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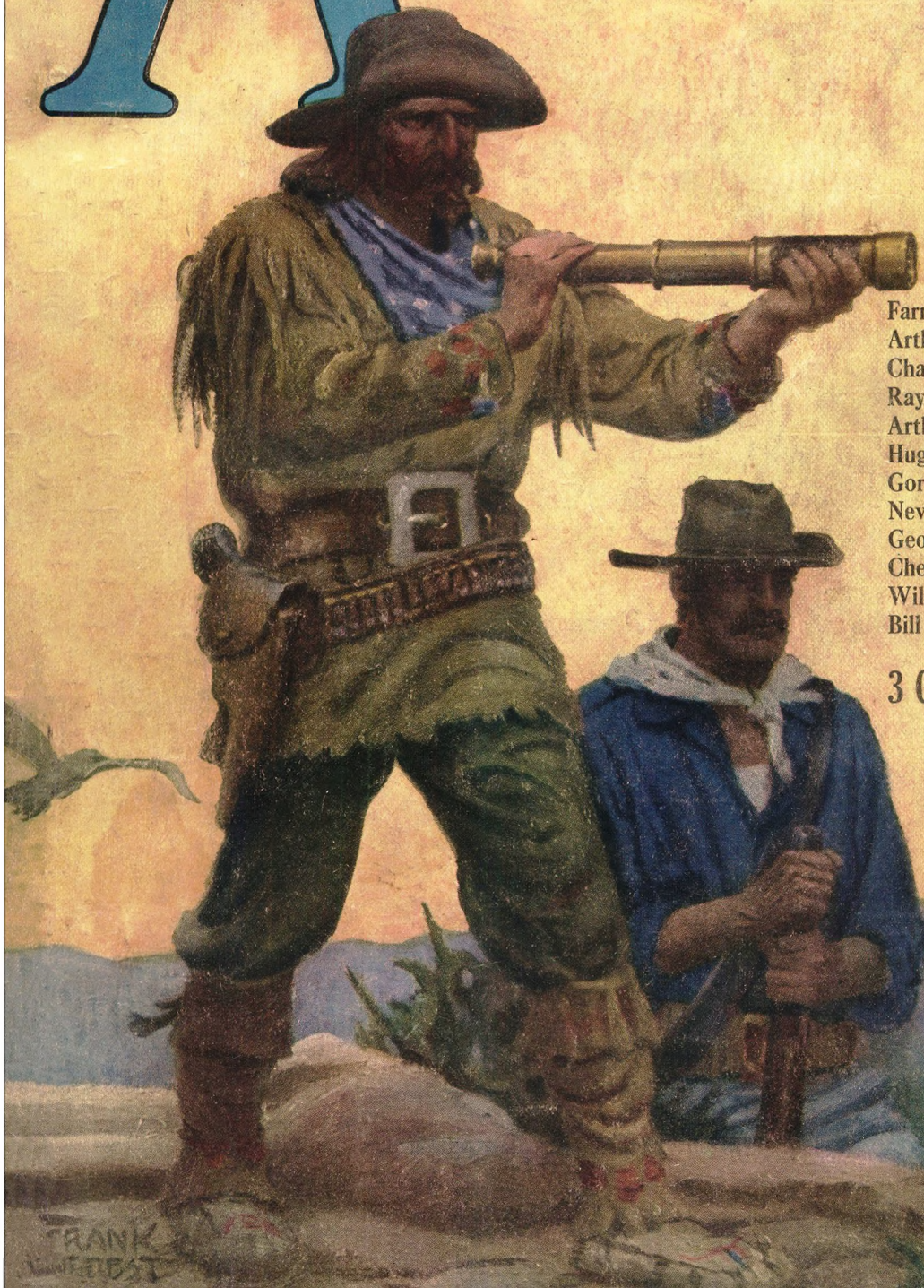

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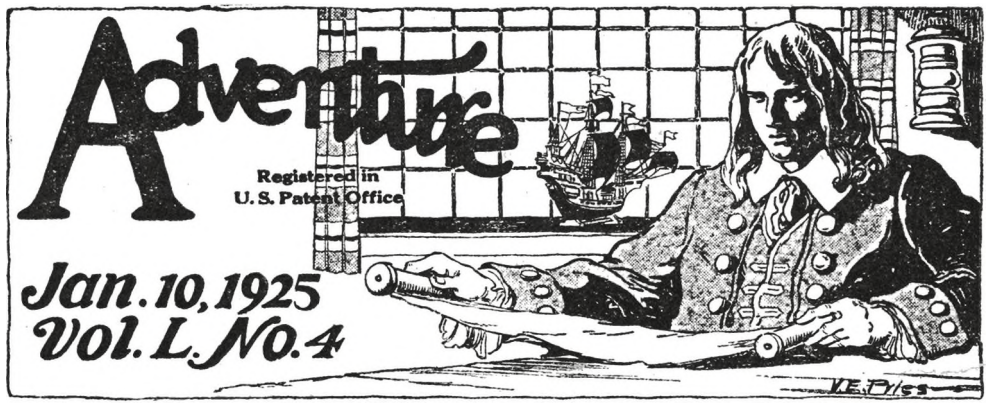

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Contents for January 10th, 1925, Issue

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(*Continued from preceding page*)

Three Complete Novelettes

BUD had a six-gun education and a prison record. Things looked black for him when the biggest cattleman in Moolock County accused him of rustling. And then *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* chanced along. "THE LOVABLE LIAR," a complete novelette by W. C. Tuttle, in the next issue.

THEY had an awful battle for the Caribbean trade. "FIGHTERS FAIR AND FOUL," a novelette by John Webb, complete in the next issue.

FOUR shots in the dark. A novelette of lumbering in the Northwest — "CROOKED DEALS," complete in the next issue, by Edward Speyer.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

Jan. 10, 1925 Adventure Vol. I No. 4

The Courage Medicine

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE by Gordon MacGregor

Author of "The Trail Smellers," "The Inca's Ransom," etc.

THE Senhor Americano is a *scientifico* and would know all about the *caapi*, the drug that gives courage; and men have told him to seek out Theophilo Da Costa? What, the learned doctors of Manaos City and the venders of herbs in the marketplace have not already sold the senhor this root and that root and told him that it was the *caapi* of the upriver Indians?

Ah, the senhor would go to study the *caapi* in its own place where it grows? Oho, that is different. Yes, without doubt those medicine pedlers would send you to a man of the upper rivers; and to whom rather than to me, who knows all about the *caapi?*

That, the senhor says, no man knows? The senhor does not understand. I am Theophilo Da Costa; and *I* tell you that I know of at least one tribe that uses the *caapi* and that I have witnessed the whole uncanny ceremony that they go through to give them courage for a terrific ordeal. I tell you more than that. I say that I myself have drunk the *caapi*. I and but one other white man. And as to gaining courage therefrom—well, I don't know. For myself, I, who consider myself no coward, had no stomach for that ordeal. But listen and I will tell you; and the senhor shall then judge for himself whether a man may drink courage out of a drug.

HE WAS a *compadre* of the senhor's that other white man. An *Americano*, and no sort of *scientifico* at all. He just came to me and besought me with fat rolls of money in his hands to take him

where he might get this *caapi* of which he had heard; for he sorely needed courage for a certain purpose of his own; and he added, while yet the fear of death was in his eyes, that, having obtained this courage medicine he would have to make a journey into the Rio Branco country *alone*.

A big man of bone he was; though overfleshy for his time of youth; and his face held the makings of a whole man in it; but the lines in it were soft yet; and the eyes, instead of the strong purpose of a whole man, held only pleading and the enthusiasm of visions which needed the hardening into resolve.

"Hmm. Good metal," said I to myself, "but unproven."

I could see how it was with him. The youth came of a family of position and wealth, and the way of his life had been made too easy for him. What man, surrounded by luxury and sheltered by much money has an opportunity to find his own manhood?

So I asked him no questions at all about his mysterious purpose or his journey into the Branco. What need? Am I a fool? Why does a young man with fear in his eyes leave all the comforts that wealth can buy and go into the farthest ends of the jungle? Because some woman has made a fool of him and has driven him to the test. We who live in the jungles meet many such; and as they die on our hands they gasp out their tale and send pitiful messages in our care to those others who have had the good sense to stay at home.

And why should this particular young man require to go out into the Branco *alone?* Did he think I was blind as well as a fool? Did I not know that out of the Branco, which flows down from the Guianas into the Rio Negro, there came tales of diamonds which grew more insistent with every month? And was it not then clear that the woman demanded diamonds as the proof of his courage and devotion?

But who shall counsel headstrong youth when a woman drives? So I said to him only:

"*Homem*, you can not buy courage; nor can you eat it. But if you *must* have this *caapi*, mark well what I say. We must journey to the Tiquié River, no less. A river of the exact center of the earth; for it flows into the Uaupes at the very line of the Equator. A river that is unknown to any of us river men, even to me; for there live the Tucana, who have the habit, not uncommon in this Amazonas of ours, of keeping a strong outpost village at the mouth of their water to warn off strangers; and if the strangers are also fools and insist, they shoot the little darts of the *uirari* poison at them out of blowguns. The purpose for which you need the *caapi* of the Tiquié Tucana is your own; but weigh it well, *amigo mio*, weigh it well."

Still the young man insisted, while he yet trembled at my recital, that his need was imperative; that life without gaining his purpose was not worth living; and he offered to pay me whatever I would.

Pois bem, senhor, we of the upper rivers do not pass a third of our lives amongst savages and a third in dugout canoes and a third in sick bed for the salvation of our souls, as do the good missionaries. So, though I had small relish for the sudden breaking-in of this youth from the lap of luxury into the beyond of civilization, since he had money in fat rolls and the courage to admit that he needed courage, I felt a sympathy for him, who, needing no wealth, was yet befooled by a woman into risking his life to find it for her gratification. So I made contract with him to take him to this Tiquié River and to do there whatsoever I might to make friends with those implacable Indians—which task has fallen to me before now—and to obtain for him some of this courage medicine which he so much desired.

YET the travel turned out to be not so easy as I had hoped. It was just by ill chance a bad time for me. It is my custom to keep a *batelão* in each of the rivers on which I trade. A stout boat of my own building, and yet as nearly indestructible as our cataracts demand, being indeed no more than a solid body of a long war canoe with an added freeboard of a couple of planks and a palm thatch roof over the latter end of it.

Such a boat will carry two thousand kilos of freight in addition to its six paddle men and a passenger or two; and such a boat I keep usually at Santa Isabel, which is the furthest station on the Rio Negro which is reached by the river steamer.

But it had been my ill fortune to wreck the boat at the whirlpool of O Forno in the forty-mile cataract of São Gabriel. No

fault of mine, senhor. I would take it as great shame to lose a boat through lack of care or skill. But in this case—as my Indians insisted, on account of refusing to make the sacrifice to the demon of O Forno —a whole tree trunk, submerged in the whirlpool, driving suddenly upwards like a battering ram, struck me from beneath and drove me upon the rocks.

Que Deus lhe maldiça. It was a great loss to me. All my freight and two Indians, one of whom was a good man on the bow paddle. So I had to arrange to hire boats as we went along. I made the suggestion to the young man that we wait till a *batelão* might be built, a question of no more than a month or so.

But the youth was as all you *Americanos*. When all time was before us he counted time as a thing of inestimable value and insisted that we push forward with speed. *Então*, the discomfort was his as well as mine; and he, as I have said, was not used to discomfort.

Had I built a *batelão* of my own design, I would have had a space to swing two hammocks. As it was, we had to hire such boats and canoes as were available and had to make camp—since he found it impossible to sleep in the wet bottom of a canoe—ashore every night.

Sleeping ashore, senhor, in those upper jungles is a laborious luxury. For the jungle grows for miles at a stretch down to the water's edge and out into the shallows. A day one may travel the upper reaches of the Rio Negro and see no shore; only black water rushing between giant tree roots; and how far beyond that impenetrable fringe the shore may lie, no man knows.

Only here and there a point of high land with a rocky front, jutting out of the sea of jungle, offers a camping place. And since the good God did not design the Amazon jungles for man to travel, He did not arrange these camp sites at convenient distances.

As often as not it would be necessary to make camp while yet a good two or three hours of daylight remained; for the next possible spot would be beyond reach within that time. Much of this so vaulable time was therefore lost; more, in the long run, than if we had waited to build a *batelão*. But the Senhor Americano, so queer was his reasoning, was satisfied, since we were at least, as he insisted, doing something.

As for me, I shrugged and continued on in that haphazard manner; for I have long since given up the thought that it might be possible to teach the senhor's restless compatriots to take things easily. It was galling indeed that I, Theophilo Da Costa, who was known among river men, as a maker of my forty miles a day when the currents were not too bad, should lag along at a fifteen or a twenty. But since the man who paid was content, should I wear myself out in the struggle?

And, *quê caramba*, what more could one do when one must sleep in all the security of a tent in order, forsooth, that the vampire bats might not settle upon one's face. Look senhor, twenty years have I traveled these rivers without a tent, ever since I was a boy; and only five scars of the bats do I carry. But the youth, as I have said, was unaccustomed to the life of a man, and he had truly a horror of the little *murcielagos;* much more than of the *tigre* or of snakes.

Clammy things, he called them in his unreasoning fear; and he shrank, as one does under the whine of a bullet, when they flitted by his head. But he grew. The boy grew as we journeyed.

Came a time when the camp site that we had aimed for was in possession of the *sauba* ants. Why, only the good God can say; for there was nothing to eat on that bare, outjutting rock; and what man can explain the doings of ants? Except that it was dusk, and that the *sauba* go about their fiend's ways at night.

I showed the fearful one how one might sleep in security among the *sauba* by laying a trail of *farinha* meal round one's blanket; for they, as long as there was good food left, would carry that off grain by grain and would not pass the barrier to molest the sleeper; being by preference eaters of roots and leaves and anything, in fact, that grows. Though they are no bigots, I can tell you, in that respect, as the innumerable scars on the legs of all jungle men will attest.

It was evidence of the youth's growing confidence that he agreed to sleep at all in the circumstances. Though the mountain of good *farinha* that he built around his cot —for, believe me or no, senhor, he carried a cot to sleep in—caused my Indian paddle men to draw in their bellies and groan.

But consider what mischance must needs happen for the benefit of this man who was struggling with his fear. I awoke in the

night, sensing that strange something which always rouses the jungle man. Without moving, I listened. There was no sound except the steady, soft, clip clip, of the ants' jaws, as was to be expected; which was comforting reassurance in itself that no wild beast was anywhere near us on that rock.

What then, had awakened me, I wondered. I felt for my rifle and listened still. Then all at once I realized the strangeness. The sound of the clipping jaws, beside being all around me, was also above.

"*Dientro*," said I. "Do they fly too, these accursed ants?"

I opened my eyes; and lo and behold, where I had gone to sleep in a tent, I saw now the stars clear above me.

"*Defende me Deus!*" I exclaimed as I rubbed my eyes. "Has the tent blown away?"

And with my speech the young senhor spoke to me at once, showing that while he had indeed lain down, he had slept not at all.

"The roof," said he, "has been disappearing piecemeal for the last hour. What new plague of the jungle is this?"

And there was anger in his voice besides the fear. A good sign. For it is my observation that anger and fear do not mix well.

"Name of a name!" said I, "I thought I knew all the mischances that might happen in the jungle. But this is new. Lie still my friend and pray that the rock does not melt from under us."

As indeed was all that was possible. Marooned we were within our charmed circles of *farinha* meal. And, believe me, senhor, one does not step abroad in the night when the *sauba* are on the path. An inch long they come in those jungles; and their jaw spread is the greatest of all the ants; a quarter of their length, no less. So I made sure by match light that my barrier of meal was still sufficient and dozed again till the dawn; our very isolation being, as I have said, our security.

And with the first light what do you think we discovered? *Caramba*, that the ants had made a highway along the tent ropes and had eaten up most of the top!

Why, who can say? Unless it was that the lower wall portions were wet from contact with the weed growth of former camp sites while the top remained dry; and who can guess what new thing the *sauba* will eat? Leggings I have seen them demolish in a night; and shoes; and well-worn tasty breeches. But never having slept in a tent in my life, how should I know that they would relish tent cloth?

"This," I told the boy, "comes of sleeping on shore. In a boat one has security, even though it be wet."

And he, forsooth, was able to laugh at me.

But out of that evil came good. For the tent being now useless, that weight was perforce discarded; and he learned to sleep like the rest of us, with his head covered by a corner of his blanket against the visits of the bats.

But, having overcome that fear, he was beset now with an anxiety that he lacked the protection of walls, of something, even though only canvas, against the beasts of the night.

Truly, that youth of the cities was able to think up more dangers than I ever knew about. But he grew out of that too, in time; and there came a day when he discarded a cot and learned to sleep in a hammock slung among the trees, thereby reducing by a full half the labor of making camp. But that was much later.

So we progressed. Though slowly enough. For this matter of hiring boats from local rubber men and nut gatherers is an unsatisfactory business. To begin with, they do not care to rent out to people going the good Lord knows whither; and it was only that I, Theophilo, was known to them that enabled me to get boats at all.

And to go on with, those local paddle men whom those petty traders supplied would not go beyond the borders of their own tribes. So our progression was in a series of small jumps of a few days at a time with a more or less tedious period of bargaining between each. As yet we had experienced no hardship of travel.

WE REACHED the great *caxoeira* of São Gabriel in due time; and I put the proposal to the boy that he could take an Indian as guide and walk the safe jungle trail of forty miles and camp then for a few days till I brought the boat up through the cataracts. He hesitated over the plan, and I could see that he clutched eagerly at the thought. But there for the first time I saw determination creep into his eyes; and he said, no, he would stay in the

boat with me and see how it was done.

"Good lad!" said I, and no more.

And so he stayed in the boat; and while his eyes grew dark with alarm as we hung on the edge of a whirlpool or hauled up against a stiff current, trusting to a rope which an Indian had made fast to a tree, he made no other sign; and after the first day of it he was able even to light a pipe and hold it between his teeth—where it duly went out for lack of drawing.

But he grew all the while. His astonishment at finding at São Gabriel a feeble old priest of a mission was an act of a comedy.

"How did that old man ever get up here?" he kept demanding. "Is there a season when the water is different from what we have just gone through?"

"Assuredly there is," I told him. "In the rainy season the water is much different—and then one does not pass at all."

But the thought of that feeble old man living there, unprotected and isolated from all civilization, took hold of him, I could see, and he pondered on it deeply.

"Here commences the real jungle," I told him, laughing. "For this is the final outpost of civilization. Henceforward, hard travel."

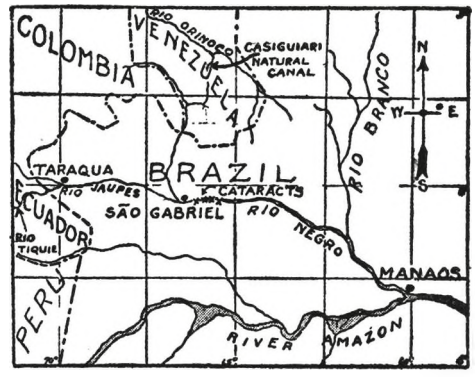
Whereupon he called upon the inferno in the manner of the gringos and demanded what I called the travel that was passed. And what do you think was the first hardship that struck him? The fact that we left our money in the care of the good priest against our return. For after São Gabriel money is but valueless weight, and a kitchen knife is worth more to those farther Indians than the same weight in gems.

But to this young scion of wealth the thought of being without money, coins, in his pocket was truly the leaving behind of the last vestige of all things that he had been brought up to require. And verily for a while his imagination seized hold of the fact to build up for himself a host of new fears about things which might now happen.

But he outgrew it as he had adapted himself to other things. And by the time that we reached the double stream, the one half the black water of the Negro and the other half the white water of the Uaupes, he was asking with bravado what dangers there were here worse than below the last limit of civilization.

But the fly belt that we passed through with our entry into the Uaupes soon put a damper on his bravado. As for me, I am dark complexioned and well burned by twenty years of sun, and on my face they do not show. But on his fresh white skin those myriad *piumes* of the Uaupes, that raise a tiny blood blister with each bite, made such a *fiesta* that at a short distance the pustules merged and he looked like an Indian.

Yet at this, though he groaned at his defenselessness, he did not complain. Here was merely discomfort; and discomfort he



had grown to accept as a part of the daily travel. It was nothing to *fear;* and it was the thought of fear that obsessed him.

"Senhor," said I to him, for we had grown to be friendly enough to talk of things intimately, "what is this fear thing that you are afraid of?"

And he thought a while and answered.

"It is just that. I am afraid of being afraid."

"Afraid of what?" said I.

He replied that he did not exactly know. He was afraid of all manner of things that might befall. All his life, he said, he had been the scorn of his youthful companions because he shrank from doing the things wherein danger *might* lie. Their sports and their contests and their wild rides in automobiles; all these held terrors for him. Particularly was he afraid of facing his fellow man in controversy. He had never had a fight, though often teased and beaten. All these things were a source of unspeakable shame to him—and, he added with some hesitation, to certain others.

"Oho," said I to myself, "to the woman, of course, who scorns him for his pusillanimity."

And I sought to comfort the obvious shame of his self confession by telling him that all men were afraid of something or other at some time. Whereat he returned quickly:

"Yes. But they have the courage to go on in spite of it."

"Good," said I. "Then we have no need to go any farther on this wild chase after *caapi*. For you have been afraid, yet you have come thus far."

Thereupon he turned red through the purple-brown of his *piume* bites and murmured that he realized now the shame of all his little fears where it turned out that no danger had existed.

"M-hm," thought I to myself. "There has been no time in my life's knowledge when we have not considered the passing of the *caxoeira* of São Gabriel as six days of concentrated danger."

And it came into my mind that the trouble with this youth was but a confusion between courage and confidence. He had been too sheltered in his upbringing to know that he could meet and overcome the unknown danger which *might* exist—which knowledge, after all, is the courage which enables a man to go on.

"Well," I told him, "be of good heart. Dangers will be familiar traveling companions of yours by the time you go alone on that business which calls you to the Rio Branco."

And there, as I had once before seen the first sign of determination come into his eyes, I saw now in his face the beginnings of the hardness which comes to a man who finds his own spirit. He said nothing. But I felt sure that when a danger came he, though he might lose his head—as who may not who is unaccustomed to meet danger?—he would at least not run away from it.

And in truth, when we fell presently into a real and very immediate danger, he recognized it no more than he had the peril of the *caxoeira*. In this wise it came about.

THE last of the old rubber outposts had been at a place called the Isla Jacaré, the Island of Aligators. Here remained now a former rubber agent by the name of Manduco, a brigand by birth and a killer of defenseless Indians. With him I haggled for three days for the hire of his leaky old boat of the rubber days and for six Indians to paddle it.

"*Canastos*," he growled, "for ten years, ever since the accursed rubber lured me into this country and then left me high and dry, I have prophesied that Theophilo Da Costa would go once too often on one of his wild trips; and this one is it. Who will pay me for my boat when you never return from the Tiquié?"

But I told him I would give him a letter to the good *padre* of São Gabriel to pay him one hundred milreis for the hire of his boat; and his Indians I would pay in trade at the rate of six meters of print cloth per man for each month that I used them.

"As for the Indians," he said, "you may pay them a meter a day or nothing at all, as you please—until they run away from you in this Tiquié country. But for the certain loss of my boat that is not enough. I suppose that —— missionary has relieved you already of everything that is worthwhile. Half his income comes from the effects of fools who go up river and never return; and the other half from the few wise ones who are so glad to get back that they make an offering. Why should I also not make a profit on your death?"

And to that he stuck till I had to agree to pay him the full price of his boat, and then he tried to cajole me into leaving the half of my gear in his keeping. But since I remained obdurate, he made other plans for its acquisition.

Six Indians he provided with his boat; and he stood on the shore to tell us with with emphasis *adios*, the final farewell, instead of *até logo*, adding as the last cheering word:

"It is but three months ago that the canoe of two feather gatherers floated down from somewhere up there, empty except for a *zarabatan*, a blow gun, laid carefully in the very middle."

And he grinned at the merry jest. The young senhor, who was beginning to understand Portuguese, asked me if any of all this talk might be true. I shrugged.

"Who knows?" I said. "The man is a liar by heredity. Yet, if true, those were two of the many fools. We are two of the few wise ones."

And I told him further that the wise ones came back to make offering by the simple method of doing nothing foolish; and it would be foolish not to watch very carefully those six Indians of Manduco's. For I could see within the first day that they

were no paddle men; but villainous dependents of that arch villain, relatives, no doubt, of his sundry women.

Whereat the youth said nothing, as was his way when he pondered deeply. But presently I saw him with determination in his face removing the old cartridges from his pistol and putting in new ones; and I wondered by what observation he had learned that precaution.

Yet in spite of precaution and my boast, we were not quite wise enough.

It had been my intention, upon reaching the Rio Tiquié, to tie up at the opposite bank from that at which it entered the Uaupes, and to send then an Indian with my carved stick to the chief of their outpost village to institute negotiations before venturing our necks into that territory.

Yet we traveled up on the right bank, the Tiquié side, because Manduco's Indians said that since we must needs make camp ashore, good sites were available on that side. Which indeed was true, and which I was glad to know; for my custom had been always to keep the left bank, with a mile of good water between me and that Tiquié of unsavory reputation; for it is the fools who run risk when there is no need.

It happened thus that on the fourth night we made camp on the right bank, the last before crossing over to the other side. I was having my day of the *terciaria malaria*, which takes me always at sunset and lasts for three hours before the ague passes and I can walk again. Else we should not have fallen so easily into the trap. But I was in no condition to note localities and signs.

My chill was upon me when we arrived at what seemed a suitable place; so I staggered ashore and shivered in my hammock, while the camp arrangements fell upon the shoulders of the young senhor. All of which he carried out with the dispatch which he had learned, and it was only his inexperience in observation which held him from suspicion.

And it was also our good fortune that the boat leaked abominably; for which reason we had instituted the custom of putting ashore overnight most of our goods and gear which would suffer from wetness.

So it came about that while I lay helpless, there was a shouting and a splashing and a cursing; and the explanation of it, when I was afoot again, was that while the senhor had been busy with the stowing of gear those crafty Indians had quietly slipped the rope and paddled off downriver in a panic with such goods as remained on board.

IT WAS then that I gave the senhor leave to curse me for a fool. Treachery I had expected from that rogue Manduco; but a petty stealing of a few bolts of cloth and some food, never. The loss was not great. Some little cloth, as I said, and a vast weight of food in tin cans which we had dragged with us half across the continent because the senhor had deemed them necessary for his subsistence.

So that, in spite of my rage against that petty robber, I was able to laugh at the misfortune; for truly that bulk of metal had been a sore trial to me. And presently, as I moved about the camp with a lantern, picking up the signs that I now found time to observe for the first time, I heard the boy laughing also; and he said that he laughed at the thought of the pleasant surprize we should afford to Manduco upon our return. Then I told him:

"*Amigo*, here is no laughing matter. The stealing of our gear is nothing; but there was more to that plan of Manduco's than just stealing; for the loss of a boat in these upper rivers is as serious as the loss of a camel in the desert; and without a craft of some sort we can neither go back nor forward."

"Pshaw!" said he with the confidence that was becoming his habit. "In a week we can build a raft and float back with the current to have our little talk with Manduco."

"Assuredly, my friend," I told him, "when time is of no value one can build anything, even a *batelão*. But just now are the little minutes of time more important than ever in your life. For all the very plain signs tell me even in the dark that this high land is a well-used landing-place for canoes—and I know of no settlement along this shore except the Tucana outpost of Taraquá."

It was here that I expected him to demonstrate some of his fear that he so bragged about. But he, after a silence, said only:

"The place of the Indians who use the *caapi?* Then we have arrived."

Ma'e Deus! I would have held discussion with the madman as to what need he had to go hunting for *caapi*. But here was no time nor place to argue.

Stranded we were. Marooned upon the

edge of the thick jungle on a little strip of high land which led back straight to the most hostile village in all the upper Uaupes. Some sort of preparation for defense was the first necessity.

And yet, what would be the use? What defense can two men prepare in the dark against a village of a hundred warriors who could creep through the blackness like jungle cats and blow a noiseless dart tipped with immediate death out of nowhere? There was nothing that one could do except promise offering to the mission chapel on the one hand and to hope on the other that the Taraquanas might not be in an ugly mood.

As for me, I sat surrounded by weapons and did both with fervor and concentration for the rest of the night. The senhor, too, loaded up his sundry expensive guns and sat silent on his cot—doubtless praying.

Whether it was the promises or the prayers which prevailed, I can not say. But the morning finally came, and we were still alive. Never was I more thankful for daylight; and I was prepared for it.

Between donating my belongings piecemeal to the greater glory of the good São Gabriel, I had been planning and cogitating and replanning; and my decision was to play the bold course—since it was the only one open—and to trust to the luck which had always been with me in my dealings with bad Indians.

SO I took my carved stick and, holding it well in view, I walked up the path which led to the village, looking neither to right nor to left, though I knew that I passed through a lane of Indians lying in the underbrush with blowguns to their lips.

By the grace of God no signal was given, and I reached the clearing on my own feet. Some two hundred meters back from the river it was, with three great community houses, *molocas* as they call them, fronting it; and it was empty of all life, even of fowls and dogs.

The central *moloca* was, of course, the council house, a long barrack of forty meters in length by a frontage of twenty-five, built of the split trunks of *chunto* palm and thatched with its leaves. No sign of life moved, except the eyes of two thick-set warriors who leaned naked upon their tall feathered spears before the closed door.

I knew that this was ceremonial, and therefore that some move had been expected of me before deciding on the killing. The closed door—which ordinarily among all those upriver Indians would remain open the year round—was a sign that welcome was withheld. Speaking, therefore, no word, I planted the sharp end of my carved stick in the ground before the council house and went back the way that I had come.

My calling card had been delivered—though it was a great loss of dignity not to have sent it by the hands of a servant. Still, the ceremony of delivery had been accomplished, and upon its reception hung our fate.

As I passed for the second time through that lane of hidden Indians I promised the half of my goods to the altar of São Gabriel; and the dignified walk at which I had set out increased to the swift stride of the jabiru stork, while the little hairs crawled all up and down my back.

"Now," said I to the young senhor, "be very much afraid and make prayers that there has been no recent misfortune in the village which the witch-doctors can blame upon us."

For I was in no mood to be soft-spoken, and I judged it best to let the panic run its course now rather than be hampered by a fear-crazed youth later when the need for action might be imperative. But he, though his eyes indeed showed the pain of an extreme effort of the will, answered nothing.

Till finally, between his teeth:

"No, my good friend and guide. I have learned that the time to be afraid is when you show anxiety."

"*Meu Deus!*" I cried. "I show it now, for this hour I consider the most anxious of my life."

But he grunted forth a hard laugh and made oath after the manner of you *Americanos*.

"Shucks of the corn?" he said. "No, my friend. You are not yet afraid."

Yet indeed I was. Afraid down to the cold marrow of my bones. Though how was I to show it to this maniac who considered that he held a monopoly on fear? Nor could I convince him during the long period of waiting which followed; and he sat and waited as I did, cold-set and silent.

But the luck, it so happened, remained

good, and no silent death streaked out of the jungle upon us. Instead, there came as the day wore on, a sturdy man of middle age who wore nothing but a G string and a tassel above his left elbow made of the hair of the red howler monkey and of toucan feathers; by which I knew he was a sub-chief.

He carried my carved stick and another, both of which he planted in the ground and then squatted behind them. I squatted immediately as he did, facing him with the sticks between us; and he gave then the greeting, speaking in the language which we call *Geral*, which is a lingua franca for inter-communication among all these Indians of upper Amazonas.

"*Hath the á purê, Kariwa,*" he said. "The stick of Theophilo is known to us by hearsay. So the chief of Taraquá, whose name is K'Aandi, sends his stick to you."

