.

My rickshaw stopped before the largest and most imposing building on the mountain top. All around were dotted scores of smaller edifices. Through the clear, wine-like air—for Koyasan is a mile above sea level—came the sound of peachwood temple gongs. Above that thudding rose the clash of cymbals and the whining chant of priests as they laid up merit for the next world by the repetition of prayers.

"Dis berong prace," said the head rickshaw coolie. "Horty yen, prease?"

"Forty yen? But that was the price for the round trip. I'll pay you twenty now, if you like, and twenty more when we get back to Nara."

The coolie scowled.

"You pay horty yen now, an' horty more yen when we get back. If you no pay, I go down. I reave you here. *Sssss.* Prease?"

I was not pleased.

As we squabbled over the extortionate charge, a priest came out to hear the discussion. The coolie turned to him and spoke at inordinate length in voluble Japanese. The holy man listened blandly but made no comment. He wore a gorgeous robe, the yellow color of his order, yet singularly lacking in that plainness of a faith dedicated to poverty—for it was encrusted with gold thread.

I paid the forty yen—twenty dollars. The priest bowed, hissed amiably at me, and directed me to follow him. We en-

tered an apartment which he indicated was to be mine for the night.

He left somewhat hurriedly, and I stared about me in amazement and awe. Here was the most beautiful suite of rooms it had ever been my good fortune to see. The walls gleamed with gold lacquer. The sides of one room were embossed with pine trees; another, with flying cranes above marsh reeds; still another, with sprays of plum blossoms.

Through the opened *shoji* on the fourth side I could see a tiny garden that was apparently reserved for my personal pleasure, since a wall separated it from the remainder of the monastery. Deftly spaced amid the shrubbery were lovely bronze lanterns. Tiny fir trees writhed in bizarre shapes. Between artificial hillocks, a Lilliputian stream whispered its way like chiming crystal. It was crossed by minute bridges of damaskeened wood. A miniature garden in the most exquisite proportions! A king's garden, I thought.

I was interrupted in my contemplation of its beauty by the arrival of dinner. At least forty courses were brought, to be served from lacquer boxes into bowls of eggshell Satsuma ware. The variety was astounding, although only vegetables were used. Meat, according to the Buddhist rule, was not only forbidden to the priests but was not permitted to be cooked on this holy mountain.

As darkness spread over the garden a priest entered the enclosure by a small gate. He placed lighted candles in the carved bronze lanterns. The illumination gave the small vista all the precious beauty of an old Japanese print. Two other priests came into the room, carrying *kapoks*. One after another, these narrow mattresses were spread upon the floor, until a bed—some three feet high—had been raised. On this was laid out a spotless cotton kimono, evidently a night robe.

As I crawled into that exceedingly downy couch, I thought:

"All this beauty is mine and I can even set my own price for it. In the morning I'll leave at least thirty yen with that head priest. Fifteen American dollars is little enough to pay for such perfection—even if it is three times a hotel rate."

Before my blurring eyes winked the candles in that purple misted garden . . .

But sleep was not to be mine. In the corridor arose an unholy racket, a clap-clap-clapping of wooden sticks. It grew louder, passed my room, receded. And every hour from that time on, the monastery's night watchman made his rounds.

"Just an old Japanese custom," I said grimly, as I lay waiting for his next visitation.

It was his efficacious method of driving off robbers before he should discover them.

Somewhat wanly, I arose at dawn. The monastery was already astir. The head *bonze* appeared, again resplendent in a cloth-of-gold robe, and asked if I should like to attend a Buddhist mass. Following him, I stood at the rear of a long, incense-filled hall with an elaborate, gilded shrine. A score of monks sat, cross-legged, on the floor before a huge statue of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Hereafter. It was all very pious.

When, later, I was ready to make my departure, the *bonze* accompanied me to the gate, bobbing his head, hissing and smiling.

I presented him with thirty yen.

"S'ank you for gift, sir! S'ank you! S'ank you! *Sssssssss*. But now I must charge you rittle money for hospitarities. *Sssssss*. Price, one hundred an' hurty yen."

Suddenly I had difficulty with words; I hissed too.

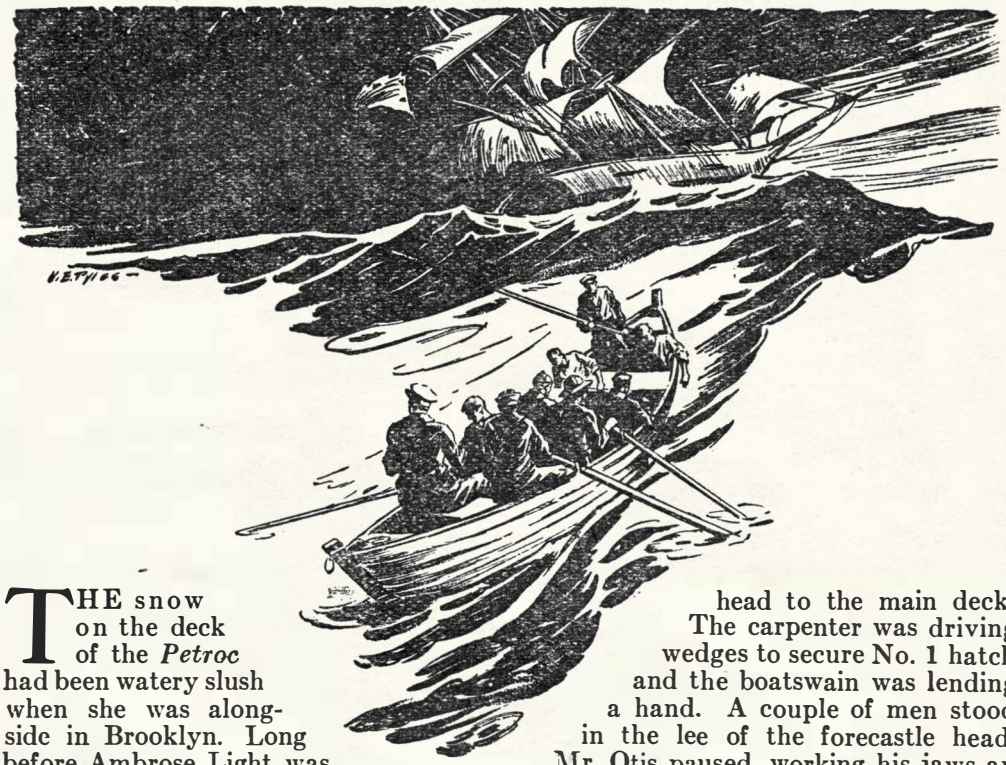
"Sus-sus-sus-sixty-five dollars?"

"One hundred an' hurty yen, yes, prease? You have nice prace, rast night. Berry nice. Each year, Imperial Prince an' Princess of Jappon come to Koyasan. He stay at our monastery. He stay in berry same room where you stay, rast night. Berry beautiful room. It is not too much money. You are American. All American are rich man. *Sssssssssssss*. Prease?"

"*Sssssssssss!*" was all I could say, as I paid him.

MISTER MATE

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS



THE snow on the deck of the *Petroc* had been watery slush when she was alongside in Brooklyn. Long before Ambrose Light was abeam it was ice—white knobby ice where men's feet had stirred it; black, smooth sheet ice elsewhere. There was snow over the ice, restless snow that never stayed still, whirling in the scuppers, racing over the hatches, massing a moment near the forecastle door and then leaping overside.

Mr. Otis, the new first officer, was moving aft on wooden feet that took short jerky steps. He was shivering like a man with ague. His long, thin body, fattened by two sweaters, a leather jacket and a greatcoat, felt as blue as his face, and he doubted the existence of his ears.

With the ice crackling like a volley of firecrackers under his feet, he came down the ladder from the forecastle head to the main deck. The carpenter was driving wedges to secure No. 1 hatch and the boatswain was lending a hand. A couple of men stood in the lee of the forecastle head. Mr. Otis paused, working his jaws an instant preparatory to speaking to the boatswain.

A sailor came lurching out of the forecastle. He was as tall a man as the mate, and with much more muscle to fill out his skin. And though he was drunk enough he moved more easily on the ice than did Mr. Otis. He paused in front of the mate and stared at him with blue, inflamed eyes. Then he smiled, a grimacing smile that converted his handsome young face into something more menacing than the snarl of the northwester in the steel shrouds of the ship. He spoke a trifle thickly:

"And here we are again—Mr. Otis and Mat Crane, A.B. Shipmates again!"

"Crane!"

Mr. Otis looked at him with his jaw

dropping slowly. He glanced at the man's mocking, intelligent face, then at the faded, wrinkled watchcoat, the tieless, dirty khaki shirt collar and the thin, broken shoes.

"I thought you'd be surprised," Crane rumbled. He stood swaying, legs wide apart. "Shipmates again! And you on the bridge and me in the forecastle—thanks to you!"

Mr. Otis had recovered from his astonishment, although he was plainly perturbed. Words mounted to his lips but, after another glance at Mat Crane's glaring countenance, he smothered them and substituted others.

"This won't be a bad ship, unless you make it so," he said steadily and turned toward the boatswain.

"I'll make it hell!" Mat Crane whispered. "That's why I shipped when I heard you had a first mate's berth."

His right arm, already crooked, came up suddenly. He took one short step forward, and his solid, big-boned fist thudded on Mr. Otis's jaw.

The mate crumpled to the deck like a mere heap of clothes.

" 'Ere!" said the boatswain, who had turned around. The other seamen, sullen from bad hangovers induced by Brooklyn gin, stood still, staring.

The boatswain was a round, short man with a face the color of raw meat. He waddled toward Mat Crane, took from the sailor a hard right-hand blow under his ear. He shook his head. Then he hit Mat Crane — pivoting clumsily and shooting a deceptively long arm from behind his back on to Crane's curling lips.

The sailor had not yet recovered balance after his own mighty but ineffective blow. When the boatswain's fist made violent contact with his lips he went backward from the waist up, then fell and slid across the uneven ice all the way to the bulwark. His head hit with a thud.

"That ain't no way to act," said the boatswain reprovingly, and trundled after him.

Mat Crane was moving slowly.

The mate, still groggy from the uppercut, dragged himself to his feet. He teetered there on the uncertain footing, peering at Mat Crane. The sailor, muttering softly to himself, was also getting up. Beside him stood the plump and chunky figure of the boatswain, ready and waiting.

"He's drunk," said Mr. Otis, fingering his tender jaw. "Run him into the focsle, Bosun."

"In the focsle, sir," said the boatswain.

He grabbed Mat Crane by the collar with his left hand. With his right arm bent to bring his mallet-like fist suggestively close to Crane's jaw, he hustled the dazed man off the deck.

Slowly Mr. Otis dragged his numb body up to the lower bridge. The skipper was descending the bridge ladder.

Captain Seldon paused to examine his new mate closely, with expressionless gray eyes that protruded glassily below his flat forehead. He was a tall man, built like a wrestler, and he could look down on his lanky subordinate who had joined the previous day.

Without speaking, he jerked his head forward inquiringly.

"Just a drunk, sir," said Mr. Otis. "The man they sent down to us to replace the Finn who jumped ship."

"It's a lucky thing the bosun was there to protect you," said the skipper. His voice was husky, but he contrived to put a rasp in it. With a massive fist he churned the air belligerently. "In my day, Mister, mates could protect themselves—fists and boots—fists and boots. But I'm old fashioned, Mr. Mate. That's my trouble, old fashioned."

He pushed by the silent mate.

IN THE frowsy forecastle the boatswain had dumped the unresisting seaman down on the deck and paused a moment in anticipation of further trouble. A few men sprawling on their bunks looked at the two with dull eyes.

"All right," said Mat Crane. "No grudge."

He got to his feet, moved over to his bunk and sat on the edge of it. His head was down on his chest, but under his curling black eyelashes he surveyed his late enemy keenly. There was no longer any indication of strong drink about his face.

"No grudge!" said the boatswain, scandalized. "An' what the blinkin' 'ell do I care whether you 'old a grudge?"

Mat Crane shook his head.

"Believe me or not, Bose," he said solemnly, "that mate got what any honest seaman had a right to give him. He's a sneak, Bose, a sneaking liar and a coward to boot. I could tell you all a yarn about that sea lawyer—" He shook his head, flung himself into the bunk and turned his head away.

"You're drunker than I thought ye were," said the fat boatswain uncertainly as he turned to go. He was not accustomed to dramatics in the forecastle.

Mat Crane raised his head.

"Or not so drunk, Bose," he said bitterly. "Maybe I'm not so drunk. Do I look as if I'd seen better days? D'ye think I don't know what it is to walk my own bridge? I could tell you—oh, hell!"

Again he turned to the damp steel wall.

The boatswain stared at him for a minute, then massaged the side of his jaw with a plump fist and went out on deck. From other bunks a few hands gazed silently at this queer shipmate. Then one of them, a bulky, pockmarked, sandy headed Pole, with a chest like a pierhead bollard, laughed uproariously.

"A skipper—a focsle skipper we got!" he said and hit the side of his berth a blow with his fist that made it creak. "We make him peggy. He keep the place clean. It's funny—a skipper to scrub the planks for us!"

Mat Crane slid out of his bunk with a single lithe twist of his body.

"If you're the focsle cock step up and take your beating," he said. "I'm down, but I'm not down as low as you, you flat faced, jabbering swab!"

The Pole came at the ex-skipper with his hands clawing as if he were going to tear him apart. Mat Crane, with eyes glinting warily, let him go by, then laughed as he saw how slow the man was. He lumbered about the narrow forecastle like an overweight ox, and Mat Crane, on his toes, began deliberately to mark him up. His fists were like rocks. He opened a cut over one eye to make the Pole's sight less certain, and then let him have it on the lips and flat cheekbones.

Only once did the Pole get his hands on Crane, and then Crane got free in an instant, with a skilful twist of the big man's arm that meant an elbow out of joint or a broken bone if he resisted. And then Mat finished punishing the screaming man with a kidney punch that stretched him in agony on the floor.

"The next time it'll be the boots for you, Jan," he said. He thrust the toe of his shoe hard against the Pole's short ribs. "Remember that—the boots next time. Stick him in his bunk, some of you!"

He turned away and slid into his own bunk.

Several men moved to obey him.

THE *Petroc*, with her smoke streaming away on her starboard bow and losing itself in the whirling snowflakes above the leaden water, plugged along steadily enough through gray dusk and black, howling night. Her sides were still salt-crusted from her last bout with the bitter seas of the North Atlantic. Now she made knots to eastward, churning back across the Western Ocean with a slim cargo for the Clyde. The wind went around to north-northwest, a bitter quarter.

By morning, out of the lee of the land, she was rolling like a barrel.

At six bells in the morning watch Mat Crane came softly up the bridge ladder and took over the wheel from a glum, yawning Dane. The *Petroc* carried no quartermasters. Mr. Otis, with his morning trick half done, heard Mat repeat the course in dutiful accents as the Dane let go the spokes.

Mat Crane spoke as Mr. Otis headed for the weather wing of the bridge.

"I'm sorry I slugged you, sir," the sailor said, staring at the binnacle. "I was drunk."

"All right," the mate answered abruptly. "But you'll be logged for it. The captain saw the fracas."

Mat Crane nodded, eyes still following the compass card.

"Yes, sir," he said softly; and then he spoke through set teeth, "There are

better ways of taking a man's ticket away from him than that. Better ways! I'm heading for hell, Mr. Otis, and I'm not going alone."

The mate, almost at the door, swung around.

"Stow that!" he said. "They took your ticket away from you for running hell-bent through a fog and halfway through an anchored schooner. I'd called you; I'd warned you; you were on the bridge yourself, swearing you'd make a passage, fog or clear. Why blame me for what justice they did to you?"

"You could have helped me out before the board, and you didn't do it, you —you—" Mat Crane flared. His control of face and voice had vanished suddenly.

"Not even perjury would have helped you—and if you want to know, I wouldn't have lied you out of it if I could," Mr. Otis retorted steadily. "There were too many dead men in the water that night to suit me. I risked my ticket, before you hit her, to tell you what I thought of you—and I say to you now, you're too flighty a bird to command!"

Mat Crane had recovered himself. He smoothed out his contorted features.

"Too flighty to command," he repeated slowly. "And you, Mr. Otis, you're going to be too unlucky to command."

"You'll obey orders. You'll do your duty while I'm mate of this ship," Otis replied. "Slug me and you'll be logged; slug me again and you'll be ironed; kill me and you'll swing. It's up to you."

He thrust open the lee door and tramped out on to the bridge.

The door slammed. Mat Crane, ex-master, laughed a trifle hoarsely, then pulled himself together and devoted himself assiduously to holding the lurching *Petroc* on her course. When the mate thrust open the door again and stepped in for a glance at the compass card the *Petroc* was heading right.

"I'm not thinking of piling her up, Mr. Mate," the man at the wheel murmured, staring at the binnacle. "It's you I'm piling up, Mister, not the ship. You value your ticket, Mister; you're one of these sober, responsible ducks. But where you're shy, Mister, is where no mate should be shy—in guts, Mr. Otis, in guts!"

He got no answer from the mate.

FOR an easterly run it was rough going. The wind hung in the north-northwest, blowing hard and deadly cold, as if Greenland's tempestuous ice cap was just under the horizon. Men pecked here and there at the icy sheet with chipping hammers, but it was not until four days out that the Gulf Stream took a hand and thawed the decks. The ship rolled until it seemed she was bent on tossing her cargo through her hatches.

Mat Crane continued to do his work and to tell the crew and the boatswain, when the boatswain would listen, what a white livered skunk they had for mate. He made friends with the big Pole whom he had fought and he kidded the cook into a friendship that brought results for all hands forward in duff and fresh bread. He was a popular cock of the forecastle—far more popular than Mr. Otis in the bridge house.

The wind, still cold, began to head them. It shifted to the north, and then to the northeast, and hung there, working up big gray combers that hit the *Petroc* on the port bow and changed her pace to a plunging, swaying heave that no man aboard could anticipate. And though she was light she occasionally took the top of one over the forecastle head or on to the waist just forward of the bridge.

There was little beyond the routine work of the ship that could be done in weather like that. Mr. Otis, on the bridge, had few orders to give the crew through the fat boatswain. Mostly it was wheel and lookout, or stand-by on the lower bridge after the ship had been cleared of ice.

But the mate was conscious of eyes turned upward whenever he looked over the canvas dodger. The men stared at him and obviously discussed him. Frequently Mat Crane smiled enigmatically at him.

The boatswain, a slow man save at his work or with his fists, occasionally fixed a red wrinkled scowl of perplex-

ity upon his officer. Then, still scowling, if Crane happened to be lookout or within sight of the main deck, he would turn to look at Mat Crane.

But nothing happened. Mat Crane obeyed orders. And then, one morning, while the *Petroc* still fought the northeaster, something did happen. The watch was turning out at eight o'clock. Most of the men had already reached the lower bridge. The big Pole, waiting for a chance to come aft, waited too long after a big sea had hit and sent green water gushing across her iron main deck. He waited until the last of the sea had vanished in white froth through the scuppers. Then, close to the lifeline, he started at a lumbering run toward the alleyway below the lower bridge.

As before, the Pole had too exaggerated an idea of his own speed.

Mr. Otis, at the bottom of the ladder from the navigating bridge, shouted a warning to him. Mat Crane, who was on the lower bridge beside the mate, also yelled.

The Pole plunged toward the ladder instead of grabbing at the lifeline.

The big sea, second of three great combers, came over the *Petroc's* deck like water bursting a dam. It flung its frothing bulk at the huge Pole and engulfed him. The iron deck boomed and the sea roared and pounded. An instant later, as the sea drained away, they saw his body by the lee rail. By then another big sea, as a glance to windward warned, was towering over the side.

The mate, closest to the ladder down to the waist, stood steady after a single look at the motionless seaman.

"Skull caved in," he muttered, then he thrust out a quick hand as Crane pushed past him. "Stop!" he snapped. "The man's dead! Don't be a fool!"

Crane jerked himself free.

"Blasted coward!" he hurled over his shoulder.

He jumped down the ladder and bounded toward the big Pole's unmoving figure. As a towering sea crashed down on the windward side of the deck Crane flung the man on his shoulder. Crouching, he scuttled the few steps toward the ladder. As the thundering water reached him he flung himself down, one hand outstretched, in the meager lee of the iron ladder.

The smother of leaping foam, crowning the green water, went racing across the deck. It flung an impenetrable veil over the two figures by the foot of the ladder. Swirling, gushing, smoking in the wind, the sea drew away. The *Petroc,* rising, dragged her main deck out of the smother.

The men were still there, Mat Crane's muscled hand still clutching the foot of the ladder.

With a rush the mate and some of the watch sped down the ladder. Mr. Otis, on the main deck, looked to windward and jerked an impatient hand to speed the men. But smoothness, of a sort, had followed the three seas. The main deck stayed clear of water while the two men were carried up the ladder to safety.

Mat Crane, gulping, got his breath and turned his head back at the officer below as the big boatswain lugged him bodily up the ladder.

"You're a little late, Mr. Mate," he taunted. "You know damn well you won't get your feet wet now."

Mr. Otis did not answer. He climbed the ladder behind the others and stopped at the top to look down at the huge body that the men had stretched out on the deck.

"Skull caved in," he said dispassionately. "The man's dead." He looked at Mat Crane in level inquiry. "Are you hurt? Will you have the skipper look you over?"

"I'm all right," Mat Crane answered. He scowled resentfully at the body of the Pole. "Does this call for a drink, Mr. Mate? That water's cold."

Mr. Otis moved toward the door of the captain's cabin.

"I'll see that you get it," he promised.

LIFE aboard that ship did not grow easier for Mr. Otis. The skipper's glassy, protruding eyes were always fixed suspiciously upon the mate when the skipper took a turn on the bridge. Girard, the second mate, a soured, middle-aged French-Canadian, perked up day by day, scenting at last a chief mate's berth. He was lavishly polite

to the master and pointedly curt toward Mr. Otis. He sweated over his navigation, working hard to find some error in the chief mate's reckoning.

The third mate was a youngster to whom life seemed simple and to whom all men were all black or all white. And Mr. Otis was to him all black, tainted with the stain of cowardice.

The boatswain, a slow man, waddled around watch after watch with his mouth open, sorely perplexed on the matter of loyalty, but doing his duty. The men were openly surly or openly derisive, and they took full advantage of the boatswain's preoccupation. They soldiered on the work of the ship.

Mat Crane was smiling again and jumping with a cheery, "Aye, sir!" when one of the junior officers gave him an order.

Discipline on the *Petroc* was plainly breaking down, and Mat Crane was not one to overdo the effect by any display of insubordination on his own part. His word was law in the forecastle now and his opinion of Mr. Otis was the opinion of every man forward.

Softly one day while he was doing his trick at the wheel he offered Mr. Otis five cents for his job, and Mr. Otis did not take him up with either tongue or boot.

The *Petroc* lurched on across the Atlantic. The wind went around to westward at last and blew as a westerly should blow on the North Atlantic in February—hard and squally. The ship paid for her lack of cargo with a racing screw threshing through air and froth instead of through good green water.

But the *Petroc* had been built for that trade, and she stood what the sea gave her—stood it groaning and straining even when the bottom dropped out of the glass one night and the wind driving over the white hissing sea rose shrieking to gale force and far beyond.

The skipper, scowling his blackest, did not heave her to. With his mind on his coal bill and what the owners would say about it, he kept her running before it. The gale was from the northwest and, though running gave her more southing than he liked, she was not too far off her course. In another day, northwester or no, she'd have to round up for the Irish channel.

In his watch that morning Mr. Otis saw a red dawn throw a lurid, added threat over an ocean that had lost its opacity—a streaked, gray, beaten mass of water, with seas flattened like crouching beasts under the blows of the mighty wind. And then the wind died a bit, and the sea came up, ravenous, charging, frothing in its rage.

Mr. Otis saw all that. And then his weary eyes saw something more—a small, slanting thing on the port bow, like a spar buoy in a mill race. He took his glasses out of the box and bent them on it.

It was the pole mast of a sailing vessel that was down almost on her beam ends. Mr. Otis, squinting tensely, could make out the hull now, a black blur constantly overwhelmed by a ring of breaking seas.

The mate called the skipper. Captain Seldon did not relish the call, but he tumbled out of his bunk and grudgingly altered the course.

"Not likely to be any left on her," he grunted, as his marble-like eyes bulged through his glasses. "She's being swept, Mister."

The *Petroc* drew closer. Half a mile away the master, after a few profane words to the engine room, awaited a smooth and then got the ship's head around into the wind and sea. The gale was coming in gusts, now, with longer lulls in between; but the sea was still coming up, mountain high, with curling tops exploding into spume. Captain Seldon kept way on her for control, but permitted her to drift slowly downwind toward the wreck.

The men of both watches clustered on the lower bridge, and the three mates all turned out to stand in the dubious shelter of the weather cloth and to glance alternately at the master and at the distressed ship. The seas were breaking clear over her.

"Looks like a bark—Australian wheat trade," Captain Seldon muttered. "Lost three masts—foremast standing. There's men on that mast—I can see a cap waving. Cargo's listed badly. Maybe one o' the sticks holed her before they could cut 'em clear. There's a raffle of spars on her lee side."

He turned to the mate.

"Break out a barrel of oil, Mister," he said. "We'll give 'em a smooth. It's all we can do. No sense in drifting 'em a line. You—" he took his bulbous eyes from the binoculars to focus them sharply on the mate—"you don't feel like launching a boat?"

Mr. Otis looked at the seas between the steamship and the bark; then at a squall coming down on them like a malignant power.

"No, sir," he said crisply. "The object of launching a boat at sea is to save life, not to chuck it away."

Captain Seldon snorted.

"You may be right," he said grudgingly, "though we weren't so damn careful of ourselves in my younger day, Mister. We'll stand by and watch her. It all depends on whether she's holed or not. What's this?"

He turned. Mr. Otis was already on his way to start the barrel of oil flowing over the side. The skipper saw a couple of heads protruding above the level of the bridge on the port ladder. They were the heads of Mat Crane and the boatswain.

"What's this?" the skipper demanded again.

"The men would like to send a boat off, sir," shouted Mat Crane respectfully.

His eyes were gleaming, and they switched from the master on the bridge to Mr. Otis below.

Captain Seldon coughed uncomfortably. He ignored Crane and glared at the boatswain. Well he knew what yarns this would make over the seven seas and the myriad ports.

"Git off my bridge," he bawled. "I'll handle this."

"Aye, sir," said Mat Crane cheerfully, while the boatswain ducked precipitately out of sight.

CAPTAIN SELDON stumped across the bridge, swearing under his breath. He brought up suddenly as the animated face of Girard, the second officer, confronted him.

"It ees my privilege, sair, to take a boat away if the chief mate does not care to make the attempt."

"I know it," Seldon growled. "We'll wait a bit, Mr. Girard."

Mr. Otis set his oil flowing on the windward bow to give the steamship as well as the bark the benefit of the film. The oil, spreading like something alive, drifted along the sides of the *Petroc* and downwind toward the dismasted bark. The translucent film smothered the whitecaps, but the swell ran strongly underneath it, and here and there a sea burst through the coating.

"Too cold to be trusted, sir," Mr. Otis remarked. "The barometer's coming up slowly, sir."

The captain of the *Petroc* did not answer. He had to contend with the conflicting thoughts of his owners' coal bill, his reputation as a shipmaster and a surging impulse to send a boat away over the oil as a gesture, at least, toward helping the poor devils clinging to the mast of that sinking bark.

Mr. Otis had no more to say. He kept his binoculars leveled on the wreck. He noted keenly the height of the hulk in the water when the seas ceased to rush over it and the signs of life in the rigging. He noted, too, the shrouds and rigging drifting with the spars and masts to leeward of the bark. He studied the wind and the sea. The only things he overlooked completely were the savage animosity of the crew of the *Petroc* and the jubilant derision of Mat Crane.

Time passed. The last few pints of the barrel of oil went dwindling away to leeward. Mr. Otis had a second barrel —the last in the *Petroc's* stores—in position.

Two hours passed. Then a third hour. Mr. Otis inspected the oil barrel, then observed with intensity the level of the bark. Canted as she was, it was hard to tell how much water she was taking in, but that she was losing buoyancy was plain.