It was then that I promised the rest of all my goods to the mission chapel in honor of all the saints by whose grace I had maintained a reputation for fair dealing among the Indians of the Bahuana and Desana who bordered on these Tiquié Tucanas; and at that moment I wrote off as well, and overwell spent all the extra little items of trade goods and the good measures of cloth which at times had seemed less necessary than keen bargaining demanded.

That I spoiled the Indians was what was thrown up to me by other—and less successful—upriver men; and my answer henceforth I considered as ready—that I had well spoiled then, *Deugraças.*"

The chief's personal stick was a sign of the return call; and I knew that welcome was extended to us, a thing that had not been known from these Tiquié Tucanas to a white man before. It was the ceremony now that we send a present back to the chief with his stick. And what, thought I, would be a most unusual and honorable gift?

I cast about swiftly in my mind—and then I saw it, lying hatefully before my eyes; and such was my relief from the anxiety of the last hours that I was able to laugh out loud.

"Ho ho," said I to the senhor. "The acceptable sacrifice is to hand. We must send him, as a gift never yet seen in these parts—your cot."

And without more ado I snatched the cumbrous thing from where it still stood after the night's use and piled it upon the broad back of the sub-chief and packed him off. And I laughed anew at the sight of his dignity under that thing of struts and hooks and canvas, and then turned to laugh at the face of the senhor as his last comfort of civilization was torn from him.

THIS indeed was his greatest hardship of the whole expedition; for he was one of those who had pampered himself to the belief that sleep was a function of importance which must take place in a feather bed; and he had considered it a hardship enough at the outset to sleep upon this thing, even with a vast roll of a mattress which cumbered the canoes and boats of our travel till the wetness which it sopped up out of the bilges rendered it more of a weight than one man could lift, and the mildew finally rotted it away.

Thereafter he had clung to the cot as the last remnant of things necessary to civilized man—even after he has given up shaving and permitted his beard to grow. His face, therefore, in the present circumstance of relief was a source of much joy to me. Yet presently he, too, was able to laugh; and I smote him on the shoulder and said to him:

"My advice to you, *amigo*, is that when the chief asks what present you want in return, you tell him a grass hammock. For in a hammock you must sleep henceforth; and a hammock such as this chief will present will be a wondrous thing woven by hand from hand-twisted fibers and embellished with the feathers of humming birds; a work of one family for a year. Take it and bring it back to your own country to brag about when you return; for the *Americanos* who possess such are not many."

Which he did. And the hammock which he received in exchange for his accursed cot was indeed a thing of beauty.

The chief, K'Aandi, when the long ceremony of the greeting and the introducing to the tribe with the smoking of the great community cigar was concluded, must needs be shown like a child how the toy worked.

In his own corner of the *moloca*—which among all these Indians is the far left one from the door—he squatted over the thing while we demonstrated its collapsible virtue; and it was a wonder to me how in that community house of fifty families where there

was no privacy other than a low rail to mark off the little three-meter section of one family from another, the rest respected his privacy and went about their business taking no more notice of us than if we had been shut off from their view by stone walls; though they must have been torn asunder to see the working of this marvel.

As for the chief, so absorbed was he with the mechanism of the foul thing that it was not until he had learned how to take it apart and reassemble it with his own hands that he was content to recline upon it and fill his cheek with a wad of the *ipadú* powder and ask of us what was the reason of our coming.

I judged it wise to tell him a tale so marvellous that all suspicion of encroachment upon his country by the white man or of exploitation of his people would be immediately removed. So—

"Kaa, Father of Andi," I told him, "this youth who accompanies me is from a place of many *molocas* on a river many years journey by canoe from here. Unlike all other men he is, in that he boasts that he has fear. He is afraid of all manner of things, and he would undergo the *caapi* treatment to cure that fear."

So great was the astonishment of the chief that the success of the story was instant. He paused with a bone spoon of the *ipadú* half raised to his mouth and called sundry of the sub-chiefs over to his corner of the *moloca* to view this wonder, one much more amazing than the miracle of the folding cot. With their own ears they had to hear me repeat the accusation; and they clicked their tongues and murmured, *"Qua gani?"* in their astonishment that the other did not resent it.

For, as among all savages, as the Senhor Scientifico will immediately understand, courage was to them the first attribute of a man, ranking even before strength. It is my observation that *moral* courage, the courage to admit that one lacks courage, is the development of civilized man.

So amazing was this confession to those savages that all thoughts of doubt against us was immediately banished from their minds. So extraordinary a reason for our coming *must* be true; and the chiefs squatted in a half circle facing the wondrous enigma and had me ask him innumerable questions as to what he feared, and if so, why?

Did he fear the *tigre* of the jungle, they wanted to know, or venomous snakes? Or fast water among rocks? Such things they could understand.

But, well—er; no, not just those things so much, replied the young senhor. But——

"But what?" they demanded.

What more was there in a man's life to fear? Enemies? Why? What could one man do that another might not; and in warfare was it not a matter of luck whom the darts struck and who escaped?

No, he had not just thought of enemies, replied the *senhor*, finding it embarrassing to answer these so direct questions about his obsession. In fact, he said, it was not so long ago that he had been through a very big war.

"Not enemies? That was good," said the chorus of chiefs. "Well, what then?"

Ah, they had it! He feared, of course, the *Jurupari*, the devil-devil who lived in the fierce thunderstorms of that equatorial belt; and in the dark jungles and in certain deep pools. That was understandable, and not so very shameful; for while they themselves, the Tucana of the Tiquié, did not fear the *Jurupari*, they knew that many other tribes feared him greatly; and they were none the worse hunters or warriors for that.

But here the senhor was on safe ground.

"By no means," he shouted, and he laughed at the thought. "The *Jurupari* of all things he did not fear."

"Amm-ma parú!" muttered the savages; and they clapped their hands to their mouths.

For, while one might not fear the *Jurupari*, one hardly ventured to laugh at him.

Forthwith innumerable further questions they showered upon me to ask this most peculiar young man. Would he really dare to stand out in the open in a thunder shower? And would he dip his hand in certain black pools that they could show him and call upon the *Jurupari* to take him if he could? And would he even stand alone without weapons for one hour under certain trees in the deep jungle? *Anu-i qué!* He must be a very great witch-doctor.

Then K'Aandi, the chief, who had been studying this phenomenon, pointed his finger at the youth and said to me:

"This I would know. Ask the young *Kariwa* who laughs at the *Jurupari* why he keeps his fear? Of what value is it to him?

In what way does it lessen or remove a danger?"

To which reasoning there was no reply. The mystery remained; and it was with difficulty that I was able to drag my so interesting exhibit away to return to our camp and prepare a meal for ourselves.

"Behold yourself," I said to him. "You are become a portent in the land; a wonder to all the tribe and a subject for conversation over the cooking fires for many a night to come."

TO WHICH he answered nothing. For he was wrapped in a deep cogitation within himself. It was clear to me that the simple and direct questions of those savages who had no unhealthy imaginations had set him to thinking profoundly upon this question of fear which had become so complex a thing for him, as against the reasoning of those primitive minds to whom fear was a concrete thing, having a definite object; a wild beast, or an enemy, or a devil.

After a long silence, while I prepared the meal, he spoke suddenly out of his dreams.

"I realize one thing," he said, "and that is that timidity before an unknown possibility is the product of a civilized imagination."

After which he relapsed again into his meditation; to which I left him in peace; for it is my observation that where reason comes to the fore, fear must needs be pushed into the background. Only of one question I reminded him, which those naked Indians had pressed.

"Of what *value* was fear? In what way did it alter the danger?"

And I left him to find the answer to that simple question out of his own philosophy. Yet, simple though the question and propounded by a savage mind, the finding of the answer for himself occupied that young senhor for many a day of deep thinking with his chin between his hands.

Time there was, and time to spare. For while we had been accorded the hospitality of the tribe instead of a swift death—thanks to the good repute of my carved stick and to the wondrous story of my inexplicable companion—it was a far cry yet to the gaining of their confidence to the extent of acquiring the *caapi*, which was a very secret drug attended by an elaborate ceremony of initiation, as is attested by the great *Americano* explorer, the Senhor Doctor who writes that he has no more than heard of it.

The matter had to be taken up with the *ipagé*, the chief witch-doctor; and he, of course, had to make a magic of many days before he could come to a decision. To which end I take credit to myself that I was able to help him.

I make but two rules in my dealings with all those Indians of the upper rivers. The one is, having struck a bargain, to give just a little bit more than the bargain demanded; and the other is to make friends with the witch-doctors, as I did in this case.

I sent him first a present of a whole pound of salt; after which he lost no time in sending for my inspection a stick of a most wonderful and elaborate carving, a whole book, indeed, symbolizing his wisdom and his exploits.

After that I became an intimate of the old man's; and a most kindly and shrewd old wizard he was. Pot companions we were; for over many a gourd of the foul-smelling juice of the caju fruit he asked me a thousand questions about the world beyond the Rio Tiquié—which meant to him downriver as far as São Gabriel, where there lived, so he had heard, a white witch-doctor who could cure sicknesses.

A point of view had this old man which was most entertaining. Of the sea, for instance, he could form no conception. A water that would take many days to cross. That must be a very big river, said he.

A house of stone he could not understand. Why, he asked, when the *chunto* palm was so easily split and was proof for all time against water as well as insects?

A river steamer capable of carrying a thousand people, he very politely disbelieved. No tree trunk that could be dug out grew that large, he insisted.

Yet he was able, speaking of the young senhor, and discussing this fear of his, to say:

"Why is a man what he is? Ask of his father and his mother and of his upbringing."

No fool was that old man. Yet he had his superstitions

"Is it true," he asked one day when I brought the talk round to the matter of *caapi*, as I did on all occasions, "that he is a witch-doctor among his own people, as some of the young chiefs say?"

And I, thinking to further his quest by representing him a man worthy of initiation

into knowledge, answered quickly that indeed he was the greatest of necromancers in his own country.

Fool that I was! I might have known that the first instinct of all savage wizards is to see proof of the wizardry of others. Into the same foolish trap that a hundred others have fallen was I now fallen myself. I, who profess to know Indians.

SO HERE was I, faced with the necessity of finding a bagful of tricks for this useless youth of mine. I went to him and demanded what tricks he had learned during his long life of leisure when all time hung upon his hands instead of the need of making a living. And he answered me with uplifted eyebrows—

"Nary a trick."

"Think, man," I cried in despair. "Think! What can you do? What do you know out of all your colleges that will be miraculous to this savage who knows nothing?"

And he answered helplessly again—

"Nothing."

So we sat and cudgeled our brains; he suggesting at haphazard what might be done with simple chemistry—had he but the apparatus and could he remember how it worked. Till I demanded of him in exasperation, what did the expensive academies of his country teach that a naked savage did not know?

Yet in the course of time an idea came into his head.

"The other day," he said, "when you lit your cigaret with your burning glass at the *sitio* of Manduco, a small boy who was watching, ran away. Would that—?"

I fell upon him and embraced him. It is my custom, traveling the upper rivers—where matches, if they do not give out, their heads become moist in the humidity and fall off—to carry a good burning lens which many a time has given me light and fire. Here was surely a magic to hand. So I took the youth to the old witch-doctor and told him a circumstantial tale of how the greater magics of the white man required a considerable time to prepare—which the old fellow could well understand.

"But," I said, "he has a *little* magic of drawing fire from the sun, which he would give to you in token of friendship."

"That," said the old man cautiously, "would be a very useful magic—if true."

Which indeed it would be in a country where for half the year all things are soaked by torrential rains, and fire must be carefully tended and kept burning lest one have to rub together two moist sticks for half a day.

So at my word the youth picked a dead leaf—this being the dry season of the year—and focused the glass upon it. The response of that tropical sun was instant. The little spot of light blackened, smoked, and burst into flame. All in a second.

"*Amm-mul*" said the wizard, his hand over his mouth. "That is a very powerful magic.' And he added quickly—

"Who else of our people has seen it?"

"No one," said I promptly.

And he, with naive confession:

"That, then, makes it ten times more useful. And—and, my brother, the young white wizard, will give me this magic and teach me its workings?"

"As a token of friendship," said I, "asking nothing in return."

So the newly accredited wizard showed his older brother in the craft how to work the thing and taught him even an incantation, something to the effect of, "Hokum, soakem, get the oakum," and so forth, which I now forget.

And he left the old man to practise his new magic with the greatest wonder and delight of his life—as who would not, having boasted of being a wizard for fifty years, and possessing now for the first time a real wizardry?

Thus it happened that within a day or two the wizard came to our camp to make a personal call and to say that a *caapi* ceremony was being prepared, though not for some twenty days yet, at the dark of the moon; and that the young white wizard, if he still desired, could then go through the ceremony with the young men of the tribe; and then, if he proved himself worthy, *caapi* would be his according to his needs.

I smote the senhor on the shoulder and told him:

"*Alegra vôs*, rejoice, for the aim of all our traveling is achieved. You shall see what no white man has seen; and the medicine of courage shall be yours—if you have first the courage to get it. And believe me, when I tell you, *amigo*, I who have been asking questions about this ceremony, if you can get it, you do not need it."

But his face set in the expression of determination which was becoming his habit, and he said with doggedness that he needed it for his purpose and that he would surely go through any old initiation ceremony to get it. Yet I, who had learned that this ceremony was no mere play of youths at an academy, shrugged and wondered.

WHAT need to weary the Senhor Scientifico with an account of our living during the next twenty days? We did as all men do in the jungle. As for the youth, I advised him to climb every day a tall tree and to swim a thousand meters and run a thousand; for this ceremony was one of endurance as well as of courage. Which things he did, though, in truth, he had not much need; for hard travel had removed much of the softness from his big frame.

And as for me, I built me a new *batelão* for our future travel; purchasing a dug out canoe—a labor of three or four men for as many months—for its own length in print cloth; and adding to it a freeboard of three planks, hand-hewn out of *luiru* tree trunks, for which labor I paid a pair of sturdy youths a kitchen knife and three fish hooks apiece. For the rest, I moved about the *molocas* and observed the ways and manners of the people, as is my custom, against my future need.

Time which for me was well spent. But the youth fretted. He was nervous, it was clear. He had keyed himself up to the highest pitch of resolution of his life; and the tension of waiting wore him down.

But the last of the moon disappeared finally and left the night as black as the stars would permit; and the time was at hand.

The ceremony was to take place, not here at the outpost village, but five days' journey up the Tiquié River, in the heart of the Tucana country.

So there set out from Taraqúa a flotilla of canoes containing only sturdy young men, each with a carefully wrapped palm-leaf box. K'Aandi, the chief, apportioned me six youths as paddle men for my *batelão* under the charge of his own nephew, and sent by his mouth a message to the chief of the village to which we journeyed to say that Theophilo the *Kariwa* was his friend.

The old wizard had gone on before to collect his lesser wizards and make preparation for the ceremony, which appeared to be a big one; for, as we traveled, small detachments of naked youths, all with palm-leaf boxes, joined us from other villages.

Of travel on the Rio Tiquié what is there to tell? Except that, as usual, those other Indians had lied to me when they told me of the terrible *caxoeiras* to be traversed. Cataracts there were, of course; but no worse than many another on the higher Uaupes.

Yet such is the custom of Indians, to report fearful things of any country that they do not know. Also it is good to know that on this river which crosses and recrosses the equator some twenty times there are more flies and noxious insects than in all the rest of Amazonas; and that while the days are the very steam of the fiend's brewing, the nights call for two blankets. Food need not be carried; for the water is good and monkeys are plentiful.

Arrival had been timed to the day. In the noon hour we came to the village, a big one of five *molocas*, all facing the river, with a great clearing before them.

The canoes were hurriedly dragged ashore; and without loss of time the young men, squatting in groups all over the clearing, proceeded to open their boxes and, producing from them gourds of paint and the most elaborate of feather headgear and fringes and trailers, spent the rest of the afternoon in dressing each other up for the ceremony.

Something of the reason and the nature of the ceremony I had learned, which the senhor, being a *scientifico*, will be interested to know.

Most of those upriver peoples, you must know, have no conception of a God to worship; their nearest approach to religion being a belief in the *Jurupari*, a spirit of malignance to be propitiated. But these Tiquié people are in this respect different from all other primitive peoples whom I know or of whom I have heard. Instead of propitiating the evil spirit, they, being a fierce and untamed people, their practise is to fight him.

Thus, when the mandioca crop has failed or the fishing is bad or there is sickness in the village, instead of offering gifts to the *Jurupari*, they go through an elaborate ceremony of defiance, a protracted affair lasting for three days, during which they

show their devil, first, that they are a strong, virile people of much stamina; and culminating with a personal meeting with their devil, at which they demonstrate to him that they are in no way afraid of him.

And it is here that this mysterious *caapi* comes at last into use. For since this meeting with the devil in person is an ordeal requiring considerable courage, the warriors nerve themselves up for it with the courage medicine.

After which, the young men who have passed the ordeal successfully are entitled to wear the head band of red monkey fur at ceremonial gatherings—though, *caramba*, they need no such recognition! For their devil leaves his mark on them plainly enough—and they are entitled also to carve a ring round their sticks, and to obtain *caapi* from the witch-doctors for all and sundry purposes, such as warfare and so forth.

This ceremony, then, began with dusk on the day of arrival. The whole village, men and women, with the visiting warriors, some three hundred people in all, engaged in the opening; the men naked except for paint and parrot feathers, and the women without even paint.

Being gathered in the great clearing before the *molocas*, a shrill hissing whistle was set up by the musicians, and the whole crowd swiftly formed circle, arms interlocked over each other's shoulders, and commenced the performance of an interminable snake dance—the prevalence of which among all Indians the Senhor Scientifico has doubtless written a book about.

In the center of this great weaving, twining circle stood a woman heavy with child and holding by the hand a growing boy and girl. The significance of this being clearly, as I have said, to show the malignant spirit who oppressed them that they were by no means a dying race.

After an hour or so of this demonstration, the woman quietly withdrew; and the dance continued with variations and without intermission throughout the night and the following day and night and the next day. This to demonstrate the stamina of the tribe.

The chief and the older men, of course, dropped out early in the ceremony and sat round on low wooden stools carved out of a single piece, keeping a sharp eye on the young warriors to see that when a man slipped from the line to snatch a bite of food or a drink of water he did not dally for too long. Ten minutes or so being the limit before he was driven with jeers and derisive calls to rejoin the dance.

And all the while there was kept up an accompaniment of soft reed flutes blowing a plaintive melody with a rythm on each fifth note to which the dancers stamped time with their feet. So persistent was this rythm that as the hours passed I felt all my senses sway to its unvarying beat and my body almost float in a manner which I am unable to explain.

But the Senhor Scientifico, who has doubtless written a treatise on the power of rythm, will understand better than I.

As for me, I shook the growing intoxication from me and went around in the dark to look for my young man, whom, in the interest of all these doings, I had lost sight of. And where do you think I found him at the last?

IN A corner of a *moloca*, stripped down to a breech clout, and in the hands of a group of old women who by torchlight were painting him with red and yellow ochres and bedecking him with feathers of the macaw and toucan. In his eyes was a light of excitement and he laughed with nervous bravado.

"Gee," he said. "I've got to get into this dance thing. It's all a part of the ceremony, and I can't afford to miss it; and—and——"

I, senhor, am a man of the upper rivers, a trader among the Indians and a man of practical habit. I do not pretend to understand the reasonings of emotional youth. Yet I could see that the nervous tension of the last few weeks and that persistent rythm beating through the dark had carried him off his feet. I nodded.

"It is what I came to tell you," I said. "You must go through the ceremony if you want to get the *caapi*. But do not lose your head; and husband your strength, for the ordeal which is to come will tax you to the utmost."

He but laughed again and went out and mixed with the other dancers; and they, without a word of surprize or of recognition, simply opened space and took him between them just as one of their fellows. They were all intoxicated with suppressed excitement, as was he.

I watched him, as the hours progressed, with anxiety; wondering whether he could outlast the strain. But I had no need to worry on that score. His body was young and strong as a bull, and the hard travel and exercise had well fitted him for such a trial.

He rested from time to time, as did the Indians. He ate and he drank as they did, and returned again to the maddening sway and stamp of each fifth beat with the other painted Indians. And he never looked at me. The maniac *was* an Indian.

So the night passed, and the day—during which the dancers passed from the heat of the sun into the shade of the great council *moloca*, never ceasing from their loops and circles and serpentines—and so also passed the next night and the next day.

I tell you, senhor, that was a test for an athlete. The women had long since dropped out of the dance. The men of middle age had been retiring in ones and twos. Only the young and the strong remained, swaying, swinging and stamping to that infernal rythm.

And with them, my young friend, whom I now recognized only by his height; for the sweat running from his body had so mingled the painted designs that he was as the other Indians, a daub of crazy color.

The older men drooped on their stools in sleep; and at last, as the second day wore on, the dancers, too, began to show signs of weariness.

Then came the *caapi*.

A drink which ceremonial cup bearers, distinguished by a special head gear of egrets' plumes, served in little gourds. All partook of it; for all were about to see the *Juruparí*—all except the women. Those who still danced, the strong young men who were going to face him in ordeal, partook of it copiously, dropping out from the line as often as they felt the need.

I, too, sitting among the chiefs, partook with them; and this only I can say about it. The liquid was almost colorless, flat tasting and somewhat bitter. Stimulating it was; for the weariness passed from the dancers with the first hour and the sleep from the eyes of the old men. Exhilarating too; for I, who am a practical person of no imagination, felt—how shall I say?—free of care and responsibility. Careless, rather, of my actions; for I felt impelled, in spite of my forty years, to give way to that accursed rythm that beat so incessantly into my temples; to don paint and feathers, and to join young senhor my friend, who danced and stamped with such abandon.

Like strong wine was the exhilaration; but by no means alcoholic; for though one drank copiously, there was no dizziness or giving way of the limbs. But as to receiving courage from the potion—well, the Senhor Scientifico shall hear and judge.

As the day drew to its close the conduct of things began to change. The dancers, though they surged and stamped with an increased vigor and enthusiasm, became sober of expression. Their enthusiasm was forced. The ordeal of the *Juruparí* was drawing close; and this was a matter to be approached with awe.

With sundown the dancers streamed out into the open, and the women were herded together and driven into the great council *moloca*—for it is death for a woman to see the *Juruparí*—and certain of the subchiefs were posted as guards against their curiosity. Conversation amongst us who watched lagged. As the swift tropic dark closed down men spoke in whispers. A happening of much seriousness was about to take place.

Consider, senhor, the scene.

THE moonless night. The swift chill that comes with the darkness. The great open place fringed by the tall dark *molocas* and the darker jungle. Away to one side a cold gray river of chill mist. No speech. No sound—except the interminable wail of the flutes and the stamp of the dancers; which had ceased to be a sound and was now only a rythm that beat at the brain.

In the midst of all this the shadowy forms of the dancers on whose wet bodies the light from just a few little fires gleamed as they passed—and who were suddenly perceived to be stark naked, having shed all their ornaments and feathers; and who danced now singly, each man on his own merits to face with his own courage what was coming.

I tell you, senhor, that even I responded to the theatrical effect of all this and felt the creepiness of the occasion. As for my young man, I could watch him no longer. He was lost to me, merged in the gloom with the other weaving figures.

Then into the silence of that rythm came a sound. Afar in the jungle at first. *Boom-boom*, *boom-boom*, it came. Almost

like deep drums; yet too protracted for a drum.

"Aa-aah!" A whisper went up from the still figures who stood about me. "The *Jurupari* comes!"

And he came swiftly. The booming approached nearer; and I, striving to locate its direction, found that the sound was peculiarly all-pervading. I could not tell from where it came, or how near or how far; except that it grew louder and crashed all round everywhere, till the air was all one booming vibration; and—curse upon it—the vibration was the demoniac rythm that had beat into my brain for three incessant days.

My whole being tingled to it; and I felt —how shall I say?—mad with all the rest of them. Ready to jump up and do any wild thing which at least would mean action.

Then suddenly one noticed that the shadowy dancers were augmented by fantastic figures weirdly painted with white which glimmered in the firelight. When they came in or how, was unknown. They were just there; and they swayed and stamped back and forth amongst the dancers and blew ever upon great funnel-shaped horns from which issued this so maddening booming. Some one gasped in the dark near me.

"*Amm-mu i qual* The *Jurupari*. *Mmâ-ul* Six to choose from!"

So here was the devil in person. For this, senhor, is their belief: These men, the six who blew upon the *Jurupari* horns, which symbolized the voice of their devil, all prevailing, were neophytes of the witch-doctors, who, while the warriors were making their ceremonial of preparation, had been in the deep jungle undergoing also a secret preparation at the hands of the witch-doctors.

Details of this preparation I have never learned, for it is secret even from the chiefs. But during that preparation—which is surely some form of spirit raising, for the men appeared to be in a sort of trance—the *Jurupari* himself had entered into the body of one of them, even the witch-doctors did not know which.

So there, among the six, was the devil in person circulating among the dancers. Here came the ordeal, the proof of courage.

Suddenly one of the dancers, nerving himself to the utmost, rushed to the side line and took a deep draught of *caapi* from one of the ever-ready cup bearers; and so, stimulated to the highest pitch of his courage, rushed back and tapped one of the six on the shoulder, for all that he knew, the very devil himself. This was the challenge. Instantly the rest, never ceasing their weave and stamp, opened out and left a space with the two dim figures, the challenger and the challenged, in the middle.

One could feel the tenseness of the moment.

Then it was observed for the first time that the *Jurupari* man carried, in addition to his horn, a long whip. A terrible thing made of some kind of a vine with a tapering lash like a coach whip.

Without more ado, the challenger lifted his arms above his head and stood so, naked and unprotected. The *Jurupari* man took aim with his whip, measuring the stroke and the distance to the man's naked waist — and, with all his strength — *Swish!*

Even in the dark, for this was near to me, I could see the immediate welt where the lash curled about the man's body. But never a groan. Never a wince from the still figure.

Instantly the booming horns crashed out with a renewed vigor. The man had passed. The devil himself had tried to wrest a sign of pain from him and had failed. In the dark around me I could hear murmurs of approbation.

Immediately followed the most extraordinary change-about. The devil, having failed to break his man, must now take his turn. Without a word he handed the terrible whip to the man and in turn lifted his arms. Whereupon the man braced his feet apart and took a careful measure—and he surely tried his utmost to wring a groan from the devil.

Truly an extraordinary ordeal, and the weirdest of all sights that I have seen. All happened in a few seconds. And then, before one was well aware of what had passed, out of the darkness where another warrior took the ordeal of his courage, came another *swish!* And presently another; and another.

And so on, far into the night. Ever the booming rhythm of the *Jurupari* horns, and ever and anon the terrible swish of the whips. Consider, senhor, what a test of courage that was for an Indian who believed implicitly in his personal devil, to say

nothing of the mere physical courage which faced the lash without a groan.

Even I, who only watched, was cold in the night and hot by turns. Just how I felt, I can not say. Only this I know. At no time did I feel that the *caapi* that I had drunk had inspired me with courage sufficient to rush in and face that ordeal.

As for my young man who was mad with the rest of those naked Indians, he was lost. In the darkness I could not see whether he remained among the dancers; far less whether he had found the courage to face the ordeal.

The uncanny night wore on. Presently all the young men who still danced had taken the test. Some of them, out of sheer bravado, twice or even three times. Presently again one was aware that the *Jurupari* men had disappeared the way they had come; without warning, taking their terrible whips and their more terrible horns. The incessant booming began to die away in the jungle. And then the dark figures amidst the firelight, dancer and watchers, began to realize that it was a very sore and a weary tribe.

In twos and threes they dropped off and stumbled toward the *molocas;* and presently I was left standing alone in the dark, tingling yet and drunk with the accursed beat that still pulsed in my blood, and looking for devils. I made haste to reach the shelter of my *batelão*. Of my young friend I knew nothing—and did not care.

BY MORNING, of course, I was sane once more, and I went up into the village to learn what I might learn. Men and women walked about with hollow eyes, sober of mien, yet with expressions of exhilaration. It had been a great triumph. Eighty-seven warriors had taken the ordeal and not one had flinched. The *Jurupari* who oppressed them had been very thoroughly shown that he could not cow that village, and he might as well leave them alone.

A young man came out of a *moloca* and stood in the doorway and stretched and rubbed the weariness from his eyes. I could see in the daylight two great welts reaching round his waistline and half around again. Yet he laughed out at the good sunshine as he stretched.

And then the wonder of a certain phase of this thing came over me. Consider senhor. Eighty-seven warriors there were, and only six *Jurupari* men. Of the eighty-seven, each had received a lash, or more—and had returned it to one of the six! Consider, then, the condition of those six who had ambition to graduate to be witch-doctors. Surely is some magic known to those people.

But I had no time to speculate on magic. I was looking for my crazy young man. And in the course of time I found him. In a *moloca* he was, huddled amidst a pile of paint-begrimed and weary young men, who yet jested with one another as they rubbed the sleep from their eyes. And round his waist was a welt as thick as my thumb, the mark of the *Jurupari* to attest his courage.

I took him away down to the *batelão* and fed him and doctored him and put him once more to sleep, where he stayed till the next day. When he was washed of his paint and dressed and changed to a white man once more, I said to him:

"*Amigo*, come away with me home. You have no need of the *caapi* to give you courage."

But he, feeling tenderly his waist, grinned painfully and said—

"No, without the *caapi* I would never have done it."

"Rubbish!" said I with anger. "Hear while I tell you about yourself, my friend. As for those Indians, they believe that the *caapi* will give them courage, as also their fathers and their grandfathers have believed. They become drunk with the ceremony of the preparation and with the magic of rhythm; and so they face their fear of their devil who is more terrible to them than the whip.

"And as for you. While you, too, were drunk with rhythm and with magic, you have faced your fear and taken the supreme test of the whip, which to us white men is much more terrible than the devil. Which is no more than I have expected of you all along as we came to each lesser test during our travel. For you have shown throughout that you need only confidence to face your fear and to follow example, reasoning that what another man may do without cringing you may do also."

"Yes," he interrupted me quickly, "that's just it. But will I face my fear *alone?* That is a very different thing; and that is what I must find out. No, I must

have my *caapi* which I have earned, and I must yet make my journey into the Rio Branco alone."

Que caralhos! What use to argue with youth which is set in its belief? And what need to weary the senhor with a profitless tale? The boy got his *caapi*, an acrid smelling powder which was to be brewed and drunk at need; and we bade farewell with interchange of gifts to those unapproachable Indians who had become our friends; and journeyed downriver in our new *batelão*.

Back and forth we argued the matter of his fear for many weeks as we traveled. But what use? He was insistent that he make his journey alone up the Rio Branco—where I told him I would have accompanied him for friendship's sake—and he could keep all the accursed diamonds that he might find. But he only laughed and insisted ever upon his need for going alone.

So at the inflow of the Branco we parted in anger. I indignant that he should desert me after all my trouble; and he sorrowfully insistent, yet promising to keep in touch. So I gave him the *batelão* and hoped that he might go to the —— in it, and so came on down to Manaos.

AND in the course of time there came to me, passed by one trader to another, a package. Small and not heavy. And I said to myself—

"*Dientro*, has the boy had such luck already?"

And I locked it away with care. And presently there came again another package; and another. And I cursed myself for a fool for not having insisted on going up with him to hunt at least for what I might find.

Five packages came in all. And then suddenly one day the youth himself. Brown, almost, as myself; and as hard of limb as of feature. The body and the face of a whole man.

And he fell upon me and embraced me and called me his very good friend and mentor who had taught him the most valuable lesson of his life—that fear was a most useless thing, having no value either to diminish or to remove a danger.

And I said to him—

"Rubbish. A naked Indian taught you that."

And he laughed aloud and shook my hand over and over again and said—true, that was so; but that I had taught him, oh, all the virtues of the world. For the boy was very pleased with himself. So I, to complete his happiness, produced his packages and delivered them to him safe and sound. But he demanded with astonishment—

"What? Didn't you open them?"

Whereat I was offended again and told him stiffly that Theophilo Da Costa was not known to be a pryer into other people's affairs. But he laughed most uproariously again and smote me on the back and opened up the packages before me. And what do you think they contained?

Caapi! Five equal portions.

After much more senseless laughter of youth at my astonishment he condescended to explain.

"I apportioned it out to cover the time," he said. "So much for each month, to use it as I might need. And as I found that I was able to travel *alone*—and to meet Indians who were not so good and traders who were worse—I sent each monthly allowance down to you to show you that I hadn't forgotten my lessons."

"*Graça me Deus!*" I exclaimed. "And were there, then, no diamonds?"

It was he now who was astonished.

"Diamonds?" he said. "Never heard of any. I went up because it was a mean country and I just *had* to feel confident that I could meet it."

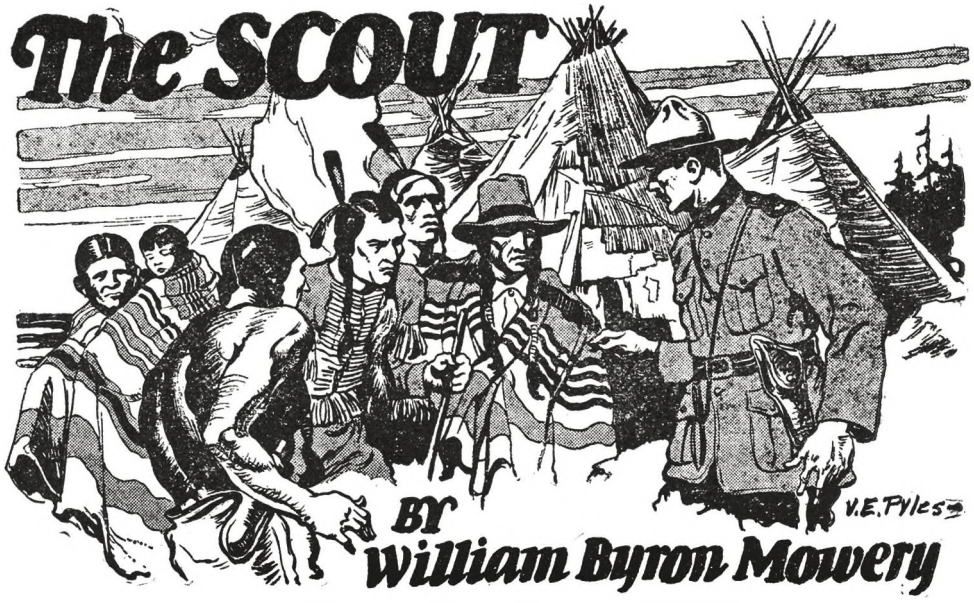
"And the woman?" I asked. "Was there no young woman who made a fool out of you and sent you away?"

"Young woman who made a fool out of me?" he shouted. "Dozens of 'em, thank —— and young men, too. Till my life was miserable. But I'll show 'em now, by golly."

And I, looking at him, said to myself—

"*Caralhos*, it is my opinion that this savage will show those one-time friends of his many surprizing things."

JUDGE then, Senhor Scientifico, for yourself, you who understand such things. Whether courage is a thing which can be drunk out of a medicine; or whether, as that old witch-doctor told me, it is a thing which one has from his father and his mother; and which, owing to his upbringing, can be hidden for a time for lack of opportunity to bring it forth, and of confidence to know that it is there?



Author of "The Ghost Track," "The Meekness of Mug-Wa," etc.

IT WAS eleven o'clock at night; the wavy horizon of the Barren Grounds cut the sun exactly in two. Half veiled by mist from the muskeg lakes, it looked like a great golden orange immersed in a pool of silver. Presently it would sink for a few minutes—to bob up a degree or two away and commence another blazing circle in the sky.

We were waiting—Inspector Norrys, Constable Wary Haskins and myself—for Scout Wilson to return. He had said we would find the Tzuhl-Tinnehs* just ahead of us across a little height-of-land, at a lake where deer and white-fish and moulting geese made good summer camping. Straight as the flight of a teal *en traverse*, he had brought us those six hundred odd miles from Fort Resolution, without missing his goal by so much as an hour's walk.

Shortly he came back, threading the willow thickets and treacherous sphagnum of the low ground where we waited. All of us looked sharply at him as he approached. None of us read a hint on his olive-bronze, inscrutable face as to whether or not we had run our quarry down.

"They are there." He jerked a thumb over his shoulder. "At the lake. A half-mile away."

Young Haskins quickly unslung his rifle and reached into his pack for extra cartridges; he carried the ammunition for our .303's. But at a remonstrating frown from Norrys he let the carton slip back again and reslung his Ross.

"We will take a look into the camp from the watershed," the inspector said coolly, "and wait there until the sun comes up again."

Silently, keeping hidden from stray hunters, we slipped up to the crown of the hill and fell in behind some clumps of coarse bear-grass.

Below us was a sizeable riverhead lake. At its upper reach three dozen skin-lodges squatted on the caribou moss, like old-fashioned beehives. Piles of deer horns, placottes of meat strung between poles, several old women pounding endlessly at pemmican, a scattering of children, some yellow, sharp-toothed dogs, and a dozen idle men.

With his binoculars Norrys searched the camp carefully.

"One half of the hunters appear to be away, judging from the number of tents. See if you can recognize any of the men we're after."

*Literally Willow-People, descended from the earlier Chipewyans (by no means to be confused with the Chippewas or Ojibways of Lake Winnipeg.) The Chipewyans are practically extinct, the southern bands having been absorbed by the Swamp and Wood Crees, and the northern bands having disappeared or pushed westward among the Dog-Ribs.

Wilson took the glasses, looked briefly, and nodded.

"All six of them are there."

One by one he pointed them out to us. They were a sextet—formerly seven—of far-roving thieves, who called themselves "Skunk-Bears" * and only occasionally lived at the main camp. At other times, particularly in winter when fur theft was profitable, they roamed over an immense stretch of country, stealing from stronger bands, plundering the weaker and murdering without let.

Almost a year before, they had gone north to the mouth of Thlewy-Chuck or Great Fish River. Among other depredations, they stole an Eskimo's young wife and carried her south with them.

She escaped from their brutalities, tried to retrace her steps north, lost her way among the innumerable water systems, but actually survived the winter alone in the Barren Grounds by snaring rabbits and ptarmigan for food and killing foxes in stone dead-falls for clothing. Some craven saw her and got word to the gang. Her chief abductor trailed her almost to the Great Fish River, caught her and—but the details are a bit incredible.

However, when the Innuits, the Kunguaqmiut, got hold of him that May, they avenged themselves by taking him out into the berg march and setting him adrift on a floe. The gang in vengeance hid along the coast, where the Innuits were scattered in single families. Teepee after teepee they wiped out—men and women and children.

A kayak runner took word of the blood orgy to Fullerton; but the corporal and his two men at that post had their hands full with a smallpox scourge among the Pikiulaqmiut. Word was relayed to Churchill, then to York Factory; telegraphed to Regina; transmuted into orders at headquarters there; and flung north to Fort Resolution.

We, the only available detail, were ordered to get the malefactors.

To hire an Indian to "walk 'long" would have meant failure before we started. An ages-old feud had existed between Innuit and Barren Ground Indian. The latter exulted in the murders. An Indian scout would have led us astray or given warning to the Skunk-Bears.

For that reason we employed Wilson, a man of about forty-seven, who lived solitarily around Athabasca and occasionally penetrated the remotest Barren Grounds *en derouine** for the fur companies.

A STRANGELY grim and taciturn man this Wilson was; but the best scout and experienced old woods-runner in all Mackenzie or Keewatin. I knew, vaguely, that he had once been a member of the force but had been summarily discharged. He never mentioned this affair; no one, after the first feel of his steel-cold nature, would dare a hint or question.

Often during that murderously fast trek from the fort, I wondered why he consented to be our scout. It was not the fine pay he drew; money meant absolutely nothing to a man of Wilson's character. It was not our company.

He kept himself aloof; never thawed or warmed; performed his duty perfectly, as a scout should, with a "Yes, sir" to Norrys, a "Yes, Sergeant," to me, and a "Mr." to young Haskins. Sometimes I thought he had come along out of a great ache to serve the force again, to be connected with one of its ventures, even in so lowly a capacity as that of scout.

Later I came to believe that from the very start Wilson had known, far better than we, the temper of the Tzuhl-Tinnehs; and that from the very start his purpose was as clear-cut and deep as the purpose of man may be.

When the twenty-minute night had passed, Inspector Norrys gave his orders.

"Keep your rifles in sling and your revolvers in your belts. Under no circumstances show fight. Only be forceful and firm. We will go down to the camp together. I will give them a harangue, we will arrest the men peacefully, and no trouble will ensue if everything is done properly. Each of you three will take two men in charge and I will watch out for escape or trickery."

Wilson at that instant spoke up. His words were as incisive as the snick of steel.

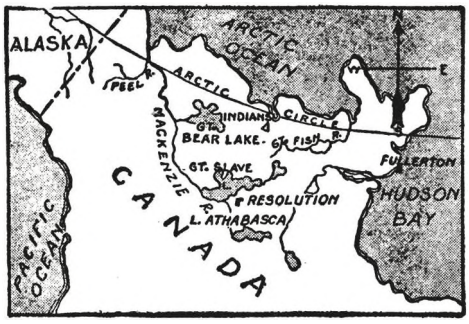
"I am a scout. My duty was to find the Indian camp and to take you back. Not to arrest. I stay here."

Young Haskins would have sworn, but his jaw dropped too much in amazement.

* Carcajou or wolverine.

* Phrase meaning to go out and drum up trade among the natives.

I was astonished, then angry at the man's utter indifference. It seemed that the slightest trace of humanity, of white-man fellowship in that situation, would have compelled him to go with us. Four men



would have been twice as safe as three. Besides, Wilson knew those Indians and was a power with them.

Only Norrys was not surprized or perturbed.

"You are quite right, Wilson," he agreed. "It is not your duty. We will rejoin you here shortly."

I wondered at the time why Norrys did not try to persuade Wilson to go along. We needed that extra rifle. The inspector was a good deal surer of aweing the Tzuhl-Tinnehs than I was. He had a reputation for contempt towards Indians as fighters. In most cases firmness beats bullets. But there are exceptions. Norrys did not believe there were.

We started down the terrace, leaving Wilson there on the hill-top, as immobile as the granite boulder he sat on.

OUR reception in the Tzuhl-Tinneh camp should have put us on our guard. At first sight of us, there were several simultaneous "Ho-lee-ee's" of warning. Then silence. The Skunk-Bears slipped out of sight into the lodges. They did not try to escape, though we were more than a rifle-shot distant and canoes lay at hand for them. That fact struck me as significant. The inspector seemed not to give it a thought.

The yellow "crackies" came tearing out at us, unrestrained by so much as a word. We kicked them aside and strode into the camp, where the Indians had bunched up around their teepees.

"I am going to harangue them first," Norry said *sotto voce*. "Sergeant Pike, you and Haskins guard the lodges on each side to see that our men do not get away."

Haskins went down one side of the circle and I on the other. In the very center Inspector Norrys stepped upon a rock. He was tall and commanding in person; his voice was sharp; and he was old enough to elicit respect from an Indian. His quick talk was admirable in every respect—save its results.

Briefly he recited the history of the crimes, laying the blame squarely upon the shoulders of the Skunk-Bears, where it properly belonged. One by one he called off the names of the men we wanted.

Since the force had had no previous dealing at all with that particular tribe, he dwelt a moment on the meaning of *maintiens le droit;* assuring them all of protection so long as they kept the law, and promising a fair trial for the six murderers.

He was interrupted again and again by a derisive chorus of grunts. The end of his speech was completely lost in a howl. Above the noise one hunter, some kind of a sub-chief, made himself heard:

Their blood brothers, the Skunk-Bears, had done nothing wrong. The Eskimo woman belonged to the man who could take her. That was the custom. When she ran off, she deserved to be clubbed, like a dog.* The Innuits had killed the Skunk-Bear. All the Kunguaqmiut alive were not equal to the one Indian they had killed. And the gang had slain only half the Kunguaqmiut.

It sounded almost ludicrous; but it was good Indian reasoning; and there was nothing ludicrous—for us—in the Tzuhl-Tinneh's threatening words and anger. The warriors openly were itching to start trouble. Some of them held balls between their teeth.

The women were as ready as the men to pitch into us with knives and clubs. One grabbed for my rifle; another almost tore my pack from me. I pushed through the mob toward Norrys. Still quite calm and unperturbed, save his voice was a little raised, he kept demanding that they should

* The northern Chipewyans are often said to have treated their women with more heartlessness and savage brutality than any other people in all history. This treatment was the prime factor in their ultimate disappearance. S. Hearne relates that one woman in his exploring party had to take up a two-hundred pound pack a few minutes after a racking childbirth, and follow her husband all day through mid-winter snow.

turn the Skunk-Bears over to us or we would take them forcibly.

I reached his side and looked for Haskins knowing now that we three would have to keep together if we would escape alive. Haskins was not in sight. A split-second later came a shot inside one of the lodges. The lodge rose up bodily and danced about like a bear, before it finally toppled over. A surge in that direction hid everything from us. We heard Haskins' voice crying for help.

"That wasn't his rifle, Inspector!" I shouted. "We've got to get to him!"

Even then Norrys did not believe that we were in imminent danger, or that his "firmness without violence" was a sorry failure with that particular bunch. I had to pull him off the rock. We hammered our way toward Haskins.

He was down under a seething pack that tore and slashed at him like so many wolves. The dead body of one of the murderers lay tangled in the skins of the toppled lodge. Only later did we learn that Haskins had taken the inspector's words about forcible arrest at their literal value, and had gone into the teepee. The Skunk-Bear shot him. The youngster, desperately wounded, grappled with the savage and succeeded in braining him with the butt of his revolver.

When we kicked and jostled the Indians off and prodded them back with rifle muzzles, Wary lay quite still. He was mauled and beaten and half stripped. At first glance I saw, by the spouting blood, that a musket ball had entered his neck. I dropped down to examine him.

Norrys kept demanding that the Indians turn over the men we were after. He spoke like a birch-wielder admonishing some rowdy schoolboys—though several barrels were pointed at us and though young Haskins was bleeding to death before our eyes.

THE sight of Haskins; his open mouth, clenched hands, tousled hair—was maddening. A harder-bitten, straighter-shooting, more dare-devilish youngster never graduated out of the "awkward" squad at Regina Training Headquarters, or lied a year about his age to get into that squad.

The fault was all Norrys' —— cocksureness. We had no business separating. We had no business wasting time in that haranguing. We should have taken advantage of those first few seconds of confusion, to seize our men and be gone. I forgot the inspector was a superior. His cool, even orders to the Tzuhl-Tinnehs made me lose control of myself completely.

"You fool! You —— fool!" I yelled. "Can't you see they're going to rush us? Can't you see Haskins is dying? We've got to get him away! Got to get out of here quick. Stop that mouth of yours, for —— sake!"

I don't know whether he heard me or not; he gave no sign. If he did hear, it was magnanimous of him not to mention it. With half a dozen hags shrieking—and spitting—in his face, and with as many warriors whooping courage into themselves, he may have understood only my general meaning.

A trifle pale but very steady, he drew his Colt.

"Pick him up, Pike," he ordered. "Don't appear hurried. Make for high ground."

Despite the limp one hundred and seventy-five pounds, I managed to make a diplay with my revolver. We broke through and got out of the circle of teepees with nothing more serious than bad stone bruises. The inspector pointed out a low round hill several hundred yards away and bade me carry Haskins there. He stayed behind, risking musket balls to cover the escape.

Our first thought was about Haskins. With seven knife-cuts as long as a finger, and with one musket wound, he was in bad shape. The Skunk-Bear's bullet had entered in the side of his neck and gone half way around, missing by a miracle both the jugular vein and the neck vertebrae.

Already he had bled white; but he was stirring back to consciousness. Norrys tore open the service "red" kit and fell to work. He was deft and practised; a surgeon might have failed to do what he did.

The neck wound was so serious that it meant death in a very few minutes, but Norrys stopped the bleeding finally, though only by sewing cotton, dusted with caustic, into the wound itself. When the other stabs and cuts had been washed with antiseptic and sewed up, Haskins opened his eyes. They were full of the blank questioning of one who comes to under strange circumstances.

"Don't try to talk, Haskins," Norrys

said gently. "You might start that neck wound bleeding again."

Briefly he told him what had happened and assured him that the Skunk-Bears would carry him back to Resolution on a litter. The gentleness, the tender sympathy, which the inspector showed toward Haskins was a revelation to me. I had thought him granite-hard and a bit domineering. This hidden trait of gentleness, I think, must have been akin to his distaste for violence toward the natives.

In the camp the Tzuhl-Tinnehs were making "smoke talk" with wet moss. I motioned Norrys aside, for Haskins, if he heard, would insist upon getting up and lending a hand.

"They're calling in the rest of the warriors, sir," I observed. "We ought to look around for an easier place to defend, in case——"

"In case of what?"

"Their attacking us. This place is exposed and too close to their camp."

"They won't attack us, Sergeant," Norrys said simply.

There was no hint in his tone of fearlessness; merely conviction, positive knowledge.

"If they had meant to attack us," he added, "they would have finished us there in the camp. If Haskins had not been hasty, we would have won our point and taken our prisoners peacefully."

"They would have finished us, if half or more of their hunters had not been gone," I argued. "Besides, it takes time for an Indian to work himself up to a fight."

"Rather, I think, given a little time they will come to their senses and turn over the five men without any more trouble. We will stay here. If we move to a better location, it will show them that we expect a fight. They must not think we expect that."

There was no arguing with him. His very conviction almost swerved me around to his way of thinking. But very shortly I began to suspect he was wrong.

By two and threes the hunters slipped back to camp until there were thirty by actual count. It was a terrific odds, even with our superior rifles. If they had a mind to, they could rush our hill and club us in a twinkling. If they lacked the courage for a charge, they could surround us and starve us out in a day or two.

IT WAS not until after I counted and recounted the thirty hunters that I thought of Wilson. When I looked toward his hill, only a hundred yards to our right, he was walking down the terrace toward the camp. I expected to see him shot down; but evidently the Tzuhl-Tinnehs recognized him. He walked right into their camp, spoke a few moments with the sub-chief, went on to the lake for water and came back to his hill unmolested.

"What are they going to do?" I called across.

He shook his head. It might have meant anything.

"Why don't you come over here?" I demanded. "If they get us, they'll get you too, to keep word of it from leaking out."

He said nothing. Did not even shake his head.

"I'm going to talk to them again," Norrys said quietly. "They know very little about the force. If I can make them understand that we are not two men but two million if necessary, we will start back with our prisoners by noon."

With hands extended, palms out, he walked half-way down the slope. The camp silenced. Norrys spoke for ten minutes. Chiefly he dwelt upon the law, hammering at them the idea that the force never failed to execute what it set out to do. It was a superb harangue. He came back, quietly confident that the leaven would work in their minds.

After some talk among the warriors, and some hot oratory from the Skunk-Bears, the sub-chief came half-way to us and sat down.

The talk about the Force was like the talk of the split-tongue Weeskaijaun. His people had always made their own law. He had spoken with the oldest man in the tribe, who said that his father's father could not remember any law but that of their own lodges.

They would continue that law. The white men had come to their camp and reddened the ground with the blood of one of their warriors. If the white men would at once let them have the young man with the neck wound, they would let the other two go back to their lodges in peace. Otherwise none of the white men would go back.

I think that last savage threat had some effect upon Norrys. It began to dawn

upon him that possibly the Tzuhl-Tinnehs were in a dangerous mood. He watched the camp through his binoculars.

"By the way, Pike, how many cartridges have you for your Ross?" he asked presently.

"A magazine full and ten in my belt. Why?"

"Nothing at all, except that the rest were in Haskins's pack."

It caught me a surprise; struck me hard. Not once had I thought about our cartridges in connection with the pack which had been torn from Haskins. There was no use to chumb that half-empty belt or swear at the broken rule. Between us we had some twenty-odd shells for the .303's.

"Don't look so glum about it, Pike. It is a plenty for our hunting back to Resolution."

His coolness, his conviction made me angry again.

"Did you hear that sub-chief's last words?" I demanded. "Don't you believe he meant them? Don't you see what's going on down there in the camp? They're painting and befeathering themselves. They're tying up their hair, and throwing off clothes in spite of the mosquitoes. That means they're bent on a fight."

"Quite true," Norrys said politely.

He took no umbrage at my anger. Evidently he did not blame me for being afraid, even though he thought my fears were groundless.

"They think they are going to attack us," he added. "They will work themselves up to a certain pitch, and then break. I don't mean to use any fanciful figures of speech, Sergeant, but it's like a bird fluttering and cackling around a motionless snake. If we just sit here watching them, paying no attention to their threats, we'll charm them helpless."

There was sense to what he said. Several times I had seen it true. But at that particular moment one knot of warriors slipped out at one end of the camp and another knot out of the other end. Half of them had guns.

"Before they get close enough for effective shooting with their rifles, I'm going to stop them," I said.

"Shoot around them!" Norrys ordered. "Don't hit a single man. Merely show them what we can do before they can get to us."

"And waste our .303 cartridges?"

"My orders, please. If you disobey, the consequences are certain and severe."

I would have risked those serious consequences if I had been faced by certain death, with no escape save by shooting down Indians. But I was not sure that Norrys was wrong. He had years to my one among the Indians. The force rated him as its best man for dealing with the non-treaty tribes. He seemed to know exactly what he was doing.

The Tzuhl-Tinnehs scattered in the grass and began to snake toward us. When they were three hundred steps away, they started shooting. It was a harmless fusillade at the distance, but it showed exactly what they meant to do to us.

Norrys gave the word. We began dropping bullets around them, closer and closer. They took our warning; stopped, wavered. The inspector dropped his last two bullets so close that they drove gravel into the face of one of the Skunk-Bears.

He smiled, but not a whit triumphantly, as the Tzuhl-Tinnehs backed down the slope and retreated toward their teepees.

"You see they did not have nerve, Pike. They'll start their oratory now. By noon they ought to be turning over our prisoners."

The Tzuhl-Tinnehs did start their oratory, but the results were not those which Norrys prophesied. We waited. Shortly after noon the lodges began to come down; the meat was bundled into skins. Lodges, canoes, provisions, camping stuff—everything was tied on the backs of the women. A strange caravan filed out of sight down the lake shore.

ONLY the warriors with their weapons remained.

"You know what it means when they send sway the women and children," I said tersely.

"That their final break will come very shortly."

"Or ours. We're practically defenseless with only five rifle cartridges and then nothing but our Colts. Good God, won't you believe they mean to blot us out inside of an hour?"

"You might dig a shallow place for Haskins, to lessen the chances of his getting hit by a stray bullet," he suggested.

I dug, while the Tzuhl-Tinnehs finished painting their faces, and gathering and

gathering their courage. Plain as daylight, to anybody but Inspector Norrys, they were going to start up that terrace very quickly and do for us. At last I couldn't stand it.

I called to Wilson. He was actually looking in another direction, but turned at my voice.

"We're out of cartridges for the Ross's. For heaven's sake, come over here and help us out!"

He shook his head.

"Then go down and try to get our cartons from the Indians."

Another refusal.

"Then give us your own beltful."

A last refusal. His coolness was as perfect and colossal as his inhumanity. I gripped an impulse to shoot him. There was some excuse for the Tzuhl-Tinnehs. They were savages, wild and lawless and primitive; of another blood and color from us.

They looked upon us as intruders who had slain one of their kin without reason, in their way of thinking. But for Wilson, our scout, there was no excuse. He was white-skinned; one of our party. His cold-bloodedness, his absolute indifference to our certain death, was diabolical.

Norrys must have read the thoughts passing in my mind; for he spoke quietly.

"You can't altogether blame him, Pike. He's been waiting twenty years for this moment. He was an inspector once."

"Wilson an inspector? Good heavens, and a mere scout now!"

"You don't know why he was cashiered with a blackened reputation?" Norrys went on. "Maybe there will be time for me to tell you. He was accused of needless slaughter of a tribe of Loucheux Indians, the Nahonis.

"When the first Klondike strike was made, there were no Canadian routes to our part of the Yukon. Wilson, a sergeant then, was sent up the Mackenzie and across the Peel River head-waters to map the country. For good work he was made an inspector and stationed on the route west of the Mackenzie. A band of Nahonis, somewhat like these seven Tzuhl-Tinnehs, began killing the sour-doughs that came out and the chechachos that went in. Wilson, with only a corporal, went after them, found them, had trouble with their tribe, and shot it out with them. He killed not only the half-dozen men he went after, but several of the other Nahonis. He reported that the bloodshed was absolutely necessary to save their own lives and to get the malefactors.

"But his corporal reported differently. Those two had lived together in the wilds for two years, absolutely alone except for passing miners. They did not quarrel; but they had different philosophies which were sharpened and intensified by their loneliness. When the corporal made his report, an investigation started. It ended in Wilson's disgrace. Whatever the merits of his case, you see why this is Wilson's revenge."

It was clear as a flash—the scout's whole scheme. During all those embittered years he had probably watched for a situation like that we were in. That Wilson had shot down Indians, unless thinking it was the only way to save himself and his man, I could not believe.

Perhaps he had been caught by one of those exceptions to the rule that firmness without violence is better than bullets. Perhaps the corporal, like Norrys, did not believe in any exceptions. Now Wilson was sitting across on the hillock, watching to see himself justified—by our deaths!

His justification promised to be consummated very quickly. There was a seething among the warriors; a final spout of oratory, chiefly from the five men we were after; a final blaze of howling at us and dancing with wide-flung arms. Then silence.

The Tzuhl-Tinnehs started up the slope. Not scattered this time, but close together, like a pack at the final rush.

I glanced at Norrys. Thus far in the business, his certainty and coolness had reassured me, in the face of every proof of hostility. Now I could hear him breathing sharply. I could see his certainty ebbing.

No time was given me to see anything else. We pushed Haskins into the pitiful shelter and turned to meet the rush. The cartridges were in my rifle. Norrys took it from my hands.

"I'm the better shot with the Ross," he said in his quiet way. "You take the Colts, Pike. I was wrong!"

The full force of those three words came back to me later.

Half-way up the slope, the Tzuhl-Tinnehs leaped to their feet, yelled, shot all their guns. Norrys stopped a cry between his teeth; I knew he had been hit.

Without stopping to reload, they hurled themselves up the slope at us. One of the warriors in front brandished, as a flag, the field service jacket torn from Constable Haskins. They screamed indescribable epithets at us—at the Force.

With his first shot, Norrys dropped that Indian. His second and third dropped two more. He was shooting to kill. His fourth and fifth missed. The Tzuhl-Tinnehs were not yet within Colt distance—I glanced at him. He had missed because of blood trickling into his eyes.

Still those ochred demons kept dropping. The swiftest, the foremost, within spear toss—one by one—crumpled, or spun, or leaped up like a wolf hit dead. Above the infernal noise I could hear only the high-pitched yells of the hit men. I could not think; could only realize that the charge was washing up against the slope without passing a certain line. Once, when the dropping ceased for a moment, four or five broke over. They ran into the Colt fire and one got back across the line.

Then the dropping started again. Their whole front caved in when a knot of six—fear-stricken at seeing three ahead of them fall—turned back and hurled themselves into the main charge. They scattered and scrambled down the slope, howling a different tune from the one they had howled ten seconds before.

I turned to see Wilson clipping cartridges into his smoking Ross. And I knew it was the deadly rifle in his hands which had saved us three.

He shot twice more. The bullets, falling ahead of the fleeing Tzuhl-Tinnehs, turned them. At an imperious gesture from his rifle they came back to the camp site.

While I wiped the blood from Inspector Norry's face and bandaged the jagged forehead wound that would leave a lifetime scar like that of a hat pressed down tightly, Wilson came walking across to us, erect and calmly as if to martial music.

Constable Haskins, rising on elbow, and I, standing almost between the two men, saw the finale.

THEY were deep-souled men, both of them—Inspector Norrys and Scout Wilson—clean-hearted men of high and strong principles. No petty spite, no petty hatred between them.

That they could have kept their secret from us during those many weeks is one of the things that passes understanding.

"My thanks to you, Wilson, for helping bring those five murderers to justice," Norrys said.

Wilson laughed—if you want to call it a laugh.

"Justice! I also got justice, once!"

"Then my thanks for saving our three lives."

The scout laughed again, louder, more mocking.

"Do you think I shot them down, those Indians, to save your three lives? Paugh!"

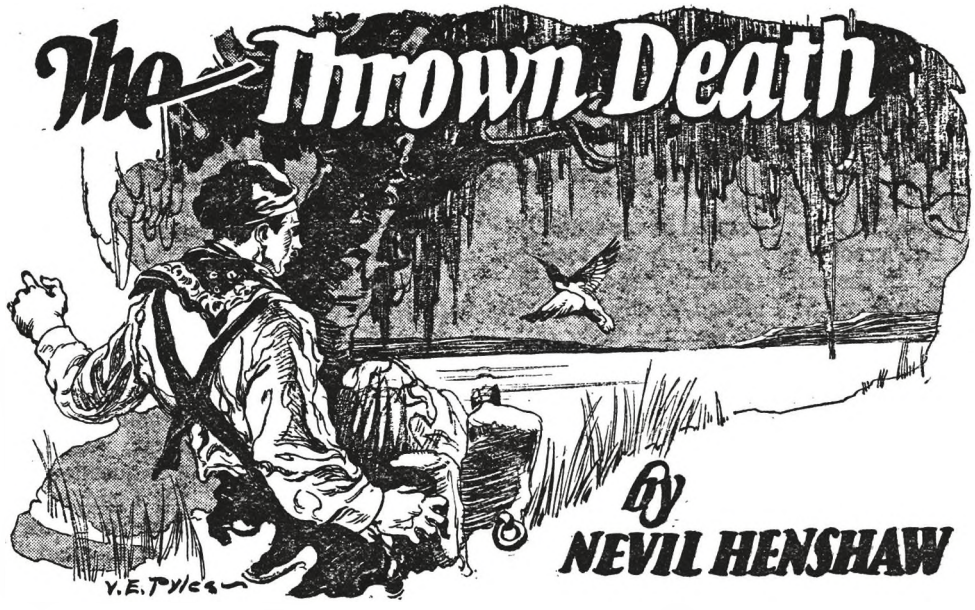
The inspector's voice dropped to a whisper.

"Why then did you do it—Wilson?"

It was strange to see water running down the cheeks of such a man as Wilson.

"Could I see the force disgraced by a pack of Indians?" he shot out, like a challenge.

Then bitterly: "I'm glad I saved you, Hensley Norrys; glad you're still alive. After what you've seen today, you will have many long years to think about that report of yours—there—west of Mackenzie!"



Author of "Stark of Auburn," "Peasant Wit," etc.

IT HAPPENED that I was returning home from the coast by way of the bridge at Petit Anse Bayou. So the girl caught me as I drove across the first great reach of prairie. It was late, and she rode her hardest, pounding up in the fading light upon a half-wild pony.

"You are Jean Le Bossu?" she called as soon as her voice could reach me.

"I am," I answered, and a moment later she had reached my jumper, to lean over and seize my arm.

"Then hurry," she urged. "Hurry, if you would save him. In a little he will be in the hands of the law."

Ah, that word "law!" And there was I with my ducks, still far away from the market in town.

"Mademoiselle," I began, "if you will tell me of whom you are speaking, perhaps tomorrow——"

"I am not mademoiselle," she broke in. "I am only Tina. And I speak of your friend, Jules Rochel. Turn round, and at once. Tomorrow will be too late."

And she added when I did not move:

"Surely you will not refuse? Always you have helped others before. That is why I rode after you when I heard that you had passed."

Still I waited a little, thinking. In a way Jules Rochel was my friend. As a youth he had helped me one year with my trapping. But since then I had not seen him.

True, I had had reports of him. The son of a father who had killed himself with drink, he was well known in the coffee houses of that small corner of Louisiana. And now that he had met with trouble, I must turn my back on the market to help him.