Mr. Otis looked at the oil barrel again and at the broken slick between the steamship and the bark. The sea was still running fearfully high; the gusts, though less frequent, were just as forceful.

"Ready to try it, sir," Mr. Otis shouted in Captain Seldon's ear. "She can't last much longer; I guess you're right about her being holed."

The skipper gnawed his lip, glanced from his waiting mate to the glowering Second.

"Well—go ahead, Mr. Otis," he said, "if you think you can do it."

Mr. Otis left the bridge. The men were already bunched by the lee quarter lifeboat. They turned scowling, uncertain faces toward him as they saw him peel off his oilskins. Mat Crane, grinning, leaned against a davit.

"Where's the boat's crew?" asked Mr. Otis. "Get ready!"

The men shuffled their feet. Deep distrust of the officer was in their eyes.

"Cold feet?" asked Mr. Otis, his voice crisp. "It's now or no time!"

They looked toward Crane, but he gave them no lead. Slowly the volunteers stood out. The boatswain and Crane were among them. Six men.

Getting the boat away was no great trick. They dropped in, and Mr. Otis, watching the roll of the ship, gave the word to unhook the falls. He sheered the flimsy little boat away from the side instantly, with a thrust of his long steering oar. Then they were out of the lee and spinning downwind through the oil slick. Despite that film on the surface the boat went soaring skyward; then dropped with heart-stopping speed into a world walled in by two masses of greasy water.

Mr. Otis stood braced in the sternsheets. His hands gripped the steering oar. His head kept turning from the men to the seas running up behind the boat.

"Steady—together—let her run!" he cautioned. "Save your breath—steady —together!"

THE lifeboat ran down to the wreck. The crew rowed as one man, Mat Crane among them. Mr. Otis held the lifeboat to clear the bark's bow; he stared anxiously ahead. He had a momentary glimpse beyond of the raffle of spars and rigging on her other side—the leeward side—where the lifeboat must take shelter. It was a mêlée of grinding, churning timber—the frail shell of the boat would not last ten seconds within the crunching jaws of that trap. Forward neither bowsprit nor foremast had carried away. There might be a chance of a lee there.

Spurred by the wind, the lifeboat ran under the drunken slant of the bowsprit. The oil film broke suddenly there, and raging white water rioted around the boat. In an instant water poured in over both gunwales; then the boat charged down the slope of another foaming comber. The water within her rushed madly from stern to bow as she pitched, but she did not fill.

In another instant she was running on downwind past the wreck. The boat slid into another area of oil, and as the sea died around her Mr. Otis flung all his weight on the steering oar.

"Starboard oars—back water!" he roared. "Port oars—pull! I said pull!"

The lifeboat, sluggish though she was, came around. She was bows to the sea, and the wreck was to windward.

"Now put your backs into it!" the mate shouted. "Pull, you sons! Pull! Pull! Pull! Break your backs! Pull!"

In the midst of a gust they fought like Trojans to hold position; they gained a few feet as the wind softened. The sweat poured off them like rain. They pulled till their arms stretched in their sockets. And finally the boat crept under the bow of the wreck.

There was a man clinging to the base of the foremast—a giant, golden haired Scandinavian in a torn watchcap. With numb hands he had cut clear from somewhere a bit of line. The water on the steep slanting deck was sloshing around the bottom of the mast; a wave, breaking clear of the oil, swept over him, but he hung on, and clambered up the mast again with his prized bit of rope. He flung it as the boat drew in. Curling, the wind straightened it out with a snap. The end fell fair on the thwarts.

"Bowman—take a turn!" Mr. Otis roared. "The rest of you—pull! Keep her moving—pull—pull!"

The boatswain, stroke oar in the boat, and next to Mr. Otis in the stern, had no need to ask why Mr. Otis kept them pulling like devils fighting their way out of hell.

The mate had edged the boat into the partial shelter of the bark's bow. But just astern of them, massive as the steel shafting of a liner, floated the

enormous mainmast of the bark. One end of it had driven on a slant through the side of the ship; it was held as rigid as a groin just to leeward of them.

One touch of that massive bulk in this high sea would crush the lifeboat like a matchbox. The squat boatswain and Mat Crane, pulling the next oar forward, rowed to save their lives with that spar before their eyes. The man in the bow stopped rowing long enough to take a hitch on the line from the bark; then he laid hold of his oar again.

There was no trusting the line in a sea like that. Every comber sent a swirl of gushing water leaping along the submerged side at the wreck. The lifeboat jumped and dropped in a whirlpool, but that whirlpool was the best lee there was, and Mr. Otis somehow kept the boat's head to the foundering bark.

It was a matter of seconds. From the slanting mainmast a man dropped as the rope slacked. He caught hold of the line and vanished into the sea. Up he came, spouting, and worked hand over hand to the boat. He dragged himself in with the energy inspired by fear. Another man dropped directly into the sea from the mast, just ahead of the bow, and caught hold of the lifeboat's side. Four men, each in his own way, made the boat.

A big man, obviously master or mate, left the bark last of all—or so it seemed to Mr. Otis. But a yell from the boatswain directed his attention to another figure—a thin, shaking man who stuck a white, scared face from beneath the slanting bulk of the foremast. He had been high up on the spar, but now he was slowly climbing down.

The giant Scandinavian raised his hands and cursed, then gestured madly for the man to jump. But the man clung, his face knotted in hysterical fear.

"Jump or we leave you!" Mr. Otis roared.

His words could not carry to that fear-tortured creature, but his gesture made plain what he meant. In the midst of that swirling chaos, with the wind screaming of death and the seas leaping, he gave the man twenty seconds. But the man still clung motionless.

Sternly the mate gripped his steering oar. His mouth framed a command to the bowman to cast off the line.

"Wait!" Mat Crane shrieked out the words and rose from the thwart. "I'll get him! Close—close to her side!"

He jerked his oar inboard, and the handle hit the toiling, grunting man behind him. The man groaned as the wind went out of him.

Mat Crane was on his feet, clambering toward the bow of the boat.

Mr. Otis, with a single movement of his right hand, caught up a bucket afloat in the bottom and slung it at Crane. It caught him in the back and he fell sprawling between the oarsmen.

"To your oar! Pull! Pull! All of you!"

The boat was swinging around. Mr. Otis's steering straightened it out. But without Crane's weight on his oar, and without the strength of the winded man, the boat was dropping downwind—rushing sternward on the slant of a sea toward the massive mast that lay like an inflexible barrier across its path. The line had parted like a thread.

The boatswain, rowing strongly with one corded arm, got a hand on Crane's ankle and dragged him back to his thwart.

Mr. Otis lifted his long oar like a lance to fend off the floating mast, but the blade shivered and broke as it struck the heavy spar. The boat plunged on, slowing as the men put their last ounce of power in their blades. The boat was hovering on the crest, about to hit the mast. It was touch and go—a battle between men's muscles and the sea.

The mate did the only other thing he could do to save his boat. He swung himself bodily over the stern, hands gripping the sternpost. The boat drove sluggishly toward the spar. Between the sternpost and the mast were dangling the mate's legs.

Unheard in the roaring sea there was a snap as the mate's right thighbone broke six inches above the knee. His torn, bleeding flesh made a solid fender as the wave that carried the boat rushed on over the spar.

"Row!" gasped the mate, clinging to the gunwale. "Row! Get her away!"

His contorted face glared at them. Then mustering his ebbing power, he

drew himself up and got his chest across the side. The huge Scandinavian grabbed one of the extra oars and flung it over the stern to steer. Crane was back in his thwart with the curses of the boatswain in his ear. He was pulling with a will.

In the lull following the passage of the swell the boat crept a bit to windward. The oars were bending like whips.

The fear-crazed man who had clung to the mast suddenly dropped into the sea ahead of them. He swam with frantic, thrashing strokes toward the bow and gripped it. The precious way they had won dwindled with the drag of the weakling's body. Again a wave swept them toward the mast to leeward.

"Do what I can!" muttered Mr. Otis. He let himself down into the sea again, with legs along the sternpost. The giant nodded, intent on the steering oar. There were many men in the boat to save; one man did not matter. It was the hard, unspoken creed of the sea.

Mr. Otis's second sacrifice was not needed. By bare inches the lifeboat evaded the spar.

Then the big Scandinavian, exhorting in stinging words one of his own men to pull the craven over the bow, hauled Mr. Otis inboard himself, still steering head into wind and sea. His rasping voice set the other men to bailing.

The lifeboat crawled ahead, almost to the side of the submerging bark. Then, as Mr. Otis had done, the blond giant with his oar edged her a trifle sidewise. The boat, still taking the thunderous seas on the bow, slipped beyond the bow of the ship and beyond the menace of the floating mast astern.

Most of the oil slick was already gone downwind. And the *Petroc* had come downwind to retrieve the lifeboat that could only go with wind and sea.

Mr. Otis lay in the bottom, no more than half conscious, but the big Scandinavian, handling the boat like a Viking out of the past, let her drop down toward the *Petroc*.

The hardest part of the job was done; there was a lee awaiting the boat without thrashing wreckage to crush it. And there was still enough oil left in the barrel to smooth out the worst of the swells while they hooked on the falls and hoisted her up.

THEY got Mr. Otis out of the boat as gently as they could, but he lost consciousness while they moved him. On deck Mat Crane moved forward solicitously to lend a hand.

" 'Ere!" said the boatswain fiercely.

He raised a bulky foot and kicked the ex-captain a good six feet down the deck.

"Flighty!" said the boatswain with ponderous confidence. "That's you. You'd stove a boat an' drown eleven men tryin' to 'elp a swab too scared to 'elp 'imself. Flighty! That's you! Be hoff!"

In the mate's stateroom Captain Seldon and Captain Olvarg, of the rescued bark, did what they could to set Mr. Otis's crushed leg.

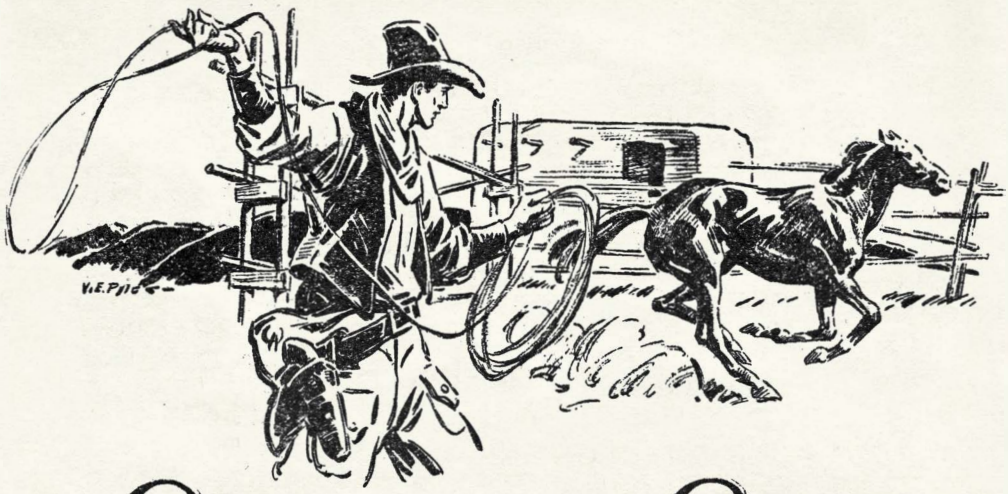
"We'll put in at Cobh," the master of the *Petroc* told his mate. "Coal be damned. It's worth something to the owners to get you fixed up quick."

His eyes bulged slightly as he stared down at the white faced, tight lipped man in the bunk.

"You ain't my kind, Mr. Otis," said Captain Seldon. "But you know now that when you get goin' you got guts if you ain't got fists. And I'll raise what hell I can if they don't give you Lloyd's silver medal for this."

A flicker of a smile passed over Mr. Otis's white lips at mention of the infrequently bestowed decoration for saving life at sea. With a great effort he lifted a hand to the net beside the bunk and dropped something on the coverlet.

Captain Seldon picked it up. For an instant it seemed certain that his glassy gray eyes would leave his head entirely. For what he held in his hand was Lloyd's silver medal, and Mr. Otis's name was engraved upon it.



SORRY SAM, COWHAND

By WALT COBURN

WHEN old Si Hobson crossed the Big Divide he left the Flying Y outfit to his nephew, Sam Hobson. Cowmen around that part of Montana shook their heads. One of them offered to bet any amount of money that it would take Sam no more than five years to run the outfit into the ground. Nobody took the bet.

Not that Sam Hobson would drink or gamble it away, because Sam's drinking amounted to an occasional glass of beer, just to be sociable; and his gambling was limited to a little penny-ante now and then, or a few games of pitch of a long Winter evening.

It was that Sam Hobson was about as sorry a cowboy as ever forked a horse. He just simply lacked what is known as "cow savvy". Even after all the fifteen or twenty years that he had been trying to learn the business, he was still a green hand. He couldn't remember stray brands. He didn't know how to handle his horse when cutting out cattle. Handling a beef herd was still a puzzle to him. Roping was an absolutely unattainable feat. He would miss half a dozen times when he'd try to rope his saddlehorse out of the remuda. And handling a bronc was clear beyond his ability. If he lived to be a hundred he would never make anything but a sorry cowhand.

Sorry Sam Hobson, they called him, there in town and on the range. And now Sorry Sam was owner of as pretty a spread as ever a cowman could ask for.

Old Si had come up from Texas with one of the first trail herds. He had taken some cattle on shares, located his ranch on Sundance Creek, and had gradually built up his outfit. Si was rated as one of the best all-around cowmen in the country. Si walked with a limp that became more pronounced as he grew older. Sometimes in rainy weather he couldn't get around at all. He had never told anybody what had lamed him. Only

after he was dead did old Doc Steele let it out that it was an old shotgun wound. One of half a dozen gun wounds he had brought away from Texas. It was one of those bullets that had never been removed from his tough old body that had finally killed him. So died Si Hobson, cattleman. And he had left the Flying Y outfit to his nephew, Sam. Folks reckoned that he'd passed the layout on to Sam because there were no other kinfolks to take it over. Sorry Sam himself had said as much.

Sorry Sam was like that. He freely admitted that he wasn't a good cowhand. That he never could, never would, get the hang of it. A good natured, easy going young fellow, Sam Hobson. Homely as a mud fence, as the saying goes. His nose was a total misfit, his mouth too large, his hair mouse colored and impossible to keep brushed. But he had a pair of steady gazing hazel eyes that sort of made you forget the rest of his face. They were friendly, tolerant eyes. And when he grinned, which was often, you grinned with him. And he trusted every man, woman and child, regardless. He even trusted the Landers outfit, across the mountains, whose spread joined the Flying Y range. Sorry Sam was probably the only human in that part of the country who trusted Pete Landers, owner of the Lazy 8 iron.

Sam Hobson must have been eight or nine years old when he got off the stage at the little cowtown of Sundance. He was alone. He had come from some mining camp in Nevada or Colorado. The story was that his father had been killed in a gambling game, and before he died had left word for the boy to be sent to his older brother, Si Hobson, in Montana. At any rate Si Hobson had met the stage and had taken the boy out to the ranch. Those who were there when the cattleman met his nephew had felt sorry for the boy. Si was not what you might call a gentle spoken man.

"You Tom Hobson's kid?" he had asked gruffly.

"Yes, sir." And the youngster had grinned into the hard, stern face of his uncle.

His hazel eyes had not flinched under the cold scrutiny of Si Hobson's eyes. Few men could face those eyes without flinching. Old Si spoke crisply—

"Pile into the buckboard."

He ignored the proffered hand. Si had turned to a bystander.

"Homelier'n a brockle faced calf, ain't he?"

They said the boy's face had gone sort of white as he heard the words, so that his countless freckles stood out like warts.

That was the beginning. During the years that followed Si Hobson tried to make a cowhand out of the boy. Sam took his cussings without a word of back talk, and Si cussed him all the more for not having the spunk to talk up. The cowboys felt sorry for the lad, and tried to make up for the way Si treated him. Sam responded to their rough kindness as a pup responds to a pat on the head.

It wasn't cowardice in the boy that kept him silent under his uncle's vitriolic tongue lashings. The boy would look the man straight in the eye.

"I got it comin'," he would tell the cowboys. "I shore am a sorry cowhand."

WINTERS he went to school in Sundance, riding fifteen miles each way. He was bright enough in school and far above the average in spelling and mathematics. And later on, when he got above the grammar school grades, he read everything he could get hold of that had to do with mining. He wanted to be a mining engineer.

Only once did he mention the fact to Si. It was when the cattleman had found some books in Sam's cabin.

"Minin' engineer, eh? A miner, eh? Burn them books. Git minin' out of your head. Your father was a miner. Minin' is gamblin'. Your father was a gambler. He got killed over a pack of cards. Git that idee outa your head or I'll take a quirt and whup it outa you.

"You'll own this outfit when I die. Learn the business. I got nobody to leave it to. If there was anybody else wearin' the Hobson brand that savvied cattle, they'd git it. Wouldn't su'prise me if you'd be wantin' to herd sheep next. Now git out and learn the business. And don't never mention minin' to me no more."

After Si Hobson's funeral Sam had gone to see Homer Gray, the attorney.

"I'm no cowman. I'd like to sell the outfit."

"You can't sell. By the terms of your uncle's will you can never sell the Flying Y ranch. The bulk of the money you make must be used to build up the outfit. The money must be spent on land or cattle or horses, or anything that would make for the good of the business. Sam, you look as if the old man of the sea was straddle of your shoulders. You own one of the best ranches in the country. If you feel like you can't handle it single handed, hire a capable foreman to help you."

Sam brightened a little.

"I'll look around for a good man. With a good man runnin' the outfit it will give me time to—"

Sam didn't finish the sentence. He broke off abruptly.

"Time to step around a little," chuckled the attorney. "Time to prance around and sow a few wild oats. And maybe that's what you need. I'm sort of trustee of the estate, Sam. I'm to handle the money, after a fashion. Check your books and so on. But I understand that you've had no bed of roses out there at the ranch. Hop to it, old man, and take your fun. Travel. See things. Have a good time. And far be it from me to cut you down. Good luck." Homer Gray held out his hand.

Sam shook hands awkwardly. He had always been awkward with his hands and feet. That was why he never went to dances. He'd tried, but it hadn't worked out. Then, once when he had put on a white collar and gone to a dance, he had overheard some girl make the remark that he looked like a red mule looking over a whitewashed fence. That settled it. He was afraid of women.

Sam left the attorney's office and walked down the street. About the first man he ran into was Pete Landers. They shook hands. Few men ever shook hands with Pete Landers.

"I'm lookin' for a foreman, Pete. You don't happen to know of a good man I could get?"

That was like Sorry Sam Hobson. Asking a cowthief like the one-eyed Pete Landers where he could hire a foreman.

"I kin git you the best man in the country, Sam. Tophand anywhere you put 'im. He's at Miles City right now winnin' first money in the bronc ridin' and ropin'. Ever hear of Bert Lowry?"

"I saw him ride and rope at Calgary. Gosh, he's great. Think he'd take the job, Pete?"

"I'm headed for Miles City now. I'll put it up to him."

Sam thanked Pete and they had a drink. Later on Pete Landers met his foreman.

"I ain't goin' back to the ranch. I'm ketchin' the stage. I'm goin' to Miles City to have a medicine talk with Bert Lowry. Sam Hobson wants a good foreman."

His thumb poked the other man in the ribs. He winked his one good eye and grinned.

A week later the cowtown of Sundance had something new to talk about. Bert Lowry, rodeo champion, was the new foreman at the Flying Y.

Every cattleman in the country had seen or heard of big Bert Lowry, rated as one of the best rodeo men in the game. But where did Bert Lowry come from, anyhow? Where was his home range and why had Sorry Sam Hobson hired him, a plumb stranger, when there were plenty of good men around the Sundance country? These and other questions went unanswered.

The chinook winds had melted the snowdrifts and the green grass showed in the coulées. Now and then Bert Lowry and Sorry Sam rode into town together, and it was plain that Sam had taken to the big, handsome rodeo man.

Perhaps it was because Bert Lowry was everything that Sam was not. He was a handsome man, with black eyes and thick black hair that was inclined to be curly. He sat a horse with a superb grace, and on foot he handled himself well. Every girl in the country made sheep's eyes at him, but he treated them all alike. He danced with them all, joshed them all, but played no favorites. When Sam and Bert Lowry were together, on foot or on horseback, Sam looked more ungainly than ever.

Bert Lowry drank but little. He

gambled a bit, but not much. He did his best to make friends in town or on the range. But behind that spirit of friendliness was a certain something that kept men from trusting him. His popularity with the girls rankled in the hearts of the younger cowboys. No man could read the big rodeo man's black eyes. There was a faint twist to his thin lipped grin. And no forty-a-month cowboy could afford the fancy clothes that Bert Lowry sported in town. Then the rumor spread around that Bert Lowry was friendly with Pete Landers. He had been caught talking with Pete Landers out on the range. Not that there was any harm in stopping on the range and talking to Pete. But most men, when they met the one eyed owner of the Lazy 8, passed him by with a curt nod.

One old-time cattleman said to another in Sundance—

"Somebody orter put Sam Hobson wise."

The other answered:

"Sam'd just grin. He thinks Bert Lowry is just about the greatest feller that ever wore boots."

Sam's attorney hinted something about it.

"You sure this Lowry fellow is all right, Sam?"

"You bet he's all right. Bert's a world beater."

"There's been some talk about him."

"They don't say anything about him to his face, do they? I'll say they don't. They're jealous, that's all. If they have anything to say, let 'em talk to Bert or me."

"But they say he's friendly with Pete Landers."

Sam shrugged.

"Why not. It was through Pete that I managed to get hold of Bert."

The attorney choked back a groan. After Sam had left the office, he dropped in at the sheriff's office. The two talked for some time. The conversation had to do with Bert Lowry.

"I'll do my best to check his record," was the sheriff's promise. "I'd give a purty to git the goods on Pete Landers. Give Lowry enough rope and he might git hisself and Pete both tangled up in it."

IT WAS about a week after this that Sundance was given a new topic to discuss. A young lady stepped off the stage. She registered at the hotel as Rae Wilbur. She had copper colored hair and brown eyes and a pink-and-white complexion that had not been purchased at any drug store. The few freckles on her small nose but added to her charm.

She had come the forty miles from the railroad and stepped off the stage fresh as a rosebud. And this despite the fact that she had ridden up on the driver's seat.

There were plenty of free drinks that night for the grizzled old stage driver. And until long past midnight, when at last he was helped to bed, still mumbling, he supplied a receptive audience with details of that forty-mile trip. How she had handled the four lines and had driven half the way. How she talked to him just like she was home folks. How she had come out to Sundance to get away from the city and its noise and crowds. How she was plumb crazy about cowboys and the West. How she aimed to open up one of them beauty parlors like they had in the big towns. And give piano lessons on the side.

The next day the male inhabitants of Sundance, to a man, were shaved. The barber did the biggest business he had ever done. The hotel dining room was packed. Men hung around the lobby by the hour. The General Mercantile had a run on shirts and ties and other articles of men's wearing apparel.

At first the ladies of Sundance eyed Rae Wilbur with a fishy eye. Then the buxom wife of the hotel owner gave a party for the new guest who had rented the front parlor and bedroom upstairs. Rae Wilbur, very simply, yet expensively dressed, played the piano for them and sang. She met them with an unassumed frankness that melted their frigidity. When they left, a few hours later, they had taken the newcomer into their fold. And a few days later Rae Wilbur opened her beauty parlor.

And even as the men of undance, barbered, had turned out in all their sartorial splendor, so did the women parade the plank sidewalks with marcelled hair and manicured hands. Rae

Wilbur's beauty shop was doing a land office business.

Rae Wilbur became a member of the Ladies' Aid. She played the wheezy little organ in the church. Rae Wilbur became a part of Sundance.

And during this time a certain sallow faced, cold eyed tinhorn gambler known only as Blackie, a gentleman who slept by day and plied his trade by night, smiled thinly and said nothing.

Once, at dusk, when Rae Wilbur met him on the street, she had given a perceptible start. The color left her cheeks. The immaculately groomed Blackie had lifted his hat, bowed and stepped aside to let her pass. No one had seen the little incident. That evening Rae Wilbur had pleaded a headache and dismissed the pupils she had scheduled for piano lessons.

Blackie, dealing faro bank that night, smiled faintly now and then as if he were recalling something. Some amusing secret.

SAM HOBSON and Bert Lowry rode into town just before the calf roundup started. Sam had been up in the mountains prospecting. He was bringing in some ore samples to send to the assay office in Helena.

That evening, in the hotel lobby, the hotel owner had introduced them both to Rae Wilbur. And for the first time in his life Sam Hobson had the experience of being put at ease by a woman. Rae Wilbur played for them upstairs in her private parlor. She served them coffee and sandwiches and Sam found himself talking as he had never before talked to a woman. Finally they left, but before they took their departure Rae Wilbur managed to slip a small, tightly folded note into Bert Lowry's pocket.

"Gosh," said Sam, flushed with excitement, "ain't Miss Wilbur a great girl, Bert?"

"She sure is, Sam. Yeah, she sure is. She'd make any man a good wife. She'd shore brighten up that ranch-house of yours, old-timer."

Sam's ears reddened.

"Don't be loco. Me, with this homely mug?"

"I noticed she didn't mind lookin' at it. The least a man kin do is to try. While I'm admittin' you'd never walk away with no first prize at a beauty contest, still I've knowed more than one beautiful girl that fell hard for a man that couldn't travel a mile on his looks. Build to her, feller."

"That coffee went to your head. We better take on somethin' stronger. Mebbe it'll sober you up."

Just the same Sorry Sam Hobson did not get to sleep that night until dawn. And then he dreamed of a girl with copper colored hair, a girl who played and sang "Annie Laurie".

Bert Lowry read Rae Wilbur's note in the privacy of his own room. He swore under his breath as he touched a match to the bit of paper. Then he carefully examined the white handled sixshooter he always carried. He even put fresh cartridges in the gun. Humming softly under his breath, he left the hotel and walked over to the First and Last Chance where a gambler called Blackie dealt.

The gambler, who was dealing blackjack, did not notice Bert Lowry in the crowd that packed the saloon. The big rodeo cowboy touched him on the shoulder. Instinctively the gambler's right hand gripped the butt of a wicked little derringer pistol he carried in a vest pocket made especially to fit that little gun.

"Turn your chair over to another dealer, Blackie," said Bert Lowry in a low tone, "and take your hand off that gun. I don't want to spill your dirty blood on the floor. I'll meet you outside."

The gambler nodded. His hands were a little unsteady as he raked in the jackpot he had just won. Then he nodded to a relief dealer and quit his chair. Out on the plank sidewalk he faced Bert Lowry.

"Long time no see you, Bert."

There was a long moment of silence. Blackie's jaw muscles were hard knots that quivered a little. Then Bert Lowry spoke.

"The last time you saw me was when we were both convicts. That was five years ago. You lily fingered rat, I'd orter kill you where you stand. I'm givin' you till daylight to quit the coun-

try. If you're in town at daylight, I'll kill you where I find you."

His open hand struck the gambler across the face, sending him sprawling.

"Just somethin' to remember me by, Blackie." Bert Lowry turned to walk back into the saloon. The gambler lay on the sidewalk.

A crimson streak came from where Blackie lay. The roar of the derringer. Bert Lowry whirled. The big gun in his hand belched fire. The gambler lay face downward on the sidewalk.

Now men came crowding out of the saloon. Bert Lowry stood there, blood streaming from his bullet torn face.

"I'll take that gun, Lowry!"

Bert Lowry, his black eyes glittering, forced a crooked grin.

"All right, Sheriff. Take Blackie's little toy, too. I bet you'll find both barrels empty. He asked for what he got."

"And he got what he asked for," added Pete Landers, who had appeared from somewhere. "I seen it happen, Sheriff."

"So did I," was the sheriff's dry comment. "You might as well come along too, Landers."

He gave orders to some men to carry the dead gambler back into an empty card room. Then he marched Bert Lowry and Pete Landers down to his office in the front part of the jail.

BERT LOWRY'S cheek was bleeding heavily. The sheriff sent a man for the doctor. He told Bert Lowry and Pete Landers to sit down. Then he examined the two guns. The derringer was empty. One shot had been fired from Bert's gun.

"So you and that tinhorn did time in the pen, Lowry. What pen?"