It seemed hard. Yet there was the girl with her plain, honest face. And the eyes were pitiful.

"As you wish," said I. "I will do what I can, Tina. And now you must tell me as we go along."

But Tina did not tell me. For the moment her thoughts were engaged in returning as quickly as possible whence she had come.

"Hurry!" she cried, and rode forward.

And an instant later she was back to do the same thing again.

Thus we went on until, near the sea marsh, we turned off upon a track that led down to the woods. Here was a settlement of a store and a few small farms. And here also was a little knot of people gathered at one side of the rutted road.

"Make room; it is Jean Le Bossu," called the girl; and, the folk falling back, I saw a battered wagon and an old bony horse.

In the wagon was a seine, half unloaded and trailing upon the ground. And beside it stood Jules Rochel. On the instant I recognized him—a fine, broad-shouldered young fellow with a face flushed and mottled as from some recent carouse.

"Jules," said I, "I am here as you wish. Now what is the trouble?"

By way of reply he stared at me stupidly. Yet he was sober now— swiftly and terribly sober. In the end he raised a hand to point at the wagon. So I looked, and inside, half covered by the seine, was the body of a man; of a short, fat man of middle age.

"*Dieu!*" I exclaimed. "It is H. Delhommer."

Then, as is ever the way, the watchers closed in again, speaking all at once.

NOW I gathered some facts, picking them out from the rush of words. The day being Thursday, Rochel had gone early to the bridge. There he was to join his seine to the boat of a friend for a try at the Friday market. A while before Rochel had returned, sodden with drink, to leave his wagon in the road. Seeing a curious hump in the seine, a neighbor had examined it. Thus he had discovered its terrible catch, and had set off at once to a prairie store from which he could telephone the sheriff.

That was all except for the tale of a quarrel that day between Rochel and the dead man. News of it had come in from the bridge.

Having learned what I could from the onlookers, I examined the body. This I knew I had best do before the arrival of Sheriff Bahon. So I turned again to H. Delhommer, thinking of him as I had known him.

A curious man, H. Delhommer, cross-grained and silent; having no friends. Sometimes he had traded in skins and game. More often he had sat, pole in hand, upon his little landing that was just beyond the bridge. Only that morning I had seen him fixing a line before his cabin. And now, like some great fish himself, he lay still in the meshes of the seine.

Quickly I made my examination. That he had died from a blow on the head was quite plain. The wound, a narrow, irregular gash, slanted upward upon the left temple. Starting with some slight depth at the bottom, it ended in what was little more than a scratch.

To me this told of a glancing blow. Also I judged that the trader had been struck by a missile rather than by some object held in the striker's hand.

One thing more I discovered before turning away. It was a little thing—just a few grains of tobacco scattered among the sparse gray hairs of the dead man's head. Had I been less experienced in the value of trifles I would have paid them scant heed. As it was, I examined them as closely as I had the wound.

All this time Rochel had stood by the wagon, staring as if stupefied. Now, calling to him to follow, I turned off to his home. Once we were inside I made him thrust his head into a bucket of water. Then, all dripping as he was, I began to question him.

"See, Jules," said I. "If I am to help you you must tell me all that you know of this affair, and at once. Any moment the sheriff may arrive."

What with the shock and his recent drinking, it was not easy for Rochel to pull himself together.

"But, Bossu!" he cried. "What can I tell you beyond what you have already heard? Juban's boat was leaking, and we could not go out. So I stayed at the bridge for a little fun. And afterward I came home. As for the rest, I know nothing. Why should I kill H. Delhommer or, for that matter, any man? It is ridiculous. Surely you must know that I am innocent, Bossu?"

That this was so I already believed. The strange circumstances of the affair, the straightness of his story, his very excitement served to convince me. One seeking to lie either mumbles or hides behind a smother of words. Rochel's frank earnestness told of the truth itself.

"Yes, Jules," said I. "I think you innocent. Otherwise I would not try to help you. But others will not believe so easily. You have much to explain. Your quarrel with the dead man, for example?"

Rochel threw out his hands.

"You know H. Delhommer," he replied. "If the perch are thick he thinks only of his fishing. When I asked for the loan of a boat he answered me roughly. Afterward we had some words."

"You threatened him?"

"I said that some one would feed him some day to his fish, if that is a threat."

"That is all?"

"All, Bossu."

"Now for this morning. You went over the bridge?"

"No; Juban met me upon this side of the bayou and told me of the leak. Not knowing if I would go out, I unhitched where I was."

"The spot?"

"It was just where the road curves in to the bridge. There is good grazing there."

"Then you spoke to H. Delhommer?"

"Yes, at his place."

"And afterward?"

"Some boats were in, and there was much to drink. We had a good time."

"When you left you went straight back to your wagon?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"You can remember this?"

"But of course. I was not that bad. Did I not hitch up and drive home?"

"Then did you notice any change in the seine or the wagon?"

At this he looked at me helplessly.

"Notice?" he cried. "Why should I notice when I had not so much as unloaded my seine? And with all that liquor inside me I thought only of home and bed."

Though I questioned him further it was with no result. Always his tale was the same. And when finally the sheriff arrived he told it all over again, almost word for word.

As I had feared, Sheriff Bahon paid little heed. A big man, slow and heavy, it was his custom to choose the easiest course. Here was a crime, and here also was a possible criminal. Why trouble to go deeper into the affair?

"No," said he when I begged him to do so. "It is all quite plain, Bossu. Rochel, quarreling with this Delhommer, decided on revenge. Later while his man was absorbed in fishing he slipped up and struck the blow that killed him. Afterward, being afraid, he hid the body in his wagon. As for Rochel's story, it means nothing. It merely shows that he is clever."

"Yes," I agreed. "Rochel *is* clever. First he murders a man. Then he hides his crime by loading the body in his wagon and driving it home for all to see."

The sheriff lost patience.

"Sol" said he. "You are quick with words, Bossu. See if you can do as well with deeds. Go and search as you have done before. For myself, I am satisfied."

And he added mockingly:

"There will be an inquest at the bridge tomorrow. Perhaps by then you will have found the real murderer."

"Perhaps," said I, and I promised myself that I would do what I could if only to shame this fat, lazy officer.

Five minutes later Rochel was on his way to a cell in town. He went with a word to the girl, Tina, who until the last clung to the side of the sheriff's buggy.

When I asked of her, the watchers told me that she was an orphan—one of those homeless creatures that are sent out from the great asylums of the city. Brought to the woods by an old couple, she was without even a name.

This was sad; and, going to her, I sought to comfort the girl as best I could.

"Come, Tina," said I. "Tomorrow I will search, and you will help me. Then we will see. At least we have not lost yet."

For a space she sobbed brokenly, looking out through the dusk to where the buggy had disappeared. Then, recovering herself, she dried her eyes upon the back of her hand.

"*Bien*," said she. "I am brave now. Tomorrow we will do what we can—for Jules."

"And what is Jules to you?" I asked her.

At this something came into her small, shadowed face that for the moment made it seem beautiful.

"Bossu," said she, "he is everything."

That night, having hung my ducks in the cold, I slept in Rochel's empty bed. And when in the gray of the following morning I prepared to set forth there was Tina, a shivering little figure, that waited for me outside upon the gallery.

DRIVING up from the woods, we went out to the edge of the prairie. Here we entered the sea marsh upon the hard shell road of a causeway. For a mile or more this causeway ran straight between high walls of grass, to curve sharply inward as it reached the banks of Petit Anse Bayou.

Just at the beginning of this curve Rochel had left his wagon. At its farther end, facing the causeway, was H. Delhommer's cabin. Across from this cabin, along a bend of the opposite bank, were the huts

and landings that made the small settlement at the bridge.

It was like H. Delhommer to establish himself upon the wrong side of the stream. Preferring the perch to his fellow men, he had paid the price of his solitude. Death had found him beyond the reach of a helping hand.

The mystery of this death I now sought to solve by beginning at the point where Rochel had unharnessed. Having determined the spot by means of the cropped grass at the roadside, I looked about for such other marks as might have been left behind.

The causeway, tracked by innumerable wheels and hoof prints, I gave up at once. So I turned to the boggy strip that ran alongside.

Here, upon the inner edge of the causeway, a single irregular furrow had been plowed in the soft soil. As it approached the spot that had been occupied by the wagon, this furrow swung in abruptly upon the causeway, its progress being marked by a long smear of dried mud upon the hard-packed shell.

Also, on following it to a point half way around the curve, I found that the furrow began in the same abrupt manner. But here there was no mud stain upon the shell.

It was a start and a good one. Already I had learned something worth while. Going back, I spoke to Tina, who waited beside my jumper.

"Well?" I asked when I had shown her the furrow. "What do you make of this?"

"It is some fisherman who has dragged his pole," she replied.

"No," said I. "The mark is too broad. I would say that it was made by H. Delhommer; that he did it with his left heel soon after his death."

The girl stared at me round eyed.

"But, Bossu!" she began. "How do you know——"

"I do not know," said I, "I can only guess. Let us say that the one who killed H. Delhommer knew that Jules' wagon was here, beyond the curve. Finding himself with a dead body on his hands, he sought to dispose of it. Before him was the settlement. Behind was the wagon that would throw suspicion upon another. Can you doubt his choice?

"For the rest, H. Delhommer was a heavy man, and one not easily carried. It is probable that the killer caught the body beneath the arms and, walking backward, dragged it along. As he reached the spot where this furrow starts he was upon the outer edge of the curve and in sight from the bridge. Perhaps just then some one was about to step out on it.

"At all events he veered suddenly to the inner edge that he might be hidden by the sharper bend of the grass. So close did he hug the marsh that one heel of the dead man slid clear of the causeway to leave the furrow behind. There is your fisherman's pole, Tina. What do you make of it now?"

The girl's answer showed that misfortune had only served to quicken her wits.

"That, if known, this would ruin us," she replied. "Tell it in town, and Jules is *foutu*."

"True," said I. "Yet for us it is fortunate. First it is a piece of good luck to pick up the trail so quickly. Secondly, since the marks are so easily read, we should soon prove Jules' innocence in at least this part of the affair."

Starting from the spot where the wagon had stood, I searched only a moment along the edge of the grass before I found what I sought. It was a line of footprints, plainly marked in the boggy soil; and upon following them I found that they led down into the marsh until they disappeared beneath the shallow edge of the tide.

"You see?" I explained. "Once frightened, I know that our killer would not risk discovery again from bridge or causeway. So, having hidden the body, he slipped into the marsh, coming out at some spot far distant from the wagon.

"Now Jules declares that he hitched up and drove at once to his place. At least his clothes were dry and free from fresh mud stains. Had he gone into the marsh, he would have been draggled to the waist."

As I finished a light of hope came into the girl's troubled eyes.

"It is true!" she cried. "It proves Jules' innocence. Come, Bossu! We will go to the sheriff at once."

But I could only cast down her spirits again.

"No, Tina," said I. "That a man went into the marsh means nothing to the sheriff. He would not see it as we do. We must find something more, and we must search for it elsewhere. The marsh has shown us

what it knows. Let us see now if the bayou has something to tell."

Going forward along the causeway, we left it at H. Delhommer's place. Here already was a small group of fishermen. As they waited for the inquest they stared curiously at the tightly closed cabin to which the dead man had been taken the night before.

To my questions they replied indifferently telling me that when last seen alive H. Delhommer had been upon his landing. Afterward they showed not the slightest interest in my search.

A man had been killed, and there was an end of him. If I chose to inquire into the cause of his death, it was no affair of theirs.

HALF way between cabin and bridge a hard-beaten path led down to the water. Following this, we arrived at H. Delhommer's fishing place.

The landing, built of cypress boards, jutted out from behind an abrupt bend of the bayou to the final support of two short, heavy piles. In its rear it was masked by a growth of rushes, while in front the swing of the bank cut off the view both up and down stream. A snug spot for a fisherman. Only when standing erect could he be seen by those who passed directly above.

At first glance the landing promised scant reward for my pains. Save for the water, the rushes and the bare cypress boards, there was nothing to see. Yet I searched it all, even to the supporting piles, which bore a white scatter from the droppings of birds. Then, lowering myself, I began to search the rushes, working around from right to left along the mud flat upon which they grew.

Here also I found nothing beyond the usual litter. Indeed, I was ready to give up and return when, from a point deep in the rushes, I caught a glint of white. Pushing back, I found that it was an oyster shell, one of the broad, heavy sort that come from the bay. An ordinary find for such a spot, I was about to throw it back again, when I saw that one of its ragged edges was tinged with red. Once I had made sure that this red was a blood stain, I cried out in excitement.

"*Hola!*" answered Tina eagerly. "You have found something?"

Climbing up beside her, I held out the shell, pointing to the stain that marred its whiteness.

"I have found the weapon," I declared. "This, I believe, is what killed H. Delhommer. Had the killer been clever, he would have thrown the shell into the bayou, making himself safe. As it is my search here is over. Now I must trust to my wits for a while."

Slipping the shell into my pocket, I sat down upon the landing. But though I thought my hardest, I could find no answer to the puzzle. True one point seemed plain. As before I felt that the blow had not been struck at close quarters. Thanks to the steepness of the bank, the striker could scarce have approached unobserved. Thus H. Delhommer would have fought for his life, causing a disturbance that would have been heard across the stream.

The shell had been thrown. Of this I was assured. Yet why?

That H. Delhommer had been killed by some enemy who wished to pay off an old score was easy enough to imagine. That this score had been paid off in such a way was wholly beyond me.

All about grew dense cover from which one might have fired a shot with every chance of escape. It was ridiculous to suppose that such a one would have chosen the risk and uncertainty of an oyster shell thrown from above. Yet, unless my finding of the shell meant nothing, this was exactly what had occurred.

My thoughts groped blindly as I sought to win a way through the tangle. Had I been alone, sunset might still have found me upon the landing. But my duty to patient little Tina could not be denied, and in the end I prepared to depart. As I did so there came a swish, a shrill cry, and a kingfisher flashed from the pile beside me, its wing all but grazing my cheek as I rose into the line of its flight.

An instant I watched the bird as it slanted away down-strean. Then half idly, I turned for a look at the perch from which it had sprung. It was the left hand pile, the one nearest the bridge, and this time, as I gazed at it, I saw it in a different light.

"So!" I said to myself; and, now that I understood, I wondered that I could have been so blind.

Yet since it was necessary to make sure I placed Tina in my former position beside the pile. Then, telling her to rise at a given signal, I climbed to the bank above.

As I passed H. Delhommer's cabin the

folk from outside were arriving. Jumpers and horses stood about, and the causeway was dotted with those still to come. Despite its grimness the inquest had become a holiday.

To all this I paid scant heed. I was hot on the trail now. Some things seemed sure. And when, a little later, Tina had answered my signal, they were surer still. I now knew how H. Delhommer had been killed and why. The killer himself remained.

At once I fastened my mind upon him. How to find this man who, the morning before, had thrown his handful of death from the spot where I stood. He might be one of a hundred.

Yet I must pick him out from the shifting throng that came and went at the bridge. Some mark, some sign, that was the only way. As I had worked before, so must I work again.

Thus I went back to the very beginning, nosing about like a dog afield. The dead man's body; there was the wound with its tale of a missile, those grains of tobacco scattered among the hairs of the head.

Ah, that tobacco! For the first time I considered it carefully. Here might be something to go on. H. Delhommer did not smoke. I remembered this now from the talk at the bridge. It was said that he was too mean, too stingy to do so.

And, even if he did smoke, how came that tobacco where it was? Surely it was dropped there by some one, and the man had no intimates or friends.

No, the killer had dropped it. He alone had been close enough to the dead man to do so. But how?

One who has killed a man does not roll or smoke a cigaret while considering the corpse. Nor does he do so as he drags it away. Yet, in this dragging, the dead man's head was below and beneath the killer's. If a cigaret had been there as he strained at his burden——

All at once I had it, swiftly, clearly, as if the picture had been thrust before my eyes. Again I felt sure. Again I had a mark to go upon—a small mark, yet a peculiar one. My search might be a matter of weeks. It might be over in an hour.

At all events our folk are curious, and the killer felt safe. Unless he had run, he would surely make holiday with the rest.

Hurrying back to the cabin, I mixed with the crowd, moving about from man to man. And in the end I found what I sought—a squat, evil-faced fisherman with the twist of a cigaret thrust behind the brown flap of one ear.

True, it was only a chance. Those who work on the water must smoke when they can. And the wind blows tobacco and paper away. With the cigaret made and held fast by the ear, it is different. More than one had the habit among his kind.

Yes, it was a chance, perhaps a long one. Yet what but chance had brought me thus far? Going back to the landing, my hopes ran high, so high that Tina exclaimed at sight of my face.

"Bossu!" she cried. "What is it? You have won?"

"Not yet," said I. "But I well may do so. It is like a game, Tina. My hand seems a good one if only I can play it. First we will try the coroner. Perhaps if I am lucky I can lay my cards upon the table."

I KNEW Dr. Lemaire, the coroner. Often I had brought game to his house. So when I called to him from where we waited upon the causeway he stopped his buggy for a word with me.

When I told him that I thought Rochel innocent through proof which I wished to present, he was interested at once. Unlike the sheriff, he would go far in search of the truth.

"That is good," said he. "Make the most of what you have found. It is no small thing to hang an innocent man."

"Then you will let me swear to what I believe?" I asked.

At this he changed from the kindly doctor to the officer of the law.

"But, Bossu," he objected, "this is the inquest. I have only to determine the cause of death. Your evidence is for the trial. You must wait until then."

"Yes, *M'sieu le Docteur*," said I. "And while I wait my man will get away. The sheriff will not help me. And even should he do so, it will be too late. Now is the time, while the killer is unprepared. Should he be warned he will never confess."

"And Jules!" cried Tina, forgetting her shyness. "Think of Jules—all those weeks in jail. Ah, you can not refuse us, *M'sieu le Docteur*."

The doctor considered, twisting the old, shiny reins that hung loose from his hands.

"Bossu," said he finally, "an inquest is a

curious affair. One never knows to what it may lead. Thus, since you may be called with others, you had best be at hand."

And with this he drove on.

So, once the jury was chosen, I pushed through the folk at the cabin, leaving Tina outside. If in life H. Delhommer had found seclusion, he abandoned it at the end. Men stood shoulder to shoulder about the four walls. True, the doctor had given his orders. But what is so deaf as a crowd?

WAITING while the dead man was examined, I looked for my fisherman. Yes, he was there near the door. Yet he would have been as safe against the farther wall. For all that press in the cabin, the real crowd was jammed just outside.

Of the first part of the inquest I remember little. All through it I was thinking of what lay before me. Now that my chance was at hand I began to doubt. After all, could I be sure? Perhaps I was wholly wrong. If so I would make a fool of myself. I might even feel the hand of the law.

Yet there was Rochel and Tina. And I had promised to do what I could. When at last my name was called I stepped forward promptly. At least I could pretend the boldness that I did not feel.

Dr. Lemaire sat at a table in the one clear space of the room. He spoke to me as if he were seeing me for the first time.

"You are Jean Le Bossu?"

"Yes, *M'sieu le Docteur.*"

"I am inquiring into the cause of H. Delhommer's death. You know anything of it?"

"I do, *M'sieu le Docteur.*"

"Then what do you know?"

Reaching into a pocket, I drew out my oyster shell.

"First that H. Delhommer was killed with this," I replied.

Having considered the shell and its blood-stain, the doctor again examined the dead man's wound. Next he questioned me carefully as to where I had made my find. He was on the trail himself now. Almost he spoke as in days before.

"Bossu," said he, "it seems that you *have* discovered something. Now for what else you may know. Tell it all, and in your own way."

In the moment I waited I glanced at the door. Already my fisherman had edged nearer it despite the jam outside. As I spoke I kept him well in view.

"It was this way," I began; "or so I believe, *M'sieu le Docteur.* As you may have heard, H. Delhommer was a great fisherman. All day he would sit by himself on his landing. Yesterday morning, as usual, he was there. This much at least is known.

"The landing ends in two short piles. H. Delhommer sat by the left-hand one. Here he was out of sight save from those who passed directly in front on the bayou.

"Thus, when later a man crossed the bridge he caught no glimpse of the fisherman. But he did see a kingfisher that had perched itself upon the top of the left-hand pile. At once the man determined to try his hand at killing this kingfisher. So, having picked up a shell, he stalked the bird along the bank above the landing until he arrived within easy range. Then, taking such aim as was possible, he made his throw.

"At this moment, as the shell went through the air, H. Delhommer rose to his feet for some purpose. An instant later his head cleared the top of the pile, to scare away the kingfisher, and receive the full effect of the throw. Struck fairly upon the temple, H. Delhommer went down dead."

I stopped since there was a sudden disturbance in the room. Men shoved and jostled, and from outside came a mutter of oaths. The doctor beat with his fist for order.

"Silence!" he cried.

And he added to me:

"The man who threw the shell, Bossu? You know his name?"

"He is there at the door, seeking to push his way outside," I answered. "Let him speak for himself."

At once the confusion increased. Arms waved, voices shouted, while near the door, the folk milled about like stock in a pen. Then all at once there was silence, and two men came forward holding another between them. He was scared, this other man—scared and sullen. As he stopped by the table his gaze went down to where he dug with one foot at the floor.

The doctor gave him a look. It was enough to judge him.

"Your name?"

"Pierre Trahan."

"You have heard Jean Le Bossu. What have you to say?"

But Trahan said nothing. Still he looked downward, digging at the floor.

"So!" said the doctor, and turned to me. "It seems that you are right, Bossu. Have you more to tell?"

Again I waited before replying. Since Trahan would not speak, I must make him do so. When I answered I quickened my words.

"The rest you can guess, *M'sieu le Docteur*," said I. "Going down to the landing, this man found that he had killed H. Delhommer. It was a tight hole for him. He thought of hiding the body. Then he remembered that Rochel was drinking across the bayou, and that Rochel's wagon, with its seine, stood around the curve. A fine way to cast suspicion! Hurrying off, he hitched up and drove to a spot just above——"

I paused and, as I hoped, it was too much for Trahan. He broke in furiously.

"That is a lie!" he cried. "I did not bring the wagon to the body, but the body to the wagon."

"As I know," said I. "I can show you the marks you made. Also the tobacco that, as you strained along, fell from the cigaret behind your ear upon the dead man's head. There was your hard luck. It gave you away."

Trahan turned on me, snarling.

"Yes," he sneered. "That sounds very clever. Yet I tell you that you lie again. It was easy enough for you to trap me. You watched from the marsh all the time."

THAT was all, since a verdict was quickly arrived at and Trahan taken off to the sheriff. Afterward, putting Tina in my jumper, I drove back to the woods. What she said to me I do not remember. But I still can see the look on her face, the light in her eyes.

Rochel would soon be free now. Once again his life was before him to make or mar. Perhaps, shunning his vice, he would marry this girl who loved him so bravely. Perhaps, glass in hand, he would go down into the pit alone.

All this lay in the future. For the present I must hurry my ducks to the market in town.

The Altar of the Legion

A THREE-PART STORY—PART I

by

Farnham Bishop

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FOREWORD

ROMANCE lies not alone in history, but in the misty, half-forgotten legends bequeathed to us by peoples who have vanished from the earth.

Most loved, most poignant in romance, the tales of those old champions who stood, a Christian wall, between free Britain and the Saxon spears. It is not of them, however, not of Arthur the King, of Gawain, Lancelot, and Tristram, that this story tells, though its theme is a legend of their time, but older still: A legend of the pride, the love, the gallantry of Roman Britainnia, the last far-flung colony of Rome.

It was Julius Cæsar who first loosed the eagles of empire on that isolated Celtic island, Britain beyond the sea. Following him, the empurpled emperors made the land their own, first subduing, then winning the hearts of its half-barbaric warriors. Together, Celt and Roman built a strong, rich civilization, half Italy, half Britain, from the Channel to the towering wall that now lies, crumbling and plundered, along the Scottish border.

The power and luxury of Rome in the fertile south and east so bewitched the hearts of the Britons that they loved to boast of the scanty Roman blood that mixed with theirs and gladly served the Empire in the legions.

Where, before, towns of wattle, reed or rough-hewn stone had stood, the marble palaces and pillared temples of Rome rose in stately grandeur to the British sky.

"Romans" these city-dwelling Celts called themselves; and in strange, barbaric accents they spoke the Latin tongue.

But, proud in savage freedom, their wilder kinsmen to the north and west scorned Roman ways and Roman servitude. In Cornwall—which the Romans called Damnonia—in Wales and north of the Humber, fierce tribesmen maintained their ancient Celtic freedom and their fathers' speech. Between them and the Roman Celts the eternal feud of hillman against plainsman defied the Italian legions and the Italian gods—defied all that came from Rome, except that greatest of Rome's gifts, the Cross of Christ.

Then, from untamed depths of European forests, the wild Germanic barbarians flung themselves against the Empire, broke the legions, profaned the temples and crushed into bloody dust the glorious pomp of Rome. The last enfeebled emperors called their eagles back to Gaul, to Italy to save the doomed city of the Cæsars. A part of this forlorn hope, the armored legions and the bannered horsemen rode away from

Britain, never to see its white cliffs and its wide, sweet-smelling downs again.

Behind them they left a people weakened, unprotected, but dauntless with the ancient courage of their Celtic sires and the pride of their Roman traditions. The legions were no more than gone, when the mail-clad Saxons in a thousand ships swept down upon the Kentish coast, seeking more fertile lands and softer homes across the sea. Mercilessly they spoiled the land with flame and sword, killing, enslaving, trampling under foot the Celtic-Roman war-banners and the vestments of Christ's priests.

But, schooled in the Roman squadrons, a prince of battles rose in Britain to repel the invader: Arthur the King, greatest among many great and valiant British chiefs.

And when at last the Saxon tide rolled over him, drowning out the Roman name and Celtic liberty in the cities of the West—Aquae Sulis, known to us as Bath; Glevum, the Gloucester of our days; Corinium, on whose ruins Cirencester stands—then other heroes rose to withstand the flood-tide of heathendom.

Yet, foot by foot and mile by mile, the Saxons pressed their victims back. Two hundred years the unrelenting warfare raged, the heathen ever reenforced by fresh fleets from over the eastern sea. There are splendid pages in the tale, glorious years when the Romanized Britons almost drove the invader back into the ocean.

It is of one such interval of British glory that this story tells: An interval shrouded in the veil of tradition, a woof of misty legend through which the crimson thread of history sparkles here and there, only to be lost again; legend which plays, as the waves play with the stones they wash and roll, with the tale of a lost land—the land of Lyonesse.

For there lingers still among the older folk of Cornwall, the last, faint breath of a land once great and beautiful, now sunk beneath the sea. The monkish Norman chroniclers have set down strange tales of its glories, its palaces and frowning walls, its heaven-pointing churches, fragrant with incense and pulsing with the chant of priests.

None knows what vanished people built its cities, or how or when it fell; but men say that the ocean rose and swallowed it up in a single day. And every scattered, broken fragment of tradition declares that this land of mystery lay between Land's End and the Scilly Isles, where now the tortured waters toss and moan above its church bells and the bleached bones of its citizens.

The pomp of a great name surrounds lost Lyonesse; for here, it is said, dwelt that famous prince and hero of King Arthur's Table Round, Tristram. First of minstrels and of lovers, bravest and unhappiest of knights, he sailed from Lyonesse to Cornwall, to serve King Mark the Cruel. To Lyonesse he returned, when he had slain Marholt of Ireland; and thence embarked for Brittany to woo Iseult of the White Hands. Therefore, if such a fair, lost land there were, the peaks of the Scilly Isles rise above its ocean grave, and the mighty granite walls of Land's End mark its eastern boundary.

The legends say that Arthur the King was the first champion of Roman Britain; and Tristram was his knight. Therefore it may well be that Lyonesse the Fair was once the farthest outpost of Roman power and Roman grandeur; doubtless in this vanished land were born the armored horsemen that for a time flung back the triumphant march of the Saxon shieldwalls, and all but drove them from the British Isles.

Isolated by the moors and crags of Cornwall, almost surrounded by the sea, it must have been as Roman as the Roman wall itself, as Roman as the radiating Roman roads that lay like a network of stone over all Britain. If this be true, then its soft-sounding name can only be the time-worn remnant of a bit of soldiers' Latin: Legionis Asa, the Altar of the Legion.

Before the Normans came, before Alfred of England humbled the Danes, Lyonesse had sunk beneath the waves. Its columned porticoes and stately halls lie many fathoms deep; but its name lives on. Old fishermen still boast that when the sea is still, they can hear its church bells ring far down beneath the rippling keel.

And of that time when Lyonesse sent forth its Roman horse against the Saxon, of its beauty and its pride, this tale would tell. It would he hard to find warriors better bred or better matched. They made history, and history has rewarded the Saxon. The soldier of Legionis Asa lies beneath the sea—forgotten.

THE LOST LAND

THE sea lies over Lyonesse—
Fair Lyonesse, lost Lyonesse—
Gray waves washed over Lyonesse,
The city of the foam,
The dogfish drive the mackerel
Where once the Saxon shieldwalls fell;
And lapped with seaweed, pearled with shell
The vanished legion's home.

Hunted o'er moor and ocean crag
The armored cohorts came,
When Rome's imperial eagles flew
From Scythia and Timbuktu
To seas without a name.
Where hidden peoples lived unknown,
They builded walls and fanes of stone,
And watched their Celtic allies drag
With aching loins o'er ancient paths
The blocks for senate-house and baths,
To make a tiny Rome.
The power of Rome, her holiness,
The wit to rule, the Cross to bless,
The Scepter and the keys.
An altar they upreared to God,
And o'er the teeming, sea-girt sod
Rome reigned by grace of these.

A little land, a shining land,
Belted with granite walls.
A city bright with palaces
With colonnaded palaces,
And glorious capitals;
Where gleaming dome and sculptured arch
And marble temple glowed,
Where booted feet trod Roman street
As legions clattered forth to meet
The yellow-haired barbarian hordes,
And Arthur with his bannered lords
Greeted the horsemen's stately march
Adown the Cornish road.

Vanished is lordly Lyonesse,
The last far shrine of Rome;
No more the Empire's lances ride
In thundering squadrons through the tide
Of ravening heathen spears.
Ten fathom down her topmost towers,
Her fragrant rose-entangled bowers,
Dream the eternal years.
The salt sea lulls dead Lyonesse,
The fighting legion's home.

The waters lie o'er Lyonesse—
Proud Lyonesse, brave Lyonesse—
The emerald waves hide Lyonesse
Where pulsed the heart of Rome.
But if you sail some sunlit noon,
When winds are still and waters croon,
Far, far beneath the drifting keel
You'll hear the church bells softly peal,
And see, in fancy's faerie haze,
The shimmering roofs of Roman days,
The long-lost walls of Lyonesse,
Where good King Arthur sleeps upon
The sunken isle of Avalon.
And silvery fish swim on and on
Through the white streets of Lyonesse,
The British Legion's home.

For Owain and North Wales!

CHAPTER I

THE LAST ROMANS

GRAY fog hid the cliffs of Cornwall. None of the riders could see a lance-length beyond his horse's ears. But between the hiss of the ebbing surf and the boom of the next wave, breaking far below, they could hear the creak of each other's saddles and the faint tinkle of their chain mail.

"Halt! Holy Saint Brighid! Prince!"

"What is it, Niall of the Sword?" answered a low, young voice.

"The path ends, Prince. We stand on the brink of the cliff. And hark!"

"I hear nothing, Niall, save the sea. And forget not that I am the Princess. Twice have you called me Prince."

The youth smoothed his voice to a sound like hidden music, to fit the part he played, and laughed in self-enjoyment of his art. Laughter—that was Meriaduc, son of Owain ap Urien.

"Be silent, Prince—cess!"

The man's voice was low and vibrant with warning. His keen ears strained for the sound he had heard between two breakers. It came again: The *tock-tock* of oars on thole-pins. Rhythmic, menacing, it pulsed like the death-watch in a moldering wall.