"What's that got to do with the shootin' match, Sheriff?"

"Mebbe not a thing. What was you in for?"

"Kickin' crutches out from under cripples, stealin' candy off kids, and herdin' sheep."

"You ain't talkin', then?"

"Not even to myself, Sheriff. You say you saw this shootin' pulled off. Then you heard what I told Blackie. You seen him shoot first. It's self-defense."

"That depends on my testimony, Lowry, when you come up for trial. Git what I mean?"

Bert Lowry's eyes narrowed. He rolled and lighted a cigaret. Now Pete Landers cut in.

"How about my testimony?"

"It wouldn't be worth a plugged nickel, Landers."

"I reckon I git you, Sheriff," said Bert Lowry. "You aim to railroad me."

"That might be one way of puttin' it. Landers, lay your gun on the table alongside Lowry's. You're under arrest."

"What charges?" sneered the one-eyed Pete Landers.

"Sheepherdin', we'll call it. Lay your gun on the table."

"Do like the law man with the purty badge tells you," advised Bert Lowry. "He thinks he's so wise. Mebbe he thinks you was helpin' me shoot down that dirty tinhorn sport."

Pete Landers reluetantly gave up his sixshooter. The doctor came in. Bert Lowry never winced as the ugly gash in his cheek was stitched. He was finishing the job when Homer Gray, the attorney, put in an appearance. Gray beckoned the sheriff outside.

"Looks like I've got Lowry and Pete Landers where I want 'em," said the sheriff.

The attorney shook his head.

"Lowry's popular. The shooting was in self-defense. Your best bet is to turn Lowry loose. You have nothing on Landers. Give Lowry more rope to use in tangling them both. Landers is the man we're after. Turn 'em loose."

"Just as you say, Homer, but— All right."

At the coroner's inquest the sheriff's testimony freed Bert Lowry. Sam Hobson was the first to congratulate the big cowboy. Bert grinned a little, then turned to the sheriff.

"Do I git my gun back?"

The sheriff handed over the white handled sixshooter. Bert Lowry, a queer glint in his eyes, ejected the empty shell that had been Blackie's death ticket. He dropped it on the table.

"Keep it for a souvenir, Sheriff," he said in his slow Southern drawl. "I'm still wonderin' why you didn't railroad me. I'm obliged."

"Keep the change, Lowry."

Bert Lowry and Sam Hobson left for the Flying Y ranch that night. But before they left, Bert Lowry managed to see Rae Wilbur alone for half an hour. They met at the edge of town, on the bank of the little river where the cottonwoods threw black shadows across the grassy bank.

Homer Gray had no intention of spying. He had been out for his customary walk before he went to bed and, as he was returning home by way of the trail along the river bank, he had plainly seen two figures silhouetted against the pale moonlit sky. The figures were those of a man and a woman who stood there under a giant cottonwood. No mistaking that man in the high crowned Stetson. No mistaking the girl whom he took in his arms. The girl was sobbing softly. And because Homer Gray was by instinct a gentleman, he had turned and gone away. Nor did he mention to any one what he had seen. Back in his room at the hotel he sat for a long time, smoking his pipe, thinking. And the thought grew in his mind that somehow that meeting on the river bank had to do with the killing of the gambler, Blackie, and that the three had, somewhere in the past, known one another, and that their acquaintance had been much more than casual. And he told himself, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe, that he would make it a point to cultivate the friendship of Rae Wilbur.

OUT on the range the calf work was starting. Roundup outfits were in full swing. For the next month or two the town of Sundance would see little of the cowboys. It would settle down to a humdrum life. Heavy jowled bartenders sat in creaky armchairs reading the *Police Gazette*. Tinhorn gamblers sat at empty tables playing solitaire or dealing dummy hands of poker. Doc Steele, the hotel owner, the coroner and Homer Gray played pitch. And so Sundance dozed away the days until the Spring roundup would be over and the dusty, thirsty, hard riding cowboys would again lope down the street and leave their horses at the hitch-racks.

Now and then bits of range news trickled into town. Bert Lowry was running the Flying Y wagon. He had let out some of the old hands and had hired new men. The Lazy 8, so it was reported, was for the first time in the history of its existence working across on to the Flying Y range. And it was claimed that Lowry, instead of working clear up to the boundary that separated the two ranges, had sent two reps to work with the Lazy 8. And the two reps were men hired by Lowry. All of which gave food for speculation.

The sheriff, on two or three occasions, had made mysterious trips. He had saddled up and ridden out of town, leaving a close mouthed deputy in charge of the office. Each time he was gone for several days, and each time he returned his horse was sweat marked and gaunt, and the man himself looked as if he had eaten little and slept not at all.

ONCE in awhile Sam Hobson came to town. Everybody spoke of how Sam had changed. His eyes seemed to shine brighter. He seemed to have taken a new grip on life. He laughed and joked and talked with everybody. They had never seen him like this before.

"It's because he ain't got old Si Hobson forever cussin' him out for somethin'," was one man's theory.

"Mebbe so. Mebbe not. Seen them samples of ore he's been sendin' to the assay office at Helena? He's done nothin' but peck around in the hills ever since he turned the outfit over to Bert Lowry. I'm bettin' he's struck pay dirt somewheres."

The women of Sundance had another theory.

"It's Rae Wilbur that's fetchin' Sam Hobson to town. Soon as he's spruced up, they're together. Takin' horseback rides or goin' walkin' in the moonlight. All you men can think about is cattle and prospectin'. But when a man like Sorry Sam Hobson commences to comb his hair different and wear clothes that fits him and send off for shirts and ties and new boots, there's somethin' in the wind."

Sam Hobson had indeed spruced up.

The careless slouch was gone from his walk. He wore decent clothes. He looked and acted like a different man. Then one night Sam Hobson and Rae Wilbur caught the midnight train for Helena. They came back a week later, man and wife. And that night Sundance celebrated. The celebration was all the more hilarious because the Flying Y and Lazy 8 roundup wagons were both camped near town. Sundance awoke from its slumber with a whoop and a holler.

Bert Lowry was the first one to wish them happiness. He had, in some mysterious way, gotten word of the marriage. He met them at the train.

"Do I get to kiss the bride, Sam, old horsethief?"

"You bet, Bert!"

Bert Lowry took charge of the celebration that night. Not until later did it strike the townfolk as odd that there should be a real string band on the train, and that there were several boxes and crates of all sorts of refreshments unloaded from the express car. Sam denied knowledge of the string band and the fancy cakes and freezers of ice cream and so on. Bert Lowry might have explained. Or Rae Wilbur, who was now Rae Hobson, might have shed some light in that direction.

Bert Lowry, as master of ceremonies, was at his best. He attended to everything. Never had the little cow town of Sundance celebrated in such a grand manner.

Homer Gray, dressing for the banquet and dance, scowled at his reflection in the mirror. He swore softly under his breath. He was remembering what he had seen there that moonlit night on the river bank. He was thinking of a dead gambler named Blackie. And he was recalling how little information he had ever gotten from Rae Wilbur, though he had spent many an evening in her company, talking, listening to her play, adroitly questioning her. Rae Wilbur had talked freely always—and had given him not one crumb of information about herself, her past, Bert Lowry or Blackie, the dead tinhorn. He was wrestling with his tie when the sheriff came in. There was a baffled, grim look on the officer's face. He tossed an open letter on to Homer Gray's dresser.

"Read that and try to laugh," he said briefly.

The letter was from a private detective agency. It stated that Bert Lowry had been sentenced to life imprisonment for cattle rustling and murder in Texas. He had been pardoned by a lenient Governor. A man answering the description of Blackie had been somehow implicated in the murder but had gotten off with a light sentence when he turned State's evidence. The girl, Rae Wilbur, was thought to be the wife of Bert Lowry. She had, at one time, been on the stage. Beyond that, little was known of the woman.

"And the damned thing got here just a week too late," said the sheriff.

Homer Gray smiled faintly.

"Sam wouldn't have believed the letter, anyhow. Well, makes our job just that much harder. Now we've just got to hang it on Lowry. Here, tie this confounded tie for me."

"Tie, hell! With the Flyin' Y and Lazy 8 cowpunchers in town raisin' all kinds of hell down the street? Me stoppin' to tie a fool tie! Git a valet!" He banged the door as he went out.

Homer Gray picked up the letter and stared at it. He smiled weakly and shook his head.

"Sorry Sam Hobson," he said aloud, then put the letter in his pocket and resumed his struggle with the stubborn bow tie.

Over at the schoolhouse the dance was in full swing. The floor was packed with dancers. Sam Hobson stepped outside for a breath of cool air. As he walked out under the stars, he told himself that this was the happiest night of his life. From inside came the mingled sounds of the dance. He sat down on a bench there in the shadow of the tall cottonwoods in the picnic grove. He rolled a cigaret and was about to light it when a woman's voice from somewhere in the shadows halted the movement.

"—Bert, dear, I just can't. I can't go on through with it. I've stuck by you, always, just like you've stuck by me, but I can't go on any further because—"

"Shucks, honey, don't you think I savvy? You're the greatest girl in the

world, Rae. The only girl I ever loved."

The cigaret dropped from Sam's hand. He sat there like a man mortally hurt. How long he sat there he did not know. After a time he got to his feet and, with dragging steps, made his way to the hotel and up to his room. His face was gray, haggard, his lips bloodless, frozen in a twisted grimace. He fumbled in his suitcase until he found an old cedar handled .45 that had once belonged to Si Hobson. Then he went back through the starlit night to the dance. There was a terrible look in his eyes.

BUT the man he wanted was not at the dance. Bert Lowry had left the floor. He had gone back over to town. The door of the sheriff's office was open. The sheriff sat at his desk. He looked up with a scowl at the big, handsome cowboy.

"Got pencil and paper, Sheriff?" asked Bert Lowry, then helped himself without waiting for a reply.

The sheriff watched as the standing cowboy leaned over. He watched Bert Lowry slowly draw the Flying Y brand on the sheet of paper. He watched as the pencil deliberately made that Flying Y into a Lazy 8 brand. Then Bert Lowry straightened up, tossing the pencil on the desk.

"And that, Sheriff," said Lowry in his soft drawl, "is how Pete Landers has built up his big outfit. I come here to he'p him steal the Flying Y outfit. But the deal is off. I'm pullin' out tonight. I'm never comin' back. I'm givin' Sam Hobson and his bride the Lazy 8 outfit for their weddin' present. You see, Sheriff, I taken to Sam right from the start. He's about the whitest man I ever met. Rae Wilbur come here to Sundance because I sent for her to come. I aimed to marry her to Sam and make that stealin' job easier. Tonight she told me she loved him. She figgered she was tellin' me news, but she wasn't. And she told me she wouldn't he'p hurt Sam in any way. Just like I didn't know she was square and game and a real champ.

"The kid's had a hard time all her life. She had a no-good brother that was plenty wild. Never once did she quit him in a tight. So when Pete Landers and a gamblin' man called Blackie framed her brother and had him sent up for life, she played this Blackie till she wormed the truth outa him. Then she went to the Governor of Texas with real proof and sprung that no-account brother outa the pen. And in so doin', she gives the Blackie skunk the idee that he kin make love to her. You seen what happened to Blackie. Yeah, Rae Wilbur is my sister. My right name is Bert Wilbur, Sheriff. And that's the story. Now I'm takin' care of another skunk named Pete Landers. I'm askin' you to let me handle the deal in my own way. I've laid my cards on the table. Find any marked ones there?"

"You'll help me send Pete Landers over the road?"

"No—I don't work thataway. I'm takin' care of Pete. Give me half an hour in town. I'll—"

Bert Lowry whirled as a harsh, husky voice called his name. There, standing in the doorway, was Sam Hobson. His face was bloodless, twisted in a terrible grimace. There was a gun in his hand.

"Pull your gun, Lowry," he croaked. "I'm killing you!"

Bert Lowry shook his head slowly, a queer smile on his lips. With a snarling cry, Sam sprang at the bigger man. Bert leaped sidewise. There was a brief struggle. Sam's cocked gun roared. Now the powerful Bert had tossed the gun on the sheriff's desk and was holding the struggling, fighting, smaller man in his bear-like grip.

"Take care of him, Sheriff. Tell him what I told you."

He and the sheriff shoved Sam into the corridor and into an open cell, giving him a rough push that sent him sprawling. Then Bert pushed the sheriff in on top of Sam. The cell door clanged shut.

"Tell him, Sheriff. So long, Sam. Good luck to you both."

Bert Lowry grinned and picked the jail keys up from the sheriff's desk.

Lowry walked down the street. A cowboy stopped him.

"Pete Landers is lookin' for you, Bert. Says he's goin' to kill you."

Bert Lowry nodded. Then he walked on toward the First And Last Chance Saloon where Pete Landers always held

forth. Bert hummed softly as he walked along the plank sidewalk, his spurs jingling. As he walked the palm of his right hand brushed the white butt of the gun he wore in a tied holster on his thigh. A week ago he had sent his message to Pete Landers. He had sent it the day he got word from Rae Wilbur that she was going to marry Sam Hobson.

Down the street, where black shadows clung to the frame buildings, something moved. Bert Lowry kept on, his narrowed eyes watching that moving, shapeless blot. Then some sort of nameless instinct caused him suddenly to leap aside and into a darkened doorway. From where that black blot moved there came a crimson slash of gunfire, the roar of a .45. Then Bert Lowry was shooting. The explosions of the two guns filled the street. Doorways and windows of the saloons were crowded with faces. The few stragglers on the street ducked for shelter. Bert Lowry and Pete Landers had the darkened way to themselves.

Horses tied to the hitch-racks reared and lunged. One broke loose and stampeded down the street, stirrups flopping. The two men kept shooting.

Lowry saw that shadowy blot lurch out toward the street. He stepped forward to meet his enemy. Twice his gun spat fire. Pete Landers's knees gave way. He lay there in the dust, motionless, a shapeless heap, his gun still gripped in his stiffening hand.

Lowry walked down the middle of the street, his gun ready. Pete Landers might not be dead. Pete Landers might be playing 'possum. From the windows and doorways men watched in hushed silence. They saw Bert Lowry move the shapeless bulk with his boot. Then he walked on down the center of the street, reloading his sixshooter as he went. He was still humming softly.

At the feed barn he got his horse. He gave the barn man a ten-dollar bill and the keys to the jail.

"Half an hour from now go on up there and unlock the jail," he told the grizzled old man.

Then he rode out of Sundance, headed south toward the Bad Lands.

SORRY SAM HOBSON freely admits that he will never make a real cowhand, in spite of the fact that Rae thinks he is. But no man can say that he hasn't made a success of it. The Flying Y is one of the biggest outfits in the country.

Sundance says that it was getting married to a girl like Rae that made a different man of him, but the girl tells another tale. She says that Sam always had it in him, but that old Si Hobson's continual cussings held back what really was in the boy. And a lot of old hands agree with Rae. At any rate he runs the ranch without any outside help, and he's made it pay. The outfit runs two roundup wagons now—the Flying Y and the Lazy 8.

Ever hear of the Rae Mine? One of the richest properties in the State. Sam discovered it while he was pecking around the mountains, just before he got married. He and his wife and their small son, Bert, spent a lot of their time up there in the pines at the mine.

Now and then a letter reaches them. The postmark may be some town in South America or Mexico or Australia. They come from Bert Lowry. The sheriff of Sundance says that if Bert doesn't decide to come back and settle down and help Sam handle those two outfits he'll get a warrant made out and go fetch him back. But Bert will beat him to it. He's coming back for Christmas, so he promises. That's when he got word somehow about his young nephew, who was named after him.

"Somebody," he wrote them, "has got to make a cowhand out of that yearlin', and it's a cinch Sorry Sam ain't the right kind of a teacher. If he don't grow up bowlegged it won't be my fault. I am sendin' you a little present for him. Somethin' he can cut his teeth on. I don't use it any more."

And in the following mail there came a rather heavy package. Inside the wrappings was a white handled six-shooter.

The First Impulse

By HENRY G. LAMOND

SUB-INSPECTOR LODDEN, officer in charge of the Queensland Native Police at Carl Creek Police Station, in the far north of Australia, sat in the shade of the veranda of his quarters and raked a stick along the earth floor while he watched a spider taking shelter from a hovering hornet. With his free hand he waved a cowtail switch backward and forward across his face incessantly in an effort to keep the hordes of flies at bay and out of his eyes.

"Ah!" he breathed triumphantly, as the spider slid to safety down a crack in the ground. "That just proves that old adages are right. Time don't wither 'em, and custom don't stale 'em. Self-preservation is still the first law of nature—now and forevermore. Hulloa, what the dickens is wrong now?"

A man was hurrying across the shimmering ground in front of the inspector's quarters. He was lean almost to the point of being haggard, and the heat which struck remorselessly seemed to have lost the power further to affect his dried body.

Though young in years his hair was slightly streaked with gray, showing the racking of the dread Gulf fever. But he was wise in the ways of the aboriginals; he knew the country and loved it; and, though not a policeman at heart, he liked the life and the spice of danger that went with it. He was Camp-Sergeant Scott.

"There's trouble among th' troopers, sir," he reported to his senior, as he halted at the edge of the veranda and saluted stiffly.

"Sufferin' Joe!" Lodden groaned. "What's the trouble now, Sergeant? Don't tell me any of the boys have prickly heat. I've got enough for the lot of us. What can be wrong with 'em? What's up, Sergeant?"

"That new tracker, Tambo, raised a row with Trooper Doomera. It appears that Tambo stole a pipe belonging to the trooper. Weemoo, Doomera's gin, told Doomera about it. Naturally enough, Doomera wanted satisfaction."

"A purely animal instinct, Sergeant," Lodden murmured. "Self-preservation's the first law of nature; but an equally

strong law is that retaliation is the first impulse. Come up here in the shade, Sergeant, till I ease this infernal itch by rubbing my back against a post. Carry on with the rest of the indictment."

"I placed 'em both under arrest," Scott continued. "They were fightin' mad when I reached 'em, and Weemoo was spurrin' 'em on. I understand, from gossip among the other gins, that Tambo used to be sweet on Weemoo himself once. She rather liked him too. Then Tambo turned his affection to another an' younger gin, an' Weemoo took up with Doomera. Shall I parade 'em, sir?"

"The old first impulse at work again, Sergeant," Lodden murmured, almost talking to himself. "Weemoo was slighted. She wants revenge. She isn't particular what she says, or what happens, so long as she gets even with Tambo. Revenge is woman's first impulse, as old King Solomon once hinted. Now, you go and get 'em, Sergeant. But don't hurry about it. Give me time to get into my uniform. A man can't impress the heathen savage with the majesty of the law when he's only wearing pajamas. You go and get 'em, Sergeant. I'll be in uniform by the time you return."

The camp-sergeant walked down to the lines to collect his prisoners and witnesses. The sub-inspector, after rubbing his back against another post to ease the itch of the prickly heat, entered the room of his quarters to get his uniform.

THE court, held in the shade of the veranda, with heat waves shimmering along the ground outside, and with the incessant droning buzz of the flies everywhere, was brief. Weemoo and other gins were prepared to give voluble evidence; Tambo and Doomera only glared in silence. Scott stated the case in brief, sharp sentences while Lodden restrained an inclination to scratch himself.

"Three hours' fatigue," the sub-inspector snapped at the conclusion of the evidence. "Put Doomera on guard, Sergeant, to see that Tambo does it. Take him off at sundown. You know the heathen mind better than I do, Sergeant. Tell him to try to behave himself better in the future lest worse befall him, or words to that effect. Wait till I enter this in the records. What's the date? 18th of November, is it? Thanks. 18th November, 1876. I wonder if the authorities would value the added information that there's a shade temperature of about a hundred and six on the cork of the waterbag and that I'm sufferin' the torments of blazes with prickly heat. Take 'em away, Sergeant, and let Tambo do pack fatigue."

Tambo, stripped of his dark blue uniform with scarlet facings, was reduced to the level of an ordinary naked savage. A pack-saddle weighing about forty pounds was placed on his head. His job for the next three hours was to walk up and down the cleared patch known as the parade ground. He walked forty yards in one direction, stopped, turned, hitched his load more comfortably, and paced back to his starting point.

Doomera sat under a tree. He was in full uniform and, though his tight-laced suit almost choked him, it was obvious that he appreciated the dignity and authority that the uniform lent him. His Schneider rifle rested on his crossed legs. As his eyes followed the pacing of the sullen prisoner his flashing teeth showed his enjoyment of the position.

The camp-sergeant walked by without stopping and saw that all was well. The sub-inspector came out to take note before discarding his uniform for the more comfortable pajamas. He saw that Tambo was already wearing a pad on the ground from his tramping, that Doomera was alert, that all seemed well.

A couple of troopers in very undress uniform came and squatted in the dust and conversed with the trooper on guard. Gins, directly and indirectly interested in the case, stood about the parade ground. They laughed and giggled, taunted Tambo, leered at Doomera, and made their crude jokes at Weemoo's expense.

Gradually the bucks and the gins drifted away and only Doomera and his prisoner were left on the parade ground. After a time, as Tambo walked up and down his beat, the reserve between them broke down and an occasional word developed into a general conversation. Tambo left his pad and paced nearer

his guard so their voices need not be raised unnecessarily. Slowly the sun dipped toward the horizon.

The station was preparing for the end of the day. The gins were busy with their domestic duties. The bucks were stretched about in indolent ease. The two white men—the only white men on the station—walked to their bathrooms to sponge away the sticky clamminess of the heat, each giving thanks that another day had gone.

"I'll take that fellow off his fatigue as soon as I've had me bath," Scott told himself.

Lodden was dressing himself leisurely, rubbing against a post as the inclination took him, when frantic screams sounded from the parade ground. He jumped from his room, grabbing a revolver and buckling the belt about him as he ran. The camp-sergeant hurried from his quarters, and from all directions black figures gathered to a common center.

Over on one side of the parade ground a screaming gin was surrounded by her sisters. They added their voices to hers, making a medley indescribable. A dark figure, which had been Doomera, lay stretched on the ground, and from his smashed skull trickling blood gathered and fell. His rifle was gone, his bandoleer with it, and near his body lay the pack-saddle which Tambo had carried.

Tambo was not in sight.

SCOTT snapped short orders. Several of the troopers spread, quartering the ground, and unerringly as bloodhounds on a scent they picked up Tambo's tracks. They followed them, whimpering slightly in their excitement, their eyes glaring with all the animal lust of the chase.

"Come back, you boys," Lodden roared. "He's closeup sundown now. We'll catch 'im tomorrow. See the tracks ain't obliterated, Sergeant, so's the boys'll be able to get a good start in the morning. Bring that gin here—that one that's doing all the yelling. She might be able to tell us how it happened."

The gin told her tale disjointedly and with hysterical excitement. She had been walking by the parade ground when Tambo stopped to speak to Doomera. Doomera ordered him to continue his fatigue. Tambo commenced to argue, stating his time was up and that he should be released. Doomera lifted his rifle to enforce obedience. As Doomera glanced at his rifle Tambo heaved the pack-saddle from his head on top of Doomera. He followed that with an instant leap. Doomera never had a chance. Two smashes with a stone battered Doomera's skull; with one sweeping grab Tambo had gathered the rifle and bandoleer, and even as the gin commenced to scream Tambo cleared the parade ground and disappeared in the bush.

"This is a nice night to be writing reports in triplicate, and suffering from prickly heat at the same time," Lodden complained. "There's Ah Sin ringing the bell for supper. We'll go and have it first and bury Doomera afterward."

Later, by the straggling light of a moon, Lodden stood at the head of a shallow grave as Doomera's body was lowered.

"I don't know the burial service off by heart," he muttered, talking to himself. "If I light a lantern, so I may read it, we'll be smothered with insects in about two jiffs. Here's my oration: 'Dommera was a good boy; but luck was against him. Amen.' You can let the boys fire a volley over his grave, Sergeant, and that ought to keep the debbil-debbils away—damn the itch of this prickly heat.

"I've told Ah Sin to have breakfast ready at daylight. We'll get out after Tambo. Leave Troopers Woppida and Arty behind, Sergeant. They'll look after the station and the spare horses while we're away. Tell those fools of gins not to make too much row with their yelling tonight. I've got to write these reports in triplicate. If I do that, and get away at daylight tomorrow, there isn't going to be much shut-eye for me. Good night, Sergeant."

When Lodden lighted his lamp and arranged his papers and ink the flying insects of the night buzzed in his ears. Some met suicide in the flame of the lamp, but some swam in the ink or stung him with searing tongues of fire. He wiped the sweat from his face and arms and lifted his head as a stuttering volley

of half a dozen rifles rang out. As the echoes of that volley thudded through the bush the wailing native girls commenced their doleful chorus.

Lodden went on steadily with his reports. He did not try to curb the gins. They were indulging one of their customs, and interference would be useless. It was well after midnight when he finished, doused his light and crawled in under the mosquito nets. It seemed to him that he had no more than shut his eyes when Ah Sin tapped at his door and called him to breakfast.

PEARLY fingers of light were streaming across the sky when the rattle of hobbles and the jangle of bells told of horses being driven to the yards. With an eagerness which they made no effort to conceal the bucks caught the horses and saddled them while their gins stood about the horse yard twittering in their excitement. Weemoo was an object of interest, not to say envy, of her sisters. It had filtered into their minds that Weemoo had in an indirect way played the part of a Delilah. Weemoo, her hair plastered with mud in token of her recent widowhood, should have been discreetly hidden and wailing her sorrow. But she could not resist the notoriety; and when she lifted her head her glinting eyes told her pride in being one of the primary causes of the trouble.

The troopers mounted their riding horses and, with the pack animals running on in front, they led the way. They were happy. This was a chase. It mattered nothing that lives were for sale or that, till yesterday, their quarry was a man who had been a friend and mate. Those he-devils in uniform played with death. They felt lonely without it.

The two white officers rode behind their men. That Native Police force was the only military, or semi-military, body in the British Empire in which the officers did not lead their men. Though those bucks loved their officers with a child-like affection, and though they would willingly sacrifice their lives in their defense, an unsuspecting white man riding in front would be too great a temptation for their instincts to overcome. The officers of the Native Police always rode in the rear when on the march!

A couple of troopers picked out Tambo's tracks almost without seeming to glance at them. They followed those tracks as confidently as a man might run a broad highway, and they chatted and chaffed as they rode. They went through forest country, through a patch of thicker scrub, across an open plain, and then they came out on the banks of the O'Shanassy River. Tambo's tracks, plain to all on the muddy bank, led straight to the edge of the water and disappeared.

Sergeant Scott spread the men to pick up the tracks where they left the water. Some of the troopers crossed the river and followed the bank on the other side, going both up and down the stream. Others spread fan-shape. One, Nikko, having an idea of his own, jogged upstream along the bank, sitting his horse with the heavy and ungainly slouch peculiar to the aboriginal in the saddle.

In less than half an hour Nikko returned, a broad grin proclaiming that his hunt had been successful. Though no sound or signal had been given, the other troopers drew together, drawn apparently by the inexplicable telepathy common among savages. They all followed Nikko upstream. About a mile distant, where a rocky bar ran in on the course of the river, Nikko deviated around the barrier of stone. On the far side of it were the tracks of Tambo!

The fugitive had walked upstream, using the running water to hide his tracks, till the bar came in. Then, using those rocks where his feet would leave no tracks, he had left the stream and continued his journey. For a trick by a savage almost without reasoning power, it was rather cunning. But that guile was eclipsed by Nikko's intuition. Not thinking, and without the ability to reason, Nikko had been led by instinct, blindly deducing the action of the other and checkmating it.

About midday spirals of smoke rose to the skies from the ranges ahead of the troop. They wavered in units and in pairs, rising in puffs and in slender columns.

"Can you read smoke signals?" Lodden asked of Scott.

"No," Scott grunted. "None of these boys can either. It's only the old bucks can read 'em. I don't think, really, there's anything to read. They send up a smoke signal to attract attention. The sort of smoke gives a broad outline, as it were; but th' old man's imagination fills in the rest. I think they think it to one another."

"Telepathic transmission, you think?" Lodden asked.

"If that's the proper name for them thought messages, then that's my opinion," Scott replied. "But I know that all the tribes about here know that Doomera's been killed, that Tambo's run away an' that we're after him. They'll keep them smokes goin' all day. Tomorrow the Balana tribes on the Barkly Tablelands is goin' to know it, an' them fightin' Kalkadoons in the Cloncurry Ranges is goin' for to have an inklin'. That smoke's comin' from about th' head of th' river, where them Waggaboongas hang out. The chances are Tambo's makin' for them."

A LITTLE after sundown, just as night was coming, Lodden called a halt for his troop. At the same time Tambo swaggered into the camp of Waggaboongas.

Old Weechera, chief of the Waggaboongas, knew of Tambo's coming and, seated with the elders about the fires, he awaited the fugitive. Their eyes gleamed when they noted the rifle and bandoleer he carried, and they gathered about him to listen to his suggestions.

The aboriginal of Northern Queensland was a creature almost devoid of imagination. He was an insensate being whose only needs were prompted by his belly cravings. Tambo was blessed, or cursed, with an imagination. The project he placed before those elders was staggering in its immensity. They sat close to their smoldering fires, smacked mosquitoes on their bare bodies and listened.

Tambo made full use of the limited vocabulary of his language. He did not employ rhetoric, and his oratory was confined to bald statements. The language did not lend itself to any other form of expression. His main argument was that he had beaten the invincible white man. Proof was at hand; he lifted the rifle and bandoleer of bullets. All he asked was a hundred fighting bucks under his leadership. He would raid the police station, rob it of rations and arms, and with those rifles and ammunition he and his army, under Weechera, would dominate the Gulf country.

The old men hesitated. The plan was away beyond them. There were a thousand possibilities, none of which they could understand, and all of which they doubted. In the abstract the thing appealed to them. As a concrete fact they could not grasp it.

Tambo spoke of flour in abundance—great bags of it stacked in the store. He mentioned tea, sugar, tobacco, and—here he paused to give the word its full effect—grog! If he was placed at the head of a hundred bucks he would bring all these things to the Waggaboongas, and on those raided stores the camp could live in luxury forever. With the rifles, and with his trained bucks, Weechera could subjugate all other tribes and reign as overlord of the Gulf. Instead of waiting for niggardly supplies of *pituri* from the south, here were literally tons and tons of tobacco to be had for the taking. He stood erect, the fire reflected from his shining body, corded his muscles and waited an answer.

The elders considered it. The project was so breath-snatching that they feared to think of it. Then, tentatively, they made an offer of twenty bucks. As an afterthought they pointed out that Lilydale Station, being nearer and not so well prepared for defense, would be easier prey.

Tambo scorned the idea of taking Lilydale. He wanted to create an impression by taking the stronghold of law and order. He wanted to deal a devastating blow. He pointed out again that to take the police station and its arms laid all the stations in the district at their mercy. They could deal with Lilydale, Gregory Downs, Herbertvale and others later. It was essential to take the police station first. It could be done with a hundred men. Tambo wanted those men.

The old men listened, nodding in

approval as each argument penetrated their minds, and then they provisionally agreed. They were adamant on but one point: Twenty bucks was all they would allow. Arguments, threats, promises, pleadings were all in vain—Tambo must be content with twenty men.

The old men had received word from answering smoke signals of a troop leaving the station in pursuit of Tambo. They knew his tracks would be followed to their camp. They did not have the imagination to grasp the fact that offense may be the best defense—that it was strategic to strike at the attacker's base and cut his feet from under him. Their sole idea of defense was to keep a strong body of fighting bucks close at hand. Twenty men would not be missed; a hundred might cause suspicion.

With the breaking of day Tambo and his small army slipped through the bush and took a straight line for the police station. As they traveled fresh spirals of smoke rose and quivered in the air. Back at his camp old Weechera read those signals, which reiterated the information that a party was in pursuit, following on Tambo's tracks. Half fearful of what he had done, he was inclined to try to recall his bucks. Then it glimmered gradually in his mind that, if the police were following Tambo, it would leave the station unprotected.

He thought of those rations, of that sugar and tea, of the tobacco and of the grog. Old Weechera smiled and chuckled to himself. He folded his wizened arms across his paunch and grinned. Even if he lost twenty bucks and gained the rations he would class himself a winner. The expedition, in his opinion, was quite worthwhile.

A LITTLE before sundown Sub-Inspector Lodden strode into the camp of the Waggaboongas. He was unattended; but as he walked to Weechera's hut a rifle cracked from the edge of the fringe of trees, and a crow which had been cawing above Weechera's humpy fell fluttering to the ground. That was the work of Sergeant Scott. It was a warning that was not lost on the natives.

Weechera, with a sick feeling at the pit of his stomach, sat beside his fire and awaited the policeman who, in the small minds of the natives, took something of the rank of a divinity when present—though when absent he was a foe allied to the debbil-debbil.

Weechera sought to guard against evil by anticipating it; he stoutly denied all knowledge of Tambo before Lodden began to question him. He went further. He stated he did not know Tambo, that he had never heard the name mentioned, that he knew nothing of the murder at the station, that he and Tambo were enemies and, in fact, he was prepared to swear that neither he nor any member of his tribe had ever seen a stranger or had dealings with one.

Lodden bullied. He swore and trapped Weechera in a score of lies. But that conscienceless old reprobate only smiled and denied any knowledge of Tambo. The tracks which led from the police station to the camp, and which Lodden thought were Tambo's, were really made by Cootcah, the debbil-debbil, to mislead the police.

Lodden put his whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast. Immediately Scott and the men, brilliant in their gaudy uniforms, filed out of the bush and entered the camp.

Weechera looked at them with some discomfort. But even his dull mind comprehended the fact that officers of the Native Police always dealt with justice. He again denied any knowledge of Tambo.

Scott, with his greater knowledge of the aboriginals, had an inspiration; he jerked his revolver from its pouch and shot a mangy cur which was sniffing about the hut. He raised his revolver and bowled over another which barked at the twitching body on the ground.

Shrill voices immediately rose in protesting yells. The gins, though they loved their children, lavished a more abiding love on their dogs. There was wild confusion. Weechera's gin screamed and dropped on her knees beside the body of her dog. Gins and piccaninnies were chasing dogs to drag them to safety, and above the din, while Scott stood with his leveled revolver, Lodden made himself heard—

"Full information of Tambo or every dog in the camp will be shot!"

While Sergeant Scott was firing, and while the dogs were dropping, the bucks of the camp were scowling fiercely and fingering their spears. The troopers were enjoying themselves hugely. They played with their rifles, itching for a chance to loose them into the crowd. It mattered nothing that most of them were of the same tribe as the camp, and that, perhaps, their near relatives were among the people they longed to kill. It was their instinct to kill—ruthlessly, mercilessly, without compunction, and the more harmless the prey the greater the pleasure in killing.

Above the din Scott made himself heard and commanded silence. He explained, speaking in the native tongue, that Tambo had been tracked to the camp and that the tracks of a party had been seen leaving it. Where was Tambo? Where had he gone? What had he gone to do? Sergeant Scott squinted along the barrel of his revolver. A spat of flame leaped from it, and another dog dropped to the ground with a yelp of pain and writhed in death.

Weechera's old gin, Yallera, explained. With tears running down the wrinkles of her aged face, while she nervously watched her dogs and Scott's revolver, she told of Tambo's arrival at the camp. She related his boasts, his demands, his departure, and she commenced to tell of his intended exploits.

Weechera's stick cut short that recital. It fell and clouted old Yallera on the head, snapping a syllable in two and stunning her to silence.

And almost as that stick fell the revolver barked hoarsely and another dog died!

Yallera took a deep breath, steadied herself and commenced again. When she had completed her story, and when Scott had translated it to his senior, Lodden whistled long and softly.

"Sufferin' Joe!" he complained. "This is a pretty mess, Sergeant, all commencing from the supposed theft of a paltry pipe. Our horses are tired, and we're ditto. This blasted prickly heat's giving me beans, too! We've got to go back, Sergeant. We'll be too late to save the station. We haven't time to impress on this old heathen savage the error of his ways. We can attend to that later. We've got bigger fish to fry now. After Tambo's finished at the station he'll come back along the Gregory River—that's a certainty. We'll ride all night, Sergeant. We'll catch him on his way back. Tambo relies on speed to get him through. We'll have to declare euchre on him by showing a greater dash of toe. Pull the troop together, Sergeant."

The tired troop, on tired horses, about-faced and rode back in the direction from which they had come. The troopers, tired though they were, laughed and joked among themselves. They knew where Tambo had gone, and they understood his mission. That night, while they were riding, talking and laughing, their huts might be going up in flames. Their belongings might be robbed; their gins would be taken prisoners; all they owned in the world would be taken by Tambo and his gang.

They knew all that—they knew Tambo would act even as they themselves would under similar conditions. But they roared with laughter as they recounted the fear of the gins as the dogs dropped in the dust; they repeated with pantomimic effect Weechera's frenzy as Yallera told of Tambo's visit and intended exploit, and they laughed and rolled in their saddles as each told of what he had seen when the camp was visited.

Lodden and his sergeant discussed matters as they rode along. Scott, being older in the ways of the blacks, gave his views first:

"Tambo won't attack the station till it's breakin' daylight. That's the way with blacks. It'll take 'em about half an hour to clean up that lot there. On top of that, it'll take 'em about an hour or so to tell the station gins what fine girls they are. There'll be another hour to have a feed, a drink or two of grog, an' to load the gins for the return journey. If it was any other buck than Tambo runnin' the show they'd stay as long as the grog held out. But Tambo's got brains. He's got imagination. He won't waste no time drinkin' at the station when he's got gins to carry that grog out bush with him. Even so, it's goin' for to be a couple of hours after

daylight before they leave. What way are they comin' back? That's the query.

"It's almost a certainty, I think, that they'll strike across from the O'Shanassy to the Gregory. That's their best track home, right beside the water. Any other nigger 'd do that. But Tambo's got imagination, an' imagination's a bad thing for a nigger. If he didn't have the gins loaded with stores he'd cut across country. But he'll bring the gins with him. He'll want them to carry the loads while him an' the other bucks strut free. Yes, they'll take the track back along the Gregory River."

"Wait a bit!" Lodden exploded in his excitement. "If we can make that bluff about sunrise we'll trap 'em. You know the place I mean, Sergeant? There's a rocky wall comes in along the bank of the river for about a quarter of a mile. If only we can get there first. You with four troopers at one end; me with four at the other end. Hey, we'll snare 'em in one hit!"

THINGS were happening at the station while the troop, on tired horses, were jogging over endless miles in the dark of night. Black shadows flitted from tree to tree and surrounded the place. One dark something drifted over the ground, noiseless as a shadow, moving with the calm deliberation of time itself, merging with any inequalities in the ground and taking part of their shadows. It was Tambo—Tambo making his way to his gin's side in their hut. From her he learned of the troop's departure and that only Arty and Woppida were left to guard the station. Tambo chuckled softly and wormed his way back to the shadows of the trees.

When the first lines of light were streaking across the sky two dark figures crept into the huts of Arty and Woppida. From each of those huts a demented gin ran screaming, and later two bloodstained figures danced and whooped into the open.

Ah Sin, the Chinese cook, hurrying from the kitchen to note the cause of the disturbance, was greeted with derisive cheers. He raced like a frightened rabbit across the parade ground, spears flicking up spurts of dust behind his heels. Yelling madly in frantic fear, he turned and ran for the shelter of his kitchen, his pigtail streaming in the wind behind him.

Ah Sin was good sport: He was harmless, helpless, and without the means or ability to retaliate. The bucks played with him till he was nerveless with fear, till his palsied legs refused to carry him and his voice croaked in whispers. Then, and not till then, he was knocked on the head and left to kick out his life in the dust at the kitchen door.

Then the blacks broke into the store. The bucks yelled with delight, and the gins screamed in their excitement, as they bundled out the things which they desired. Tobacco, rum, flour, sugar, limejuice, treacle, jam, tea and sundry unidentifiable parcels were strewn on the ground in front of the store.

First the mob feasted, only Weemoo standing aloof, taunted by her sisters and cuffed by the bucks. In their wanton waste they destroyed ten times what they ate, and then with a shout of delight the bucks found the rum. But Tambo checked the rum drinking. He had imagination. He was not a temperance advocate, and he had no intention of carrying back more than a fair share to Weechera. There was plenty of time for the rum later. Their first duty was to make a good escape.

He apportioned the loads among the captured gins. Weemoo, sullenly protesting, eyed the bundle which had been set aside for her. As Tambo swung the haft of his spear menacingly Weemoo's eyes flashed a red flame, and she muttered under her breath—but she heaved her load on her head, balanced it and glanced once out of the corner of her eyes toward Tambo. Weemoo also had imagination of the elemental sort, and she was allowing it to run free while keeping her deeds and words in check.

Some of the bucks were slightly heady with the grog; all were intoxicated with the excitement of success; some of them wanted to spell a day, to lie about in ease, to boast of their success and to parade in the fine feathers they had taken from the store. But Tambo had imagination. He knew something of the ways of the white man, and he guessed

reprisal swift and sure would catch him should he tarry. As he could not literally burn his bridges behind him, he did the next best thing—he took a firestick and set fire to the store and other buildings. Then he explained to the other bucks what that action would bring to them if they lingered.

They did not linger. They spurred the gins with their loads and followed orders as Tambo gave them. They left the remains of the station, ran up the O'Shanassy and cut across to the Gregory River. All his animal instincts told Tambo he was running the right course. All his imagination warned him that he was running into a trap and that the route was wrong. But with his gins loaded with supplies he could not take the rough track straight across country. He was suspicious. He was wary. He sniffed the wind and smelled death in every breeze. But his imagination failed him, and he did not know enough to throw out skirmishers and scouts.

Weemoo was up in the body of the driven gins. She staggered under the weight of her bag of flour, and when she stumbled she heard Tambo's loud roar of laughter. Weemoo gritted her teeth and mumbled under her breath. And she prayed in her own way to the gods of vengeance!

They came to the entrance to the bluff. The leading buck entered it. Tambo at the rear, with Weemoo close beside him as she dropped back under her staggering load, looked about him and sniffed nervously. One kite hawk was wheeling in a blue sky. Ahead of the mob noisy parrots left their shelters and screamed their protests at being disturbed. Nothing else moved. Tambo took another look about him and entered the defile.

A precipitous cliff of rock was on one side of him. Fifty yards from the base of that cliff the river flowed broad and smooth. It, all the blacks knew, was fully charged with crocodiles. The surface of the stream, so slow in its course that it appeared stagnant, was covered with great water-lily leaves which floated sluggishly, and occasional twin bubbles marked the snout of a lurking crocodile.

Tambo drew a deep breath, spurred those immediately ahead of him to faster action and stepped into the mouth of the gorge.

LODDEN and his troop rode through the long night, the tired men punching along on weary horses. About an hour after sunrise they reached the bluff. From the north, in the direction of the station, a new column of smoke rose in the morning air and hung like a pall. The men knew its meaning.

"Sufferin' Joe, Sergeant!" Lodden complained. "If they've burnt the store there'll be no bicarbonate of soda left. My prickly heat's worse, and soda's the only thing that touches the spot. Damp bicarbonate, Sergeant, sponged on, gives immediate relief. You keep Nikko, Deemera, Balairah and Toby with you. You stay here at the top end of the bluff. You know what to do. I'll take the other four boys and go to the other end. It's no use telling those boys to spare any. They won't! But if you see any bicarbonate of soda, Sergeant, guard it with your life."

The troop, divided, took stations at either end of the bluff. The horses were taken well to the rear, all packs and gear removed to insure silence, and one boy was left to guard them. The others waited, well hidden in the thick trees and high grass. Some dozed drowsily, their heads nodding as they sat in their shelters. Lodden was swaying gently, and even the prospect of the conflict ahead of him failed to thrill him to complete wakefulness.

Suddenly Bourlarry started. His quick ears had picked up a whisper. He hissed slightly, which brought the others to instant alertness, and their eyes shone. From afar down the river had come to them the scream of parrots in flight. They knew something moving up the course of the river had disturbed those parrots.

The boys played with their rifles, their eyes glaring and their teeth showing in fiendish grins. Lodden, now wide awake, wormed his way forward the better to view the entrance to the trap. He lay partly concealed under a bush, and through its thick foliage he commanded the flat to the banks of the

river. When the low rumble of ground vibrations came to him he turned to his troop. He held up a warning hand, and with his eyes he commanded silence. The thudding of the ground, denoting footsteps in numbers, drew nearer. Then came the first murmur of conversation from the mob coming upriver.

Almost holding his breath in his nervous excitement, Lodden watched the leaders enter the trap. Three strapping young Waggaboonga bucks led the way, their eyes searching, their spears poised. Behind them followed a straggling line of gins, each heavy loaded, and all jabbering and grumbling incessantly. Farther down the line, with Tambo five or six places behind her, was Weemoo. She bent as she struggled under her load of flour, and beside her were three other gins attended by two Waggaboonga bucks.

Weemoo straightened as she came to the mouth of the bluff. She looked about her, turning her head slowly from the wall to the river. She turned again, talking as she walked, and suddenly her eyes snapped to attention and with a jerk her whole body tensed.

In his excited eagerness Lodden had parted the leaves of his shelter the better to see if Tambo was coming. He looked along the line, and as his eyes reached Weemoo he felt her gaze grip his and hold for a brief fraction of time. Weemoo had recognized him! What would she do?

Lodden's thoughts raced. He knew enough of the natives to know they were almost child-like in their simplicity. He knew the women were given to hysteria and lack of control. He expected Weemoo to cry an alarm. That alarm, he knew, would disturb the quarry, scattering them like birds in flight, and the whole of the hunt would then be in vain. Unless he acted, and acted quickly, taking the initiative from the blacks, Tambo would assuredly escape. His only chance was to spring the trap, half filled though it was, and to throw the mob into confusion by his precipitate act. Lodden raised the whistle to his lips which would commence the action.

But before Lodden's blast was blown Weemoo recovered herself. With a casual laugh she drew her companions' attention to something in the river, drawing their eyes from Lodden's retreat. She swung along, laughing softly and carrying her load lightly for the first time since the march started.

"Smart work!" Lodden told himself. "Tambo's with the mob. He isn't in the jaws of the trap yet. If he was Weemoo would have sprung it. She wants to make sure he'll get in good and solid. It's safe to trust the female of the species. The old first impulse comes out on top every time."

The line straggled slowly past. Gins and bucks were intermixed, walking casually, freely, laughingly and without premonition of danger. At last the end came. Tambo hesitated at the opening, looked about him and stepped past the line of concealed troopers at the mouth.

Almost it seemed to Lodden that a stunning silence shut down with a snap as if the very air itself held its breath. And that silence was immediately shattered by a harsh voice grating from the top end of the bluff—

"In the name of the Queen, stand!"

With that command, and with the frightened yell which followed it, a spluttering discharge of rifles sounded. Gins dropped their loads and, screaming, ran in fear. Bucks scattered for shelter, dropping as they ran, and some of them lay bleeding on the grass. And above all the shouts rang the bloodthirsty cries of the Native Police.

Tambo did not hesitate; he turned and raced for the entrance of the bluff. From out of the long grass behind him uniformed figures rose and spat flames from their rifles. Ahead of him, stretched across the opening from wall to river bank, fiends in uniform took aim and fired feverishly. The mob was trapped—an unscalable wall on one side and the broad river on the other. In between a few shrubs offered scant shelter from the hell which came in leaden streams about them.

THE conflict was short. After a few shots the black police, as was usual with them, got out of hand. They clubbed their rifles and ran berserk among the helpless bucks yarded in the defile. No quarter was given. None

was asked or expected. The slaughter stopped only when the last buck lay on the ground.

Lodden and the sergeant then called the troopers to order. They searched the fallen. Tambo was not among them. They turned over every body and searched every tussock of grass, every shrub and every crevice in the wall. A lizard could not have evaded them. They found the rifle and bandoleer; but they could not find Tambo. It was impossible to look for tracks. In the mêlée of the engagement the ground had been torn to dust and the grass chopped to chaff. It was beyond the realm of reason to pick out individual tracks.

"He might have taken to the river," Lodden suggested. "I know he came in. I know he didn't get out at my end."

"Nobody passed out my end," Scott added curtly.

"Then if he's taken to the river," Lodden continued, "the crocs will get him. Which way Tambo been go? You boys been see 'um?"

None of the troopers had taken particular note of Tambo, though nearly all could express an opinion of his actions. The gins, huddled together in frightened heaps, were just recovering their composure. They were commencing to giggle and laugh, to relate experiences and have a general conversation. Until they settled down it was only a waste of time to try to question them.

"He might be lyin' under one of them lily leaves," Scott suggested. "A nigger can hide under one of them for hours at a time. He just pokes his nose out of water under one of the leaves. He stops there. He's hidden. Everything's right with him. It's goin' to take us a week to turn over all them leaves—there's thousands of 'em. If a croc don't grab him in the meantime, and unless we find him before sundown, he's goin' to dodge us durin' the night. But we've got to find him. What's up with them gins?"

Weemoo and Lairah, Tambo's gin, had created a diversion. They were waging wordy warfare and dealing in obscene recrimination. Weemoo was undoubtedly in the right. Lairah giggled and made an occasional interjection to add flame to the fire of Weemoo's wrath. At last, provoked beyond endurance, Weemoo picked up a stick. Lairah responded.

The lightning play of those sticks was in itself a marvel; but a greater miracle was that few blows struck home. Those gins were accustomed to punishment. They were skilled in the art of evasion and guard. If a stunning blow did get home—one which would have stretched a white man unconscious on the ground—the recipient merely shook her head to clear her brain, whirled her stick above her and sailed in again!

The other gins were taking sides, reaching for other sticks and preparing to take part, when Scott intervened. He ordered the onlooking bucks to hunt for Tambo, and he separated the gins.

Lairah raked Weemoo with a verbal broadside as they parted. She giggled, ogled the boys near her and turned again to her opponent.

Weemoo replied only with a flash of her eyes. She stalked straight to where a spear was lying on the ground. She stooped down and picked up that spear. Before any one could interrupt her she ran lightly to the bank of the river, poised and sent the spear whizzing to the center of a lily leaf. With the dry gulp of torn air behind it, and with the sucking sob of a spear in flight, it sped true through the center of the leaf. Half its length slid from sight. Then it stopped dead, standing upright!

From beneath that leaf a purplish stain of blood rose to the surface. The water was lashed and sprayed as a convulsive body beneath heaved and contorted in its death agonies.

While Lodden and Scott, spellbound and silent, watched the drama the fiendish face of Tambo appeared above the surface. He threw half of his body out of the water, but he sank again as a brown shadow slid up to him and a pair of crocodile jaws closed on his body and drew it under.

Out on the bank, among the corpses of the slain, Weemoo danced hysterically, laughing and taunting Lairah, who was plastering her hair with mud in token of her widowhood.

Continuing

SCALAWAG

By GORDON YOUNG

The Story Thus Far:

CAPTAIN Bill Jones, of the trading schooner *Merry Maid*, lay at Tehuala Island for weeks, giving the merchants and planters of the place ample time to pay him his fees. Then at last he realized that they were laughing up their sleeves at him because of his apparently easy-going nature—and Captain Bill went ashore like a tidal wave.

Woo Lung, the storekeeper, owed him fifty dollars. But Captain Bill, knowing that Lalee, the merchant's pretty daughter, was in love with one of his young sailors, said he would cancel the debt if the girl were allowed to marry his boy. Woo Lung, who hoped to sell Lalee to a drunken planter, refused. So Captain Bill gave him a lick on the head and ordered him to have the girl ready by nightfall, when she would be called for.

By dinner time Captain Bill had cut a wide swath through the island. With his pockets lined with his "collections" and his hammer-like fists pleasantly tingling from variously bestowed taps on various miserly jaws, he repaired to Cloverland's Hotel, where the island's élite gathered to fraternize on the deep verandas.

But here such a rough fellow as the captain was not welcome. The pompous Mr. Cloverland waited upon him in person—to tell him to depart. And Bill very graciously departed—as far as the nearest fringe of trees. Whereupon he flattened Mr. Cloverland with one huge fist, disarmed him and stripped him of his fancy clothes.

Back at the hotel, Bill was drawn aside by a pretty girl who told him she was Jeanne, niece of the planter Malloy who owed Bill considerable money. She pleaded with him to give her passage to Nello Island, where she had relatives; else she must marry the elderly and dissipated Mr. Pleu.

Bill agreed. But before he set out for the ship, he went upstairs where the gentlemen in question were gambling—and beat them all up. He barely made the ship, with half the island behind him. Lalee, he was told, was safely aboard; so Bill got his anchor up.

The next morning Bill found that a terrible mistake had been made. His sailors had gone to Woo Lung's—but confused by the dark had brought off to the ship, instead of the doll-like Lalee, an austere spinster missionary named McKenzie. Bill was horrified until he discovered that Lalee was indeed aboard, having come herself with Charlie, her sailor sweetheart.

Some days later Bill made his landfall at Nello, only to find that Jeanne's relatives, the Stantons, had been murdered by cannibal raiders. Fearing another attack, he hastily passed arms to his men, and was amazed when the austere Miss McKenzie seized a rifle and handled it expertly. But he had little time for reflection. Already the savage blacks were swarming out from the beach in canoes—led by a longboat which Bill knew must have been taken from white men.

"There'll be more frizzled monkeys in hell 'fore sundown than the devil's had to fry since Noah got drunk!" Bill roared as he lined up his people for the attack.

"I WISH you wouldn't be blasphemous at a time like this," said Miss McKenzie severely.

Bill grunted. She had no way of knowing that he was anxious, that he wasn't blasphemous at all; that he would have said, or done, anything to put a grin on the faces of his crew.

He was buckling on the revolver and cutlass and trying to think. He shifted his weight to fix the revolver more comfortably on his hip and to keep the cutlass from getting between his legs. He drew the blade and tried the edge with his thumb, then swore.

"I've got so used to its not bein' sharp it fooled me."

"I sharpened it the other day," said Lawton, trying to stand as if his back did not hurt him.

"Too bad I'm goin' to get it nicked, 'cause I need a shave an' my razor's dull as a Chinaman that don't want to savvy." He said it absent mindedly as he stood eyeing the shore where the cannibals were unmistakably making ready for their big try to cut off the schooner. "They're queer devils," he said to no one in particular. "Sometimes they're jumpy an' timid as kicked dogs. Sometimes they'll run right through a blaze o' gunfire an' keep comin'. Sometimes they'll break an' run right when they've got you licked—but most usual they won't. Hmm."

He looked around studying the crew that stood about, hopeful and eager. He looked hastily across the faces of the women, then gazed shoreward.

"That longboat's goin' to be sluggish under their paddles. Look at 'em climbin' into it. If I ever get—I mean when I get to Sydney again I'm goin' to buy me a dozen cannons. Stick 'em all over the deck. If I could blow that— Hi, Harry! Quick! Get me some dynamite, all the same for fishin'! Caps an' fuses. Lively, son! An' some cans o' salmon to tie it to," he added.

"Dynamite!" Miss McKenzie gasped. "Isn't that dangerous?"

"Yes'm. An' if that boat full o' maneaters gets within a hundred feet o' me, I'll show 'em just how dangerous."

"But if it should go off accidentally—" Miss McKenzie suggested.

"I'll make an awful splash in the Sulphur Lake when I come down!" Captain Bill leaned over the rail, pointing. The others looked and saw a dark fin wavering through the water. "He's flyin' his gaff topsail. An' there's another. They smell a fight, them fellows."

Harry came running and grinning, his hands full of cans, dynamite and caps.

"All same smoke-ship noise," he said, referring to a gunboat's cannon.

"You drop that stuff an' it may be all the same as Judgment Day! Here, put it on the skylight. Careful, there. Give me the cord an' I'll rig some ballast on this stuff so I can throw it."

Captain Bill made up three bombs, firmly and carefully binding two cans of salmon to each. He tried the weight, balancing himself as if to throw. With a glance lifting to the rigging, he said—

"If I get excited an' have it bounce back off a backstay, I won't live to dandle no great-grandchildren on my knee."

He took matches from his pocket, looked at them carefully and struck one to see that it was not by chance moist. Then he laid them down so that they would be ready at hand when he reached for them.

"I think," said Miss McKenzie, to whom her religion was more than her life, "that it would be fitting if we held prayer."

She spoke with resolution, yet as if half expecting the impious Bill to protest.