"*Warigeath tha cliful Fremme Woden!*"

The cliffs re-echoed to the hoarse shout of mingled fear, prayer and command.

The stripling prince in his sister's clothes flung up his head—a gesture old Niall loved. It was one of the little things that kept alive his faith in the boy's destiny—this gay-hearted boy, heir to dominion over a brave people, a people struggling for its very existence against the heathen from over the sea; this gentle, graceful boy who fainted at the sight of blood and could fool the women themselves when he put on their garments. But there was no outward sign of weakness in the erect, slim figure whose horse was drawn close to Niall's.

"Saxons," he muttered, "Saxons—even here!"

Niall of the Sword cursed savagely.

"Ay, Saxons! By the love your father bears me, Prince—Princess—I pray you

turn back. To the right of us is naught but crags and fog; to the left a headlong plunge to the sea and the mercy of heathen pirates; a precipice in front, and the saints know what lies beyond. Let us flee while there is time! Rude as the Cornishmen are, they are of our own faith, and will at least protect us from the heathen spears."

The boy shook his head; the other could just see him through the gray curtain of fog.

"Never!" he answered firmly. "My father bade us go to Bellerium, and go we will, though ten thousand Saxons bar the way. Make room!"

Urging his horse past the old man's before he could be stopped, he rode straight over the edge of the cliff. His mount took the descent with a snort of fear and a great slithering of loose stones. Niall groaned; but no crash of a falling body came to his straining, anxious ears. Instead he heard the hoofs of the horse strike beaten earth, and the soft "princess" voice of the rider call:

"The path goes on and down. It is steep but not perilous. Follow on!"

At once Niall took the descent. Owain's son lacked not courage, that was certain. Again the clink of steel and creak of leather broke the intervals of gray silence as the twenty troopers of the escort, one after another, rode down the steep trail, to find themselves on the level sand with the surf breaking close beside them.

"Princess!" Niall of the Sword called softly. "Ay," he muttered to himself, "and Gwenlian would have done it, too," remembering how many of Owain's court thought her better mettle for a throne than her brother Meriaduc, with his swooning, his songs and his pranks. They thought this sadly, for they all loved the boy—ay, they loved him.

"Princess!" Old Niall repeated the call, a shade louder.

"Here!"

The word was almost a laugh, youth's challenge to adventure.

"We go on? Let it be so, then. If only those accursed Saxon dogs do not hear us!"

The deep, soft sand dragged at the horses' hoofs. Niall gave a quiet command; the cavalcade turned toward the sea and along the hard, wave-packed beach. For more than a mile they rode at a walk, till a puff of warmer air drew a warning grunt from Niall.

"The fog will thin now," he cautioned, "for the wind rises. We shall be needing to make a run for it!"

ALMOST as he spoke, the air grew clearer in shreds and patches; a faint, sickly sun shone through the fast-melting fog. Along the southern sea, the beach stretched out farther and farther, rising inland into wind-carved dunes. The cliffs of Cornwall lay behind to the eastward.

Turning in the saddle, Niall uttered a startled cry, which came back a hundred times as loud, in a fierce, many-throated yell—

"*Weallas!* Britons!"

Out of the off-shore fog, not far behind the two-and-twenty riders, a dragon-prowed longship surged in through the shallowing waters and grounded with grating keel. Forty oars tossed aloft; the port shieldrail thronged with eager warriors. Springing from fore deck and rowing bench, the Saxons flung themselves over the side, waded through the surf and charged along the beach. Their brandished weapons caught the feeble glint of the sun.

"Spur! Spur!" Niall shouted and, seizing Meriaduc's rein, set off in swift flight.

Imperiously Meriaduc snatched the bridle free, and turned to look at his foes. The sight of so fair a face and the long black hair above a woman's gown brought a roar of delight from the heathen.

Meriaduc rode for life along the unknown shore. Behind galloped the mounted escort: Twenty tall warriors in blackened chain mail and flapping black cloaks. After them raced the Saxons, between seventy and eighty pirates armed with heavy spears, with swords and axes, swift-footed and long-winded, lusting for fight and plunder. A few of them reluctantly stayed behind to guard the stranded galley.

The chase streamed on, pursuers and pursued tailing out, the fugitives gaining in spite of the weariness of their mounts. Niall of the Sword looked back over his shoulder, a derisive challenge on his lips, but turned swiftly back again at the cry of Meriaduc.

"Niall! We are trapped!"

Through the mist before them rose a mighty cliff that seemed to run inland interminably, blocking the beach from the water's edge to the very limit of the landward vision.

"Inland!" Niall shouted.

Wheeling to the sword hand, the riders galloped along the granite wall into a lingering fog bank that screened its end from view. On they pounded blindly, till Niall, now in the lead, reined in so sharply that his horse pawed the air.

"The rock turns," he cried. "We must fight!"

A projecting salient of the cliff barred their road. In the pocket which it formed with the main line of the headland, the fog still lay thick; Niall's hand groped along a smooth, damp wall. He shouted a command; the score of warriors formed up in double rank and drew their long, straight broadswords.

The old commander's heart ached anxiously for Owain's son, knowing that at the first blood drawn would come the womanly swooning, and a good soldier, sorely needed in the fray, would have to bear a poor one to shelter. He turned to Meriaduc.

"Do not try to fight. Hide in that angle of the cliff," he commanded.

Meriaduc's eyes flashed anger, then dulled with shame, and, wrapping his sister's cloak about him, he obeyed. Slowly his soldiers trotted toward the straggling pursuers, not eighty yards distant.

Seeing their victims at bay, the Saxons halted and collected into a compact wedge, shields lapped together above projecting points. For a moment the hostile ranks surveyed each other coolly; then Niall pointed out to sea, and smiled grimly. A second Saxon ship was drawing swiftly inland, its shieldrail lined with archers ready to loose.

"Men of Owain," he addressed his warriors, "there is but one hope, and that a small one. Break that shieldwall and spur through. The second rank will take the Lady Gwenlian in charge. Princess!"

Meriaduc rode out from behind the cliff angle.

"Now!" barked Niall. "For Owain and North Wales! Peck, ye Ravens!"

The riders stiffened, about to drive in the spurs. As their muscles tightened, a commanding voice, neither Saxon nor Briton, shouted—

"Halt! Stir not!"

Saxon and Briton alike turned at the command. On the crest of the nearest sand dune towered a tall horseman in Roman armor. With his eye fixed on the Saxon wedge, he raised his long, heavy lance.

"Look!" he commanded in British.

The embattled enemies followed his gesture to the comb of the headland. The fog was gone; the projecting arm of the cliff now appeared, not as a granite ledge, but as a steep ramp of concrete. Above, crowning the cliff, a great gray castle lifted its battlements above the shore.

The second galley was driving in toward shallow water, her archers waiting only till her course should bring them within range. Emboldened by the shouts of their fellow-pirates, the shieldwall began to surge forward. Again the strange horseman lifted his spear, pointing it toward the Saxon ranks.

AS AT a signal, something flashed on the castle wall; the air was rent by a tearing hum. A boulder, seeming to blot out the sun, swept down from the sky to seaward, fell crashing into the waist of the approaching ship, and broke her in two. With a gurgling rush the waters engulfed her; the heads of her crew dotted the sea.

Again and again a sullen twang sounded from above, and great darts, heavier than any man could wield, tore into the compact front of the advancing Saxon shieldwall. No foe could be seen, yet one after another the terrible steel-tipped beams rent great gaps in the pirate ranks. Whoso was struck was hurled back through the rank behind, torn half in two, while the cruel dart sped on to bury itself in a second breast. The Saxons faltered, gave back, and broke for the shore.

"Now!" Niall shouted. "At them!"

The twenty Celtic horsemen broke into a gallop, their long blades flashing in the sun. But before they could close, a trumpet sounded, and a squadron of heavy cavalry, clad from top to toe in close-fitting scale armor, clattered out from the dunes and thundered past them with leveled lances. They swept up the fleeing Saxons as a broom sweeps dust, their spears piercing mail and flesh. Behind them surged the black-clad Ravens, eager to be in at the death, their swords flashing down and rising red.

A pitiful remnant of Saxons reached the water's edge, plunged in and strove to thrust off the stranded galley. Niall would

have ridden them down, but the stranger waved him back.

Hardly had he reined in, when the hail of missiles from the castle was renewed, pelting the surface of the sea, piercing the light planks of the ship, striking the Saxons under as they stood or swam. The water was tinged with blood; corpses strewed the shore.

Niall cantered over to his deliverer.

"A pretty slaughter," he commented, "but a poor fight."

The stranger shrugged his broad shoulders.

"A better fight would have landed you in Purgatory," he answered. "Who is in command among you?"

Meriaduc, pale, his face resolutely turned from the scene of battle, rode up beside them. He lifted his troubled blue eyes frankly to the stranger's warm hazel ones, searching his face earnestly.

Here was such a man as the young prince had never seen in his native hills: An inch short of six feet, his erect carriage made him seem much taller; his girth and limbs were those of a well-conditioned athlete; his broad, square brow and chin, and Roman nose were those of a conquering Cæsar. Dark with that warm, clear-skinned complexion peculiar to the Roman, his face lighted with appreciation of Meriaduc's grace of carriage and girl-like beauty, as the Welsh youth rode up.

Accustomed as Meriaduc was to this kind of tribute when he played the girl, a blush for his own manhood suffused his cheeks, but his eyes did not falter. Very simply and with becoming firmness he answered the stranger's question:

"I," he said, "am Gwenlian, daughter of Owain of North Wales. Owain sends me on an errand to your people, under the protection of Niall of the Sword—" with a charming inclination of the head introducing the old warrior—"Niall of the Sword," he repeated, with a touch of proud affection, "Captain of Ravens. With all my heart I thank you for your timely help."

The stranger flung back his scarlet cloak and saluted, his finely molded corselet flashing like a mirror as it caught the sun.

"I am Marcianus Drusus, Prefect of the Damnonian March. I am proud to have been of service to King Owain's daughter. He and my father rode together against the Saxons under the banner of King Arthur. It has gone ill with Britain since good King Arthur's death."

"Hard indeed," the graceful princeling answered seriously. "These forty years the Saxons have been establishing their kingdoms in the east, raiding farther and farther inland, masking their falseness under a pretense of peace. Now they advance in force, burning cities, desecrating churches, slaughtering and enslaving our people.

"My father has given up the security of his capital on the Scottish border to spend his old age in riding up and down the marches from Carlisle to Caerleon, from Powis to Corinium, striking swift blows at the invader with his gallant horsemen, the Ravens.

"But now the West Saxons set great hosts afoot, conquering new kingdoms year by year, and my father has neither the strength nor the troops to hold them off much longer. Therefore I have come to your province to ask help for my race—and yours, and—" again the blush threatened to mount— "a refuge for myself."

So it was Gwenlian had been sent by Owain, Gwenlian left behind in Aquae Sulis, stretched out on her bed with an illness of alternate aches and torpor.

Meriaduc's heart had gone out with a rush to the stalwart Roman soldier, and he was feeling his own defects as never before. He wanted to grow as tall, as broad, as brown, as brave, to be a man like the Prefect of the Damnonian March, to be his companion, in time his equal. But he did not forget to exert his "princess" charm.

Drusus, meanwhile, reflected on the news from North Wales.

"We are out of the world here in Legionis Asa," he observed. "I hold the borders to keep at least this little Roman corner of Britain safe from the barbarian. Here we do not know how the warfare goes in the north and east."

"All the land between Strathclyde and the German Ocean is overrun by the Saxon hordes," the counterfeit Gwenlian answered. "Nothing of Britain remains save North Wales from Cumbria to the Severn, the midlands from Glevum to Corinium, Cornish Damnonia, and your own Legionis Asa. Damnonia and your province have never helped us since King Arthur's death. Alone, we of Wales fight a hopeless battle."

The blue eyes sought the brown ones appealingly.

"It can not be that your folk will refuse us aid," Meriaduc went on softly, playing his woman's part. "Here on your very border, Saxon blood has been spilled. Your coasts have felt the grating keels of Saxon ships. Yours is the greatest remnant of Roman power in Britain. Yours is the wisdom of Rome, the valor of the legions, the heritage of the Empire!

"Though we of the hills do not recognize your sovereignty, we look to you for strength, aye, for leadership in our struggle for life. You can not refuse us!"

Drusus's eyes kindled kindly.

Encouraged, the suppliant went on:

"Why should not you, the heirs of Celtic liberty and Roman glory, stand side by side with your Celtic comrades in a cause that means life or death to us all?"

Drusus smiled sadly. Lady Gwenlian's sex and her inexperience carried her along so swiftly.

"All you say is true," he of Legionis Asa replied, "but—" his face had clouded— "there are many of our citizens who would hold aloof, preferring that we keep our Roman isolation. They say, and I think truly, Princess, that Legionis Asa has a sacred obligation to maintain the culture and traditions of that Rome which, save for us, is dead. While Legionis Asa stands secure, and only for so long, Imperial Rome yet lives."

He averted his eyes. Anxious for smoother ground, he let his gaze dwell on the Ravens under Niall's command, and remarked courteously:

"At least Britain is not lost while such soldiers live. I have often heard of the valor of Owain's Ravens, but never before have I seen them. It would please me to stand beside them in battle. God grant that I may!"

"Does it not rest with you?" Meriaduc asked.

Drusus shook his head.

"A soldier must obey orders."

His manner then took on the kind concern of a host.

"But I am thoughtless; you are weary with your long, perilous journey, and must have rest. I will guide you to the city, and, if you permit, claim the hospitality of my cousin Tullia Marciana for you."

For an instant they held each other's gaze. Meriaduc knew he was like his sister and that in taking on her robes, he took on, too, something of her softer loveliness.

The resemblance they bore each other was, indeed, the marvel of the kingdom; but what he read in Drusus' steadfast glance was only a silent understanding of the dangers a girl had undergone to bring her father's message to Legionis Asa, a perception of fine spirit and courage, and Meriaduc's young, hero-craving heart leaped with the resolve that Drusus should not be disappointed in him, even while the blush again warmed his cheek.

What pleased Meriaduc to the point of ecstasy was that he read no hint of dawning sentiment in Drusus' eyes, a frequent accompaniment of his girl masquerades. The brown eyes were kind, appreciative, respectful. Meriaduc was content. They would laugh together over this adventure some day; albeit his masquerading was, for the first time, more than a lark.

His sister Gwenlian had been left in Aquae Sulis to drink the curative waters, and the mission to Bellerium could not be delayed. Meriaduc knew what Gwenlian did not suspect, that his father, while seeking the protection of the Roman city for his daughter, counted at the same time on the eloquence of her beauty, not less than on her spirit, to move the Senate there to favor his plea for help.

Meriaduc resolved that if the influence of a beautiful woman could help his country in dealing with the Senate of Legionis Asa, his country should have that influence. Nobody but Niall knew that Meriaduc was impersonating his sister.

Niall had opposed the plan, but the headstrong boy had had his way. In truth, the boy had not consulted the man. He had simply appeared as Gwenlian and completely fooled old Niall with a story of sufficient recovery to proceed on the journey, even acting the languid girl in something less than full health for a few hours, and enjoying the old warrior's tender solicitude to the utmost.

In the end, as Meriaduc knew he would, Niall fell in, grumblingly, with his madcap prince's plan. Meriaduc was three years younger than his sister, but as tall as she.

Niall listened in entranced amazement while the young prince modulated his tones to a clear sweetness that was Gwenlian's own. The old fellow's ingrained, rugged honesty withheld complete approval still, but inconsistently and involuntarily he

reveled in the beauty of the acting, and his memory was soon recalling to him the last night in Owain's court.

THERE had come to the court that evening a minstrel of rare talent in whose throat dwelt a lark. He had held that noisy, rude assembly silent and rapt for hours. In the hush after one of his songs, a young officer of Ravens voiced a thought, not conscious that he spoke till his own words fell on his ears.

"As I live," he breathed, "it is no minstrel that, but our own Prince Meriaduc up to his tricks!"

It broke the spell. There followed much loud laughter, and shouted compliments to the prince's mimicry. The bewildered minstrel was besought to own up, to throw off the disguise. Meriaduc had slipped out of the hall, a short time before, on business of his own, and was about to reenter, when he heard the officer's words. He remained behind the door curtain and, through a place worn thin and easily made into a small peephole, watched the impromptu farce.

The poor minstrel was frantic with trying to guess what was this rough northern game, and how he was expected to play his part in it, when Meriaduc stepped forth, unobserved in the excitement, and began to sing one of the minstrel's songs, his voice rising high and sweet above the din. Everybody loved the merry prince. But Meriaduc was fifteen, and at that age in King Owain's time a man must be a man.

But this man, a king's son, chose to be a woman, and in that guise was even now about to enter Legionis Asa. All in the service of his hard-pressed country, it was true, and there was no doubt that a beautiful, high-spirited princess would have more influence than a prince who could not fight. Niall sighed profoundly.

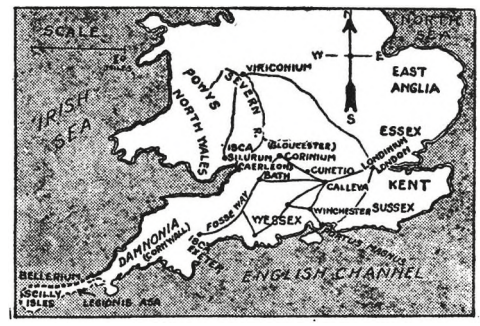
The prefect swung about and issued a command in Latin—

"*Retrorsum!*"

The squadron of heavy cavalry swung into columns of fours and rode up the ramp. At a signal from Drusus, Niall and the Ravens followed. Side by side princess and rescuer rode after them.

With strangely mingled feelings Meriaduc studied the massive workmanship and skillful construction of the great military ramp. Rising like the shoulder of a mountain, straight as an arrow, and slightly ridged to keep the horses' hoofs from slipping, it was built of huge blocks and slabs of Roman concrete.

How many men had labored for how long to raise its mighty bulk, and how many



years the land of Legionis Asa must have lived in peace to perfect the work!

Would such a folk disturb their comfort, their entrenched security, to save a people whom the Romans regarded as barbarians? What though the people of Legionis Asa were half British? Roman civilization and Roman pride made them regard themselves as a superior race, an island of culture in a sea of semi-savagery. His people would seem little better to them than the heathen Saxons.

Meriaduc pointed to the ramp.

"But why is it unwalled?"

The prefect's thin lips were touched with a smile.

"You will see," he answered.

In a moment more the hoofs of their horses rang bell-like on hollow metal: Two great plates of bronze, each three paces long, extending the full width of the ramp to its unparapeted edges. An almost imperceptible line showed where the two plates met.

When they had all passed over the plates, Drusus called to the squadron trumpeter who rode ahead—

"Sound, Furco!"

The cavalryman blew a ringing call. An echoing clang of metal replied. Meriaduc looked back. The bronze plates had vanished. Where they had been, emptiness yawned from side to side of the roadway. At a second signal the bronze leaves rose on shrieking hinges, till their edges met once more.

"The ramp is hollow there," Drusus explained. "It is a hundred feet from the roadway to the sand, and twenty more to the granite rock beneath on which the foundation rests. Those plates are supported by massive beams of well-seasoned oak, thrust out or withdrawn at will by counterweights, through greased channels in the concrete. Mark how the tops of the side walls rise to a polished knife-edge, so that none may mount thereby."

"I could cross that hole on a long plank," criticized Niall of the Sword.

"But you would need more than one plank to get troops across, and while you were laying your bridge, the engines on the walls would crush you with stones as they but now crushed the Saxons."

Niall looked up at the huge castle crowning the height. Steel flashed above the T-shaped Roman battlements as sentries paced to and fro; long arms of metal-bound wood rose from the platform like the threatening limbs of giants. Niall saw that the range was too long for arrows, and that the entire ramp was commanded by the battery above. He was silent.

Before them the armored horsemen rode on, their muscular bodies clothed in close-fitting scale mail from head to foot, like polished silver statues. Their helmets of tempered plate, fitted with visor and cheekplates in front, sloped down behind to a ridged curtain of steel, protecting the neck to the very hollows of the shoulders. As much as the giant wall itself, they expressed to the Welshmen the might and confident strength of Legionis Asa, the last corner of what was once the world-encircling Roman Empire.

Into Meriaduc's memory flitted fragments of old tales recited to him and Gwenlian when they were children by their nurse, a hill-woman from the wild Welsh mountains, bits of ancient folklore repeated by rough soldiers around the fires: How the Romans of Legionis Asa were more than mortal, men with the strength of giants and the weird knowledge of magic art, whereby they built sky-sweeping walls and glistening fairy cities of jeweled towers and shimmering palaces.

They passed a second pair of hinged plates and came to a turn in the ramp. Above this turn the road wound along the face of the cliff in a triple turn, roughly parallel with the castle wall, and now the ramp itself was walled and battlemented. When they had made the turn, a clang of bronze caused the newcomers to look back. An enormous gate had closed behind them.

"The officers who could lead an army to victory past your castle," said Niall, moved to pay tribute to the defenses, "have never been born."

The last turn of the ramp brought them to the castle gates, flanked by tall round towers connected by a galleried and loop-holed gate-house. At Drusus' nod, the sentry on the nearer tower called to the keepers of the gate below, and the two bronze leaves swung slowly inward.

IN THE broad street between the long rows of barracks on the left and the officers' quarters on the right, a half company of infantry were doing sword exercises. Sturdy, broad-shouldered men, they were clad in leathern doublets reenforced with straps of steel across breast and back, steel caps and knee-breeches steel-scaled halfway down to the thigh. They bore large rectangular shields with convex faces, and were fencing with blunted broadswords, double the weight of those used in battle.

Glancing from the mighty walls and the stalwart soldiers to the straight streets and ordered bustle of a Roman camp, Meriaduc smiled sadly.

"I came with a plea for help from Britons to Britons," he sighed, "and I find only Romans. Romans of British blood, speaking Latin, wearing Roman dress, living in Roman fortresses, forgetful of all that once was Celtic Britain!"

"We are both Britain and Roman here," Drusus answered. "I think you will not find us forgetful of our mother Britain."

He dismissed his troopers, bade a centurion see to the lodging of the Ravens and conducted Niall and the "princess" to the officers' mess.

"I can offer you only the simple fare of a soldier," he apologized, "but even pulse, goat's meat and sour wine may serve after a rough journey."

The "princess" smiled graciously.

"Often we of the North think ourselves fortunate to get so much," he said, "and I am sure that an officer and a noble who lives so simply must still feel the British blood course more swiftly than the Roman in his veins."

A group of centurions rose as they entered, and, presented to the Princess of North Wales, went through the formal stateliness of the Roman salutation. Drusus removed his heavy, scarlet-plumed helmet. Niall started and stared at him.

"By all the Saints!" he blurted out, "Roman you may be in speech, dress and thought, but I'll swear your heart is British. No man with hair that red was ever anything but a Celt!"

CHAPTER II

THE CITY OF THE LEGION

"IT IS not honorable for a British princess to enter a strange city without her escort," Niall protested; but Drusus was not to be moved.

"The Roman law forbids troops—even our own—to be brought within the city limits," he explained. "Only officers on leave and foreign emissaries are excepted. You are both welcome, but your men will find good quarters in Castellum Maris. I am sorry."

"Have no regrets," said Meriaduc, sparkling at the prefect. "It is a wise law. You are a strong escort of yourself, and I could not see your land with a better guide." The prince was a perfect lady. "So I am indeed to see Bellerium—Bellerium, the fairy city of the West! I have heard that it is built of gold and precious stones, and inhabited by a happy folk, stronger and wiser than other men."

Drusus smiled.

"Such strength and wisdom as we have come from Rome, who taught us the lesson of unity and the arts of peace and war. As for happiness, all men are happy or unhappy as God wills. I doubt not that even those of our race now enslaved by the Saxons feel their hours of pleasure, when oppression rests less heavily upon them."

Meriaduc turned his wide blue eyes full on the prefect. They seemed to grow darker with the sudden gravity that settled in them.

"There is no pleasure, no happiness," he insisted, but with Gwenlian-gentleness, "where there is not liberty. You say Rome gave you unity, and by unity you have preserved yourselves from the darkness that has fallen over the rest of Britain. It is unity I come to urge upon you—union with us who still hold out against the heathen, that Britain may be free and all its people know the blessings of Roman enlightenment."

Drusus felt himself carried away by the princess's enthusiasm. Often he, too, had dreamed such dreams of a free, united island, led by Legionis Asa to liberty and civilization. A new, fresh eagerness flooded his mind. A beautiful woman pleads powerfully, as Owain knew, whether her lips speak or her eyes.

"You give me new hope," Drusus replied. "I would give much if you could appear in person before our Senate, but there Niall must speak for you. Custom forbids women to take part in our councils."

Meriaduc veiled his eyes modestly. So the Senate was not to see him as Gwenlian! But he would doubtless meet them—some of them—individually. He would surely have his opportunities.

He unveiled his shining blue eyes with every appearance of guilelessness, and entreated:

"But you also will speak for me?"

"I ask nothing more than the chance to serve you," Drusus answered. "Indeed, I have long wished for a closer friendship between your people and mine."

Niall of the Sword, picking his teeth with a dagger, watched the two with open satisfaction. He saw and understood the prefect's ready sympathy, his interest in "Gwenlian's beauty"—so he put it—touched to radiance as it was by the fire of patriotism. He saw the quick response of eye to eye, of smile to smile, of serious mood to serious mood, the spontaneous friendship of two young, strong, wholesome souls.

Niall's own respect for Drusus was ungrudging; he judged men with a soldier's eye. He fell into pleasant musing, the expectation of an errand well performed, a successful embassy, aided by the influence of the powerful Drusus. The young prince was wise for his years. But how the old soldier wished it were Gwenlian herself who sat there.

"My month's leave began last night," the prefect was saying. "I should have gone to the city today even if you had not come. My legate will take over the castle."

A trooper entered to report that the horses were ready. Outside stood a comfortable carriage, upholstered and cushioned, into which the prefect assisted

Meriaduc, while a soldier, who took the seat beside him, examined the lash of his long whip.

Drusus's powerful roan charger stood by, snapping at its groom and stealing sly kicks at a second saddled horse awaiting Niall. But Meriaduc, turning a dazzling smile upon the prefect, urged him to share the carriage.

"It is not well for a guest to part company with a pleasant host."

Niall elected to ride in the carriage, too. Drusus took the reins.

Two swift Irish horses drew them briskly down the wide, straight *via principalis* which halved the space enclosed by the castle walls and through the rear gate, where the guard turned out in the prefect's honor. Crossing the drawbridge over the wide, dry moat, the carriage sped across the parade ground and past the fields where details of prisoners were bringing in forage, while soldiers off duty tended their own vegetable gardens.

Straight as a lance to the northwest ran the road they travelled: A noble road, built up from bedrock like a city wall, smooth-paved with massive hexagonal blocks of granite. Roman tombs and rude stone sepulchres of earlier races stood by the roadside.

"They are smelting tin ahead there," said Niall presently. "I see the furnace smoke."

"Stannatio, the Tinners' Town," replied Drusus. "We shall be there soon. Men have smelted tin there since before Pytheas of Marseilles voyaged to this land in the days of Alexander the Great."

THEY came to the compact little town, by the shore of a lovely lake. Its narrow, twisting lanes were centuries older than the Roman roads that cut straight through to the ancient market place. There the military road from Castellum Maris joined another leading to a lesser fortress on the northern shore to form the main highway to Bellerium.

Just then, however, the market place and all three highways that led from it were blocked by what looked and sounded like a riotous mob. Hundreds of half-naked, shock-haired men, brandishing uncouth clubs, were being roused to frenzy by the words of one of their number, who was fervidly exhorting them from the steps of the wine shop. As the carriage approached, a yell burst forth that made the horses rear in fright. But at sight of Drusus, skilfully controlling the terrified team, the crowd drew back and made way, cheering with delight as he avoided a charcoal-burner's donkey and swung on two wheels into the Bellerium road.

"Only an open-air meeting of the miners' court," Drusus informed them, as soon as he could make himself heard above the uproar as they left the town behind. "It is their ancient privilege to try all cases arising among themselves, save only those that involve the death penalty. That sounded to me like a case of ore stealing."

"It sounded to me like war and rebellion!" declared Niall. "But never have I seen a prettier bit of driving. Will you let me try the reins now? Years ago it is since I have driven such horses, and many miles across the water. The best horses and the best men come from Ireland!"

Drusus smiled at the Raven's zeal and surrendered the reins to him.

"Niall is an Irishman," Meriaduc explained. "You know, perhaps, the Ravens are all Irish?"

"No," Drusus answered. "Tell me something about them, Princess."

"My father learned the art of war under King Arthur, forty years ago," began Meriaduc, nothing loath. "Britain was stripped of her best fighting men after the Roman legions went away. Then came the Saxon hordes, flooding out the country, already bereft of its youth. To meet them, King Arthur had to make one man do the work of ten.

"He trained his few warriors as heavy cavalry, who charged and burst the heathen shieldwalls by sheer weight of horse and metal. But, as you know, his last great battle swept away his bravest squadrons and broke our strength beyond recovery.

"My father fled with a handful of faithful vassals to the hills. Deeper and deeper drove the Saxon raids, close to the borders of North Wales. In our mountains they were helpless against us, but we could not recover an inch of the lowlands. Terrible is that stubborn, compact Saxon infantry! Our Welshmen could neither crush nor face them; nor could we learn to fight on horseback.

"So Owain, my father, formed cavalry from the Irish immigrants who had come into our country, and eagerly they flocked

to his banner, for they knew he would show them good fighting. They are hard riders, and bigger of bone than our men. Seven hundred of them are in his service; and these, from their black mail and black mantles, men call the Ravens.

"So far, no Saxon square has ever stood against them. But now the barbarians, having settled the quarrels among themselves which saved us for forty years, are pouring across the borders in such numbers that soon even the Ravens will be unable to hold them. That is why my father sent me here for help, remembering that in his youth the Roman cities of this island rendered Arthur more help than our own wild Britons."

"What a land to loot!" Niall broke in, marveling at the countryside through which they rode.

The road ran between rich lowlands on the south and fertile, gently rolling uplands to the north. Between the plain and the hills flowed a river, halving the peninsula of Legionis from its source in the lake to its outlet in the distant Atlantic. A clean-ruled line, the road ran in the river valley all the way.

Every foot of the land seemed to be under cultivation. A strange sight for Britain, the glossy-leaved olive groves; for even Cornish Damnonia had not so soft a climate as its sea-girt extension of Legionis. Every little farm nestled about its own trim farmhouse; here and there a larger estate surrounded a luxurious villa of white granite. Thatched huts were rare. It was a country neither of slaves nor of peasants, but of comfortable small freeholders.

Drusus pointed to the farther hills, rolling up vineyard-clad to the north, with occasional outcroppings of granite such as are seen in Cornwall, but white and finer grained.

"Yonder are the quarries and the mines," he said. "Our people trade tin and fish to the Irish for horses."

"I knew it!" Niall exulted. "What other breed could bear the weight of your troopers, with their armor and all?"

"Look!" Drusus exclaimed. "There lies Bellerium!"

Far to the west, a huge hill loomed against the declining light. Beneath it, a mass of white buildings gradually took form and seemed to spread out on either hand as the carriage rolled on.

"Bellerium is your chief village?" the Irish tribesman asked.

Drusus kept a straight face, but his eye sparkled.

"Bellerium is our city! The capital and single city of Legionis Asa—the largest city left to Rome west of the Hellespont!"

His face grew sad, his heart suddenly heavy with the thought of the great empire that had been, and which now was divided among German barbarians.

The red glow of the setting sun kindled into fire the nearing domes and pinnacles of the gleaming city. Meriaduc gazed with awed rapture and quickening pulse at its splendor of which he had heard so many fanciful tales. In the rosy light, it seemed indeed an elfin capital, its grandeur softened into dainty opalescence in the unreality of evening.