He looked at her queerly and was not at all impressed. His eye roved from her severe face to the rifle that she held. Missionary or not, she was a fighting woman; and he liked her.

"All right," said Bill. "'T won't do no harm if you don't make it too long."

Then, forgetful that the missionary understood Samoan, he spoke to the crew, called them *"fanau seoli"*—children of hell—and told them to stand humble with faces downcast and listen.

"She," said Bill, "is all right, an' you devil-colored heathens remember that!"

She dropped to her knees, closed her

eyes, lifted her face toward the hot sky. The natives watched her with uneasy awe, listening, not understanding, but impressed. Lalee sat calm eyed, staring, as the others, excepting Captain Bill, bowed their heads. He stood watchfully at the rail. The black fringe of bushy jungle came down about the broad white beach that glimmered and glistened as if strewn with broken pearls.

Small groups of cannibals still pranced about as if hastily completing some ritualistic dance. The canoes were moving off, darting this way and that. The heavily loaded longboat, double banked with paddlers, came slowly. A big war canoe, with dexterous sweep of paddles, shot out into the lead of the disorderly flotilla, and the other canoes rapidly fell into line as it swung wide to starboard of the schooner.

Miss McKenzie arose, brushing at her knees.

"Here," said Bill, giving her the glass, "they're gettin' near 'nough for you to have a good look at 'em. Beauties, they are. An' comin' silent, which is a bad weather sign."

Bill sent one of his men into the foretop with shotgun and shells. He called after him:

"You'd better be lucky. 'Cause they're goin' to pop at you from all sides. But don't you dare get killed—you hear me!"

He sent the halfbreed, Harry, into the forecastle with three other men, and posted others on both sides of the schooner. His orders, flat and emphatic, were:

"When they rush us, you boys make a break aft. We'll take our last stand here, all together. Keep well down. I don't want you showin' any damn fool courage!"

"Why, they're not making a sound," said Jeanne uneasily.

"No, miss. They're savin' their voices."

The missionary shuddered as she handed the glass back to Captain Bill. Jeanne reached toward it, but he put it behind him.

"You'll see 'em close enough—soon enough. Frizzled headed monkeys, with black teeth an' lips red as wounds—an' dead men's bones stuck through their noses." Then to Miss McKenzie, "Don't waste too much time lookin' for 'em, but sort o' make a point of pickin' off them that wear flat clam shells around their necks. They're the big mug-awampuses! Biggest mess of 'em I ever saw at one time."

THE canoes, moving slowly in a wide circle, were strung out completely around the *Merry Maid.* The cannibals kept their eyes on the schooner. It was ominous and uncanny that they should be silent.

"Not yet," said Bill, putting his hand against Miss McKenzie's arm. "They'll move in closer. An' it's bad to shoot an' miss. Makes 'em think their charms are workin'. Bucks 'em up. They'll keep broadside till they make a break for us."

Not a sound or motion of command was heard or seen, but all the canoes began to move more rapidly. The heavy longboat, with which the cannibals were unfamiliar, sluggishly lost its place, and the canoes swept by it. The circle began to narrow. A rifle was fired on the forecastle—just a splash of sound in the tense silence. The halfbreed Tongan had shot at the huddle of men in the longboat. The two other men with him fired, almost together. Then rifles began to crack rapidly.

"Let 'em have it!" said Captain Bill. "An' look at 'em go!"

The circling canoes struck out as if in a wild race. The paddlers stabbed and jerked with rhythmic heave; and every face, with its ghastly white gleam of eye, was turned toward the schooner. They had closed in to what was well within rifle shot, and the canoes swept on in an ever narrowing circle. The savages knew that the sparsely manned deck could not guard all sides, and that, once on board, the weight of their numbers could overpower the few persons there.

"Damn 'em!" said Bill. "How they take it!"

As he emptied one rifle he thrust it behind him without looking, and took another, loaded, from the hands of Lawton or Jeanne. He shot rapidly, but the deck swayed to the gentle toss of the tide and the canoes bobbed. Savage

after savage was hit as the canoes passed the stern where Miss McKenzie, with grim face and eyes ablaze, put her cheek to the rifle stock; and where Captain Bill, broad and tall, and almost as black and naked as the cannibals themselves, towered above the low bulwarks with a cloud of powder smoke sifting about his head.

If a paddler was hit, he was callously pitched overboard and another slipped into his place; and the water was reddened by the splashing upthrust of sharks that snapped at dead men, and some who had merely been wounded.

"They can't stand this long!" Captain Bill shouted above the cracking clatter of the rifles. "They'll break one way or t'other—ashore or toward us! Pour it into 'em!" Then, with sudden thought, "Quick! Hand me that dynamite—one of 'em an' matches! I'll give 'em a scare that'll send 'em ashore!"

Jeanne caught up one of the bombs and some matches and thrust them at Captain Bill. He struck the match, watched the splutter of sulphur, then touched the fuse. With hand drawn far back, he held the bomb, watching the fuse burn, holding on and on and on while Lawton and Jeanne paused with half terror to stare. With a powerful heave he finally threw it. The bomb struck the water not ten feet from a war canoe. The bomb sank. Captain Bill leaned forward, swearing. Nothing happened.

The next instant, with a sound as if fiends were breaking out of hell, the savages, having closed in to what they considered proper rifle range, began to shoot. Bullets splattered high and low, and there was the zip of bone-pointed arrows as they passed, the sharp click as they struck against the bulwark or sides of the deckhouse. The yelling was terrible. It seemed to fill the sky. Its echoes rang back from the distant rocks. Red lipped mouths were distorted in wide howls. The crew answered with shouts of defiance that were simply smothered under the demon-like yelping and frenzied shrieks of the savages who were working themselves into a battle rage.

Jeanne cried out and pointed forward as a hurtling shape dropped to the deck. The man on lookout in the foretop had been shot down. At that the savages redoubled their yelling, with a kind of triumph in their shrieks; and the canoes broke from their circle with a sweep of paddles that set every bow head-on for the *Merry Maid.*

"It's come!" Bill shouted and, cupping his big hands to his mouth, he bellowed as if through a hurricance, "Lay aft! Damn you, get back here—we'll make it a fight yet!"

Then with powerful sweeps of his arms, Bill seized one woman after the other, and shoved them forcibly into the deckhouse. He pitched a handful of rifle cartridges inside, pushed the door to, and turned to see the bulwark rail lined with scrambling devils. Frantic with triumph, they leaped on board from every side, clustering in a thick, jostling mass, howling. Confusion boiled over the deck with tossing arms swinging clubs and tomahawks.

The halfbreed, Harry, squat as a bulldog and as fierce, and the men of the crew, had given way before the tumultuous swarm that came in over the bows —upheaved as if sudden waves had scattered a spume of devils. Three of the crew, at one place and another, went down fighting—stabbed, clubbed, shot; and the cannibals clustered in frenzy about the dead bodies, beating and hacking them to pieces.

Captain Bill, with pointblank range, seemed merely to poke a reddened savage off the rail where he popped up, like a Jack-in-the-box, with ax uplifted not a half arm's length away. The point of the rifle was against the savage's head as it went off, and he toppled backward. Bill emptied the gun into the mass of men and, thrusting it behind him with no look around, shouted:

"Quick, Lawton! Another one!"

Then he turned and saw Lawton feebly clutching a cannibal's upraised arm; and a second savage who had come in over the taffrail brought down an ironwood club across the boy's head. Captain Bill swung about. His cutlass flew out and up and fairly hissed as it swept down in a blow that took the cannibal's head half off at the shoulder. The next instant a rifle seemed to blaze in his face, and he jerked his head back, blink-

ing at the powder scorch as the nearest savage leaped up like a shot cat and came down in the scupperway, dead.

The missionary stood in the doorway. She was straight as a sentinel, with head up and lips tight as healed skin about a scar. No being behind closed doors for her when a fight for life was on! The muzzle of her rifle had been almost against Captain Bill's cheek as she fired. She stepped out on deck, facing forward, and began to shoot. Captain Bill's roar of "God, what a woman!" was lost in the tumult. He drew the revolver and shot twice, following up the shots with jab and thrust and hack as he, and two or three boys of his crew, cleared the alleyway aft. Then he turned and charged forward, with the Tongan halfbreed at his shoulder. It was all a blur of action. Bill was cut, bruised and bleeding. The halfbreed had new holes in his hide; but, as always in a fight, he had gone berserk.

The cannibals, in a squirming tumult from the waist of the ship forward, milled about in a surge of stamping and brandishing of arms. With the deck underfoot, they felt they had cut off the schooner though fighting went on aft. Crazy for loot, they crowded into the galley and the crew's quarters, seizing anything they could carry. They were as helter-skelter as a prodded anthill, but the fighting went on; and when the searchers after loot had overrun every place they could get into, the swarming mass of them began to press into the fighting, and Captain Bill's boys clubbed with empty rifles, having no time to load.

The halfbreed, Harry, wrenching a long handled tomahawk from one savage, split the frizzled head of another and took away his club. Captain Bill lashed and thrust with swinging cutlass. The savages behind those nearest pressed forward. Miss McKenzie, with her rifle jammed, plucked with broken fingernails at the locked shell. A thrown club, meant for Captain Bill's head, passed him and struck her down. Bill saw the black shoreline looming up, and he knew the savages had hacked the hawser. The *Merry Maid* was adrift. His bare feet slipped in the slick red ooze, and he went down in a tangle of legs and arms; and there was a chopping thump on the deck as blows missed his head.

His brave boys came as if thrown into the mêlée. Two who had climbed the deckhouse for the better advantage in loading and shooting, simply jumped. The halfbreed, Harry, leaped forward with a swirl of blows, beating back in the alleyway those who tried to get into the scramble. Bill came up, dazed and half blinded, shaking his head and shoulders. With backward look and reeling gesture he called hoarsely for the women to get back into the deckhouse. That was the last place they could make a stand, and there the fight would end.

And as he looked backward, Captain Bill's reeling body froze in a moment's rigidity as he stared at Jeanne Malloy. She stood at the skylight, her head bent forward over a burning match, and in her right hand she held a package of salmon cans and dynamite. There was a sparkle at the fuse tip, and she raised her head with a vague, faraway look. She had seen Captain Bill light, hold and throw the other bomb; and with trance-like calmness she now watched the sizzling fuse, then slowly stooped and with an upward toss of both hands flung it forward, following it with a staring gaze.

It came down well amidships, bouncing against the body of a savage as it fell. The next instant there was a scramble for it. They didn't know what it was, but anything they could get their hands on was loot.

Then a thunderbolt seemed to strike the *Merry Maid* amidships—a deafening blast of sound, a jar that shook the deck from under every foot, and a flying tangle of bodies pitched headlong through shattered rigging and overboard. The savages, filled with panic, yelped in terror and plunged overboard, into their canoes, into the sea where sharks with a frenzy of feasting swarmed through the blood-red water. A ragged hole had been blown in the deck, and a great wide gash of planking was torn from the starboard bulwarks. The splintered mainmast swung against the stays. All about lay men, dead and dying in the distorted attitudes of bodies flung with great violence.

Captain Bill, knocked from his feet by the explosion, arose with a bound and went to Jeanne who, too, had been thrown down by the jarring blast. Her eyes were set in a fixed, frightened stare. She was terrified by what she had done. He gathered her up into his arms, praised her with rippling oaths, and held her as he pointed to the scrambling flight of cannibals. She shook her head, not looking, and hid her face with her hands and pressed against him, the better not to see.

Tongan Harry, and others of the crew who were still alive, stared with a kind of stupid amazement, looking from one to another, aloft and alow, not understanding the miracle.

"She did it!" said Captain Bill, putting Jeanne's feet to the deck. "By herself. No one told her! Nothing else would have saved us. An' we won't be saved very long if we don't get ashore an' up to the stockade—before these devils get their breath. The schooner 'll be on the beach in a half hour, or less. Or sink under our feet. She's a-leak!"

CHAPTER VI

THE VICTORS

OUT of the ten natives of the crew there were five alive; two of these were badly hurt and none was without wounds. The boy, Lawton, was dead, his head battered in like a broken shell. The missionary's shoulder was broken. Her right arm hung uselessly and she rubbed at its pain, but no complaint crossed her thin, tightly pressed lips.

"Now what do we do?" she asked, seeing that the schooner was wrecked.

"Get ashore. Get up there to Stanton's. These cockeyed devils have had all they want of fightin'—for a time at least. For a good long time! That is, unless they see we're helpless. They'll think we're comin' after 'em—an' bolt."

The boat at the starboard davits had a hole in the bows as big as a man's thigh where a piece of the bulwark's timber had been blown through it; but the port boat was sound.

There was hurry and bustle as the crew brought up stores that they thought ought to go into the boat; but Captain Bill left most of the stuff on the deck because he did not want his boys to be overloaded in marching from the beach up to Stanton's.

"We'll hang on to our guns an' plenty of shells. With us joinin' them up there—if we've got guns—we can break out an' raid the niggers, catch their pigs, steal their coconuts, an' not starve. Fact is, I had it in mind to send you women to sea, at tide-turn, with three or four of the boys—just enough to man ship. Was goin' to have you go across to Wilson Island an' bring help. 'Twould have taken about a week to go an' come. Me, Harry an' the others would have gone up to the stockade. But now I'm sorry I've got to take you women out o' one mess into another'n!"

"And I am sorry, Captain Bill," said Jeanne, looking straight at him and putting her hand on his arm in the way that she so often did unconsciously, "that because of me—through trying to do me a favor—you have lost your ship and—and so many of your friends."

He patted the hand on his arm.

"I've lost ships before. Aye, an' friends, too. It's part o' the sea life. But while there's life there's hope you can make your enemies sorry! These dead boys o' mine an' that kid, Lawton, are goin' to have the best funeral I can give 'em. The niggers'd plunder the old *Merry Maid* anyhow. I'm goin' to wrap my boys up in canvas an' set fire to 'er. Men that sail with me don't get fed to sharks."

"But I feel wretchedly to blame, Captain Bill."

"You? For what? This mess? I'd been in here before an' would've come again. Supposin' I'd come nosin' in an' hadn't had you along? Where'd I be now? I'd be over there on the beach gettin' scalded an' scraped—like a pig—while a cookin' pit big enough to hold me was bein' dug! You saved them of us that are still alive. Yes'm! An' I'd like to ship you, an' Miss McKenzie here—yes, an' Lalee too, for though she don't do much fightin' she keeps cool an' don't squeal—ever'time I go some place where there's likely to be some fightin'!"

He patted her hand again, reassuringly. And Jeanne looked at him very steadily, as if she wanted to say something, but could not; yet, since she could not say it, she seemed to hope that he would read it in her face. She continued to hold her hand on his arm, and she pressed it as she looked up into his big face, now bruised and bloodstained.

She was a girl of the island aristocracy, who had been waited on hand and foot from babyhood, dressed daintily, taught manners; and he was rude and rough, went half naked, was much given to swearing, and had a hungry man's table manners but, unlike the planters, was not troubled with dyspepsia.

They seemed an unmanly lot—the men she knew—compared with this turbulent sailor who had a simplicity about him that was unlike anything she had seen before, and a robust cheerfulness. He was honest in that he said what he thought and did what he liked, showing queer tenderness and more honor than the fastidious men among whom she had been raised. She could not help the emotions that arose in her; she did not want to help them; but she felt that she could not possibly tell him what they were. And Jeanne felt confirmed in all her opinions and liking for Captain Bill by the attitude of the thin lipped, severe Miss McKenzie, who forgave him his many sins.

And nothing made the two women think more highly of Captain Bill than the way he had taken time to overhaul his boys after the fight, examining each of them, swearing at each, daubing their cuts with corrosive sublimate that burned like fire.

"We might as well use up the medicine chest," he told them.

He pulled a broken arrow out of the breast of poor Kluckeroo, examined the arrow critically and said:

"There was no poison on this one. No—you'll be all right."

He was lying of course, for he could not tell whether or not it was poisoned. Only time could tell that. But what he said made Kluckeroo happy. And when he had thrown the empty bottle overboard, Miss McKenzie asked why he had not doctored his own wounds.

"It burns so bad I was careful to use it all up on them. There's no such thing as bad whisky; but if there was, I'd be generous. Let my friends drink it. The same with this stuff."

He helped the women and the two badly hurt boys into the boat, called down, "Stand by a minute!" then disappeared. He returned with a backward look over his shoulder and got into the boat. As they pulled away, curling wisps of smoke began to appear.

"I flooded the cabin with kerosene. Heaved a keg o' powder up on the table. She'd have sunk anyhow, but probably grounded where them cannibals could 've got to 'er. When I don't like people I don't want 'em to have nothin' o' mine."

The bay was filled with sharks and, insatiable, they nosed about with eager scent, stabbing through the water. Jeanne peered at them with fascinated horror, but said nothing.

Before they reached the beach a mantle of smoke lay over the *Merry Maid;* then a muffled boom reached them, and instantly the flames jumped up through the smoke and the roaring of the fire come to the boat like the sound of storm.

THERE was not a person to be seen on the beach. The savages had fled, dragging away their wounded.

"Put her stern-on," said Captain Bill.

The boys at the oars turned the boat about and backed up to the beach. Captain Bill, in the sternsheets, held his rifle and watched. The boat grounded gently, but Bill continued to wait.

"I don't think there's a nigger within a mile," he said. "But if there is, I'll serve notice he's too close an' had better move. You set tight a minute."

Taking his rifle and the third of the salmon-tin bombs, he stepped out into the knee-deep water and went up on the sand and toward the dark fringe of bush. Then, with a wary look all about, he dug his heels into the sand, bracing himself, and lighted the fuse. With a powerful overhand heave he threw it hurtling high into the air and it came down well back in a pandanus grove. Silence followed; a tense waiting. Then a jarring explosive crack, a volcanic heave of dirt

and twigs, and thunderous echoes that rolled back and forth from the rocky promontory at the bay's tip to the hills. The echoes died away, and there was no sound but the crackling rush of fire about the burning schooner, and the surge of the waves.

Captain Bill walked backward to the water's edge.

"I bet up to Stanton's they think we're a gunboat. Sorry to disappoint 'em. Sorrier than they are that we ain't. I'd've slammed that bomb over there among them canoes, only I was afraid o' flyin' wood. We'll just take the time to bust up a few of 'em, anyhow. The only way you can teach a cannibal anything is to knock off his head or break up his canoe. If you do both he learns a lot. Gets damn near civilized."

The rowers backed the boat as high as they, standing in the water, could shove it up on the sand; then they took up their rifles and put themselves on guard while Bill lifted out his two wounded boys. He gave his arm to Miss McKenzie, and after that to Jeanne; but he caught up the little Lalee and shook her teasingly.

"You havin' a good time?"

"No, I not!" she said emphatically, then smiled a little, like a doubtful child.

Captain Bill laughed at her and stooped to put her down, then patted her back. Jeanne had the envious wish that Captain Bill would treat her with the same familiarity that he showed the pretty little halfcaste.

The boys ran about on the beach and chopped into the canoes as if they were enemies. They were at least the principal wealth—they and pigs—of the savages. It would have been risky work if there had been any cannibals near because, overeager, Bill's sailors ran far along the beach where the stranded canoes had been abandoned by the fleeing savages. They smashed the mysterious longboat too, then, being called back, unloaded their own boat, dragged it on the sand, turned it over and chopped savagely.

One of the wounded boys, half squatting, half lying, on the sand and eyeing the bush watchfully, called out in sudden alarm, pointing. All turned.

"This is a hell of time to be seein' enemies," Bill growled. "Why didn't you see 'em before we busted all the boats?"

A moment's silent staring. Then two tall, bushy headed blacks, higher by head and shoulders than the Nello islanders, stepped into view and stopped, shading their eyes as they peered into the hot glare of the white beach. Instantly every rifle was pointed toward them, but the muzzles at once dropped. They were Malaita boys.

Bill called out to them, and the blacks moved as if to run toward him, but stopped at once with a backward look. The muffled sound of angered white men's voices came across the wide beach to the water's edge. Then two or three other Malaita boys appeared and stood as if half eager to run toward the beach, but were afraid of somebody behind them.

Captain Bill, irritated, bawled out:

"What the hell's the matter with you fellows up there?" He grumbled as he looked, "Somethin' queer. They're not with Stanton's sons, that's sure."

Then with a cautious push at the thick foliage that he had been standing behind, the head and shoulders of a huge bearded white man appeared; and he stood motionlessly, scrutinizing the beach. A second white man stepped out, another, and still another.

At that Captain Bill started toward them.

"Halt!" one shouted, raising a rifle.

The others swung their weapons menacingly. The Malaita boys broke into a guttural jabbering with welcoming gestures. They had recognized Captain Bill. They were trying to assure these men that he was all right.

Bill strode across the deep, loose sand that lay between the tide's reach and the bush. He was angered and contemptuous that men should be so cowardly, and such fools. They could see that he had women on the beach; they could see his schooner in flames; they had the more numerous party, and yet were suspicious and unfriendly.

"Halt!" the man repeated, and bent his cheek to the rifle's stock.

"You shoot at me," Captain Bill called out, "an' my boys down there'll fill you

so ruil o' holes the devil'll have to use a spoon to dip you up! You crazy, or what? I'm goin' to take my party up to Stanton's an' you hadn't better try to stop me. We've licked all the cannibals on Nello an' if you don't want to see how we done it, put down them rifles!"

"The Stantons have gone away," the man who seemed to be the leader called. "We bought the plantation—an' hell broke loose."

"Yeah?" said Captain Bill, and stopped then and there, settling back on his heels.

He was within fifty feet of them. They were armed to the teeth. Three were bearded and the other needed a shave.

Captain Bill glanced back, looking thoughtfully toward the women, toward the wounded boys.

" 'Tween the devil and the deep blue sea," he thought. Then boldly, "My women an' boys can't set here on the beach—"

"Why'd you break up that longboat?" the man called irritably, as if the loss of this boat was more important to him than the cutter of Stanton's that lay wrecked among the rocks, than the *Merry Maid* herself, now low in the water and still aflame.

Captain Bill snorted.

"In case the cannibals come back an' wanted their supper, we had the cookin' wood ready. I'm accommodatin' that way."

"Say, who the hell are you, anyhow?" the man called, not liking such answers.

"Captain Bill Jones, South Sea man. An' who are you—all you?"

"I'll just send these blacks back up to watch out for niggers. Then we can talk."

CAPTAIN BILL grunted skeptically. He watched, he listened, as these men, with curses and gestures, ordered the Malaita blacks to follow the youngest of the white men. Captain Bill saw that these whites were not experienced planters; they did not know how to handle natives, but used oaths and threats and gestures, the appearance of anger. The Malaita blacks did not want to go. They stared at Captain Bill much as dogs will often stare at some man whom they recognize as the better master; but they did move back, reluctantly, into the bush—followed, not led, by the white man. Captain Bill grunted some more and said things to himself.

The three men then stepped toward him. They came with slow steps and wary looks in their eyes, but no longer held the rifles menacingly. The biggest man, who seemed to be the leader, said. a little apologetically:

"We've been through hell. Badly shook up. Glad you've come, Captain Jones. My name's Hall. These here are my pardners, Coleman an' Thompson. We don't know the island very well, but come in here an' bought this plantation o' Stanton's about ten days ago. He went away on the steamer. Him an' his family. Jobbed us right, he did."

The big, bearded Hall swore at Stanton for having put off the wretched plantation on to such inexperienced fellows as themselves. The other two bearded men chimed in with blasphemous reproaches.

"We need help an' advice," they said, staring hard at Captain Bill, but still as if a little suspicious that they could not trust him.

"How'd you come to buy out Stanton?" Bill inquired.

"We heard it was for sale, this plantation. We came in here on the steamer ten days ago. Talked it over with Stanton. He lied to us beautifully. The next day him an' his family left on the steamer. Wish we had 'im back!" The burly Hall had the indignation of an outraged honest man. "Paid him a thousand pounds, gold, we did!"

Captain Bill grunted some more. What he wanted was to get his party under cover and behind stockade walls. He asked, however—

"How did the row start?"

The black bearded Coleman looked expectantly at Hall; and Thompson said—

"You tell 'im, Bob—"

He also looked at Hall. Then all of them watched Captain Bill as he listened.

They had the air of going through

with a story that had been hastily rehearsed; and the big Hall, as if a show of anger at their bad luck would help make the thing convincing, began with a prelude of curses. He said they hadn't known it, of course, but Stanton had been glad to get out because the Nello cannibals were getting ready to wipe him out. He said also the Malaita boys had treacherously put the cannibals up to trying to kill them. Some of these Malaita boys had appeared to be loyal, but the others had joined the cannibals. The fight had started unexpectedly early that morning. They had been hard put to hold the stockade. When they heard the fighting about the *Merry Maid* out in the bay they had taken new hope. They had seen the cannibals flee, and had then ventured out to discover to whom they were indebted.

"We are certainly glad to see you, Captain Jones!" said Hall, belatedly warming up.

He cursed in enthusiastic gratitude. The black bearded Coleman joined in, grinning and swearing; the scraggly bearded Thompson waggled his head affirmatively and used oaths, too, in telling how glad they were Captain Jones had come.

There was a smell of whisky about these men, and they had shown a jumpy furtiveness, a kind of tense uneasiness. They had revolvers and rifles, and the look of men who would kill with feverish quickness if they thought themselves in danger. Captain Bill hated the sight and smell of them. He had no way of telling what had become of the fourth rascal, who had withdrawn with the Malaita boys. Perhaps that one hung near in ambush, ready to shoot if Captain Bill showed any signs of not believing the bearded man's story. Perhaps they had gone back watchfully to see what the cannibals were up to; but the situation didn't look right.

These fellows wanted to know about Captain Bill, and who the women were! How did it happen that the Malaita blacks knew him? Had he been a friend of Stanton?

"We had some business now an' then, me an' Stanton," said Captain Bill carefully. "An' them blacks o' his—I blackbirded 'em. That's why I can't get full o' joy if they pretend to forgive me. You're right about 'em bein' tricky an' treacherous. Yeah, you bet. Dead right."

"An' them women?" said Hall, squeezing his thick beard as if it were a sponge.

"Oh, them? One o' 'em a sort o' relation to Stanton. Paid me passage to bring her here. The other'n is her companion, in a way o' speakin'. The halfcaste is the wife o' one of my boys."

"Let's go make 'em welcome," said Hall, pushing his hat to one side and setting his shoulders.

The three men exchanged glances—curiously quick glances—as if they very well understood one another and needed no further words.

Captain Bill, with a stride that put him in the lead, called out:

"Good news! Stanton an' his family's safe—went away on the last steamer." He waved his hand toward the men with him. "They bought the plantation."

"But I thought the dead black said—" Jeanne began, and stopped short, catching Captain Bill's look and the furtive silencing gesture.

She looked with wide eyes at these three bearded strangers—and did not like them.

Miss McKenzie stared critically at Captain Bill; then her severe gray eyes silently judged the faces of the strangers. She looked again at Bill, and cocked her head to one side, overhearing what he was hastily saying in Samoan to the ugly halfbreed with the bulldog's heart; and she saw the Tongan halfcaste's lips curl back like a dog's. Captain Bill promptly rubbed the palm of his hand over Harry's face, as if to wipe off the expression of hate and distrust.

"Be a hypocrite!" said Captain Bill warningly, and the missionary flinched as if from a blow, for Samoan for "hypocrite" was the same as the word for "Christian".

Hall, Coleman and Thompson, with hasty appraisal, glanced about at the few stores brought off the *Merry Maid;* they eyed Bill's boys with a kind of contemptuous distrust, then fastened their attention on Jeanne and Lalee.

The three of them staringly took off their hats, bobbed their heads and mouthed reassurance.

JEANNE flinched and looked about as if for escape. She did not like the look in the eyes of these men. She had been made fearful by Captain Bill's warning glance and furtive silencing gesture; and now Captain Bill seemed to ignore her, leaving her alone.

The burly Hall, with his tangled mass of beard that looked very much as if it had been found among discarded rubbish and glued to his face, said:

"It's been terrible for a girl like you. You're all worn out. Let me carry you up to the station."

"Oh, no, I can walk."

"We'll both carry you," said Thompson, whose beard was scraggly, growing in splotches over his face.

He was the only one of the three who carried a knife. There was a smear that resembled blood on the handle.