The sky was still faintly pink as they rode in through the city gate, a single magnificent arch, unwalled, spiritedly carved with battle-scenes, and surmounted by a figure of Victory in a four-horse chariot. The prefect's voice, subdued, yet exalted, seemed to chant in his guests' ears as he told of its significance.

"A monument to the men of Britain who went forth to defend Rome," he explained. "When the Saxons first seized the fair cities of the southeast, the hard-pressed provincials sent a message to Rome. 'Help us,' they wrote to the consul, 'the Saxons overwhelm us.'

"But the emperor himself sent back word that even Rome, the sacred city, was threatened by the barbarians, into whose hands the great province of Gaul was already falling. So the men of Britain—your forefathers and mine, Princess—took counsel, gathered together a full legion of their bravest and best, and sent them overseas to Gaul, with this message: 'Rome can not help us; so we, who are dying, give our last blood to save Rome.'

"That legion never returned: its bones whiten the plains of Gaul. That arch preserves their memory."

They passed between splendid columned buildings of white granite, with sculptured capitals and pediments alive with boldly executed figures of athletes contending, soldiers fighting, priests offering sacrifice.

Beyond lay a public square, fully four hundred feet in depth and half again as long. Meriaduc's eyes grew big with wonder

at the majestic colonnades and graceful porticoes on three sides of the square; the rows of stately shops hung with awnings of richly embroidered silk, which merchants' assistants were even now taking down; the throngs of people: Bearded men in white tunics, graceful, dark-eyed women in many-colored silks and fine linen, with high-piled hair arranged in fantastic coils and towers. Here and there were men in light armor, girt with short swords and carrying heavy staves—the city police.

IN THE cool of the summer evening, the citizens strolled under the porticoes of the tall buildings, greeting friends, buying cool drinks of corner venders, laughing easily, taking the air in dignified yet comfortable enjoyment. A group of merry urchins splashed about the fountain in the center of the square. It caused Meriaduc to wonder: These folks were happy, unlike his own struggling people.

"The new forum," Drusus commented. They were driving more slowly now. "It was built in the reign of Constantine, the first Christian emperor. The old city lies to the west, beyond the Ictis causeway. It was an ancient town even before the Fifth Legion, the *Fortuna Triumphans*, was cut off in the Damnonian fogs and sealed the cliffs where Castellum Maris stands today. They seized and fortified this port, where Greek and Phœnician galleys once came for tin.

"The natives soon made peace with the Romans and accepted alliance with the Empire. That legion never went back. From those sturdy Romans, mingling with the native Celtic stock, we of Legionis Asa are descended. The name of our land, in the soldiers' dialect, means 'Altar of the Legion,' for on the site of their first camp in this land, the soldiers built an altar to the allied gods of Rome and Britain.

"When Constantine made Rome turn to Christ, missionaries made their way hither by sea. Traders and artisans came from Rome; sculptors from Gaul, from Italy, from Greece. Larger ships were built, trade flourished, the city became rich and beautiful. The old site was abandoned to the poorer folk—fishermen for the most part—and a new city was built about this forum. See yonder basilica!"

He indicated a long, low-domed edifice, filling the entire southern side of the forum.

"That is the church of St. Helena. Its frescoes are the wonder of Britain. It was built by refugees from Kent, fled hither from the Saxons, in gratitude for their deliverance."

The carriage had stopped while Drusus talked. A voice hailed him from the basilica porch:

"Oh, Drusus! Is the gallant soldier free from cares of war? What news from the frontier?"

A tall, slender man of about Drusus's own years advanced toward the carriage with mincing step. They two alone, of all the men about the forum, wore no beards; but there was no other resemblance between them. The intruder was gorgeously clothed in a long-sleeved tunic of yellow silk and slashed overmantle of Tyrian purple; long, perfumed curls fell to his shoulders. His large, lustrous dark eyes were gentle and mournful, like a woman's; his chin was long and pointed.

As he spoke he gestured languidly with delicate, well-kept hands, and a slow smile curled on his full lips. A long, thin dagger hung at his waist from a golden girdle; his soft Cordovan shoes were red, with a rich design in gold thread.

Drusus greeted him with scarcely veiled reluctance.

"Hail, Nicator! Little news from the frontier, and I suppose you can tell me less of the city. I shall see you in the morning."

"Wait!" called the other as the horses began to move. "I saw the lovely Tullia today. Her eyes were red with weeping for you. She will rejoice at your return."

As he spoke, the dainty Nicator surveyed Meriaduc with eyes grown bold. Meriaduc endured the gaze a little scornfully, but Niall, being almost without a sense of humor, scowled savagely at the dandy.

"I must go on now, Nicator, but I promise to see you tomorrow," Drusus insisted. "I have business for the Senate, and I look for your support."

"Call on Ventidius first, then," Nicator replied shamelessly. "I dare not stir without him, you know. Farewell, if you must be off."

The carriage rolled away, Nicator watching it curiously till it disappeared down a side street past the basilica. At the same time Meriaduc was asking merrily:

"Was that a man or a woman?"

"A little of each," Drusus answered with

a short laugh. "Soft as a woman, bold as a man, cunning as a serpent, he is the son of an old Roman British family. It is said—I think truly—that there is a dash of Syrian Greek about him. He plays the ancient Roman dandy, apes dead fashions, and pretends to live in a world that has perished.

"Yet he is a shrewd politician, the jackal of Ventidius, who owns the government of Legionis Asa. Between them, there is little that slips through their fingers. It will be unpleasant work winning their support for your mission, Lady Gwenlian, but it must be done, for they control over half the votes in the Senate. Nicator, thanks to his master Ventidius, is Prefect of Police."

"If I had only known," Meriaduc murmured with a half-concealed twinkle.

THE street they followed crept up a steep hill. On its crest a puff of clean salt air stung their cheeks. Here the close-built houses of the lower city gave way to walled gardens and luxurious dwellings. Lamps gleamed from slender-columned portals to right and left, and others twinkled, level above level, beyond them on the slope of St. Mary's Mount.

"Here we stop," Drusus directed with a familiar, affectionate gaze toward a richly carved doorway, flush with the street, and lighted with two bronze lamps.

Springing from the carriage, Drusus offered his hand to Meriaduc, and Niall leaped after. The soldier who had ridden with them took the reins and guided the horses through an arched gate leading to the stables.

At the prefect's knock, the bronze door swung inward, revealing a delightedly grinning slave against the background of a brilliantly lighted hall, panelled with dark wood. Lamps of bronze and silver hung from the carved ceiling, and shone on painted insets in the walls.

The slave preceded them down the hall. He passed through a curtained doorway, spoke a few words in Latin. Light footsteps ran across the floor behind the curtains, a slender hand thrust them aside, and a tall girl of rich, imperious beauty came regally forth. Her face, alight with welcome, clouded just perceptibly at sight of the strangers; but her greeting, as Drusus introduced the Welsh princess, was courteous and cordial.

"It is good to see you again, Tullia," Drusus said, smiling. "Where is Aunt Sophonisba?"

"Where should she be but at some silly shrine or other?" Tullia Marciana retorted. "Just now it is Isis-worship. Her soul would be in sore peril if she were not a good Christian at heart. She will return soon. Centurion, you are welcome."

This last to Niall, giving him the nearest possible Latin title to his own. Understanding no word, he replied as well as he could in Welsh flavored with a rich Irish brogue.

They passed into a large, square room with lofty frescoed ceiling. The mosaic floor shone in the lamplight like a mass of clustered jewels; the embroidered hangings gave an effect of depth and softness, rich beyond compare.

"I will leave you to my cousin, Princess," Drusus said, and, to his kinswoman in Latin:

"Tullia, if you love me, speak to her in British. She knows no word of our tongue. Come, Centurion!"

Mouth agape, the Irishman followed.

CHAPTER III

THE MADNESS OF NIALL

THE moon rose, round and tremulous, out of the ocean. In its mellow light the water stretched out heaving, as it emerged from its cloak of darkness. Its light touched the garden with sudden life; a marble bust against a background of some satin-leaved shrubs, gleamed in pale, clear outlines under its radiance. Far down, where the walls of a white building shone ghostly among the pines, a nightingale burst into tumultuous song. A faint sea breeze stirred the broom, wafting fragrance into the half-enclosed court.

Forgetful of all but the beauty of the night, Meriaduc gave a sigh of happiness. A slim figure in a white robe—the gift of Tullia—he rested his hands, having lightly marveled that they should look so small and white in the moonlight, on the marble rail of the garden seat.

Had he really remembered who he was, he might have rested a soft cheek against a rounded arm, or something like that, instead of sitting there boyishly erect, his eyes shining with a light near to rapture as he

listened to the bird whose notes seemed to voice the beauty all around him.

The boy was thinking that if he had not been born to be a king, he would have chosen to be a minstrel, and do his part toward making his people great by singing to them of great things.

Drusus stood not far off, watching his guest. With the doffing of his armor for the woolen tunic, hose, and mantle of home and comfort, he had laid aside also the repressed dignity that the feel of steel and brass compels. He was home—in the house of his fathers, in the garden where he had walked with his mother when a little boy, while she planned the fair pleasure-ground she would leave to her son. That bust, the fine, stern features of which now stood out sharp against the tall shrubs, was his father's image, the memorial of a gallant officer.

But of the past Drusus had little thought. His eyes seemingly absorbed in contemplation of his guest, were really looking beyond her, trying to read the future of her people. Feeling the prefect's gaze at last, the young prince remembered his Gwenlian-self.

"I should think—" he used his Gwenlian voice of music—"that you could not bear to leave so fair a spot even for an hour. Truly you are blessed in your land. Can Paradise itself be lovelier?"

Down below, far past the terraces with their unseen flowers, the sea whispered to the cliffs. Drusus roused himself to reply:

"Though Paradise be lovlier, I am content here."

"Heresy!" It was the light laugh of Tullia, from the arbor at his right. "I have heard an ancient tale, Drusus, that there is a shrine on the isle of Cyprus, where on summer nights the pagan goddess Venus returns to vex the souls of men.

"They say that she bewitches the pious monks so that they forget their prayers and think not of the saints. Can it be that Venus has risen from our British foam to bewitch your Christian soul?"

There was more than a tinge of malice in the question. She had been watching him from the arbor.

The elf of mischief, never far from the surface of Meriaduc's soul, chuckled ever so softly. Was Tullia jealous of him?

"Nonsense!" Aunt Sophonisba scolded from among the roses. "This is the night of Isis. Do you not see the full, round moon, and smell the flowers? On such evenings she, the Goddess of the Heavens, exerts her full power. The priest says——"

Tullia laughed again, a silvery, scornful peal.

"It is the old heathen in our Roman blood, Mother. Try as we will, we can not forget the kind old gods, the playful nymphs, the trumpet call of Pan from the thickets. These summer nights set the old gods to peeking out again around each tree, peering through every bush."

"Hush!" The mother, scandalized, forgot her affected zeal for strange cults in the shock of her daughter's pagan outburst. "You say sinful things, Tullia."

Drusus turned his face toward the arbor.

"I was dreaming. I had forgotten you were here. I——"

"Come, Mother! And you too, Princess! Let us leave him to his dreams, since they make him forget us."

Tullia's radiant beauty glowed in the moonlight as she stepped from the arbor.

Meriaduc half rose, but settled down again. "It is so lovely here," he said.

Tullia turned on her heel and whisked into the house. After a moment's hesitation, Aunt Sophonisba followed her daughter.

"I am cold," she stopped to say, and shivered a little. "The sea air will bring back the pain in my shoulders."

Drusus hastened to offer her his mantle, but she refused, and left the garden. The prefect walked over to Meriaduc.

"The nights are cool here," he said. "Since my aunt rejects my mantle, will you not take it, Princess? The fogs of Castellum Maris have so hardened me that I do not need it."

Meriaduc inclined his head in assent. Drusus laid the woolen cloak about the bare shoulders, thinking they were rather sturdier than Tullia's, as became a maiden of the North. None knew better than Meriaduc that this was no lover's gallantry, though, he suspected, it might look like that to Tullia, who appeared for a moment at a window, and then turned quickly away.

Meriaduc, in the midst of his mischief, was feeling that sense of security and fraternal content the presence of Drusus inspired in him. The young prince did not want a love affair on his hands, messing up his more serious business.

A little delicate, wary coquetting of those

senators—well and good; even a little pretended soft partiality for Drusus when Tullia was near to be vexed by it—that would keep him from missing Gwenlian too much and make things more homelike.

But there was to be no really jolly fun-making, he told himself, such as he could have in his Welsh hills. As for the prefect, he was probably too much courted by the ladies, anyway, to be easily susceptible.

"You have been very kind to me," Meriaduc said gratefully in his maidenly manner. "You saved me from the Saxons; your aunt gave me shelter and hospitality; Tullia Marciana replaced my travel-worn garments with fine raiment of her own. I feel as if I had laid aside all the old rough life of our hills, the haste of flight, the toil and discomfort of the camp, the bleak, dark, wooden halls of my people, to enter a new existence of light and beauty."

"God grant it may be so!" Drusus breathed fervently.

"Ah, but it can not be. If your Senate is so gracious as to grant my father's plea, I shall dwell somewhere in this city till the wars are over, and then return to my own people. I wonder where I shall lodge while I am here? I can not burden you much longer with my presence."

"The Senate will doubtless grant you a residence," Drusus said. "You will be given a town house and a villa, with servants and lands, for as long as you remain in Bellerium. But if you wish to make us happy, you will stay with us instead. It is no burden, but an honor."

He spoke in all sincerity, knowing indeed that Sophonisba would feel the honor as keenly as he. His aunt was no more proud of her stately hospitality than she would be of the opportunity to entertain a foreign princess. Even the prestige of the Marcianus blood would be enhanced by the visit of such a guest. Sophonisba's pride in her position was as great as the real kindness of her heart.

"I have no more fears for my mission," warmly answered Meriaduc, with moist eyes and a soft, assured little laugh. "A people so generous to the stranger will not refuse to help their kinsfolk of the hills. It is long since I have been so happy as your kindness has made me."

"I hope you are right, but I should be a poor friend if I did not warn you that the affair may turn out badly. Ventidius must be won over before the Senate will promise anything. But I will see Ventidius tomorrow."

"Ah, tomorrow!" A girlish sigh, yet a voice that rang with true feeling. "So much—the happiness, the very lives—of so many—depend upon it."

"Tomorrow!" Drusus echoed, speaking louder than Meriaduc. His voice carried to the house, and was met by a ripple of Tullia's laughter.

A few moments later her voice, rich, vibrantly sweet, sang in malicious audacity a snatch from Horace:

"Ask not what fate may hide behind tomorrow,
What chance of bliss, what unknown care or sorrow.
Seize the glad hour! Clear gain each joy you borrow!
Today is yours. Despise not love and laughter,
But kiss her, lad! A fig for the hereafter!"

She sent a clear-cut low-pitched laugh trilling into the garden after the song.

Drusus stirred uneasily. Only the recollection that his guest knew no Latin saved him from the cruelest embarrassment. What did Tullia mean by it?

Meriaduc, sensing the uneasiness, and fearing that his host might want to retire to more serious pastime than talking to a pretty girl in a moonlit garden, rose gracefully from the marble seat, saying:

"It is late. Let us go in."

Drusus's cloak he did not surrender till he stood in the doorway with Tullia's eyes upon him; then, with a calculating prettiness of manner, he permitted Drusus to remove it.

"SURELY, Drusus, you will not interfere further in this absurd affair!"

The Welsh princess and Tullia had left the breakfast table. Aunt Sophonisba looked at her nephew with an air of imperial arrogance that ill became her plump features.

"Why should we, the descendants of the Cæsars," she continued, "disturb ourselves for the sake of skin-clad savages? We should only destroy our comfort, weaken our strength and fall an easy prey to the Saxons."

Drusus gazed at her in astonishment.

"But last night," he protested, "you were eager to have me use my influence in Owain's favor."

A look of calm superiority stared him down. Sophonisba had had a bedtime talk with Tullia.

"Last night," she retorted crushingly, "I knew less than I know now. It does not become you, Drusus."

He forced a patient smile. It was little use, he knew, to argue with Aunt Sophonisba.

"The Princess Gwenlian is scarcely a skin-clad savage," he answered kindly.

"But her eyes!" exclaimed his aunt. "And her manners! The girl is a little barbarian, affectedly trying to live up to her new surroundings. And I do not like the way she looks at you, Drusus. She is playing with you, twisting you about her finger, for the sake of your influence with the Senate. And you—why, this very morning, the little Welsh flirt kept you so engrossed that Tullia spoke to you thrice without receiving an answer. You will break the child's heart."

So that was it? Square chin raised, Drusus met his Aunt's eyes almost angrily.

"This is folly!" he exclaimed. "Tullia has no eyes for me; to her I am a mere soldier. She prefers poets, like Ausonius Venter. Why keep bringing up that old agreement between my father and yourself, when Tullia was in her cradle? She has no intention of marrying me, nor I of marrying her. My cousin and I are cousins and old playfellows—no more."

Sophonisba's eyes threatened a deluge. Only the presence of Niall, lingering over the wine-basin, restrained her. The Irishman was blissfully ignorant of the altercation going on in Latin. Recognizing the storm signals, Drusus rose.

"I go now to see Ventidius," he announced.

Sophonisba's patrician nostrils twitched scornfully.

"Ventidius? Since when has a Marcianus dealt with such scum as he? Why must my nephew soil his clean hands with low politics?"

"I shall soil no one's hands, dear aunt. You may trust me."

"I hope so," she sighed. "But I hardly know you now, Drusus. Your life in camp has coarsened you so. You no longer recline at your meals, like a Christian, but sit bolt upright like any barbarian Celt." A delicate return to scorn on the last words.

"I have come home in time to have my manners mended," he laughed. In British he said to Niall:

"We must be off, Centurion!"

In deference to the Senate Drusus wore light armor and his scarlet robe of office. Niall sighed with content as he mounted the mettlesome Irish mare the prefect had ordered for him.

"Call yourself Roman," he muttered. "I know better! Red hair, a good arm in a fight and a dainty taste in horseflesh mean just one thing!"

The Irishman had no eyes for the well-built streets of long, two-storied villas, typical Roman-British dwellings of the wealthier folk.

Each had but a narrow frontage on the street and ran far back into its own grounds. Roses and brilliantly flowering vines climbed the stone lower story, to twine about the half pillars supporting the projecting wooden second story and fling their blossoms upward to the tiles.

Niall of the Sword was on horseback, riding with a congenial companion on an important errand, and he heeded nothing else. One building, however, caught his eye.

"A church!" he exclaimed. "I have not said a prayer for a fortnight!"

He had seen a tiny basilica, its roof surmounted by a cross.

Drusus restrained him with difficulty.

"Business first!" he urged. "We have much to do this morning."

The house of Ventidius, a huge, over-ornamented building in debased Gallo-Roman style, impressed the Raven more than any he had seen.

"Who lives there?" he asked.

Being told—

"Ventidius?" he repeated, "is he the king?"

Drusus laughed.

"No," he replied, "but he might as well be. He is a politician, if you know the word. He has half Bellerium in his pouch. His father made his money in the slave trade, before that was made unprofitable by the immigration of free refugees from the districts overrun by the Saxons. Now we have but little slavery, outside the larger households.

"Every free man of good physique serves his time in the army, and all soldiers who have seen active service are entitled to land. That was my father's doing: He modeled his plan on the Roman system of

colonizing farm lands with retired veterans. Ventidius hated him for it, till the rascal found a way to win the soldiers' votes. Now he interests himself in getting huge appropriations for pensions. In addition, he owns more than half of Bellerium's shipping."

Ventidius was not at home. The slave suggested that he might have gone to the baths, and thither Drusus led his companion.

THE splendid system of public baths introduced by the Romans still flourished in Legionis Asa. On the west side of the forum a large, porticoed marble palace housed this chief resort of Bellerium men. Passing through a well-lighted atrium, lavishly frescoed and adorned with statues of dead notables, the two entered the dressing-room, where groups of men were already standing, naked and unembarrassed, talking together amicably.

All greeted Drusus effusively, and when Niall was presented as a captain of the famous Ravens, they accorded him much honor. The Irishman, astonished at such indifference to privacy, could scarcely conceal his confusion.

"Has Ventidius come?" Drusus asked.

"In the sweating room. But what has the lordly Drusus to do with Ventidius?"

"I am thinking of applying for a pension," the prefect answered; and the jest was greeted with much laughter.

Drusus led Niall through one long chamber after another: The anointing room, the cold baths, the well-warmed *tepidarium*, where the bathers basked after coming from the hot bath, and into the hot room itself.

This last was well patronized in the morning, and a dozen heads poked up from steaming tubs to hail the newcomers. One, scraping a sleek skin with a metal strigil, chuckled at the mention of Ventidius.

"He is steaming his paunch in yonder," the bather informed them. "Nicator is with him. They mean mischief this morning, for their heads were close together when they came in."

The sweating room was a vaulted chamber above great furnaces, heated by the steam from pipes opening through the walls, and ventilated by an opening in the roof. Flat-topped benches lined the walls and ran in rows along the floor; but only two, in a far corner, were occupied. Here, side by side in all the naked glory of contrasted fat and leanness, lay Ventidius and his henchman.

"Drusus! And clothed!" Nicator exclaimed, raising himself on one elbow.

The light from a large window of milky, opaque glass fell on his slender, sinewy body.

"Man, you will perish in this steam! What are you doing in the baths in that condition?"

"I came to see you and Ventidius," the prefect explained.

Nicator laughed.

"I thought you were trying to get rid of me last night, but I am glad to see you meant what you said."

Ventidius, a man once powerful, but now flabby with the fat of middle age, raised an eagle-beaked, many-chinned head, looked, grunted and sank back again.

"I can understand your wanting to see me," Nicator went on, "for I am an interesting person, but Ventidius!"

The rascal raised his hands in mock surprize.

"Business?" Ventidius grunted.

"Business."

And Drusus solemnly presented Niall, officer of Ravens and envoy extraordinary of Owain ap Urien, King of North Wales.

Nicator eyed the Irishman with frank interest, greeted him warmly and winked at Drusus to convey his amusement at Niall's uncouthness.

Yet he was genuinely interested. The fame of the Ravens, those mysterious fighting men who had shattered the stoutest Saxon bands, and rolled the barbarian terror back from their borders when all the south and east had fallen, was a common subject for wonder even in Legionis Asa. Ventidius merely reached out a flabby palm and grunted again.

Speaking in British, Drusus outlined the reason for the embassy, and left the rest to Niall, who explained with native eloquence the danger that threatened his people. North Wales would have all it could do to beat back the next onrush of the invaders; the splendid city of Aquæ Sulis, just over the border, had twice seen mounted bands of Saxon raiders from her towers. The security of Wales and of Cornish Damnonia meant the security of Legionis Asa itself. All the scattered remnants of free Britain must stand or fall together.

"Aquæ Sulis threatened!" Nicator exclaimed in real concern. "Why Aquæ Sulis is as Roman as Bellerium! Ventidius, we must do something about this."

Ventidius grunted.

Drusus realized that he must win over Ventidius if he expected to win Nicator's support. Well-wishing as the dandy might be, he would not dare break faith with the man who held his career in the hollow of his hand. The prefect addressed himself to the politician.

"This is a reasonable request King Owain makes of us, Ventidius. Nicator is right: We can not let our sister-commonwealth of Aquæ Sulis perish. There is only one way to save her: Send troops to Owain and the townsmen. Moreover, our own safety is at stake."

He narrated briefly the appearance of the two Saxon galleys off Castellum Maris.

"Both there and at this port we are well fortified," he concluded, "and Damnonia stands between us and the heathen hosts. But we have no war fleet of our own. We must unite with the Welsh to crush the Saxons now, before they send their countless galleys to blockade Bellerium."

"What if they send those galleys while our fighting men are saving the Welsh?" Ventidius objected.

"The heathen can spare few ships till the Welsh are crushed. If we can drive them back from the Welsh border, we can send our united armies east, drive them out of Britain and keep them forever from threatening us here."

Ventidius sat up, kneading his perspiring paunch. Shooting a keen glance at Drusus, he demanded:

"How much will the Welsh pay?"

Disgusted, Drusus retorted angrily:

"You had best ask their envoy."

Ventidius, quite unashamed, turned to Niall, and asked in Welsh:

"How much will your king give us for our help? What will my commission be?"

Every hair in the Irishman's beard bristled with indignation. Even Nicator averted his eyes in shame.

"My king," Niall answered thickly, "holds honor above price. You, who call yourselves Romans and deem us barbarians, ask a price for that which the British blood in your veins should compel you to do unasked!"

"I do nothing without a price," Ventidius retorted. "Pay me, and I will see what I can do; refuse, and you will not make enough votes in the Senate to get a single horseman."

Drusus turned away, sick at heart.

"I will lay the matter before the Senate this afternoon," he declared. "I know your influence, Ventidius, but I will not believe there is so little honesty in the Senate of my country as to reject a plea that involves our safety and our honor. Farewell!"

He turned away, but Ventidius called after him:

"Wait! Nicator tells me the Welsh princess is beautiful. I will talk terms with her." Turning to Niall, he said in British:

"I have refused my help, do you understand? Yet, if you meet my terms, I will consider the matter. I know you hillmen have little money. I am a rich man, rich enough to buy all Wales and give your starvling king all the luxuries that should go with a crown. I rule Bellerium; but these proud semi-Romans look down on me because I am not noble. If Owain will give me his daughter's hand, I will persuade the Senate to send him an army."

Niall's eyes were terrible.

"Give—you—" he gasped. "You!"

With a howl of rage, he seized Ventidius in his mighty arms, lifted his naked, slippery bulk on high and flung him through the window. As he crashed to the pavement, his tender flesh gashed by broken glass and torn on the stones beneath, Ventidius raised a wail of anguish.

Nicator languidy slipped to his feet.

"Now the eggs are broken!" he exclaimed reproachfully. "Drusus, you should keep your barbarian in hand——"

The frenzied Raven bore down upon him, swept him up even as he spoke and hurled him after his master. Then, his eyes aflame, Niall burst from the room, Drusus at his heels.

CHAPTER IV

VENTIDIUS STRIKES BACK

BRUISED and shaken, bleeding from a dozen scratches, Ventidius sprawled on the pavement. Before he could rise, the lighter figure of Nicator hurtled through the broken window and dropped squarely on top of him. About them swiftly gathered a crowd of men and boys, shouting with ribald mirth. The tumult and the cloud of

steam pouring from the shattered pane brought others running from near and far. Bystanders cried out that the boilers of the baths had burst.

Gathering fresh increments from the near-by forum, the crowd became a hooting mob. The ridicule Ventidius feared more than death poured upon him from the pitiless ring of mocking faces. The massed spectators before and the wall behind, shut off all escape. Knowing the temper of a city mob, he realized that missiles would soon begin to fly.

A swirling current in the throng caught Nicator's eye.

"Police!" he shouted. "This way!"

As he had hoped, the swirl became more violent; a staff began to play above the heads of the crowd, and one of the police forced his way through. Finding his prefect and the all-powerful Ventidius exposed to public shame, the officer hid his involuntary grin, snatched cloaks for the victims from the nearest backs, and ordered the crowd to disperse. Then, with drawn sword, he made a path for the two to reenter the baths.

Bathed, bandaged and clothed again, they counseled together in the politician's private dressing room.

"Why did I have you appointed, if not to take care of my enemies?" roared Ventidius. "Have them thrown into prison at once, and lodge charges of attempted murder against both. I'll have the Senate remove Drusus from office, and send that barbarian to the quarries for twenty years!"

"You can not touch Drusus," Nicator answered with venomous softness. "He laid not a finger on either of us. Nor can we lay one on him, unless we want a rebellion on our hands. The people are too fond of him; the troops and citizens would rise together, set him free and burn you in your own house. The barbarian is another matter; him we can punish—if we go about it secretly."

"Secretly!" Ventidius turned purple. "When he has put us to public shame? I will have him tried before the open Senate—make an example of him."

"And a laughing-stock of us. Street-ballads will be sung about you; all Bellerium will cram the court room to hear how you lay naked and wheezing in the gutter."

"Enough of that! Arrest them secretly. Have them disappear."

"Impossible. The mere absence of Drusus would set tongues to wagging. The Irishman is an envoy, his person is sacred."

"You said we could punish him. Has he not violated his own immunity by attacking a citizen?"

"Of course. But if he is tried before the Senate, it must be on the ground that he, the envoy of a foreign ruler, has broken the peace of Legionis Asa—that King Owain, through him, has opened war upon us. The Senate can not try ordinary criminal charges, and our criminal courts have no jurisdiction. Any action the Senate takes against him will be held as directed against the North Welsh as a people."

"Do you mean," Ventidius snarled, "that that savage can make a jest of me with impunity?"

"Not so. Punish him if you like, at the cost of provoking a war with North Wales, allying yourself with the heathen against our fellow-Christians. Or you can strike at him so shrewdly that none will suspect you had a hand in it."

"How?"

Ventidius was cooling down under the influence of his jackal's calmness. Though the veins of his neck were still swollen, his brain was clear again, and his little red eyes grew cunning.

"It will break his heart if Owain gets no troops from us."

"I would break more than his heart. But we can not openly refuse all help to the Welsh. Drusus will back the barbarian, and, as you say, the people will shout for Drusus. We must seem to favor Owain's request, to deny it against our own wishes, on grounds of public interest. That will be your part.

"Drusus has a seat in the Senate by virtue of his rank. He will introduce Owain's envoy, and speak for the proposal. I will prepare your speech as soon as I have seen Carbo, Fulgentius, and the others of our party. Let us be stirring!"

DRŪSUS was astir already. As soon as he could calm the enraged Niall, he took him on a round of visits to the most important members of the Bellerium Senate. Some kindled with enthusiasm at the picture Drusus painted of a united Britain, freed from the heathen and again flourishing with fertile acres and splendid cities where now the Saxons had made a wilderness.

Others were indifferent. A few frankly opposed any proposal to withdraw Roman troops from a Roman land, and made no effort to conceal their contempt for what they considered the barbarity of the up-country Celts. But Drusus was well content; by noon, eighteen of the forty senators were pledged to an offensive and defensive alliance with North Wales. Seven of the eighteen belonged to the party of Ventidius.

Three hours before the Senate convened, Drusus and Niall were dining with that very Carbo of whom Ventidius felt so sure. One of the richest of the mine owners, he was genuinely concerned at the news that the Saxons threatened Aquæ Sulis, Corinium and the other scattered Roman cities of central Britain, which furnished the best markets for his tin.

At noon Ventidius also descended from his litter at Carbo's door, and instead of asking for the master of the house questioned the servant. Learning that Drusus and the Irishman were at that moment with Carbo, he drew out his wax-coated tablets, wrote a message for the senator, and gave it, with a handful of coins, to the door-keeper. It was not the first time the servant had experienced his generosity. The message was not delivered till Carbo's guests were gone.

From Carbo's house the politician went direct to that of Drusus, his slaves panting and sweating under the heavily laden litter. Sophonisba received him with cold politeness; only the announcement that he came on an errand of state obtained his admission. He asked at once to see the Welsh Princess.

Ventidius was now in complete control of his temper. As Meriaduc entered the room in a becoming gown of Tullia's, a gleam came to the eyes of Ventidius and a smile of admiration to his thick lips. He rose to greet the distinguished beauty with unctuous courtesy.

"I have but just learned from the prefect that you have come to us for help," he declared. "I have hastened hither to offer you my services. King Owain has been the savior of Britain, the only man to stand between her and the heathen. Wishing to see his daughter for myself, and hear her message from her own lips, I have come as soon as the cares of state permitted.

"I have no small influence in Bellerium, and shall not hesitate to use it in such a cause. Yet I have no arguments against the objection, so strong in the Senate, against weakening our forces at this time. If you can convince me, I think the Senate can be convinced also."

The man's ornate dress, his huge, soft frame and smooth manners, at first sickened Meriaduc. This was the most powerful man in Bellerium! Alas! He thought of the poverty of his own people, the half-starved, comfortless toil of their lives.

But the gracious assurance of support won out against his repugnance, and with a girl-like eager joy he poured out the message from his father, representing to the hardened, selfish politician the dire straits of the borderland, the imminent peril of Saxon invasion, his father's despairing hope of a united, free Britain. Cheeks and eyes aglow, the fire of patriotism illumined the rich beauty of the make-believe girl as no deliberate will to bewitch could have done.

Ventidius, his bulk overflowing a wide-armed chair, leaned forward as he listened, his eyes taking in more than his ears. Indeed, after the first few sentences he heard little. It seemed to him that he had never seen so lovely a woman, that the fairest girls in Bellerium were swarthy and awkward in comparison with this free-limbed, high-colored child of the hills.

His little eyes gleamed. He began to desire her as he had never before desired even money. Too prudent to take the risk of voicing his admiration, afraid to await the return of Drusus, he rose after a few questions and took his leave.

"I will see what can be done," he promised. "There will be opposition. At least my influence should prevent a positive refusal. If you could address the Senate, Princess, there would be no doubt. But you will find me a strong advocate."

As he passed through the long corridor, half open to the outer air, Aunt Sophonisba stopped him.

"The Princess spoke with you concerning her mission here?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Ventidius, sensing fresh material for his schemes. He recognized the signs of a patrician about to ask a favor of him. "She expects me to help her. I may do so."

Aunt Sophonisba's delicate nostrils widened, and the penciled eyebrows arched painfully.

"I wish," she said reluctantly, "that you

could be persuaded not to. I know you are very powerful, and I have good reason for disagreeing with my nephew about this girl and her foolish errand. You know—" she hesitated, then plunged boldly on—"I wish Drusus to marry his cousin Tullia."

Ventidius opened his little eyes very wide. Here was danger, danger he did not relish. Drusus was too young a man, too handsome and dashing, to be tolerated as a rival. His social position made a marriage with the proudest blood of Wales possible. Ventidius kissed Sophonisba's hand.

"Drusus is young and impulsive," he answered. "I have a great admiration for him, and a greater interest in his career than you imagine, gracious lady. I promise you that I will do everything in my power to prevent the Senate from granting the Princess's request. Of course, nothing must be said of my part in the affair. If your nephew thought I had a share in defeating a project which interests him, I might lose his goodwill."

Sophonisba nodded.

"I understand. I will say nothing."

As his slaves bore him homeward, Ventidius reflected that he had done an excellent morning's work. He or his emissaries had issued instructions to every senator whose vote he controlled, and had spread the warning among the timid that Ventidius opposed any cooperation with the Welsh, no matter what his lieutenants might seem to say in the course of debate. All that remained was the framing of Nicator's speech, which he would work out while eating his noonday meal.

In the mean time, both Drusus and Niall could go about the city unmolested. Ventidius saw his revenge working out unguessed, relentless, without danger to himself. None but his henchmen and the instructed senators would know he opposed the alliance. The Lady Gwenlian was too beautiful to be wasted on an inexperienced boy like Drusus. He pictured her full of gratitude to himself for the help he did not intend to give her, and she would find him most sympathetic when her hopes were thwarted.

Even Drusus might be deceived into thinking him a friend—till the time came when he could get rid of Drusus. The large element among the people who would favor the Welsh alliance would be brought over to Ventidius by the report that he was with them. He could defeat the alliance, break Niall's heart, win Gwenlian's approval and achieve popularity, all at one stroke.

After that, what? Why limit his ambitions? Gwenlian, having been sent to Bellerium for safety during the war with the Saxons, would be within reach. If he were married to the daughter of the great British champion, he would possess two claims to almost royal honor: His wife's birth, and his own control over the one considerable Roman settlement left in Britain.

Why, he might—after Owain's death—become king over a united Celto-Roman Britain! He, Ventidius, the despised son of a slave-merchant, sneered at by the proud old Roman families, might yet rule over the entire island! Of course, there would be trouble with the Saxons; but there were ways of keeping the heathen in hand without fighting—at least till the crown rested on his temples.

NIALL'S beard bristled over compressed lips as he followed Drusus up the stone steps of the Senate House. It was an imposing rectangular structure in almost pure classic style, on the north side of the forum. The pediment was a vast expanse of weather-stained bronze, on which heroic figures stood out in high relief, allegorically portraying the founding of the city by the lost legion.

The Raven, still smarting under the memory of Ventidius's insolence, had listened grimly to the prefect's lecture on the necessity of keeping his temper and behaving like a civilized envoy. Drusus had told him bluntly that he might expect either arrest and imprisonment, or a hidden stroke of cunning treachery that would be still worse for his mission.

Now, as he passed little groups of whispering senators, clustered together like great white birds in their togas of office, Niall imagined that they turned to look at him with direful, furtive glances. He longed for the hills, the simple wooden halls and wattle huts of his people. Here, amid undreamed splendors, he knew not how men thought, what words meant, how he himself should act.

A settled gloom enwrapped him as he entered the cool, columned hall, and took his place on a long side bench of marble, reserved for guests of state. The frescoed ceiling looked miles above him, like a

painted heaven full of hostile gods. Drusus sat beside him, instead of in his own seat.

The minutes dragged for Niall until the white-bearded Quæstor of Justice, who presided over the Senate by virtue of his office as chief magistrate, took his seat. Instantly the senators filed majestically through the three doors and proceeded to their proper places on the curved marble benches. By laying aside his cloak, the Quæstor gave the signal for the house to come to order.

Niall moved restlessly while routine business was transacted with a slow, solemn dignity. When the Quæstor called the order of the day, he sat up with a nervous jerk.

Drusus was on his feet.

"Fathers of the People," he began, "I ask your permission to bring before this body a request from King Owain of North Wales. On behalf of his ambassador, whom I present to you, I urge you to listen favorably to his petition. This guest of Legionis Asa is Niall, Captain of Ravens, the accredited envoy of King Owain."

He sat down amid a rustling of robes and general whispering. The Quæstor formally greeted Niall, who rose at Drusus's whispered instruction, in a sonorous Latin speech of welcome, of which the Irishman understood not one word. But he did understand the prefect's low command to speak his message; and as soon as the Quæstor was silent, he began.

Drusus had feared that the experience of the morning had shaken the Raven's poise; but Niall, all the more master of himself for the repressed warmth of his emotions, made a telling speech. He was fervid without passion, dramatic without pose, and astoundingly eloquent. When he had finished, a ripple of applause ran along the benches.

But a shock was in store for him and for Drusus. Carbo, on whose support they had relied, rose immediately, and spoke in favor of Niall's request, but in such terms as to condemn it more effectively than open opposition could have done. He concluded:

"Though the gallant soldiers we send so many leagues from home may never return, though we buy our honor with our lives and with the extinction of our state, yet shall we gain a greater glory than by holding shamefully aloof from our threatened brothers; for brothers they are, though none of the Roman blood which ennobles us flows in their savage veins.

"With tears for the peril of Legionis Asa, with grave fears for this last relic of great Rome, I urge and vote that we accept the Welsh proposal. I advise, Senators, that we not only offer refuge and hospitality to the Princess Gwenlian, but that we send ten thousand cataphracts and heavy-armed infantry, with provisions and equipment, to the banner of King Owain."

Utter silence followed the speech. By "advising"— a term that implied a definite motion—that ten thousand troops be sent, he had brought before the Senate a concrete proposal to strip the country of all its fighting men, save some raw recruits and aged reservists, and expose Legionis to Saxon conquest. Drusus could read in the dismayed glances of the legislators that they would neither welcome the motion nor easily accept a less pretentious substitute.

In this moment of depression, Drusus noticed one senator nudge his neighbor, point in Niall's direction, and whisper. Then both laughed; the second man whispered to a third. Down the bench, along the next, and on like ripples in water, nudge, look, and whisper sped, invariably followed by a laugh or a smile.

The prefect easily guessed that the gossip of the baths had brought the morning's mishap to the Senate's ears. Now, hearing the tale, all the house would know, without any effort from Ventidius, that the all-powerful politician must be opposed to any request the Irishman might make.

Then Nicator rose, and Drusus had another surprize. For Nicator, with fine eloquence and apparent sincerity, urged the senators to vote for Carbo's motion. He pictured the plight of their distant sister communities of Aquae Sulis, Corinium and Viroconium, smaller and weaker than Legionis Asa, but equally Roman, threatened on two sides by the heathen Saxons, aided only by the insufficient forces of the Welsh. They looked with tears to Bellerium.

He mentioned the ancient Roman fortitude, the example of Varro, who, when he had led the Roman armies to defeat and Rome herself almost to annihilation, had been thanked by the Senate "because he had not despaired of the Republic." He concluded with a stirring appeal to that honor which was more than death, to the virtues

of their ancestors, and to the greatness of dead Rome.

There was no discussion. After a pregnant silence, the Quæstor gravely put the motion. Carbo, Nicator, Drusus, and seven others voted for the resolution. A few did not respond to their names. Twenty-eight, protesting that they acted only for the national good, voted against it.

"It is decreed," the Quæstor pronounced, "that the Senate and People refuse the request of the Welsh. In the name of Legionis Asa, I assure the Princess Gwenlian and the envoy Niall of the warm affection this people feels for their imperiled brothers of Wales. If there is no further business——"

Drusus rose, his lips twitching.

"Fathers of the People," he said with quiet bitterness, "I bow to the decree of the Senate. It is settled that Legionis Asa will not help our brothers against the common enemy. But I, whose father fought for Britain, hold my honor in my own hands.

"I pray you, give me leave to go with my own command, or at least with such as may volunteer, to serve under Owain's banner. I am ready to give up my rank as senator, my office as prefect. I ask only permission to lend my training and my arm to the Christian faith and the cause of British liberty."

"That," the Quæstor answered, "is a matter which requires the most serious consideration. I rule that it be carried over to the next meeting."

As they left the hall, Drusus gloomily explained to his companion the decision of the Senate. Niall flamed out in rage.

"It were better," he said, "that Britain had never heard of Rome! You are mad here, mad with the folly of dead men and forgotten ages. What has Rome given to the Celt save fine cities and gay clothes, rich foods, and the mean safety that rots men's souls?"

Drusus was too much the Roman not to resent this.

"Rome gave the Celt the Cross of Christ," he answered. "Roman training gave us the sword and the genius of King Arthur, and the strategy of your own king. Do not condemn us till you have heard our last word. I have another plea before the Senate."

"While your senators talk, we perish," Niall retorted.

"I at least will perish with you, then. The Senate meets again in four days. Till then, have courage!"

CHAPTER V

THE VEILED WOMAN

"WHERE is Gwenlian?"

"In the garden with Mother. Wait, Drusus!" Seizing his hand, Tullia held him back. "Will you not tell me?"

"There is little to tell, Cousin. The Senate refused. But I—I shall go, if I can get permission."

"Go? To Wales? Without soldiers? You will be killed!"

Briefly he told her of his plea to be allowed to carry the Roman eagles into North Wales, at the head of such soldiers as would volunteer.

Tullia turned away, pretending to arrange the roses in a silver vase. "But—Drusus! she whispered. "To go, and leave us here. We are the last of an ancient house. If you should be killed!"

"Better so than to live in a land that has forgotten its honor."

She turned and put out her arms to him.

"Can you not see that it will break our hearts? We have none but you, we two helpless women. You are all we have—the last of your name. And the folly of it! Forgive me, Drusus. You and your handful will not only die, but you will die in vain. Oh," vehemently, "this barbarian woman has bewitched you!"

"You too, Tullia?" he queried a little wearily. "The Lady Gwenlian has little to do with my resolve. Our race is dying, is being wiped out by the heathen from across the sea. The Senate has failed us; so be it. I shall appeal to the people.

"Let the market-place hear what the Senate has done, and the cowards who voted to let Britain perish will find it hard to save their heads. The troops will follow me—the people will rise in arms!"

Tullia's face blanched.

"You would rebel?" she gasped. "If the Quæstor hears of this, you will be thrown in prison, perhaps sent to the quarries. Leave this folly, Drusus!"

But Drusus, carried away by his own eagerness, was not to be checked.

"The Quæstor dares not arrest me," he

answered. "If he did so now, the troops would march on the city. I am no traitor, Tullia. I am a Roman Briton, one who loves his country and would see her follow the honorable course. If the Senate refuses to let me call for volunteers, I will proclaim myself dictator, seize the city, and form an alliance with King Owain."

The curtains parted, revealing the supposed enchantress, flushed with excitement, in the doorway.

"You will not!" Meriaduc said imperiously. "My father would not accept forced help. It was not to overthrow the government of Legionis Asa that he sent me hither. He would scorn to save our blood at the expense of yours. Rather than see you in arms against your own land, I will go back alone to my father, and report the failure of my mission."

"But the Senate has refused!" Drusus protested.

"I know," Meriaduc answered with serene gentleness. "I heard you say, as I came near the door, that you had appealed for consent to go yourself, with volunteers. If it is permitted, I shall accept willingly, proud that you at least have so much of the Briton in your blood. But you are a soldier, Drusus; you must do your duty as a soldier, and obey. What the Senate decrees, that you must do."

"So be it," he replied dully. "You are right; I can not stir up strife in my own nation. But, whether the Senate permits or not, I will go myself. And may the saints pity Ventidius if ever I find the power to crush him for his work today!"

"Ventidius!" Meriaduc's eyes were wide. "Did he not support us? He promised me he would."

"Not he. If he had said one word for us, every vote would have been cast for the alliance. The vote was twenty-eight to ten, against us. That means but one thing: Ventidius had sent his orders to all whom he controls, and they dared not disobey him. If you had heard Carbo—well——"

He found no words to go on.

"How did Nicator stand?" Tullia asked.

"He spoke for us."

"Then Ventidius must have thrown his weight on your side," his cousin declared, as one who sees an easy fact that another is strangely blind to. "Therefore the vote means that Legionis Asa is against meddling with the affairs of other peoples. We have no interest in the Welsh, and can defend ourselves against the Saxons."

Drusus sniffed at his cousin's conclusions.

"You do not know Ventidius, Tullia. Listen." He told what happened at the baths. "Ventidius was on fire with a rage for revenge. If he promised Gwenlian to use his power for her, he did so for a blind. Nicator must have been instructed to speak for us, for the sake of deceiving us. Carbo swore to aid us, and then made a speech that would have wrecked any cause. I tell you, Ventidius has betrayed us!"

"I can not understand you, you who call yourselves Roman," Meriaduc breathed wearily. "You promise finely, and break your word the next hour. With us, a promise is sacred."

Tullia fixed her dark eyes on Drusus.

"Do you still hold," she asked, "to your whim of leading volunteers to death or exile?"

The prefect's face lighted.

"With me also," he replied, "a promise is sacred."

NICATOR, yawning, threw aside the illuminated manuscript he had been reading, and called indolently to his slave.

"Fetch me the Ovid, Dio, and a cup of wine. These Christian writers are tiresome; give me the poets of the Golden Age. No, not the *Metamorphoses;* I have had enough of mythology. Bring me the *Art of Love.*"

The slave wrenched at the hasps of a magnificent bronze chest, threw open the lid, and searched through a pile of rolled papyrus manuscripts. Diligently he searched, his fingers trembling. At length, turning an ashen face to his master, he faltered:

"I can not find it, lord. It is not here."

"You lie, dog! I put it there but yesterday."

Snatching a gold-handled rawhide whip from the onyx table, Nicator drew it across Dio's naked back. Dio screamed as the lash fell. A gentle smile curved Nicator's soft lips.

A second slave, his eyeballs rolling with fear at the screams, entered the room.

"There is a woman without, Master," he announced.

Instantly Nicator threw the blood-stained whip behind the book-chest.

"Get out, thou!" he commanded the whimpering Dio. "Is she young, Cecilius?"

"I think so, Master. Her face is veiled, and she wears a heavy cloak, but her voice and eyes——"

"Admit her," Nicator ordered, "and wait in the atrium."

A slender, graceful figure, swathed in a heavy cloak, entered. Above the veil that hid the rest of the face, a pair of dark eyes glanced swiftly about the room, as if fearing some hidden auditor.

"There is no one here but ourselves, my dove," purred Nicator. "You are as safe here as in the confessional."

"I doubt that," the unknown retorted dryly. "But I will tell you this, Nicator: If by any chance I should not be safe here, the ice-mountains of Ultima Thule would not protect you from the sword of my avenger."

Nicator made as if to lay his hand on her veil, and as she drew back, he said in mock reproach:

"If you are so cruel, lady, why do you seek so soft-hearted a man in his own house at midnight?"

"Part you will soon know," she answered. "The rest concerns you not. Why did you not speak against the Welsh petition today?"

Nicator stared at her.

"How do you know about that, pretty one?"

"If I am pretty, you do not know it. Keep your hand from my veil."

"Women who seek me do not hide their faces from me."

"If you wish to see my face, you must keep your fingers at home, and listen to what I have to say."

Nicator drew up a cushioned chair, and sat down cross-legged on the floor beside it. The woman took the chair, made certain that her veil was secure, and said:

"In four days the Senate meets again. Drusus will ask permission to march against the Saxons with as many of the soldiers as will volunteer. You must see to it that the Senate refuses him permission to depart."

"Who are you, to give orders to a senator?"

"It matters not," the woman answered. "You will do what I say."

Nicator moved to where he could look up into those beautiful dark eyes.

"I wish I could see your face," he murmured. "I should know those eyes and that voice, however you tried to disguise your tones. Where have I seen you, lovely one?"

She made a gesture of impatience.

"Will you do as I ask?" she commanded.

"You know more than you should," he evaded. "It is not yet given out that the Senate refused King Owain's request, though, as you say, the vote was cast today. Yet you know how I spoke. Since you are familiar with so much, you should also know that I take orders from but one person in Bellerium."

"I have seen Ventidius," the woman answered. "He sends you these."

From beneath her robe she drew out a double tablet, closed and sealed. Taking it, Nicator broke the seal, which he recognized as that of Ventidius, and read the letter to himself:

V. to N.: Greeting. Promise this woman anything she asks, but do not act till I have spoken with you. I have agreed to help her; it costs nothing to promise, and she knows too much. Once Drusus has left the city, she can do no harm. Farewell. V.

Reclosing the tablet, Nicator locked it in the bronze chest. Then, bowing low, he said to the veiled woman:

"Forgive my insolence, Tullia Marciana. I will do as you bid me."

The woman sprang to her feet, angrily, and tore the veil from her face.

"You should have given me the tablet with your left hand, Tullia. That sapphire ring on your finger—there is not a stone in the city to match it."

"I was a fool!" she cried. "But it does not matter. I am sure Ventidius does not know. You will not tell?"

"On my faith as a Christian, I will not," he assured her. "But you have asked me a hard thing, Tullia. I will try to prevent Drusus from receiving the Senate's consent, but many will clamor to follow him against the Saxons. The Senate does not meet for four days, and in the mean time some one is sure to talk."

"Then," Tullia said firmly, "you must not wait for the Senate to meet. In urgent matters involving the public safety, the law empowers the Quæstor of the Treasury, the Quæstor of Justice and the Prefect of Police to act for the Senate. You must call a meeting of those officers tomorrow, lay the matter before them and urge them to insist that Drusus remain here. An excuse can be found: Say that Saxon ships off the coast require his presence at Castellum Maris."

"You are a clever woman, Tullia. I will call a meeting tomorrow."

"A DECURION of police," the servant announced.

Drusus emptied his wine cup and rose from the supper table.

"Pray the saints, Niall," he said cheerfully, "Ventidius has not ordered our arrest for your exploit of yesterday."

He found the decurion in the outer hall.

"Hail, Prefect," the officer greeted him formally. "Orders from the Council of Public Welfare."

Drusus took the proffered tablet, broke the seal, read. His brow clouded.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"I am to take back your answer."

"What need? Say that I obey."

The decurion saluted and went out. Drusus strode back into the dining-room and threw the open tablet on the table. Sophonisba cried out in apprehension at the set anger in his face. Meriaduc watched him intently. Tullia smiled faintly to herself, remembering her last night's work. Niall alone paid little heed: Bellerium had almost exhausted his capacity to feel surprize.

"Read!" Drusus said, pointing to the tablet.

Tullia picked it up. As her eyes traveled along the engraved wax, they blazed with fury.

"The dog!" she muttered.

Her mother looked at her admonishingly.

"What is it, Drusus?" Sophonisba asked.

"The Council of Three," he answered. "Ventidius did not dare let our case come before the Senate again, lest the people, hearing that our request was denied, should rise and demand war against the Saxons. Declaring that the safety of the land was involved, the Council met today. They give me leave to depart—with a hundred lances!"

"Still—I do not understand," faltered Sophonisba.

Drusus picked up the tablet and read aloud, translating for the benefit of his guests:

"To Drusus, Prefect of the March: Greeting. In the name of the Senate and the People of Legionis Asa, we, by virtue of authority on us conferred, declare the Republic in danger, and do charge and command you accordingly to obey the instructions herein contained. It having been made known to us that the sovereign of a friendly people, Owain of North Wales, calls upon Legionis Asa for help against the Saxons, we decree that this people of Legionis Asa is in honor bound to come to the rescue of King Owain with all the force it can spare. We therefore ordain that thou, Drusus, do set out at once for North Wales, with one hundred horsemen of cataphracts such as thou mayst select, such force being as great as the present peril warrants us in authorizing. Approving the request of King Owain for a larger force, but hesitating to deprive this land of more of its defenders during the Saxon menace, we refer his ambassador to the Emperor.

MARCUS AUSONIUS, *Quæstor Aerarii;*
SULPIDIUS RUBREX, *Quæstor Tribunorum;*
JOSEPHUS NICATOR, *Præfectus Municipii.*

"But that means that you will come!" Meriaduc cried gladly.

"Aye. But one hundred cataphracts! One hundred—when five thousand horse and foot would be scarce enough! This is Ventidius's doing. He knew well that the people would force the Senate's hand, and that nigh every soldier in Legionis Asa would volunteer to serve with me under King Owain. Ah, but the rascal is cunning!"

Tullia rose, her knuckles white on the arms of her chair. Her cheeks were colorless, the light gone from her eyes.

"Will you go, Drusus?" she whispered. "But no—read the order: 'We refer his ambassador to the Emperor.' Surely you can get permission to wait—till the Emperor——"

Drusus brought his fist down crashing on the table.

"The Emperor! he cried. "Do you know who is Emperor in Rome? Rome is dead, in the hands of German barbarians. The only Emperor is he who reigns in Constantinople. How long will it take, do you think, to get word thither and back? Ventidius mocks us! The Emperor! As well refer us to King David of Israel. I go tomorrow."

"But Drusus!"

Tullia felt her knees give way; then, recovering herself, she spoke as became a Roman:

"If you must go, see to it that your deeds bring honor to our house."

Drusus kissed her hand, and left the room, Niall with him.

CHAPTER VI

MORITURI SALUTAMUS

"I GIVE you no written instructions," said Carbo, "lest you be stopped and searched. If any ask, remember that I did not send you, and know nothing about your errand."

As soon as he returned home from the Senate, Carbo had called his four trustiest slaves to him, and, swearing them to secrecy, told them how the Senate, at the command of Ventidius, had refused help to the Welsh. Though he himself had spoken as the politician dictated, Carbo's heart was in his treasure-chest, which was flattened by the tin trade to Aquae Sulis and the cities of the Severn Valley.

His only hope of keeping this most profitable market lay in strengthening their defenders against the Saxons. If Drusus failed to bring the spears of Legionis Asa to Owain's support, the Saxons would make an end of Carbo's customers. So he hastened to meet plot with intrigue.

"You, Cornutus, spread the word among the miners. You, Volpo, inform the farmers. You others go about among the citizens. Do not say that any man informed you; let it seem as if ye repeated a floating rumor. But look to it that ye are believed! Haste, for the time is short."

By dusk, Volpo, sharing a farmer's supper, gossiped idly of the tale that Drusus, attempting to raise troops for the rescue of Aquae Sulis, had been denied by the Senate; that an envoy of King Owain's had been publicly insulted, and that it was even whispered Ventidius had some interest in keeping peace with the Saxons.

This last was pure fiction, but the farmer swore a furious oath when he heard it, and commanded his three tall sons to spread the terrible tidings throughout the countryside. He himself took down from the wall the sword he had used in long-ago Damnonian campaigns, and though it was already as keen and bright as zealous care could make it, he sat long by his fire that night, crooning an old war song as he plied whetstone and burnisher.

It happened also that two men, drifting into the fishers' quarter, talked much to the same effect. With eloquent gestures, each gathered a scaly-armed crowd about him, and poured out the tale. The fishers, descendants not of the legionaries but of the native Celts, raised their dripping knives and swore that such things should not be.

Meantime, far down the Miners' Road galloped Cornutus, bound for Stannatio with the tidings that the Senate's decree meant not only the humiliation of Drusus and the overthrow of the Welsh, but also the end of the tin-trade with Aquae and Viroconium, the closing down of the mines and the laying-off of honest workingmen.

"I WILL not stay!" Meriaduc's blue eyes flashed stormily. "If your people had consented to send enough troops, I should have obeyed my father's command to take refuge here."

If the Senate had been generous, he would have found another excuse for going with the soldiers. He loved the march and the camp, the neighborhood of brave men and always tried to believe that this time he would be able to take his part in battle like a man.

"But now my father rides alone," he added, "I must be near him."

Drusus shook his head.

"This very morning," he said, "Nicator came with orders from the Council of Three that you be not allowed to chance the perils of the road. They are right: It would be murder to let you go."

"Nicator!" Meriaduc's lips spurned the name. "The tool of Ventidius, who aided his plot to deprive my father of succor from Bellerium. What has he or the Council to do with me—the—the—princess of a free people?"

"Nicator wishes your people well. His farewell to me was most kindly."

Meriaduc waved the defense aside.

"I came hither safely enough. Niall and his Ravens kept me from all harm. If I could come with twenty, I can return with six-score."

"You shall not go, Princess," Niall broke in with a meaning look at Meriaduc. "I am responsible to Owain for you, and I refuse to let you leave the safe shelter of Bellerium. May God and the blessed saints be with you—daughter of Owain."

Meriaduc came close to Niall.

"You old owl," he whispered fiercely, his back to Drusus to hide an unfeminine scowl. "Suppose I say who I really am?"

Drusus, perceiving a private argument, turned his back also, and withdrew some yards to a table, where he absently turned over the pages of a parchment left there by Tullia.

"It would make no difference in your going," the "old owl" replied. "You can pick a fight any day in the streets of Bellerium and shed a little blood," he continued. "To face blood without paling is the test you must pass before you again march with

soldiers to possible battle. Your father has ordered it so."

The unhappy prince's eyes became two balls of blue fire. Anger tied his tongue. Then grief put out the fires.

"Niall," he pleaded, "how am I to become a soldier unless I am allowed in camps?"

"That way has been tried," the Raven answered.

Meriaduc could not have it known that he remained behind because he could not face a fight, so he had to remain the "princess." He had worn women's clothes for days, and how he had come to hate them! And what should he do when Gwenlian herself appeared, for she would surely be brought to Bellerium as soon as she was well enough to be moved?

The sound of footsteps approached the curtained doorway. Sophonisba, her face tear-marked but still majestic, entered and threw her arms about her nephew's neck.

"Isis guard you, Drusus," she prayed.

"Will you give me a Christian blessing, Aunt?" he begged with a teasing grin.

The old woman gulped down a sob, and, all pretense swept aside, kissed him, murmuring:

"Christ and his Holy Mother watch over you, my Drusus, and bring you safe back to us! Oh, my lad, my little lad, I can not bear to have you go!"

Tenderly Drusus kissed her cheeks.

"Fear not," he reassured her. "You shall see me back again, laden with Saxon spoil. I will bring you a Saxon god to add to your collection. Nay, do not weep! Has Tullia no word for me? Where is she?"

Sophonisba wailed afresh.

"Oh, Drusus, her heart is broken! All she will say is: 'He would not stay for me—he would not stay for me—he cares nothing about me. I have seen him for the last time.' "

"I am sorry," said Drusus simply. He shrank from trying to understand his emotional cousin's conduct. "Tell her I will bring back a Saxon standard for her," he added.

"That is a proper gift!" exclaimed Meriaduc, all Gwenlian again. "I wish you had made me such a promise."

"I shall bring you a sword, red with Saxon blood," Drusus responded gallantly.

It came so suddenly, Meriaduc staggered a step backward, caught Niall's glance with its message of "You see!" On that he straightened proudly, and smiled gratefully at Drusus—every inch a princess.

"HARK! What is that?"

The sound of angry voices, rising and falling in incoherent waves, drifted up from the lower town. Drusus and Niall reined in, and gazed down the empty street before them.

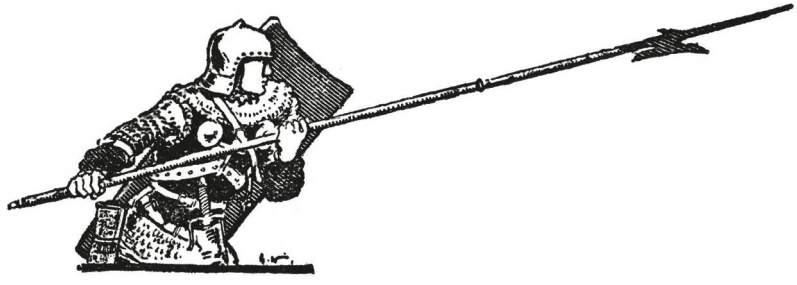
"It comes from the fishers' quarter," Drusus said. "Trouble again, probably, over the price of the catch."

The tumult redoubled, thousands of voices pealing high in one concerted yell:

"Ventidius! A rope for Ventidius!"

"Come!" shouted the prefect, and spurred down the hill, Niall after him. Still they could see no one, but as they drew nearer and nearer the old forum, the cries of the mob swelled louder and louder. Turning a sharp corner just west of the public baths, they came suddenly upon the throng.

TO BE CONTINUED



Willie alias Bill

by Raymond S. Spears

Author of "Sheriff Durand Deputes," "The Word of a Hard Man," etc.

WILLIE CLUTES was six feet tall, weighed one hundred and twenty-one pounds and had the largest hands and feet on the southwestern slope of the Adirondacks. Every one laughed at him except Lizzie Gaile. Lizzie was nearly six feet tall herself; but she was good to look at, even if she was thin, in those days. Boy and girl, they lived in the town of Wilmurt, which was a great town to grow up in.

One day Willie shambled down the road to the white schoolhouse. He shuffled dejectedly along till he reached the yard. Then he heard a voice calling to him with a taunting laugh:

"Hey, Sunflower! Hey, Sunflower!"

Willie turned his face; and at that gesture any one could recognize the nickname "Sunflower" as an inspired description. Willie in a measure looked like a sunflower, resembling the stalk, leaves and blossom of the tall, slender plant.

Willie Clutes had stood all he was going to. He saw that the taunter wasn't any schoolboy, but Lem Clawson, man-grown and sweetheart of the teacher, Miss Elsa Hickless. She was standing in the schoolhouse doorway, laughing. Really, Willie Clutes was amusing!

But the boy, as he dropped books and dinner pail, started for Lem, his coat fluttering clear of its hanging points on his bony shoulders. Lem laughed aloud. He stood his ground. He weighed one hundred and sixty pounds, stood a reasonable five feet ten inches tall and had what he thought was "science"—boxing skill. Little he knew about the desperation of a boy who had been fed up on the mockery of physical conditions over which he had no control.

Willie Clutes, going at a marvelous, crane-striding gait, collided with Lem Clawson. There were smacks and uprolling dust, grunts and exclamations. The shrieks of "Fight! Fight!" were interrupted by louder, thumping blows. Out of the roadway dust appeared large fists and large feet in circuitous course. Then Willie Clutes at last stood up ferociously.

The dust settled. The boy looked down on a prostrate, quivering foe. He turned a shaggy head and twisting face on the children who had been his tormenters. He looked with an indignant snarl at the teacher, who had not played fair with him. He looked at Lizzie Gaile, who was biting her lip with sympathy and triumph.