Miss McKenzie stepped back questioningly to one side where Captain Bill was busy with his boys. She asked in a low voice—

"Who are these ruffians?"

"The devil knows. Him an' them is friends. But they don't lie well, that's sure. Tell me Stanton sold out for a thousand pounds—when he'd have the worst of the bargain for twice that. An' he's not one to take the short end of any deal. Ain't I done business with 'im enough to know? Tell me the steamer stayed in here overnight. It's little they know o' island ways. She never stayed in here more'n three hours—an' most o' that time the whistle would be screechin' to hurry. Tell me the Malaita blacks put these Nello cannibals up to fightin' when—hell a-blazes—they'd no more mix an' talk together than octopuses an' sharks! I don't know where they come from or how they got here, but I know one thing. They don't know the islands. I've got to get you women up to the stockade an' under cover. We can't stop on the beach or in the bush. An' if you think prayers might help, then say a lot of 'em. But keep your eyes open while you're sayin' 'em."

Captain Bill stooped to have the wounded Kluckeroo lifted on to his back, meaning to carry him up the trail.

At that moment the boy Charley jealously twitched at Lalee's arm. The black bearded Coleman, leaving his companions to be as gallant as they pleased to Jeanne, had turned his attention to the pretty little halfcaste. Coleman contemptuously half pushed, half struck Charley aside, telling him to get to hell away.

Captain Bill swore explosively and jumped forward. He jerked Charley back and aside with one hand, sent Lalee backward with the other, then knocked Coleman flat on his back into the sand.

A flood of oaths, vivid and unprintable, poured out of Bill's mouth as he bent down, waving a fist warningly before the astounded Coleman's nose.

"No man alive, you cockeyed dog, puts a hand on one of my boys! An' stand clear o' this girl! She's his wife. I don't care who the hell you are, or how many more the devil's hatched just like you—you'll be nothin' but a hide full o' broken bones if you meddle with my folks!"

Coleman sat up, his black eyes glistening with fury and his hand groping for the handle of his revolver in its flap holster.

The burly Hall and the scraggly Thompson turned instinctively to their rifles. But there was an uproar of yelps from the native crew, a hasty upflinging of guns.

The halfbreed, Harry, his ugly face set in a grinning snarl, came up to Bill's side, ready to leap. Charley had a rifle pointed down at Coleman's breast; but Bill knocked the rifle aside, swearing at him.

"When it comes to white men, I do my own killin'!"

Jeanne had cried out and pulled at Hall's arm.

"No! Oh, don't!"

Hall and Thompson, either not wanting trouble at all, or not wanting it just now with such ready fellows as Bill's natives, hesitated in a moment's doubt; then both of them pounced at Coleman. They took his revolver and rifle away from him, shouting:

"No, Cole! No! Don't be a fool!

You'll spoil ever'thing! We're all friends!"

Coleman, finding that his friends were determined not to have any trouble just now, blustered and struggled like one who never counted the odds; and said that he wouldn't take a cussing like that from any man.

"Let 'im loose," Bill growled. "He'll take more'n a cussin'. He'll take a broken neck to hell with 'im!"

"Cole's hot tempered. Don't mind 'im, Captain Jones," said the scraggly Thompson, showing his teeth in a friendly grin. "He'll get over it quick."

"Look here," said Captain Bill. "We've been through a fight that damn near wiped us out. Our ship's gone." He waved a hand, pointing. "We hit the beach—with women. An' you fellows—white men at that—act like we was cannibals ourselves. I don't want no more trouble. For onct I've had enough. But if you fellows ain't—now's the time to say so."

He said it with bad temper and flaring truculence, meaning what he said, and looked pointedly at Coleman, to whom the bulky Hall was talking hurriedly in a low tone.

"It's all right now," said Hall, turning to Captain Bill. He grinned like a peacemaker who was not quite sure of himself, pulled at his beard, and his eyes darted from one side to the other, looking now at the natives, now at the women, then back at Bill. " 'S all right. You an' Cole shake hands. We're all in a bad fix here together an' we've got to be friends, ain't we? Come on, Cole, show there ain't no hard feelin's. That's the boy!"

Coleman, coaxed and half pushed by his two friends, ungraciously put out his hand, offering the gesture of peace.

Captain Bill looked at him and, not at all deceived, hesitated. It was drawing on to late in the afternoon. The shadows were stretching out, like weary things preparing for sleep; and the sun was not far above the bushy ridge of the distant hills.

"All right," he said. "We'll try some friendliness. But I want you, an' you too—" Captain Bill looked pointedly at the burly Hall and then at the scraggly Thompson, and back again to Coleman whose black eyes were aglow with a sinister gleam—"to understand that these boys o' mine are white men."

Then Captain Bill looked toward Miss McKenzie and at Jeanne, toward Lalee; then again eyed the three bearded strangers. He did not say anything about the women, yet conveyed the warning that they too were under his protection. And his look meant more than words.

CHAPTER VII

DANGER SIGNALS

THEY marched up the winding trail through the bush to the little flat-topped hill, cleared of all undergrowth and small trees, where Stanton had made his home and put up the stockade, walling it about with strips of sheet iron to keep the natives from easily setting fire to the posts. The stockade was about eight feet high, though sharpened and fire hardened posts stood higher. It enclosed less than an acre of ground, protecting the house and a couple of long, low sheds where Stanton stowed copra that he got from the natives in trade, and where his Malaita boys had their sleeping quarters. The gateway into the stockade was strongly bolted with square hewn timbers.

Stanton, getting on fairly friendly terms with the Nello natives, whom he nevertheless watchfully distrusted, had cleared a good deal of land, put out young coconuts and planted cane and corn and built other sheds outside the stockade.

The house was a four-room, box-like structure, with the partitions little more than halfway to the roof, the better to give free ventilation. It was surrounded by a wide veranda, floored with split bamboo, where the family slept, ate, rested—in fact, lived, except during the worst of the rainy season. The house stood on coral blocks, high off the ground; and, being on the highest part of the hill, any one on any part of the veranda could overlook the stockade which was about a hundred feet away. Stanton had a half dozen dogs that ran loose in the stockade. These, just as

well as he himself, knew the difference between the Malaita blacks and the Nello savages. They would let the Malaita boys, and any white men, come through the gates, but set up a storm of barking when any of the Nello islanders came near, as they often did, to peer through the stockade cracks.

On the way up the trail Hall, who was unmistakably the leader of these men who had taken over Stanton's plantation, said to Captain Bill:

"I'll just hurry on ahead an' make sure ever'thing is ready for the women." Then in a low voice, "Pretty bad mess it was. Dead blacks layin' around."

"They've seen plenty of dead blacks layin' around this day," said Captain Bill, suspicious. He did not know what Hall might plan to do if he got out of sight. The way these fellows had made the Malaita blacks withdraw looked queer to him. "If you want to do somethin', just pack that other boy that's hurt on your back."

"Hey, Thompson," said Hall, "come here an' carry this boy. Put 'im on your back like the captain's done with the other one."

The scraggly Thompson fumbled with his chin as he stared at Hall. For a moment he seemed about to refuse. Then with no willingness, he said—

"All right."

Two of Bill's crew were carrying the wounded Malgo. Thompson stooped down and they placed him on his back.

"I'll just go along ahead," said Hall again, and off he went, half running. He was a big man and did not run easily; besides, it was uphill.

"Hmm," said Captain Bill reflectively as he strode along with both arms about Kluckeroo's legs, "I smell somethin' like a lot o' bad fish. This don't look right—none of it. I'm beginnin' to suspect what I'm afraid has happened. An' if I was sure of what I'm beginnin' to suspect—" he looked half furtively at Jeanne, who held to the missionary, pretending to help her but really wanting the comfort of being close to her— "I'll be damned if I wouldn't take my women an' boys, an' bolt to the cannibals! Hell a-blazes, Stanton's allus treated 'em honest. They wouldn't have attacked his stockade unless somebody put 'em up to it. If for no other reason, just because they knowed they couldn't take it. But these fellows, Hall an' them, couldn't have put the Nello cannibals up to it. They don't know natives well enough. I can't make out how it happened. An' I just can't think men are bad enough to do what I'm afraid these fellows have done. Well, we'll soon find out!"

Captain Bill stared at Coleman's back and mused:

"I've got the feelin' I've seen him before. I ain't—but I've seen others like 'im. An' been sorry I didn't shoot 'em on sight." Then he asked Kluckeroo how he was feeling.

"Me hab plenty bad feel in belly. No like dese fella-men. You watch out, Cap'n."

"Cheerful blighter, you are," said Captain Bill. Then to Harry, who marched along at his elbow:

"You 'ear this, 'Andsome 'Arry? What d' you think?"

The halfbreed growled, drawing back his lips:

"Plenty trouble! I see how dey look. Dey want this missa girl you lub an'—"

Captain Bill swore at him.

The halfbreed shrugged his shoulders and muttered stubbornly:

"You big fool to tell lie like dat. *Whau!*"

"Rats!" said Captain Bill.

"*Whau!*" said the halfbreed.

"I don't!" said Captain Bill.

"Big lie!"

"Guess I ought to know!" said Captain Bill, trying to be angry but feeling only an uncomfortable prickle as if he had got sunburned. "Damn you anyhow!"

"*Whau!*" said Harry. "Missa look lub at you plenty time. Huh. Lalee say to Chaley so. Me I see too. Pretty girl lub a man, man got to lub pretty girl. No can help himself. You say no, you lie. *Whau!*"

Captain Bill somehow felt that he had got the worst of that argument, so he called Harry bad names and told him to step ahead and not jog against poor Kluckeroo.

Captain Bill, very hot and prickly, with the sweat breaking out on his face, turned a little furtively and looked to-

ward Jeanne who, weary, bedraggled, and very much worn out by what she had been through and by the fear of what was yet to come, held to the hand of the grimly unflinching missionary.

"I don't!" said Captain Bill to himself; then added, "I mean *she* don't!"

THE stockade gate was open, and Hall stood waiting for them. He looked at Captain Bill watchfully as if expecting troublesome questions. There was not a sign of any one else about, and not a sound. It seemed like a place of the dead.

Captain Bill stopped inside the gate and spoke to Harry, who then helped lower Kluckeroo to the ground. Captain Bill took his rifle from one of the boys who had been carrying it, flicked back the hammer and looked to make sure it was loaded. He straightened his belt, feeling of the revolver in its flap holster, and fingered the handle of his cutlass.

Miss McKenzie sighed as if with relief to be at last within the security of the stockade. She held her broken arm in a strip of torn cloth fastened about her neck, and her arm must have hurt, for her lips were set tightly and she did not say anything. Jeanne looked about with a kind of furtive interest, and carefully avoided the faces of the bearded men. Hall and Thompson, with awkward heartiness, were trying to put Captain Bill and his party at ease. Coleman stood by himself in the gateway, looking toward the jungle and absently kicking the dust with the toe of a boot. He was keeping, or was pretending to keep, a lookout against the return of the savages.

"Well, we're all safe now an' ever'thing's all right," said Hall in a tone that tried to be cheerful and was merely loud. "Come on up to the house. Sam an' the blacks, they are over to the other side o' the stockade, keepin' a lookout. We can't be too careful."

Hall spoke as if he knew that Captain Bill was going to ask the whereabouts of the other white man and the Malaita boys.

Captain Bill grunted absently. He had wondered where those fellows were; but he was wondering more about something else—and he could not tell just what. He frowned, trying to think, and looked all about. This silence was somehow all wrong. Then he realized what it was he missed—the bounding and barking of the dogs that always gave him a noisy welcome. He turned abruptly on Hall.

"Where are the dogs?"

"Dogs? Why—er—" Then, seeming to have got his breath, Hall said with glib haste, "The cannibals killed ever' last one of 'em!"

He squeezed at his beard and stared watchfully at Captain Bill. Thompson looked at him as if waiting for something; and Coleman, who was some twenty feet away, turned with a sidelong glance.

"Yeah, they sure hated them dogs," said Captain Bill in an even tone, nodding a little as he looked away.

He knew very well that Hall had lied, but he could not imagine why. Each dog was as good as ten men in standing guard.

As they went up to the house Captain Bill caught sight of the Malaita blacks at the other side of the stockade. They were all huddled in a group on the ground, staring fixedly toward Captain Bill's party. The man called Sam, who had them in charge, with a pipe in his mouth and a rifle across a forearm, leaned against a post some twenty feet away. It was very much as if the blacks were prisoners and he was their guard.

Captain Bill nodded to himself and said nothing, but he was thinking fast. It was plain enough that these Malaita blacks were being kept away from him.

Captain Bill was now carrying Kluckeroo in his arms, and as he came to the steps that led up to the veranda, he stopped and staggered back as if he had lost his balance. Thus he pressed back against Miss McKenzie and Jeanne, and in a hurried undertone said—

"Jeanne, get these men alone with you!" Then he continued, but addressing Kluckeroo:

"Jar you up, old fellow? Well, in a jiffy you'll be snuggled down an' comfortable."

Jeanne, mystified and incredulous,

looked at Miss McKenzie.

"Did you hear?"

"Yes."

"What can it mean?"

"I trust him," said the missionary.

"So do I, but—"

Jeanne looked at the burly, shaggy Hall, the evil and unclean Thompson. At that moment she felt it were easier to choose to be on deck in the midst of fighting, howling cannibals than alone with such fellows as these. She didn't know how to go about doing as Captain Bill had told her, and she was so tired and weary and anxious that she could not think.

So it was that almost unconsciously, just by a sort of feminine instinct, as soon as she came on to the veranda she dropped into a chair and asked—

"Oh, please, may I have a glass of water?"

"Sure!" said Thompson heartily.

"I'll get it," said Hall.

Captain Bill, with Kluckeroo in his arms, marched right on around the veranda; and his boys followed, carrying their other wounded companion. Miss McKenzie hesitated, feeling that she oughtn't to leave Jeanne, then went on.

As soon as they had rounded the corner of the veranda, Captain Bill turned on Lalee.

"You stay right here—ask for water too. Talk nice to 'em. Come on, the rest of you."

Lalee gave him a startled, uncomprehending look, and stopped. Captain Bill strode on, bearing Kluckeroo as if he were a child. Miss McKenzie followed, alarmed and excited by Bill's manner. Charley looked back doubtfully at his pretty little wife, not liking for her to stay there. He trusted Captain Bill in all things, but was nonetheless unhappy.

At the far end of the veranda Captain Bill came to a bed. He told his boys to search about for mats, to take them wherever they found them.

"This is where we camp. Hurry up. It'll be dark in another quarter of an hour. Come here."

He touched the missionary's shoulder, leading her aside.

"Here," said Captain Bill, furtively drawing the revolver and offering it to her. "Keep this thing. I hope you won't need it, but—where you goin' to put it?"

"Raise my arm a little in this sling. Place the gun under my arm. There. No one will notice and it will be easy to get if it is needed."

"You," said Captain Bill, "are a lot too good to be a mish'nary!"

"You are wrong there!" said Miss McKenzie crisply.

"I ain't. I wouldn't tell what I'm goin' tell you to any other woman I ever knew. She'd faint 'r yell 'r somethin'. I wouldn't trust 'er to see it through. Now, listen. There wasn't no other way to get to talk to you alone without them dirty beards gettin' up close. They're watchin'. I may be wrong, but my guess is we've got stranded among a worse lot than any bunch o' cannibals. You know why they're keepin' them Malaita blacks away from me? It's my idea they're afraid the blacks would tell me things about what's happened here in the stockade!"

"What can you mean?"

"I ain't much good at figurin', as all the storekeepers in the islands know. So I may be wrong. But Stanton never sold this plantation—he's been murdered. Him an' his family. These white men done it an' some o' the blacks joined in. That's why they had to kill off all the dogs. The dogs tore into 'em when they saw what was up. That's why they was so scared when they saw us on the beach. That's why they hurried the blacks back up here. An' this fat Hall come a-runnin' up the hill ahead of us to make sure nothin' was left in sight so we'd know what had happened!"

"Murdered? A whole family! These men did that?"

"I don't know for sure, but b'lieve so. What's more my guess is this: Stanton or some o' the boys—his sons, I mean—was outside the stockade when the trouble started. An' I bet you it was Stanton hisself that stirred up the Nello savages to make the attack!"

"But where did these men come from?"

"The devil knows. He brought 'em. I'll bet again they come in that long-

boat we saw. Maybe are mutineers an' said they was shipwrecked. Got took in an' fed. I don't know all the tricks fellows can play when the devil helps 'em, but I know one thing: Hall an' his men think they've got us. Me, I think about the same, maybe. But they wanted you women stowed safe an' out of the way, first—an' so did I. I know damn well they're goin' to try to kill me an' my boys. Get us out o' the way. They don't want you women to feel too bad about it, so I expect tonight they're goin' to pretend the savages are makin' an attack. Me, I'll go out to help 'em beat the cannibals off an' get killed. That's why I wanted to get you alone. An' give you that gun. If I do get killed, you'll still have it. So far in my life I've been hard to kill an' I don't see no reason for changin' my habits just to suit a lot of fellows I don't like nohow!"

"This is terrible!" said Miss McKenzie.

"Yes'm. 'Tis. It'll be a lot terribler if they get a glimmerin' of a notion that we even halfway suspect 'em of havin' killed off Stanton's folks. Then they'll start shootin' from the back, an' since it's gettin' dark they'll have all the advantage. But if we leave 'em to work it out their own way, then they'll try to kill me off out o' sight somewhere so as not to hurt you women's feelin's. Understand?"

"Yes, yes," said Miss McKenzie hurriedly; then asked hastily, "But if Mr. Stanton or his sons were outside of the stockade and urged the savages, as you say, to make the attack—why then, perhaps they are still alive."

"No'm. Before our anchor was halfway down they'd have been out to the *Merry Maid.* No'm. Either these men in here shot 'em from the stockade or the Nello cannibals, gettin' overheated by the fightin', just up an' killed 'em—together with the Malaita boys that was outside with 'em. You see, almost any mess o' savages will follow a white man into a fight as long as they are winnin'. But when it gets too hot for 'em they'll kill him just to have the satisfaction of killin' somebody. That, maybe, was what happened to Stanton. He's made this stockade so strong he couldn't take it himself."

"But what are you going to do, Captain Bill?"

"Do!" said Captain Bill. "Hell, I don't quite know—yet. Make some trouble, somehow! It's gettin' dark. I want you women snugged down here. An' don't you stir. Look along up there—" He pointed to where, dimly seen in the gathering darkness, the man Thompson was standing at the veranda rail talking to Lalee. "That fellow Hall, bein' busy showin' what a nice fellow he is to Miss Jeanne, run Thompson off to come back here an' keep an eye on us. An' he just couldn't get by Lalee without stoppin' to look handsome. When it comes to pretty girls most men are fools. I know—havin' been the fool so many times myself. You go along up there. Say you want a lantern an' food. Maybe you don't feel like swallowin' a bite, but say it anyhow. An' bring back Jeanne an' Lalee—an' don't believe what you see when you come back!"

"What d'you mean?"

"No time for talk now. An' keep that gun out o' sight. An' remember, don't let 'em suspect what we think! *You* be nice to 'em, too!"

Miss McKenzie adjusted the revolver in the sling under her arm and folded the cloth the better to conceal the handle, then, stiffly upright and with resolute stride, she walked away from him. She had a brave heart and she trusted Captain Bill.

CHAPTER VIII

BILL SETS A TRAP

BILL crossed the veranda with a jump and entered the nearest room. It was pitch-dark in there, and he struck a match, holding it high under a sheltering palm. He knew that the Stantons had used this as a kind of storeroom for their more personal belongings. Boxes and chests had been broken open and scattered in a litter. What looked like a pile of colored rags lay almost under Bill's feet. They were women's dresses, of a kind used for Sunday wear and company in more civilized places than Nello. If the Stantons had gone away, these dresses would have been among the first things packed.

This was the only bit of actual evidence Bill had seen which definitely proved that Hall and his men had lied. He had not had any doubts about their lying, but here was confirmation. He stared so long and hard that the burning match stung his fingers and reminded him of what he was about.

He shook it out, and in the dark quickly groped his way to a corner where he knew there was a sort of cupboard in which Stanton had kept his whisky under a lock so that the Malaita boys, who did housework, could not get to it. Savages, and even natives who knew better, when they got to liquor usually gulped too much. Within a few minutes they sometimes fell down stupefied, and often died. Bill more than once had seen a cannibal suck down a quart of gin. He lighted another match.

The lock had been broken, but the heavy doors of the chest were closed.

The thought went quickly through his mind that if these men had killed Stanton within the stockade they would have taken his keys, not smashed the lock.

Stanton kept a large supply because the steamer came only four times a year, and very irregularly, often passing him up if the freight in the neighboring group did not seem large enough to pay for turning out of its way.

Bill had no way of judging how much whisky these men had already taken. They had searched the house hastily, breaking into everything to see what loot they had; and had been sensible enough not to get drunk.

"It's goin' to look like I ain't got that much sense!" said Bill to himself as he took up a bottle, shook out the match and groped for the heavy corkscrew that had been fastened in the side of the chest.

He had seen Stanton open many bottles here. The cork came free, and Captain Bill at once took a big drink, shook himself and felt better. He set the bottle down carefully in the dark and reached within for another. He drew that cork, set it down and took a third.

In stooping to grope carefully for the opened bottles near his feet, his fingers touched a ball of heavy twine.

"Ha, just what I may need," he said, and stuffed it into his trousers pocket.

He took up the bottles and returned to the veranda where his boys, having brought all the mats and blankets they found on the nearby bunks and beds, had made pallets and laid the two wounded natives on them.

It was almost as dark on the veranda as it had been in the room.

"Harry," Bill called in a low voice. "Come here. All you. I'm goin' to make you smell nice. One swaller—that's all you get. Just to give you an appetite for supper—if we get any supper. Take your hands away. I keep hold on the bottle!"

In the darkness he poked gropingly for Harry's mouth, tipped the bottle, then jerked it away, splattering the whisky over him. He did the same with the other two boys; then, amid their grunts of surprise and protest, he emptied two bottles between the cracks of bamboo flooring.

"Now I want you, all you, to act drunk. You've been drunk enough times to do it well. No noise. Just stupid. Don't walk straight. Don't want to move. After we get somethin' to eat, you fellows just huddle up here any old place an' pretend to go to sleep. Understand? An' don't you move unless I tell you to. I want these fellows here to think you're too drunk to see anything or care about anything. Now get over there in the corner an' act half dead!"

Charley felt about until he found one of the empty bottles. He sucked at it noisily and carried it with him.

When Miss McKenzie came back, followed by Jeanne and Hall, who carried a lantern and held to the girl's arm, she stopped short, sniffing with much the same sort of startled inquiry as if she had smelled smoke and thought the house was on fire. The odor of whisky filled the air.

The burly Hall was in a very good humor. He seemed pleased with himself. He had even taken off his hat and laid it aside, to show what good manners he had. But when he smelled that whisky, a mingling of frightened anger ran through him.

"Here!" he called out, holding the lantern up and swinging it about to have a look at Captain Bill. "Where'd you fellows get that?"

Captain Bill was squatting on his haunches, with his back against the wall near the doorway of the room where the whisky was kept. He tipsily held out the half empty bottle.

"Hrmm?" said Captain Bill, then drunkenly he half sang—

"Oh there'd be nozin' more in the world I could wish
If the ocean was whisky an' I was a fish—

Have drink?"

"Drunk!" said Miss McKenzie, who knew the weaknesses of men, or thought she did.

She was reproachful, frightened, horrified.

"Drunk?" Bill inquired, smacking his lips and blinking. "Not yet! See 'at?" He lifted his hand, folding down the first three fingers under his thumb. "I ain't drunk long as I c'n wiggle my lil finger. See it wiggle?" He held his hand near his face and stared fixedly at the little finger. "It wiggles, see?"

Hall laughed, and Thompson, who had come near, slapped him on the shoulder and grinned.

"There is nothing to laugh at!" said Miss McKenzie.

"No'm," Thompson agreed. "Disgustin'!"

"That's right," said Hall. "An them natives, too—" he raised the lantern, peering. "Why, they're drunk! But you women don't need to worry at all. You're safe. We'll take 'em away from here. You see," Hall went on, glibly explaining and casting a vague gesture toward the doorway where Bill sat, "the Stantons left a good deal of their stuff here. We're to send it on the next steamer. An' while we was busy fightin' today, some of our own blacks broke in an' just turned ever' thing upside down!"

Jeanne bit her lips as she stared toward Captain Bill. Tears came into her eyes. She felt somehow betrayed. All of her admiration seemed to collapse into disillusionment that Bill would get drunk at a time like this.

SHE began to cry. She was weary, worn out. She felt as if all day she had been going through a nightmare with her eyes open; but she had had such faith in Captain Bill that she felt that everything would somehow have to come out all right. Now the feeling was gone, utterly, for he sat there like a drunken fool, waggling his little finger almost against his nose.

The burly Hall put his arm about her.

"You'll be all right, little girl. You'll be all right."

Jeanne scarcely moved. She hardly knew what he did or said. It seemed to make no difference what any one did or said now. Hall gave the lantern over to Thompson, and led her to the bed where she sat down with her face in her hands, sobbing. And Hall sat beside her, saying over and over:

"You'll be all right. Don't cry. You are with friends. I'll take care of you."

Miss McKenzie stood tall and gaunt, with lips firmly set. She tapped a toe nervously and looked at Captain Bill with anger and disgust. Then something awakened an echo of almost the last thing he had said to her. She had heard it inattentively, but now remembered—

"An' don't b'lieve what you see when you come back—"

She did believe it; yet a kind of despairing hope made her want to be doubtful.

"I want sompin t'eat!" said Bill loudly.

"Take 'im around to the kitchen, Tom," said Hall to Thompson.

"Come on," said Thompson.

"Nope. I won't move till I get sompin t'eat. Ain't you fellows goin' be 'spitable an' feed guests?"

"Go fix 'im somethin', Tom," said Hall.

"Thash right, go on, Tom. But leave that lantern. How'm I goin' fin' my mouth in the dark? Thash why I spill thish bottle. Dark."

Thompson put down the lantern and went away. Hall asked with fawning eagerness—

"Wouldn't you like somethin' to eat, little girl?"

"Of course she would," said Miss McKenzie. "And I would like coffee. Good strong black coffee. It will do her good, too."

"If you'll just come along I'll show you what we've got. Lot o' tinned stuff, an' you can pick out what you think she'll like," said Hall, expansively hospitable.

Miss McKenzie didn't move for a moment; then, adjusting the bandage under her arm, she went with him.

The lantern was left sitting on the floor near Bill, and he remained motionless, squatting on his haunches, with the bottle in his hand.

Jeanne straightened up a little, sighing as she gazed at him. She murmured:

"Oh, Bill—Captain Bill! How could you!"

"Me?" Bill replied in a low voice and sober tone. "I ain't done nothin' to be 'shamed of. But *you!*"

"You are drunk," said Jeanne.

"Huh," Bill spoke quietly but in a sour voice. "If you ever saw me drunk onct you'd know better. I most certainly wouldn't 've let him put his—You didn't even move?"

"Bill? Bill! What are you talking about?" Jeanne leaned forward, peering earnestly. "You must be drunk! Why do you act this way?"

"You didn't move. You stood still. Then you set still."

"Bill! What is the matter with you? You are drunk! Oh, how could you. Captain Bill? How could you!"

"He puts his arm round you again, I'll break his neck. I'll break it twice. I'll—" Bill heard a light footstep, and he relapsed into a drunken mumbling. " 'F them can'bals start any fight again when I'm round, I'll break 'eir bones into toothpicks."

Then the black bearded Coleman, carrying a rifle and without a word, came close and quietly sat on the veranda rail, with his back to a post. Bill tipped the bottle, drinking. He grumbled with maudlin irritation:

"Call me drunk! I ain't. I'm jus' tired, 'at's all. Tire'."

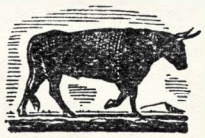
His head fell forward drowsily and he rubbed at his face, but looked between his fingers at the sinister Coleman, whose hand again and again went toward his hip. Coleman's dark eyes glanced now at Jeanne, and now at Lalee who, motionless as a little statue, crouched on the pile of mats. Then Coleman would stare at Captain Bill, remembering the heavy fist that had driven into his face.

Said Captain Bill to himself:

"They don't want to shoot me in front of the women. Very p'lite of 'em—that is!" He was also troubled by fears that they had murdered the Stanton family. He believed it; but belief is not proof. "As long as they think I'm drunk, they'll think it is goin' to be easy to get rid of me."

TO BE CONCLUDED

Bullfighting in Moroland



By CHARLES A. FREEMAN

NO, SEÑORES, men are secondary figures in the bullfighting of the Sulus. They do not eclipse the animals as they do in Spain. It is bull against bull—carabao against carabao. And let the best beast win.

Suppose we ramble over to Indanan, twelve kilometers outside the walls of Jolo. The rice harvest is in and money is in circulation. Bullfights are to be held today.

Up in the bamboo grandstand sits his Highness, the Sultan of Sulu. He has literally no authority, but bears an ancient title and receives a pension from Uncle Sam. A number of his wives are near him. They wear conical hats, wide trousers and tight waists. Most of them display barbaric jewelry of hand worked gold set with Sulu pearls.

Over to the left is Princess Tarhata, a graduate of the University of Illinois. Once she was a charming flapper. But now she is a typical Moro woman—filed teeth and lips stained with crimson betel-nut juice. The princess is conversing with an American officer of the Philippine constabulary.

At the foot of the grandstand are the Sultan's retainers. Slim dark men in skin-tight silk pants and jackets adorned with silver or golden buttons. In sashes around their waists are thrust keen edged barongs and krises.

A singer is beating on a bamboo xylophone called the *gabbang*. He touches on the golden days of piracy in his songs, glorifies the Sultan, who he declares is a descendant of Alexander the Great.

The Sultan takes off his red fez and waves it. Gongs clamor. A pair of bulls are led in—humpbacked creatures with polished horns. At each bull's head is a Moro holding fast to a halter. The bulls sight each other and charge.

Wham! They come together and lock horns. They strain, tug. The Sultan is cheering for the black bull who carries his bet—one thousand pesos.

The bulls back away—charge again. Tons of bone and muscle. The crowd roars itself hoarse. This is indeed a fight. The best bulls in the Sulus are contending. Clouds of dust rise. The brown bull is trying to gore out the eyes of the black.

"The brown! Oh, the brown!" shrills Princess Tarhata.

She tears a bracelet from her wrist and tosses it to the stakeholder. He matches it with five one-hundred peso bills, holds them up; the princess nods.

But now the brown bull slips; falls on his side. The cruel horns of the black sink home. Moros rush in and drag the brown bull from his conqueror—and the Sultan collects his bet.

Again the gongs clash.

Next a pair of carabaos fight. Great water buffaloes, these, with horns measuring five feet from tip to tip. But the carabao is uncertain to bet on. He is not tenacious like the bull. He may turn and run if the first round of a fight goes against him. In this case both animals go to the finish, and a white carabao is the victor.

This is his first fight. If he continues to go from meet to meet without losing

he will never toil again. His initial price was about sixty pesos. This fight has raised it to thrice that sum. But if he loses or runs he will be relegated to the cart. For the defeated carabao never comes back.

One hears much of the ferocity of this beast. But he is at his best when in company of others of his kind. In Luzon a herd of carabaos routed a battalion of American Infantry. And nobody blamed the doughboys for running.

The Sultan has tried hard to procure a pair of tamaraos for the Indanan *fiesta*, but has failed. The beasts, a cross between the water buffalo and the deer, are seldom taken alive. And they are found only in the Island of Mindoro. Their hoofs are cloven and their horns run straight back. Weighing in the neighborhood of a ton, and loving a fight, tamaraos make dangerous enemies.

Sandwiched between the bullfights are bouts between tiny sand bears brought from Borneo, and rendered savage by hunger. Raw meat is placed before them, and in a moment a battle is on. Indanan is repeating the sports of the Roman amphitheater before the days of gladiators.

And now a great cage is wheeled out. It is faced with wire and its bottom is covered with earth two feet thick. In one corner is a large and hungry land crab. He has burrowed a hole and watches by its mouth. A snake of the python family, also hungry, is introduced. Animal and reptile fancy each other's flesh. And a fight starts.

The snake seeks to crush the crab's shell. But the crab backs away, sparring like a boxer. They close, and the snake's coils wind about the crustacean. But the crab breaks the hold and, minus a small claw, escapes. Again the snake attacks.

"*Mabuhay ang ahas*—hurrah for the snake!" shouts a Tagalog soldier of the constabulary. He waves a fistful of bills. "Fifty pesos on the crab!" bellows another. "*Mabuhay ang alamasag!*"

Rapidly the crab scuttles to his burrow. The snake follows, thrusts his head inside. Up comes a giant claw. It grips the snake by the neck. Tears it. The snake flails about, dying hard. And, finally, the victor dines on the vanquished. Money changes hands.

Again the gongs sound. This is a short recess. Everybody eats. The Christian element drinks. Golden *tuba* is there. Gin and cold beer bearing the familiar trademark of San Miguel. Everybody in the islands knows the good St. Michael whose likeness and that of the dragon appears on the bottles.

Servants crouch at the feet of the Sultan. They offer betel nut from a golden box, and push forward a golden cuspidor. The princess is likewise served. And only a few years ago she was a co-ed.

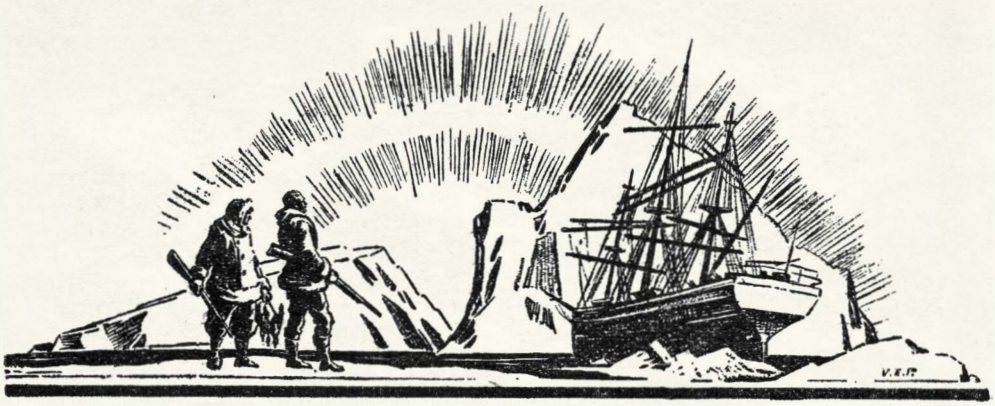
A clatter of hoofs. The pacers are ready. The distance to be paced is one hundred and fifty yards. Any horse breaking the gait is at once ruled out. What a gallant array—silken clad horsemen; short stirruped saddles with brocaded cloths; woodwork inlaid with mother of pearl. A trumpet blares. The first group of four horses has started. They flash past the grandstand in a blaze of color.

A white horse is leading. Princess Tarhata leans forward—shrills encouragement to the rider. But a black one forges ahead. The princess's fists clench, but she's a good loser. In the next race she wins. And in that which follows.

The Sultan too is in luck. He has entered only one horse but has bet heavily on him.

And now as the successful jockey enters the grandstand, out comes the Sultan's *kris*. From his white silk coat he slashes the gold buttons and pours them into the jockey's hand while the crowd applauds the regal largess. Yes, race day at Indanan is a big event.

But perhaps in the crowd of bettors is one who has lost heavily. If he broods over it, watch out. Some day he, as a *juramentado* who has sworn to die killing infidels, may surge through the Asturias gate of Jolo. And, barong in hand, deal death until he is shot down. They do such things in Moroland.



When Frost Was Friend

By STEPHEN ALLEN REYNOLDS

OUTSIDE the snow banked *Delphine* it was fifty-five below zero. Stars of the Great Bear glittered almost overhead, their light supplementing that of the rosy aurora shimmering above the white hump that was Whale Point. Save for the black fangs of encircling reefs, the violet shadows of the cluster of igloos built around the frozen whaler, all was white and cold and still.

But down in the master's room of the bark were warmth and sound of sorts. In the stifling heat shed by a potbellied stove, by the light of an oil lamp hung in gimbals, two sweating men sat at poker. One of them, several years the junior of his opponent, took matters easily. Whether or not the right cards fell to him he hummed softly and unobtrusively. Winner or loser, the expression on his weatherbeaten face remained that of a man who has just heard a good story.

Not so the behavior of Captain Alexander Crump. With either a curse or a boast on his tobacco stained lips he dragged the pots to his side of the table —or saw the whites, reds and blues raked over and stacked at the elbow of his chief officer. Bleak and dour was the gaze of the master's faded blue eyes while the cards were being served; but with the start of the betting little fires would kindle in them.

For five long months this nightly game had endured, commencing in late October as harmless penny-ante, developing into a duel where substantial sums and articles were at stake. With the winning of the skipper's spare cash, a small bale of musk ox hides and a few choice silver blacks, Mate Caleb Poore would gladly have called it a day. The raising of the stakes had always been at the captain's suggestion; and now that Crump was a heavy loser the lanky, good natured chief officer couldn't well deny him "revenge".

"I don't like this gamblin' with our lays*," the mate grumbled when for the fourth time that night the captain charged a hundred dollars' worth of chips against his prospective share of the voyage.

"What's eatin' you?" Crump demanded truculently. Abruptly he ceased shuffling the greasy deck of cards and glowered across the table. "Ain't you satisfied with bein' a heavy winner?" he went on.

Caleb Poore fidgeted on his seat.

*Term used by whalemen to describe prospective share in proceeds of cruise.

"That's just the point," he said reluctantly. "I don't *aim* to be a heavy winner. I don't want your lay. An' if you lose that I don't want to win your Fairhaven house an' lot. You're plumb unlucky at cards. Even the advantages you take don't seem to help you beat my hands."

"What d'you mean—advantages?" There was a metallic note in the captain's query as he grated out the words.

The mate saw that he was in for it. He moved restlessly, regretting for the moment that he had mentioned his discovery made fully a week before.

"Speak up, Mister."

Caleb Poore mopped his face with a big blue handkerchief, then crumpled it and for the space of a few seconds seemed to be studying the polka dots on the bunched square of cotton. An inarticulate growl came from across the table, and he raised his eyes and spoke.

"I hadn't intended sayin' anything. I was hopin' you'd win back the best part o' your stuff. But even your double discard system didn't—"

"Double discard," the captain echoed hollowly.

"When it's been your deal," the mate nerved himself to explain, "you don't toss away your discard. For more 'n a week you've been leavin' your original hand in two little piles in front of you. When you draw three cards you look at 'em an' then match 'em with whichever pile suits."

"You're a stinkin' liar!" came from between set teeth, and simultaneously the enraged master of the *Delphine* dashed the cards full in the face of his accuser.

Poore, slightly pale, uncoiled his lanky form and rose slowly to his feet.

"You're a cheat, sir," he said doggedly, "a cheat an' a disgrace!"

WITH speed belying his years the older man leaped to his feet and lashed out a knotted brown fist. The mate's shoulder took and felt the blow, but before it could be repeated he closed in and smothered the threshing arms. He was working the half crazed master toward the big sea-chest at the side of his bunk, when suddenly and unexpectedly an upthrust knee wrung a groan of anguish from him. Now a bald head fringed with rusty red hair was pressed against his chest, and soon an arm was freed. Immediately clawing fingers were at the mate's throat.

Caleb Poore was one of the strongest men who had ever wielded a spade on a cutting stage. Lean and hard almost as the flukes of a thin blubbered finback, he now exerted a part of that strength and tore himself free. One glance into the captain's pale blue eyes shot with fires of hatred, and he loosed a mighty blow.

It was enough. Alexander Crump went crashing back against the outer cabin partition, seemed to hang there for a moment, then collapsed and lay still in a tangle of table legs and a litter of cards and chips.

For a few moments the mate stood rigid, with lips compressed, with knuckles showing white against his saddle-colored fists, and then the odor of burning leather came to his nostrils. One of the captain's brogans was too close to the hot stove. Poore stooped, changed the position of the leg, and then on second thought lifted the unconscious master and bundled him unceremoniously over the weatherboard of his bunk.

Barely long enough to assure himself that the skipper was breathing did Poore linger on the scene. Then he shrugged his powerful shoulders and stalked out of the room.

CONCENTRIC rings of fire circled through the skull of Captain Crump. He opened his eyes. The circle disappeared, but immediately pain swarmed over him and was felt in many spots. One of his hips seemed to be out of joint. His chest hurt him. At the back of his head, just above the fringe of rusty red hair which hung untidily over a grimy soft collar, his exploring fingers found and felt gingerly a painful lump. From the soot encrusted lamp chimney the captain's gaze fell to the overturned table and the litter of cards and chips.

Now he understood. Caleb Poore had bawled him out for holding over his discard. He had lost his temper. There had been a fight. Poore had beaten

him into insensibility and then had picked him up and flung him into his bunk.

Just like a sack of whale scrap held over to kindle the tryworks or start the bug-light! Just like a coil of buntline jerked from a pin and dumped on deck! Deep in the parched throat of the humiliated master an oath took form. It bubbled thickly through his lips. He rose and staggered rather than walked to the small locker which held the simple medical supplies of the bark. In a far corner of the bottom shelf he found the squat brown bottle which many a time, particularly of late, had brought doubtful comfort to him. He dragged it out and half filled a thick bottomed tumbler with sweet but potent Jamaica rum. He drank. Almost immediately power seemed to trickle into his being. As his mental faculties sharpened, so his bodily pain was dulled. Now he set about righting the table and putting the room in order.

The worn and greasy cards were a problem. During his games with Caleb Poore he had at times vented his rage by tearing up losing hands, and the cards he now held had been procured from the forecastle by a steward who knew what an apple pie would fetch. They represented the last deck of playing cards aboard the bark. A flood of unpleasant memories surged through the captain as he stood contemplating the sticky and broken cornered pack; and then, as a revelation, it came to him that it had outlived its usefulness. There could never be another game with Caleb Poore—not with cards. That they should ever face each other again over a poker table was out of the question.

"All my loose cash, all my furs an' private trade, an' damn near half my lay," Crump muttered to himself, and then jerked open the door of the stove.

He flung the cards upon the glowing coals, watched them curl, blacken and burst into a dull flame. With passing interest he noticed a jack of diamonds staring out of the heap; but soon it blackened beyond recognition and turned to ashes. Softly, thoughtfully, Captain Crump closed the stove door and helped himself to another drink.

As that jack of diamonds had blackened, he ruminated, as meat blackens under the sun, so would the dead body of Mate Caleb Poore blacken—and that before the voyage was over. For had he not, in addition to winning heavily, done the unforgivable thing? He had laid profane hands on the sacred body of the master.

To kill a man would be no novelty to Captain Alexander Crump. New Bedford whaling circles still buzzed with the story of a killing off the Seychelles. Aboard this same *Delphine* a sick man had been driven aloft and had blundered over the simple casting off of a topsail gasket. Crump bawled aloft certain reflections on the fellow's seamanship and maternity, and a spirited but misguided reply came back to him. No one but Crump saw the marlinspike he claimed came streaking down toward him, but all the watch on deck saw the master draw his gun and shoot the sailor. Down from the maintopsail-yard the dead son of a vilified mother came crashing to the deck. There was no inquest, no trial—simply a burial at sea and an entry in the log.

Likewise an entry in the log had in earlier days glossed over the beating to death of two Portuguese runaways surrendered at Brava. Maybe Crump, at that time master of the *Western Star*, hadn't intended taking their lives. And, again, he might have; for the knowing and suspicious ones among the crew were of the opinion that, a profitable voyage being about over, the unexpected capture and return of the runaways meant that certain dollars would come to them in the shape of their lays, which otherwise would have gone to swell the captain's bonus.

IMPS of alcohol scampered through the brain of the whaleman reputed to be the hardest but most resourceful skipper of a fast vanishing fleet. They set him thinking unholy thoughts. They urged him toward the medicine locker, where he stood for a few moments eyeing certain small bottles on the topmost shelf. One of those white tablets, the imps whispered to him, would do the trick. In the black morning coffee, always overboiled and bitter with chic-

ory, no hint would be given. Caleb Poore would die, would be laid out on the cooper's bench and sewn up in a breadth of a last season's topgallantsail.

After his body had been sledded out to the lip of the floe—some ten or fifteen miles, according to the wind's pressure on the loose ice in the unfrozen middle of the bay—the Stars and Stripes would be taken from it. A few words from "Forms of Prayer to be used at Sea" mumbled through cold-stiffened lips, and at, "We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption", the sled would be tilted and what represented Mr. Caleb Poore would slide into the green water. He would bob up again a couple of times, but as the buoyant air would filter through the top of the shroud, he would sink and disappear for all time.

Abruptly the thoughts of Alexander Crump were directed into a different channel. The rum bottle was empty, he discovered. Before he rolled into his bunk to spend what was left of the night he figured he needed another drink.

He stooped and rolled back the flimsy rug. He found the sunken ring of the lazaret hatch and lifted it. Three steps down, and he was in the midst of his more precious stores. Here was ammunition and chocolate and limejuice. Here were a few dozens of plum pudding and the barrel of rum chocked "bung up and bilge free".

A funnel hung from the spigot. Crump adjusted the former, carefully turned the latter and, with watering mouth, saw the thin stream of precious liquor trickle into the bottle. Soon he would have hastened from the chill place back to the warmth above, but in the rectangle of light framed by the small hatch opening, certain lettering in red caught his eye. There was no need for him to read the warning, "Danger—High Explosives", stenciled on the visible side of the case of dynamite, and his action now in lingering was coupled with the thought that it would be far better to blow Caleb Poore up than to poison him.

"One poisons rats and insects only," an imp whispered.

"It's a more manly way," another supplemented, "more manly than poison."

Crump listened, made his choice and then climbed out and replaced the hatch.

"I've got to invent an accident," he mused as he prodded the dying fire and gave thought to the deadly greasy cylinders stowed below.

Three drinks instead of the contemplated one found their way down the gullet of Crump before he sought his berth. But with the third drink had come triumph. He had a plan which couldn't fail. Within a few days he would be acting as Caleb Poore's temporary executor. In his capacity as master he would take possession of the dead man's belongings, his papers and cash, his wardrobe and personal "trade". Who would know of the lay notes he'd tear up? Who, after the crew had been paid and the officers gone on their way, could say a word about the furs in his custody?

Grinning at his cleverness, Crump kicked off his brogans and drew his shirt over his head. He had planned already the entry that would appear in the log.

A RACKING headache greeted Crump on waking late the next morning. Standing orders that he be not disturbed had kept the steward and his coffee pot away, but now the captain craved service. He sat up and felt himself over. He was stiff and sore. The liquor, as usual, had let him down. He crossed the after cabin and poured himself a moderately heavy drink. He drank it and then, still in his underclothes, opened the door and bawled for the steward.

"Coffee an' a fire," he snarled at the soft footed and quiet mannered Portuguese, who would have been surprised and suspicious had Crump addressed him pleasantly.

"Aye, aye, sir."

Rum bridged the interim until warmth and coffee arrived; and as the captain, now dressed, sipped from the big porcelain cup, a rhythmic, pulsing sound came to his ears. To know the time he had no need to glance at the clock under the skylight. It was four

bells—ten o'clock—for the rite of pumping ship had begun. Well under the twelve feet or so of ice in which the *Delphine* was imbedded, her black keel and lower timbers were soaking. Water penetrated into the bilge and became a problem which was solved daily at this hour.

But the mind of Alexander Crump dwelt now on matters other than pumping ship. He finished his coffee and found his cap. Without a word he passed the second mate, reading in the outer cabin, and climbed the steep companionway.

In the big deckhouse of rough lumber and tarred paper, all was in order. The cook was busy in his galley. Near the binnacle Caleb Poore stood enjoying his pipe while chinning with an Eskimo visitor. Fearlessly the brown eyes of the mate met the pale blue ones of the master, but with the briefest of glances the latter passed on to where two men were laboring at the pump brake.

The last of the water was foaming down the trough rigged from pump to scupper, and as the captain approached the supervising third mate a wheezing cough was heard from the pump valves.

"What's she makin', Mister?"

"She sucked at a hundred an' eighty-two, sir."

"Not so bad." Crump growled. Apparently as an afterthought he inquired. "Who goes ashore for ice today?"

"Mr. Poore an' the port watch, sir."

A little thrill of satisfaction came to the captain. He passed on to the cooper's bench where some of the boat-steerers had their gear laid out. A black fellow was slipstoning a lance head to razor-like sharpness, stopping every now and then to apply his thumb to the edge. Nearby, another boat-steerer was grinding the wicked looking barb of a darting-gun iron, one of the crew turning the stone. All was industry. All was in order. Crump fished in his pocket, brought out his plug and knife and cut himself a generous sized chew. To kill the next half hour or so he sat down on one of the benches near the big stove in the center of the deckhouse.

In the enormous boiler on top of that stove fresh-water ice was melting day and night for the use of all on board. Directly after dinner Caleb Poore and his men would make the two-mile trip to the frozen lake just over the first white swelling ashore. Three hours would pass before they would sled back to the *Delphine* its semi-weekly supply of huge ice cakes cut and stacked in readiness the preceding October. Within that period, Crump mused, ample time would be given him to visit the mate's stateroom and carry out the first step of the plan.

It seemed hours before the steward's handbell tinkled at the foot of the cabin companionway; but eventually the captain, the three mates and the cooper were seated at table. As usual, there was little conversation. When the corpulent and good-natured third mate voiced his almost daily complaint on the monotony of a boiled beef and soggy bread diet, Captain Crump took it upon himself to make a suggestion.

"The last o' the deer meat's gone," he said, "but mebbe Mr. Poore knows where to get us another mess o' them white grouse."

Poore, indirectly addressed for the first time since the quarrel, took the suggestion as a step toward peace. Not inclined to carry on a useless and hateful war which might end seriously for one or both of them, he replied to the captain's words in kind.

"If it's a fine day tomorrer," he said, a spoonful of dried applesauce halfway to his lips, "I'll take a run back into the hills."

"Good!" Crump pronounced heartily; adding, "An' while you're ashore for ice this afternoon I'll break out some fresh shells an' fill your belt an' gun."

He was as good as his word. Dinner over, he went up into the deckhouse and brushed the rime of frost from a windowpane at the break of the poop-deck. Through the glass he watched the fur clad members of the crew assemble at the foot of the sloping gangway of hard packed snow. A braided *rurati* hung like a crossbelt over a shoulder of each one of the men. They hooked into the ring at the fore end of the heavy sled and, at a word from the mate, set their shoulders into the harnesses and trudged off.

Ten minutes later found the captain seated in his room. The door was bolted. Beside him stood the mate's gun, and on the table before him reposed a box of shells and a reloading outfit. With fingers that trembled ever so slightly he extracted the shot and powder from a row of shells. Then he gave his attention to the candle shaped stick of sixty per cent dynamite he had in readiness. He uncurled the paraffin coated paper at one end and with a wooden spatula dug carefully into the yellowish gray substance disclosed. He filled a shell and then gingerly replaced the wads and shot. The resulting product looked good to him. For a moment or two he studied it, rolling it between his thumb and fingers.

In this shell alone, he mused, was dynamite enough, when detonated, to burst the finest shotgun ever turned out. But in the magazine of the pump-gun would be other shells likewise prepared. The shock of the first explosion would serve to detonate these latter. A man pressing the trigger of this deadly weapon would most certainly suffer death.

"It'll blow his damned head off," Crump muttered grimly, and then set about completing his preparations.

FOR fully two hours Caleb Poore and his Eskimo companion had been scouring the white blanketed Barrens back of Whale Point, looking for ptarmigan, the grouse of the Northland, when suddenly Obluktoo stopped his dogs and pointed ahead and a little off to the left. At first the mate saw nothing unusual; but as he raised his dark glasses and the pupils of his eyes adjusted themselves to the blinding glare of the March sun, he distinguished a cluster of moving objects perhaps a hundred yards off. Immediately he stepped from the sled and dragged his gun out of its case.

Ptarmigan of these latitudes are not easily alarmed, and quite boldly the Eskimo and the white man walked toward them. When fifty yards were gained Poore pumped a shell into the chamber of his gun. Another ten yards, and still the plump white birds hopped about undisturbed or stood pecking at the hard snow.

"Must be sixty or seventy of 'em," Caleb muttered to himself as he stole nearer. He went on to wonder what they possibly could be eating, for at this season of the year, the thermometer averaging forty below zero, there could be neither vegetation nor insects atop the packed snow. Perhaps it was their way of getting water.

At thirty yards the mate was satisfied. With his teeth he drew off the heavy mitten which would have hampered his trigger finger. Now he leveled the gun, took aim and pulled.

A sharp, snapping sound rewarded him, but by no means surprised him. A misfire will happen. Not a bird had flown away. Unhurriedly Caleb pumped out the bad shell and slid a new one into position. Again he pulled trigger, and again he heard the *plap!* of a detonated primer. It was irritating. His right hand was fast growing numb with the cold. Now he pumped and pulled furiously, emptying the harmless gun, and as the birds, disturbed at last, were on the point of taking wing, a roar at his elbow announced the firing of Obluktoo's muzzle loader.

Seven birds fell to the single shot of the native. Poore counted them automatically, and then gave his attention to the duds scattered about. He picked one of them up and examined it. It seemed crimped and wadded properly. A dent in the primer showed where the firing pin had done its work. In fact he had heard the detonation of each primer. The fault must be in the powder, he mused as he tucked the shell into one of the pockets of his belt. Back aboard the *Delphine* was a better place for a close examination.

The two men trudged back to the sled and the crouching dogs. The long whiplash of Obluktoo cracked; the huskies yelped in answer and strained at their harnesses. The sled moved off, slowly at first, then more rapidly; and against the self-created breeze, the knife-like thrust of the cold, the two riders bowed their hooded heads.

They reached the coast and picked their way through the jumble of ice cakes heaved this way and that by the

rising and falling tides. They passed through the village of snow houses and stopped at the foot of the sloping gangway. The naked spars of the *Delphine* were casting long shadows to starboard when the mate paid his Eskimo with hardbread and then climbed aboard the bark. He swung open the plank door of the deckhouse, entered, and at the galley turned over his string of frozen birds to a surprised and pleased cook.

"Fair luck?" the corpulent third mate asked as Poore approached the stove and extended his arms for a pull with his *koolitang*.

"Fair to middlin'," the chief officer answered. Rid of the heavy fur garment, he tugged gently at the lumps of ice clinging to his mustache below each nostril. "There'll be a mess for supper," he added as he seated himself and spread out his fingers to the comforting warmth of the stove.

Thawed somewhat from the effects of the cold ride, he volunteered details of the hunting trip, the failure of the shells, concluding—

"If it hadn't been for Obluktoo an' his gas pipe musket we'd be chewin' that same old salt horse tonight."

No bell sounded as the anchor watch was changed and the men at the cooper's bench left off arranging and sharpening their boat gear. The new man, with no anchor to watch, but with the big stove to stoke and ice to be melted, lighted the acetylene lamp which would burn throughout the evening hours. This done, he sniffed hungrily at the savory odors issuing from the galley door.

Meanwhile, thoroughly warmed but a little tired, Caleb gathered up his belongings and went below to his room. As he passed through the main cabin, his gun in the crook of his arm, his ammunition belt and furs slung over his shoulder, he saw no one but the steward. He was setting the table for supper. Still unsuspicious of foul play, Caleb had no reason for glancing toward the after cabin. Had he done so at the moment of laying his hand on the knob of his stateroom door, he might have glimpsed a face grown yellow with surprise and fear. Pale blue eyes stared their unbelief out through the crack of the door held slightly ajar, while a pendulous, tobacco stained lip quivered, then was sucked in sharply to the indrawn gasp of one befogged by alcohol watching a specter stalk close at hand.

Two doors were closed as one. Aft, a bottle was located and raised to avid lips. A few feet distant, separated only by a stout partition, easy-going Caleb Poore flung his gear into his bunk and set about hauling off his mukluks, getting ready for supper.

ABOARD the *Delphine* in Winter quarters it was the custom for most of the officers to gather in the deckhouse after a meal. A walk up and down, a pipe or two smoked while lolling on one of the benches near the stove, served to mitigate somewhat the severity of a necessarily confined and narrow existence. Save for the anchor watch on duty, the temporary structure covering the entire poopdeck of the bark was forbidden loafing ground for the crew.

In the hot and bitter smelling forecastle they had their own lair—a place in which to eat, sleep, fight and make merry. Here they made small trade with Eskimo visitors and contrived at times from fermented molasses or whatnot to make villainous drinks. Here of an evening they sang their whimsical but mostly unprintable chanteys and, in a poisonous atmosphere vitiated by eighteen bodies and half a dozen whale-oil lamps, variously squatted on their sea-chests or snoozed in their bunks.

Seldom did any of them glance aloft where, at the head of the steep ladder, through a ventilating scuttle, a rectangular patch of star pricked sky was visible. On this particular night—the night following the day of the ptarmigan hunt —some convivial spirits were roaring out the "Whaleman's Song". Hundreds of times had the homely phrased ditty been sung since the young ice formed around the *Delphine*, yet always for the foremast hands did the concluding verse hold its charm.

To the ears of the half crazed master, standing bareheaded in the open air near the cooling tank of the try-works, the provocative words came floating up.

For the hundredth time the classic whale had been raised, killed, tried-out, and the oil stowed down. Then:

> And now we're full-ship, and homeward we're bound,
> While pannikins of liquor pass merrily around.
> Soon we'll be happy, with the pretty girls on shore;
> We'll spend all our money—and go whaling for more.

Notwithstanding the piercing cold, the serious matters at issue, Crump snorted contemptuously at the reference to liquor passing merrily around a whaleship. Except in rare instances and emergencies a foremast hand doesn't get even a smell of liquor—save on an officer's breath—from pierhead to signing off. What rum was placed aboard was a master's perquisite, a medical store to be issued or prescribed at his discretion.

The cold wiped the fever from Crump, glazed his sweating forehead. Mention of liquor reminded him that he was in need of another drink, a dram to stiffen him against the things to come. For, after keeping to his cabin throughout supper, curiosity had conquered fear. Only a moment ago—or was it a month—he had passed through the deckhouse and observed the mate digging the wad out of a shell. It meant discovery; an end of his activities. He'd either be killed or placed in irons. Slow to wrath, but mighty when awakened, Poore would strike.

A frenzy possessed the master. He glanced wildly around. The naked foreyard stood out against the northern sky—a gallows limned on a rosy backdrop. The crackling whispers of the aurora mocked him, accused him, drove him up the icy steps to the plank door at the break of the poop. Half numb, wholly mad, alcoholic imps echoing the mockery of the aurora, he entered the deckhouse in time to see Poore holding up a stick and showing something on the end of it to his fellow mates. The group was standing in the full white light of the acetylene lamp, and as they looked up at the banging of the door, Crump fancied they knew all.

As a matter of fact, the officers as yet knew little. A careless glance at the skipper lingering at the cooper's bench, and again they gave their attention to the substance taken from the shell.

"Never saw any smokeless powder like that," the third mate said.

"Looks like dynamite," the second put in.

Crump's nails bit into his horny palms. They hadn't found out yet. But they soon would. Then they'd get after him. They might not even hold him for the courts. The cold and numbness left him. He was in a fever now, and as his burning eyes flitted hither and thither over the boat gear laid out on the bench, he found no little comfort in the idea that he could at least snatch up a lance and make his taking a costly one. Or, better still, one of the whale guns! The darting guns were too intricate, too unwieldly; but a bomb from one of the brass shoulder guns would do the trick.

Shot into the deck at their feet, the plunger would nip into the fulminate and fire would eat along the short time fuse. Two little seconds, and then, even as the three of them stood amazed at the roar of the gun, hell would break loose under their feet. It might wipe them all out. He could claim it was an accident.

To think was to act. With assumed carelessness he picked up one of the guns, broke it and inspected the breech.

"It does look like dynamite," he heard Caleb Poore say and, with his fingers at the lid of an ammunition box, Crump turned for a look.

Still no attention was being paid to him. He saw Caleb's forefinger touch the greasy paste at the end of the stick and apply it to the hollow of his temple. Now he rubbed it hard into the skin above the pulsing blood vessels and stood waiting.

Crump knew only too well what would follow. Poore had applied the "powderman's test". Soon the raw nitroglycerin would be absorbed. The mate's face and neck would flush and tingle to the whipping-up of the heart beat. There was no time to lose.

Quickly Crump raised the lid and seized one of the fat propelling cartridges. He shoved it into the chamber

and snapped shut the breech. One last glance at the men under the light told him the clicking sound had attracted no special attention. All was well.

The slipping of the bomb into the barrel would be a noiseless proceeding. The row of deadly cylinders now claimed his attention. Fourteen inches long they were, slim shells of polished brass crammed full of giant powder; folding feathers of metal at the butt end, a point of steel at the other. A heavy ingot of solder blocked one end of the neat row. Crump moved it aside, and with trembling fingers seized the nearest bomb.

Meanwhile the smear of nitroglycerin had done its work. A tingling of his expanding capillaries, a violent throbbing of his heart as it hastened to equalize the suddenly lowered blood pressure, and Poore muttered grimly—

"It *is* dynamite."

The words of the captain flashed to him: "I'll break out some fresh shells an' fill your belt an' gun!"

It was plain as day. The mate's nostrils widened and quivered as Crump's unholy plan burst full upon him.

"Lord," he muttered, "if that dynamite hadn't been frozen I—I'd have lost half my head."

Stirred to their depths, but not yet realizing the full import of Caleb's words, the second and third mates stared at the flushed face of the speaker and then at each other.

"The dirty skunk!" they heard him snarl. "He thought he'd kill me an' hide his gamblin' losses. I'm goin' to—"

He turned, and for the first time looked toward the bench some twenty feet away. Alexander Crump stood there. His thumb was drawing back the hammer of the gun. He raised it to the level of his hips, unaware of the brass object that was rolling from the bench. Before his finger could creep inside the guard and press the trigger, the bomb dropped butt first to the deck. Hell erupted at his feet.

He heard a mighty cough like that of a bull whale in its dying flurry. Imps leered at him as with his last living sensation he felt his body being lifted, thrust upward toward a yawning black void.

There was the tramp of many pairs of feet; and as men from fore and aft burst upon the scene, it was to find Caleb Poore removing a wicked splinter from the leg of a corpulent and profane third officer. Iodine and courtplaster sufficed for his own minor scratches, and within an hour of the completion of certain tasks, including orders to the sailmaker and cooper, he busied himself at the final job of the day. Seated in the captain's room, now *his* room, he penned a long entry in the log. Its concluding paragraph ran:

> Two strips of deck planking will be put in and caulked tomorrow. Glass is already set (4 panes 8x12). Will take inventory come morning, and if wind is offshore and weather clear will hold burial service at floe-lip. So ends this day.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A SUPPLEMENTARY note on Sitting Bull and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

Vegreville, Alberta

In the November 1st issue of *Adventure* I notice some surprising information relative to the late Colonel Sir Samuel B. Steele, and with your kind permission, I would like to set the *Canadian Police Gazette* writer, Inspector Parsons, on the right track. My authority for the statements I am making is Colonel Steele's autobiography, published in a limited edition in 1915, entitled "Forty Years in Canada". I did not know Col. Steele personally, but I was very well acquainted with members of his family and, possibly, it was on that account that the Colonel sent me an autographed copy of his book.

I have examined Col. Steele's book very carefully and noted all his references to Sitting Bull and the Sioux band which followed him into Canada in December, 1876, after the Custer massacre. I can find nothing indicating that either Sitting Bull or any of his chiefs or followers were ever arrested in Canada. There was never any need to arrest them, for Sitting Bull was decidedly on his best behavior while here, as he hoped to remain in Canada and had petitioned the Dominion Government for a reservation. Were it not for your space limitations, I would like to quote copiously from Col. Steele's book. It is most interesting and comprehensive.

IF SITTING BULL was never arrested in Canada, it follows that Col. Steele could not have performed the feat accredited to him. Sitting Bull and his chiefs met and had a conference at Fort Walsh at which Colonel Macleod of the N.W.M.P. presided. Generals Terry and Lawrence with their escorts from the international border were at the conference. The American officers were treated to a lengthy lecture by Sitting Bull, who pointed out the injustices he and his band had suffered at the hands of the Americans, who had violated treaties before the ink was dry on them.

Sitting Bull remained in Canada until the spring of 1881. During his stay, he was treated with consideration but given to understand that eventually he must return to the United States. Col. Steele met him at Fort Qu'Appelle and had a powwow. Mr. Dewdney, Indian Commissioner, was sent for and Sitting Bull placed his case before him. But nothing could be done with his request that he be given a reservation in Canada, so he was turned over to Inspector McDonnell, who escorted him to the border and turned him over to Major Brotherton of the United States army. Col. Steele says:

"This surrender ended our troubles with Sitting Bull and his Sioux and I may say in connection with it that not one word appeared in the official reports of the year."

IT FOLLOWS from this that Col. Steele did not "withstand the efforts of the American officers to drink him under the table." I doubt very much if that feat could be performed with any N.W.M.P. officer or man, for, while not prudes, they were abstemious to a degree. Any officer or man found under the influence of liquor got short shrift then—and that goes today too with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I am not aware of Col. Steele's personal habits in that regard, but I do know that those members of the family with whom I was acquainted were fanatical teetotallers.

As to the incident of a Mounted Policeman going into Indian camps and making arrests single-handed, there was nothing unusual in that. With the exception of the small flares of rebellion in 1870 and 1885 under Louis Riel, there has never been trouble with the Indians of Canada. Treaties have been uniformly respected by all parties. Only in very rare cases would a Mounted Policeman require an army corps to assist him in arresting any Indian. —A. L. HORTON

BRIEF correspondence on the use of valerian in tiger hunting. Doubtless some of you can add to our knowledge of the subject.

Verona, Pennsylvania

I read with great interest Talbot Mundy's recent story, "White Tigers". And I understand that you have spent some time in the vicinity about which this story is woven. I know that valerian is recommended as an ingredient in certain animal lures. Do you know if it is especially seductive to members of the cat family, as Mundy states? If valerian is so used, could you tell me which form of the drug is used? I have located tincture of valerian, ammoniated tincture and pill forms. Could you tell me how the drug is prepared, as a cat lure? Is it the European form of the drug plant to which Mundy refers, or are there several forms?

In asking the above, I have in mind certain murderous wildcats, in the vicinity of my favorite wild-turkey cover. —A. E. KEMMERLING

Captain de Sturler's Reply:

New York, New York

The plants Valerianaceae is known in 12 genera and 190 species and is distributed through Europe, North Africa, temperate Asia and N. W. America; there is one species in South Africa, and it is entirely unknown in Australia. Its properties are aromatic, antispasmodic and sometimes stimulative.

Valeriana officinalis is a common plant ranging from Central Europe through Asia to Japan. It has a penetrating odor and a bitter, acrid taste, and distilled with water yields a volatile oil and valerianic acid. Cats have a strange liking for the odor, and it exercises a remarkably intoxicating or stimulating power over them; hence the plant is sometimes called cats' valerian.

That is all the information I could gather for you, never having had an occasion myself in Africa to put it to any use like Mr. Mundy. From his story and its locale, I assume that the native used Asiatic valerian; but not being a botanist or pharmacist, I can not accept any responsibility beyond the first three paragraphs.

—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER

IN CONNECTION with his serial beginning in this issue, Hugh Pendexter sends in the following note on the historical background of the narrative:

Norway, Maine

The American army in the War of 1812 consisted largely of recruits. One of the weakest nations, if not the weakest, in the world went to war with the oldest and strongest. As I have indicated in the story, every British commander in Canada received the news several days earlier than did Hull. Benjamin Franklin is credited with saying, after the end of the War of the Revolution: "The war for independence is yet to be fought."

In a manuscript history of the war on the Canadian Peninsula, William Hamilton Merritt, officer of Dragoons during the first of the war, makes the statement: "We received intelligence of the declaration of war by the United States on the 27th of June, 1812, from a messenger sent by the late John Jacob Astor to Thomas Clark, Esq., of Niagara Falls. The express was sent immediately to General Brock, who was at York."

COLONEL ST. GEORGE, at Malden, received the news by letter on the 30th, two days before it reached Hull. Captain Roberts, in command of the British post on the Island of St. Joseph, at the head of Lake Huron, received the news July 8th. I mentioned these two, of several British officers who received the news ahead of Hull, because each of the two envelopes containing the news were franked by the American Secretary of the Treasury. Secretary Gallatin was above suspicion, but his avowed opposition to the war caused the report to spread he would do all he could to prevent any invasion of Canada. Even many in the war-party were strenuously opposed to such an invasion.

But the times were hectic and tempers were hot. President Madison was accused of being under the influence of Virginia politicians. Also that Calhoun, working through his influence over the president, blocked aid for Hull, in fear that a conquered Canada would be annexed to the United States and would greatly increase the anti-slavery territory, and would shift the balance of political power from the slave-labor to the free-labor States. General John Armstrong boldly charged this in a political pamphlet, after quarreling with Madison.

ONE interesting result of this war was the reaction of the New England States against what they considered to be unconstitutional Federal acts. Fortunately peace was declared between the two countries before the Hartford Convention had traveled too far toward the later doctrine of nullification. War could have been declared against France as logically as against England, and seventeen votes were cast for a declaration of war against *both* nations; which is one of the sportiest proposals to be found in recorded history.

Burgoyne's cannon, captured at Saratoga in in 1777, and recaptured at Detroit, was for the second and last time captured by the Americans at the battle of the Thames, October, 1813. It was placed in the State Arsenal at Frankfort, Kentucky. Some reader may inform us where it is now.

Six days after the United States declared war, Napoleon crossed the Nieman despite 300,000 Russians attempting to block his advance, and by September 6th he had fought the battle of Borodino, and left a field strewn with ninety thousand in killed and wounded. —HUGH PENDEXTER

FURTHER speculation on the ultimate victor in a bout between a boxer and a wrestler:

East Orange, New Jersey

I was much interested in Mr. Barton's inquiry concerning the boxer *vs.* wrestler proposition, because some time ago I asked the same question of a man who has held several amateur wrestling championships, is a better than average boxer, and has considerable reputation as a dangerous rough-and-tumble fighter. His answer was a little different from Mr. Cranford's. He said: "Given two fast, clever men, with nothing barred, in an open space, or in a twenty-foot ring, the boxer would beat the wrestler every time. In a confined space—say a fifteen-foot room with furniture in it—the boxer would simply be hell out of luck." —PAUL L. ANDERSON

COMPLICATIONS when the circus, the law and the railroad tangle:

Washington, D. C.

Having been amused as a spectator in part of the court procedure in this episode of circus life, I thought it might be worth passing along to the members of Camp-fire:

The 101 Ranch Circus came to Washington, D. C., the national capital, encamped on the show grounds, gave two performances and then "went broke" in the middle part of August of this year. Employees claimed unpaid wages in an amount of $28,000. They refused to work until paid, though they did assist in feeding the animals, consisting of elephants, horses, etc. They also prevented others from moving the animals or loading the show on a train to send it home to Oklahoma until an injunction was issued by the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia restraining such interference, after having been applied for several days previously, and after, according to the attorney for the owners of the circus, "the greatest game of poker I ever played with any Supreme Court justice."

THE employees spread the rumor that Little Joe, one of the elephants (there were five) was "bad" and would mind no one except his trainer. The trainer refused to work until paid. The owners of the show imported a trainer from the Middle West who had never handled this elephant, keeping this trainer under cover until ready to load. He walked up to Little Joe, slapped his trunk, turned him loose and the bad elephant minded like a child.

Several of the new employees, lined to load the circus, pulled canvas down around their ears, due to unfamiliarity with the big top. The American Legion gave a benefit entertainment in the Washington Auditorium for the unpaid employees. The employees retained two attorneys who seem to have used up a good portion of the money so secured.

The show was finally loaded on a train; a Penna. R. R. engine hooked up and it proceeded about two miles over the Maryland line, whereupon the air brakes slowly set on the entire train due to some one in the train setting up the emergency air brake, and the train came to rest opposite a flock of Maryland "Constabules", armed with writs of attachment before judgment, sworn out by the unpaid employees, who had accepted an invitation of the owners to ride home to Oklahoma as guests of the owners with fare and meals paid for by the owners.

THE Constabules proceeded to read the attachments to the engineer and then took charge of the train and animals, and the employees started sundry crap and poker games along the right of way. The engine was returned to Washington and the stock permitted to graze in nearby fields.

The following morning the Maryland judge, who had issued the attachments, decided, after a session of several hours' duration, that the writs were void because of the circus being an interstate commerce shipment, and ordered the train released; whereupon the attorneys for the employees swore out new and additional writs before another judge in Maryland, which said writs Constabules refused to serve unless bond for $125,000 was posted. Before this could be done an engine was hitched to the train and "highballed", the employees again riding the train as guests of the owners.

The attorneys for the employees attempted to have the train attached in Baltimore, and their chagrin can easily be imagined when the train went through Baltimore (a division point) without stopping. A telegram was finally received that the show had reached Oklahoma safely.

—R. A. HARMON

PLEASE address all communications intended for this section to "The Camp-fire", care of the magazine.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Flatboat

YOU can make a river craft as good as Huck Finn's for practically nothing.

Request:—"I am thinking of drifting down the rivers from Cincinnati to New Orleans next Summer. Where would I have the best chance of picking up a flatboat?"

—PAUL W. KOHN, Jackson, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. George A. Zerr:—How would this strike you? It has been done. Get several discarded railroad ties, nail several stringers crosswise, then nail planks on top. You'll find sufficient driftwood to do this; then for a few dollars you can get sufficient flooring to finish off your raft and then you can erect a tent on it, which will house you and provisions. This will be an ideal camping trip. However, if you intend to oar it, attach two long light poles with light boards nailed to the ends. You must carry a lantern at night, to prevent being run down by large steamers.

Log Cabin

STOVE vs. fireplace, with the stove preferred for Minnesota.

Request:—"I want to build a log cabin, with a stone fireplace, and I would appreciate your advice on building the chimney."

—EARL CROTTS, Osage, Minnesota

Reply, by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—A stone chimney, either rough stone, squared stone, or cobbles, set in cement mortar, is proper for a log house, but I hesitate to attempt to tell you how to build one in the small space of a letter. Better hunt up some local man who has done this kind of work, and get him to help with the job. Remember, too, if you plan to use this cabin the year round, that an open fireplace will consume wood almost as fast as you can cut it, in keeping a cabin warm in Minnesota Winter weather. A stove is not quite so much in keeping as an open fireplace, but is vastly more efficient. If you do use stone, test it first to see if the variety available will stand extreme heat without cracking, for some kinds of stone spall badly when exposed to fire.

Seri Indians

RED men who used to be hunted like rabbits.

Request:—"Please tell me something of the Seri Indians who inhabit the Island of Tiburon in the Gulf of Lower California—their habits, mode of living, etc. Has any effort been made to improve their lives? Are they molested in any way by the Mexicans?"

—R. BLACKBURN, St. Thomas, Ontario

Reply, by Mr. Arthur Woodward:—The Seri, living on Tiburon Island (Shark Island) originally consisted of four tribes according to the latest data, gathered by Dr. A. L. Kroeber of the University of California, and they seem to be more closely allied to the Yuman stocks of the Colorado than the Uto-Aztecan of Sonora.

Culturally they are very low in the scale. They appear to have little native religion and have been affected very slightly by any of the Christian creeds. They subsist largely upon shellfish, turtles and fish, supplementing this diet with waterfowl, eggs, land game, cactus fruit and mesquite.

In times past the Mexican government has raided Tiburon, and these Indians have been

hunted like rabbits. Undoubtedly the Seri were largely to blame for some of the fighting which took place. Now, however, they are living entirely upon Tiburon (formerly they also occupied the mainland) and are under the jurisdiction of Sr. Roberto Thomson of Hermosillo, who acted as a *jefe de vigilancia* over them—in other words an Indian agent for the government of Mexico.

Football

HARNESS dressing for pigskin.

Request:—"I have found that oil stretches the leather of a football. What dressing do you recommend?"

—WALTER HIRECKE, New York City

Reply, by Mr. John B. Foster:—I have consulted with experts in regard to the best dressing for your football and they are quite unanimous in favoring harness soap. They are strongly opposed to oil, which leaves the ball spongy; and it easily picks up dirt after it is oiled.

They do not guarantee that harness soap, which should be of a good quality, will prolong the life of the ball; but they are sure that it will prevent the cover from hardening and stiffening.

King Tut

"THE curse lives!" they say.

Request:—"Who was King Tut, or Tutankhamen? Did he do anything that would make him noted above other exhumed kings?"

—IRVING MINER, Cornell, Illinois

Reply, by Dr. Neville Whymant:—Tutankhamen was not, as you seem to have surmised, a particularly brilliant son of the old Pharaohs, but his importance arises from the fact that he represents, in his period, a time of transition from one stage of Egyptian civilization to another. A further point of importance in his case is that his tomb had not been desecrated as had many of the others in which valuable treasures and relics informative of the civilization of the period should have been found and were not.

In Tutankhamen's tomb were found not only valuable jewels and objects of art interest, but also furniture and models of such sort as to give a clue to the stage of development reached by the artisans and priests of the period. His tomb was not far from Luxor, and it is still a puzzle why it was not discovered earlier and rifled like many another.

Other Pharaohs' tombs have certainly been opened from time to time, but they held fewer treasures, precious and academic; and in the present case much of the publicity is due to the fact that a curse on the openers of the tomb was found shortly after penetration, and since that time four of those most closely associated with the opening have died. "The curse lives!" they say.

Blimp

A ONE-MAN airship propelled by a motorcycle engine.

Request:—"A friend and I are thinking about building a small one-man blimp.

1. How large should the gas bag be to carry one man and all necessary things?

2. What kind of gas should be used to inflate it?"

—LA MAR S. BELL, Fingerville, South Carolina

Reply, by Lieut. J. R. Starks:—1. I think that 22,000 cubic feet is about the smallest one-man blimp you can safely build. There have been a number smaller than this, but I have seen them buckle up on a bumpy day and tear to pieces when moored on a windy day. Some Army free balloons for two men (including weight of basket) are about 19,000 cubic feet. Translate the highly efficient spherical shape of this size balloon into the comparatively less efficient (lift per volume) shape of a blimp and you would need about 22,000 cubic feet to give you the lifting power that a 19,000 foot balloon would have. Your framework would be light and your motor would probably be a motorcycle engine and not a larger aeronautical engine; hence with one man and a light motor you would not have much more weight than the small free balloons carry when they lift two men and a basket.

2. Hydrogen would be the most efficient in lifting power. This gas is quite safe, contrary to popular opinion. That is, pure hydrogen is safe, but once let it get diluted with air and it looks for every possible chance to go "bang". However, with a blimp barely able to lift yourself and engine and fuel you would have to keep the hydrogen pure or you wouldn't be able to rise from the ground, except under power of the engine. Be careful to screen your exhaust pipe outlet, to catch all possible sparks.

Gold

DUTCH GUIANA is an unpleasant place in which to prospect for it.

Request:—"1. I am contemplating a prospecting trip into Dutch Guiana for gold. Is the back country accessible?

2. Would I have to pay heavy duties on my outfit when entering the country?"

—JOSEPH MAPES, St. Louis, Missouri

Reply, by Dr. Paul Vanorden Shaw:—1. Undoubtedly there is gold in the jungles of Dutch Guiana, and the cost of living would be practically nothing provided you could keep on living. Most districts where gold might be found are inaccessible, and climatic and other conditions are far more destructive than most people realize. The jungle is no place for a freelance without a large expedition or a great deal of jungle experience.

2. Your personal belongings would not be subject to a very heavy duty, but the minute you enter the country as a miner you are subject to a new set of laws and conditions in which retaliation to the American tariff is the main feu-

ture. I should not recommend going to Dutch Guiana in the hope of making money by gold mining.

Dory

DOWN East they swear by it; but it's not a good general service boat.

Request:—"I am interested in the Gloucester dory, and would like to know if power is ever used in it."

—CHAS. G. DUBELL, Camden, New Jersey

Reply, by Mr. Gerald T. White:—Many Gloucester dories have had engines installed, but I most positively do not recommend the genuine dory for power. The dory is ideal for the purpose intended—a seaworthy rowing boat that will nest on the decks of fishing schooners.

Unless loaded with fishing gear and catch the dory is not particularly stable. Down East they seldom acknowledge the faults of a dory, just as in certain sections of the country where the roads are deep sand and mud they will still claim the old Model T Ford is the best motor car. But, if you want a power boat for general service, there are many types more seaworthy and comfortable than the dory.

Legionnaire

WHEN France is at war with a Legionnaire's homeland. . .

Request:—"Considering that the World War was only fourteen years ago, why do the French allow so many Germans in their Foreign Legion?"

—JAMES C. JONES, Ft. Barrancas, Florida

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—It has been a policy of the Legion, almost from its organization more than one hundred years ago, to admit men of any nationality, even including enemy aliens. Incidentally, when the Legion was sent to France during the World War, the German members, at least those known as such, were left behind in Algeria to guard the frontiers, thus relieving French or colonial troops.

Australia

NOTES on the weather. Torrid Marblé Bar.

Request:—"Could you give me some information on the temperature of the more densely populated sections of Australia?

I would like to know the average high in Summer and the average low range in the Winter season, especially at Sydney, New South Wales."

—HENRY W. VOLZ, Phoenix, Arizona

Reply, by Mr. Alan Foley:—The cities, the temperatures of which are quoted, are the capitals of the various states:

CITY	Mean Summer	Mean Winter	Highest on Record	Lowest on Record
Canberra	67.7	44.2	102.6	14.0
Perth	72.8	66.0	108.4	34.2
Adelaide	73.0	53.0	116.3	32.0
Brisbane	76.7	59.7	108.8	38.1
Sydney	71.0	54.1	108.5	34.7
Melbourne	66.6	50.0	111.2	27.0
Hobart	61.6	46.8	105.2	27.0

Up in the Northern Territory, of course, the temperatures are much hotter, as you may gage from the fact that Marble Bar in Western Australia holds the world's record for a continuous hot spell, when for over a hundred consecutive days the shade temperature was over 100 degrees.

Decoration

TURKISH Crimean medals of the British navy.

Request:—"Was the Turkish Crimean medal to the British navy engraved on the rim?"

—ROBERT D. SHANK, Hollywood, California

Reply, by Mr. Howland Wood:—The Turkish Crimean medals to the British navy apparently were not marked, although now and then one turns up with the name impressed upon it. Probably these were done either by the individual, or for the individual by the British government. All I have personally seen are unstamped, although we have two or three medals to Sardinian soldiers that are stamped.

THE TRAIL AHEAD—THE NEXT ISSUE OF *ADVENTURE*, JANUARY 15th

GOOD MEN *and* TRUE

A powerful story of the World War, showing that patriotism is a quality inbred in all men; and that when they deem the cause just, none will hold any sacrifice too great—even to the last pacifist and malcontent. If you want Peter B. Kyne at his very best, don't miss this fine red-blooded fighting story!

By PETER B. KYNE

And These Other Good Stories

TRADERS, a story of the Old West, by W. C. TUTTLE; A SCRIPTURAL QUOTATION, a story of guile, pearls and crime, by H. BEDFORD-JONES; OF SLANDER, a story of Medieval Italy, by F. R. BUCKLEY; Part II of THE BUNGLERS, a novel of the Canadian campaign in the War of 1812, by HUGH PENDEXTER; FIVE HUNDRED IN GOLD, a humorous story of the sea and the banana republics, by R. V. GERY; PALM OIL RUFFIAN, a story of witchcraft in southern Nigeria; and the conclusion of SCALAWAG, a novel of the SOUTH SEA ISLANDS, by GORDON YOUNG.

NEVER PARCHED
NEVER TOASTED

Camels are always mild

FOR a smoke that is mild and cool, switch to Camel, the fresh cigarette. A blend of choice Turkish and mellow sun-ripened Domestic tobaccos, perfectly conditioned, Camels are made fresh and then kept fresh by the Camel Humidor Pack. Try them, for just one day, then leave them —if you care to.

R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO COMPANY
Winston-Salem, N. C.

Don't remove the Camel Humidor Pack—it is protection against perfume and powder odors, dust and germs. Buy Camels by the carton for home or office. The Humidor Pack keeps Camels fresh