Lem Clawson was whipped. He was down with his face covered with blood, and motionless. Willie's look checked the teacher's rush to protect her sweetheart. Elsa stood wringing her hands.

"Oh! You've killed him! You've killed him!" the girl cried out.

"I killed him!"

Willie looked down at the victim of his herculean rage; and, shaking his head like a bear over a honeycomb, he growled:

"I'm glad of it! I *wanted* to kill him!"

The score of children fell back from the desperate boy. Several cried. The teacher screamed so loud that she was heard nearly a mile up and down the highway. Willie reached down and, seizing Clawson by the slack of his shirt bosom, shook him with a strength that was astonishing. Then he stood erect, squared his shoulders and snarled his triumph at the children.

He looked at Lizzie, who stood a little apart. She half-smiled as she gazed at him, studying his expression curiously—and with an odd, knowing look.

"Good-by, Lizzie!" the lank boy said, repeating it, awkwardly, "Good-by—I—got to be going!"

He strode back through the schoolhouse yard and vaulted the board fence in the rear. He crossed the mossy pasture, entered the ferns and briers and vanished in the low second growth on his way into the Big Woods growing on the granite mountains beyond.

Lem Clawson was not dead. He was knocked senseless, however, and he was still limp when neighbors from the house half a mile away arrived, wondering what had happened to make all that screaming.

Lem revived under cold water from the spring of the schoolhouse lot. He sat up, unable to see out of one eye, and with his face bulging out like a blackberry, where the impatient knuckles of the schoolboy had kneaded cheeks, brow and jaw. He would show the black-and-yellow bruise stains for weeks. He went back into Jim MacBeth's log job, on Mill creek, working, never again to make fun of an awkward youth.

WILLIE CLUTES did not return. No one knew what had become of him. Some held to the absurd idea that he was scared to death, or that he had died of starvation, afraid of being electrocuted for murder.

No legal action was taken. Justice of Peace Grotus Reising laughed when he heard of the affair and remarked that Lem sure had what he deserved; and Deputy Sheriff Conklin told Clawson that it served him blamed well right, picking on a boy. Miss Elsa, the teacher, was sorry—and told Lem she hated the sight of him.

Lizzie Gaile sat dreamily over her books. She gathered up Willie Clutes' dinner pail, books and hat, of course, and carried them tenderly home to his Uncle Fred's. For weeks and months she went to the post office and stopped at Uncle Fred's every day on some excuse or other.

One day, she had a letter from off yonder. Seven months had elapsed since Willie Clutes took his departure. The letter read:

DEAR FRIEND LIZZIE:

I have come West, where I am going to live forever. I knowed you would be intrested. I got a job but i aint goin to keep it for i am learnin abot gold minin and i am going prospectin wen i get a grubstake an find a lota money. so i guess ill kwit this tim your friend BILL CLUTES.

No address—no request for an answer. But the envelop held a clew. It had been mailed at Eureka, Nevada. On the geography map Lizzie found the name and studied it while she dreamed. She read the geography, all that it told about Nevada with its cattle, mining, irrigation and other industries. It was, she knew, nearly three thousand miles from Wilmurt to Eureka. She could not forget Willie Clutes—who signed himself "Bill."

Lizzie grew up in Wilmurt. She went to work for the Little Jack Conklins; and then Mrs. Burt Conklin needed help on her husband's log job, the kitchen work being right heavy. Lizzie was strong and could bake twelve loaves of bread in the stove oven while she fried six pounds of salt pork on the top, boiling two pecks of potatoes and cooling twenty mince pies—all at the same time.

Lizzie was a smiling, buxom girl when she was nineteen years old. She enforced respect, having knocked a lumberjack or two over the head with a stick of three-foot hardwood. She danced at many a Wilmurt party, and the timbers of the Ohio platform sprang to her buoyant stepping.

People wondered why she didn't marry. Surely a dozen of the young men around would have been glad to have so husky and splendid a woman—able to pitch hay, roll a log of beech stovewood or swing an ax on the kindlings. She worked for the love of it, tireless and buoyant, singing as she peeled potatoes after working all day till nine o'clock at night.

But Lizzie was silent-tongued about her

own heart. She was gay and smiling, her blue eyes brilliant like gems—but fathomless.

And one day she drew her pay, all that was coming to her. She took the bus to Prospect; and ten days later she arrived at Eureka, Nevada, coming up on the narrow-gage into the clear skies and stony mountain ranges of the high plateaus.

In Eureka she went to the hotel where tourists stopped. She looked the dapper proprietor in the eye and asked for a job.

"Yes, ma'am!" he exclaimed, delighted. "We've been trying to find a girl for seven months!"

He started to pick up her suitcase, which was twenty-eight inches long, sixteen inches wide and ten thick—a small trunk. He could hardly lift it with both hands.

"I'll carry it," Lizzie said, swinging it up on two fingers, adding, "Do you know Willie Clutes around here?"

"Willie Clutes?" The hotel man shook his head. "No—never heard of him!"

Lizzie went to work, with joyous vim. She not only cleared the kitchen; she started from one corner and banished the dust and dirt of epochs to the farthest, topmost nook. She was a jewel beyond price. In a month she was Eureka's prize worker.

Every man jack knew, however, that she was, for some personal reason, looking for Willie Clutes. Word was passed around. Everybody wanted to help the big, good-natured girl find Willie.

Three months elapsed

No one asked why she wanted to find Willie. That was none of their business. He might be a favorite nephew—or any one for that matter. Talking in low voices around the stove, which was filled with a juniper-cedar roots, the boys talked it over. The girl's anxiety, and lack of other topics, except traditions of the Eureka grandeur when one glory-hole yielded $19,000,000 in metal, compelled all hands to think about the question she had raised. Suddenly, with a look of comical inspiration, Jerry Flipp exclaimed—

"Say, boys, you reckon she might mean by Willie, 'Roaring Bill' of Gambrel?"

"By gosh—whoeoee!" the boys yelled, and hurried back to the kitchen.

They found Lizzie dabbing a handkerchief in her eyes; but she looked up with a cheery smile of welcome despite the glistening tears.

"Why, say, Lizzie, likely you might mean Roaring Bill Clutes, the prospector over to Gambrel?"

"Roaring Bill!" she breathed. "Oh—maybe. Is he tall and thin?"

"Well, he's tall, Lizzie," they said. "But he isn't what you'd call gangling. Why, say, he's coming three hundred—and getting his growth——"

"Say, boys!" Jerry exclaimed. "Remember when he come here? He was tol'able spindling then—six foot and passing on up! You remember, George?"

"That's right," the others nodded. "And, Lizzie here—she hain't seen him sinct——"

The garage man ran Lizzie over to Gambrel about a week later. Eureka didn't want her to go. Her song, echoing down the street of many abandoned houses, and her smile, radiant and large enough to include all hands, were going to be missed. At the same time, they knew she was right. Gambrel was a good stirring place to organize a café restaurant, and—of course—she'd be near Roaring Bill, too.

Willie—gee whizz! They warned her never to call Roaring Bill that name, no matter how much or how well she might have known him in the old, other days back East.

And so Lizzie organized the Pie Special Café in Gambrel. She took a smoky, greasy, odorous lunch room, and worked it in a week into a clean and attractive dining room. In two weeks she was doing the best business in town. At the beginning of the third week she was established firmly and was putting money in the bank every morning at ten o'clock.

ROARING BILL CLUTES strolled down Thunderburst Gulch to Gambrel, his arms swinging and the palms of his hands just missing the outthrusting butts of two ferocious .38-40s, which were most exceedingly convenient in open Denver holsters. On the outskirts of town he drew both guns and casually shot a large, white, long-necked bottle which some one had left standing on a real-estate sign out in the sage. The glass fell in a shower of glimmering flinders.

"Huh! I reckon I'm all ready!" Roaring Bill growled in a voice that preceded him a quarter of a mile well beyond the Pie Special Café.

He sauntered down the middle of the

street. A tourist who had come a long way in a short time overtook him just before he reached the restaurant and honked aloud, rasping, imperative and impertinent hoot at the stroller.

Roaring Bill froze with astonishment. Bystanders gasped with horror. He turned on his boot heel, pulling both guns; and, circling their muzzles with eager expectancy, he faced the stranger. As his eyes glowered on the wife and three children, he saw that they did not realize the etiquette which they had violated—and they now recognized imminent doom.

Even at sixteen miles an hour the automobile was coming too fast. The driver pulled frantically to one side, skidding in the deep dust and throwing clouds of saffron alkali, and cleared the native by a rod, and stepping on the accelerator, they roared down the street.

"Haw, haw, haw!" whooped Roaring Bill Clutes in a voice that terrorized the travelers. "Haw, haw! Hadn't been fer that lady an' kids I'd shore mussed up that cussed impedence in short pants into nothin' by remainders."

Firing two or three shots to speed the departing travelers, Roaring Bill discovered the bright new sign of the Pie Special Café. He blinked. He reloaded his revolvers in an absent kind of way. He chanked his jaws and smacked his lips.

"Well — well — well!" he whooped. "Cleaned up, breshed up, mopped out, 'n' signs of a new management, heh! An' me starvin'—haw!"

He swung, scuffling the dust, to the fly-screen doors and poked them wide with the muzzles of his two revolvers.

"Whoo-e-e!" he shouted, as he entered.

Down the double rows of four-seat tables forty patrons cringed where they sat. The Chinese cook in the rear uttered an odd, cackling, impossible kind of a sound. At the calk of the horseshoe-shaped lunch counter stood Lizzie with her arms bare to the elbow, her shapely, withal large fists doubled against her large, withal shapely waist, and on her face was a smile that radiated across the rotund, rosy cheeks, while her blue eyes gazed with gemlike radiance, flickering a little, at the coming patron.

They stood staring at each other. Roaring Bill's whiskers draped long and silkily, and his hair was long and lustrous dark brown. His brows were tawny, his great eyes blue-steel, scowling as he squinted.

He looked, his eyes snapping, blinking. His face was convulsed with conflicting emotions, and he glared to right and left along the many tables. For the first time under the observation of any Nevada man, Roaring Bill hesitated.

The eyes of Lizzie softened. Into their depths flowed a glow of feeling—of all strange emotions, that of pity. So this was Roaring Bill Clutes, was it? She smiled as she leaned forward, dropping her hands on the edge of the counter, studying his face, in detail.

"Hello, Willie!" she greeted.

Roaring Bill's teeth clicked. His face contorted. His eyes popped and glowed. He brought his two gun barrels down on the edge of the lunch counter as he uttered a bruin-roaring snarl, shouting:

"What! What! Heh! I'm Roaring Bill Clutes; don't ferget it, you!"

"Oh, I won't!" she laughed lightly. "What'll you have?"

"Hey—you—Lizzie! Gimme ham an' aigs! Make 'em double! Chuck a whole apple pie, and serve my coffee into a quart pitcher, *black!* Step along now; lively! Haw-haw-haw! D'je see them towerists jump 'n' run? Haw!"

"Thank ——, he's good natured today!" somebody gasped; and on the instant Roaring Bill raised his right gun to the waistline and plumbed a can of soup in the middle of an ox. The can exploded like a canister, and red soup splashed the ceiling and gushed down the shelves.

"By gosh!" Roaring Bill remarked. "I'm feelin' restless today! Heh! I got to be doing—" he snapped a shot at a derby hat hanging on a hook— "something. Hi-i! I shore added to the ventilation of that there felt brain box, didn't I? Well, I'll be gosh blamed! There's Pete! Pete, come here!"

He beckoned with the five-inch barrel of his right-hand gun; and as Pete hastened, choking on a mouthful of roast beef, the commander beckoned with the seven-inch barrel of his left-hand gun.

"Kimon!" Bill demanded. "Step lively, thar!"

"Say, you dag-goned, miserlin, white-eyed yeller coyote!" Roaring Bill demanded. "Git down to that emporium of yourn! Bring me a order of grub for a

prospector of the hills! Sack er meal, slab er bacon, bag er flour, good coffee. Sugar 'n' a can o' blackstrap 'lasses! Bring 'em up. An' you, you chicken-livered dealer in hardware—John!"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Clutes!" a tall, nervous, rather elderly man cried.

"Six boxes of amyunition f'r my fav'rite weepins now! Thirty-eight-forties. Don't fergit the calipers!"

"Good lord—I—I couldn't forget!" John Steed gasped.

"An' f'r my carbine, a hundred shoots'll do this time. What you hangin' round fer? Git! Good lawd, I gotter wait——"

"No—suh! No—suh!" the long hardware man cried, dashing for the door.

"Now—Hades! Hold on——"

Clutes pulled a shot ahead of the nervous merchant, who jumped back a yard as the bullet threw dust ahead of him.

"Wait'll I finish, dad-blast ye! I busted my butcher knife; bring me one with a fifteen-inch blade. What in blazed nations you waiting for? Git there!"

The hardware merchant made a start like a hundred-yard dasher. Roaring Bill turned to look at the swinging doors down the lunch counters. From the kitchen came sounds of anxiety, a falling pan, low squeals of perturbation.

"Hey! Where's them eatings? Where's my beefsteak an' fried in onions?" Roaring Bill demanded. "Where's them—*Lizzie!*"

"Coming! Coming!" a voice cried. "Coming!"

She appeared with a tray filled up with things to eat. She snatched from in front of one customer a beefsteak to make up a deficit in Roaring Bill's memory. She emitted on the wide, long counter, ham, eggs, roast pork, veal cutlets, beefsteak, apple and lemon pies, a pitcher of coffee and another of tea. The café workers had learned the forgetfulness of Roaring Bill and his touchiness when he failed to remember what he had ordered—and his good nature when he saw ample provender in great variety to fill what he called the fuel box of his boiler room.

"Well, well, well!" he cried, delighted, reaching to see the cutlets and a thick slab of beef. "Sure, it feels good to be eating store grub again. Been living kinder slim on young jackrabbits and old rattlesnakes—huh!"

He drew his red bandanna handkerchief, and seven or eight snake tails fell with a crisp sound to the floor. Roaring Bill broke a lemon pie in two and ate into the halves with smacks of appreciation.

"I declare, Lizzie!" he rumbled. "That dadblasted yeller cook of yourn is learnin' to make a white man's pie, ain't he?"

"Yes, Mr. Clutes; he am—is!" the buxom young woman nodded.

"And yo're shore gittin' purtier and purtier, ain't you?" he added with a ferocious set of his jaws.

"Yes, sir!"

"That's the way to say it!" He shook his shaggy head. "Last time I come in yere, yer predecessor come blamed near conterdictin' me, young woman! I don't 'low nobody this sider —— to conterdict me, by gosh! I was comin' down that there street jes' now, an' a towerist blowed his horn fer me! Say—ain't they insultiner, them towerists?"

He looked around, growling at the recollection. There were some tourists along the double row of seats-for-four tables behind him. He rolled his eyes at them.

"My ——, Lizzie!" he bellowed, having fixed his big, bull-like eyes on an unfortunate group. "Be them women in pants, or be they the indifferentest men that eveh walked Thunderburst Gulch? For the lova my native hills—they're women! They squeal like women! Huh——"

As he turned, the khaki-trousered young women sprang to their feet with low, frightened cries:

"Save us! Save us!"

They twinkled through the doorway, followed by the gruff laughter of the whiskery three-hundred-pounder of the jagged rocks, sage valleys and vast distances.

"Huh!" he grunted. "If I'd be'n drinkin', I'd be'n vi'lent, seein' them —— things. I bet I'd spanked 'em, I would! Huh! Women all nonplused up thataway! Huh!"

He went on eating in the large, grizzly-bear way that was his chief characteristic, hooking in the grub with his ample, scooping hands. He smacked his lips joyously, like a whip cracking. He turned his roving eyes to look at Lizzie.

To tell the truth, Lizzie was good to look at. She was nearer two hundred than one hundred pounds weight—by some forty-six pounds. She was well fed, blooming-cheeked, amply-armed and blue-eyed—

withal, a bit nervous in her glances now. Roaring Bill under her doubtful watchfulness, let fall his own gaze uncertainly—a merest flutter of his huge crystal eyes, as blue as the sky

"Hey!" he suddenly yelped. "Where's them grubs—where's them shoots—where's them stub-toed, hang-fire scoundrels I ordered my supplies of? Hey!"

"Comin'! Comin', Mr. Clutes!" a voice gasped down the street.

"All right, Pete!" Roaring Bill remarked as the storekeeper staggered up under a bag of meal, which he had carried too fast, and followed by others, also laden with supplies according to the order.

"Where's—where's your horse?" Pete begged anxiously.

"Hoss! Hoss!"

Clutes looked meditatively up the gulch. Far away, just above the V notch at the head, where the trail came through, he saw a vulture poised against the sky in the far beyond. He blinked.

"Theh!" He pointed. "Theh! Them buzzards show whar that animile is! I wore him right down to the brisket, ridin' in, playful, this mohnin'! An' the scoundrel laid down an'—an' died!"

"Oh—Bill!" a voice gasped behind him.

He turned and saw Lizzie holding her hands.

"You didn't ride your horse Wild Flower to death!"

"Didn't I!" Roaring Bill grinned. "Huh! Didn't I! If a hoss can't carry me, he dies! That's what that hoss does!"

Lizzie blinked. To her came a vision of a wonderful horse, huge, powerful, perfectly magnificent, of whose splendor she had heard an imagination full.

"You brute—you brute!" she cried.

A gasp of horror went up from the bystanders, who stepped involuntarily back as Roaring Bill swung slowly around on his cougar-hips as his grizzly shoulder worked and twitched.

"You miserable, good-for-nothing brute!" she continued, careless of her fate. "Killing—riding that Wild Flower to death!"

"If yo' wa'n't a woman—a credit to yore sex—" Roaring Bill grumbled uncertainly, his huge, banana-bunch hands clenching and unclenching. "A man—a man cain't do it to a lady—what—what ——"

"Never mind the lady!" Lizzie shrieked. "You killed the most beautiful horse——"

Roaring Bill backed away. He was restraining himself. He was shaking his head, he was grumbling and growling, he was flexing his big arm and his broad shoulder—but he was restraining himself.

He backed out into the middle of the street, looking for something to vent his wrath upon, to take out of his mouth the taste of the insult which a man, a he-man, couldn't resent—adequately. As he did so a dog came yapping and prancing diagonally across the rutted dust in the street. The dog was a pretty tourists' pet, cocker spaniel in breed, and full of the joy and impudence of life.

"Yip! Yip!" the animal barked at the mountain man. "Yip! Yip!"

There is nothing in the world more exasperating to a he-man in his huskiest mood than to have a dog, cur or pedigreed, come yelping and barking around. Here was Roaring Bill, just hanging on to himself because he simply couldn't tear a lady into small pieces—merely because it wasn't done—and here was a dog, property of some panted lady tourists.

Roaring Bill uttered a whoop of satisfaction, at which the spaniel hesitated in doubt and wonder. Surely no man ever had made such a noise before—and was this great huge creature trampling in the dust a man anyhow? The dog had his question in his every expression, bold to stand his ground, impudent to bark again, and yet, ready on the instant, to light out.

"Here, here, Tootsie! Here, Too-ootsie!" a shrill, thin woman voice wailed, and then Roaring Bill snatched at his .38-40s. He pulled the short right-hand one with a snap that sent the bullets pouring on the instant the muzzle cleared the holster. The long, left barrel issued forth a shade more deliberately, and as the right hand smoked and rolled, the left hand with punctuating deliberation boomed, firing one shot to the other hand's two.

Tootsie jumped three feet in the air backward as volumes of black powder smoke choked his nose and vision. He was running before he hit the ground, making two jumps before his paws struck the dust, for a dog is marvelously quick and agile at the best.

Quick as he was, the bullets threw the dust up around him, richocheted under the surface and screamed down the length of Gambrel, while every one along the street

raced to cover. And Tootsie, squealing in shrill dismay, dashed into the automobile where three panted ladies shrank and quivered under the hard, cruel glare of Roaring Bill's scintillating blue eyes.

"If yo' weren't women," he roared, "if yo' weren't *Women!* Lettin' yore blamed kioodle yap at me, by gash!"

He rolled his eyes and saw Lizzie standing with her arms akimbo in the doorway of her café. He tucked away his .38-40 short barrel and went thumbing along his belt; but all the cartridge loops were empty. His guns were empty. Roaring Bill stood with his bare hands, so to speak; and, tucking away his long-barreled .38-40, he glanced hopefully around as if he hoped, he wished, he longed for somebody to challenge him—even with repeaters and knives, and he, defenceless but for his hands!

Lizzie of the café threw back her head and laughed. Her laugh was the pleasantest thing in a great scene. It echoed down the street melodiously, for it was a laugh for the open spaces.

Roaring Bill nerved himself. He took one step toward the café. He raised his two fists, seven feet apart, and took another step. The buxom young woman waved her own shapely hand at him and then, throwing a kiss, went within.

COMING up the street in a flivver, the cut-out whimpering in the breathless silence, was Steed, the hardware-store man. Steed's approach relieved the intensity of the situation.

"Them ca'tridges! Them ca'tridges!" Roaring Bill yelled.

With his pocket full of shells torn out of a 50-box and his guns lifting hungrily, Roaring Bill looked around. Lizzie was gone. The cocker spaniel was a mile away, with the panted lady tourists stepping on the accelerator. The street was all clear except for the agitated storekeepers.

"Steed!" Roaring Bill said. "Pete! Load them supplies into this here chariot o' steel 'n' iron!"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Clutes!" they replied in a breath, heaving in bacon and such.

"Now roll'er! Let 'er roll! Whoe-e-e!"

Shooting promiscuously, with Steed crouched over the wheel urging the light truck and praying as he stepped on it, Roaring Clute emerged from Gambrel into the wide, open spaces beyond the gulch head, through the eastern pass. Through the gap and on the down grade Roaring Bill emptied his "weepins" at soft-drink bottles, soup cans and stones—shattering the marks or tearing them into shredded flinders.

Out yonder, where the rutted trail ended at the fractured rocks amid which stood Roaring Bill's home, they emptied the supplies out on the ground. As they did so, a horse, Wild Flower, with one leg all bandaged up and smelling of liniment, came whinnying joyfully to nuzzle the big fellow. Yanking a poke out of his pocket, Roaring Bill thrust it into Steed's hands.

"Thar!" he bellowed. "Tell 'em Bill pays his debts and credits! Go tell 'em he takes what he wants and pays f'r it! Hand Lizzie her share an' give Pete his'n! Now git!"

The hardware merchant, hopeful for his life, thankful that he had somehow survived that long in so deadly a presence, dashed away, while over his head sang the bullets of a violent man's fare-ye-well. Glancing back, he saw Roaring Bill shoulder the three hundred weight of supplies, caressing the horse Wild Flower and shooting intermittently.

Downtown everybody breathed with relief. The ferocity of the wild and woolly man made them nervous. All the afternoon Lizzie's new friends came in to congratulate her on her impudence and the marvel of her escape. In Lizzie's eyes were a merry glance and a quick twinkle.

"He might have killed you—not thinking!" they said, awed.

"Huh!"

She shrugged her shoulders as if she hadn't done so much.

"He'll do something awful some day!" it was said. "He'd eat a man up!"

"Uh-huh!" Lizzie nodded. "I see him doing it!"

"Now, Lizzie!" her friends remonstrated. "Don't you take such chances ever again! That man's crazy bad! He's had everything his own way——"

Lizzie took their orders for coffee and apple pie, which they ate to soothe their nerves. And reports from out in Shattered Rocks indicated that Roaring Bill was tearing down the ledges and rolling out the country rock; that he was pulling the earth to pieces. They heard the booming of his black powder and the mauling of his sledges

on the stone. Roaring Bill was the most active worker in the world, to hear tell of his efforts. Nobody ever went up into his ridge. True, he had found many pockets of gold all over it, but just to hear him approach made the Shattered Rocks his own, though the range comprised forty square miles, instead of the legitimate two hundred by twelve hundred feet or so of a legal claim.

ON GAMBREL fell approaching quiet of the community's intermittent doom of visitation. Any day Roaring Bill was likely to come in. People looked up the gulch expecting to see, and dreading to discover, the figure of Roaring Bill silhouetted against the sky in the notch.

Only Lizzie sniffed scornfully.

"Lizzie!" her friends begged. "Don't irritate 'im! Don't exasperate 'im! That man's bad! It was all he could do to restrain hisse'f——"

"Shucks!"

She shrugged her shoulders, and people regarded her with regret and awe, as if she were rushing straight to perdition and ought to know better; but, being a woman, of course she would have her way!

Sure enough, Roaring Bill appeared. He came romping on hi. se down the middle of the road, throwi' dust and crowding two or three tourists out into the knobby land of the sage, making way for his unswerving progress. He was roaring, of course. The reverberations of his six-shooting echoed amid the cliffs of the cañon.

He pulled up in front of the Café Pie Special. He looked from under his beetling, hairy brows up and down—and he saw slithering from sight a number of scuttling human beings. But the café was crowded. Tourists and citizenry were cornered! With satisfaction he threw the bridle reins over his horse's head, landed on the sidewalk boards like a log on end and entered the place of store meals.

"Howdy, Lizzie!" he greeted with great good humor.

"Howdy!" she replied coldly.

"Set 'em up, woman! I'm hongry!"

"Set up what?"

"My daily stent o' grub!" he replied, glaring at her.

"A bushel of eats—mixed!" she called back into the kitchen.

"A bushel o' eats—hog-scrambled!" a shrill, oriental voice returned.

Roaring Bill stood with his mouth open. He wasn't what would be called angry, for him; nor yet was his mood one of good nature; he was just flabbergasted, in his large and husky way. He made some curious noises, something like those of a choking cougar or of a grizzly bear which has swallowed some honey and queen bees the wrong way.

"Woman! Woman!" He glared at Lizzie. "Do you dare me—*me?*"

She laughed in his face.

"Supposin'—supposin' I—I should *marry* you?" he demanded.

"Just supposin'!" She shook merrily.

He blinked. He looked into the frankly amused, and even joyously expectant, gaze of the blue depths of her eyes.

"Woman! Woman!" he breathed, and looked around over the host of people who had been eating the fifty-cent dinner but were now breathlessly expectant.

His eyes fell upon a dapper, goateed, wind-burned man. He grinned with a curious expansiveness.

"You—Jedge!" He leveled a long finger. "Come'r!"

"Yes, sir! Comin', Mr. Clutes!" the little man cried in a high, tenor voice. "Comin'!"

"Here!"

Roaring Bill snatched across the lunch counter and seized Lizzie by her wrist with a hand that seemed made for it.

"Marry us!"

"Good lawd! I——"

The judge blinked, horrified.

"Gwan!" Roaring Bill ordered.

"Dod—dud—do you take this man to be yere lawful husband?"

The dispenser of peace and law passed the buck to the lady.

Lizzie looked thoughtfully out of the window at the horse before the door. A bale of alfalfa had been spread for the noble animal. A washboiler full of spring water was beside the fodder. One glance in the direction of the livery stable had won these attentions—and more—for the horse. Two hostlers were brushing and currying the sleek and beautiful mount, too.

"Wild Flower?" Lizzie mused, looking at Roaring Bill, whose teeth were showing, and his hand closed down even more ferociously on her clear, white skin.

"Yes, Wild Flower!" Roaring Bill interluded. "He learnt his lesson, lying down on me. I left him fer the buzzards—an' he crawl-l-led back!"

"Do you?" the judge asked nervously.

"Yes, I do!" Lizzie replied to the original question.

"And—and, Bill—Bill—do you mean it? Do you take this—this lady— Honest, Bill— You don't——"

"Spit 'er out, you blamed, sawed-off runt!" Roaring Bill ordered.

"Do you take this fair lady to be your wife—this——"

"Sure I do!" Roaring Bill roared huskily. "Sure I do! Now, my fair lady——"

He reached both arms and engirthed her in an embrace any less husky and well-proportioned young woman must have perished in. Lizzie, her arms pinioned, looked him in the eyes as his shaggy head came down to kiss those shapely, and—be it said—upturned lips. Everybody started at the contact. Surely it was a kiss for the wide open spaces! People averred that it was heard half a mile.

"Now—now for the honeymoon!" Roaring Bill exclaimed with gusto, his eyes looking out at his horse.

He gazed at Wild Flower and glanced down his own enormous proportions. The fleeting thought that he would rush out, bearing his victim-bride, vanished in an odd grin.

"By ——!" he declared. "The hoss ain't made 'at could carry us both! Hey, you blacksmith Jack! What we need's iron an' steel, aluminum an' good hick'ry wheels! Hey, Jack, bring us an automobile f'r our honeymoon!"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Clute!" the ex-blacksmith, present garage-sales agent shouted. "Just a minute!"

"A blamed short minute!" Roaring Bill yelped, shooting his right-hand revolver while he held fast to Lizzie with the other hand.

In two minutes Blacksmith Jack arrived with a speed truck, and he asked anxiously—

"Can you drive it?"

"I kin ride anything!" Roaring Bill replied, hustling Lizzie up into the high front seat.

True, it seemed as if Roaring Bill knew what he was about. He reached into his jeans and threw down an enormous leather poke, full of nugget gold from glory-hole pockets in his private stamping ground. He dropped another huge poke on the seat between him and Lizzie.

Then with open cut-out, the speed truck rolled up the grade and out into the trail that led east, to the land of Western honeymooners.

"Poor girl— That poor woman!" a dozen, a hundred, sighed and mourned, a wizened little tourist woman adding, "What a life he'll lead her!"

Then, remembering their duty, a cheer of good will followed the bridal couple. Lizzie turned and waved her hand.

THREE months later Mr. and Mrs. Roaring Bill Clutes returned. Bill was driving, the same as usual. He stepped down from the house car with which the two-ton speed truck had been adorned.

Every one in sight recognized his figure, but not his raiment. Roaring Bill was dressed in pale-gray stockings, the most expansive tweed knickerbockers ever constructed to order; and he wore a cap of the same material, besides a silken shirt. Instead of home-made burro-hide boots, he wore oxfords—No.

He trotted arour the motor hood and reached to assist his wife to the plank in front of the café. As she stepped down, the Chinese cook of the Café Special Pie uttered a curious squeak like a startled hen. Lizzie was wearing knee pants herself, not too tight—not too loose either, but just the correct fit; and she was splendid in her magnificent equilibrium, poise and proportions.

Everybody caught a unanimous breath. Roaring Bill held the door open for Lizzie to stroll into her emporium of eats. She smiled to include all her old friends and all her coming acquaintances. Tourists, not having known or heard of the previous conditions and experiences, gazed in wonder at the expressions of relief and delight, the even unbelieving amazement.

Roaring Bill drew silently into a chair against a small wall table. Lizzie breezed lightly through, toward the kitchen, calling as she ran:

"All the eats! Sample of each on a platter!"

Roaring Bill smacked his lips.

"Say—Lizzie!" Pete whispered, watching Roaring Bill anxiously. "What— How come it— Who happened——"

"Why, he's the gentlest old dear!" she chuckled. "Wouldn't hurt a fan-tailed chipmunk!"

"We—we were worried to death!" Pete spoke for them all.

"Well, I wasn't!" she smiled. "When the best shot in the country misses a kioodle spaniel dog twelve times in succession—and feeds his hoss firstest—and never shoots at anything but tin cans and bottles—shucks! That's the man I laid for—and caught! He was just roaring with embarrassment, account of him being so big, awkward and ignorant."

"But—but——"

Pete glanced, embarrassed, at the clothes he couldn't mention.

"I hate 'em!" she confessed with a shrugging laugh. "But I knowed I'd have to make that man eat dog—right off! Gracious! Suppose he should discover his strength and tear loose! But he won't. I've taught him manners."

She glanced involuntarily over her shoulder to where Roaring Bill was fumbling with the day's menu; and then, in a fierce whisper that made all those in the kitchen jump, even the Chinaman, she said:

"Hurry! Get Willie's eats—quick. He's 'most starved!"

Willie Clutes smiled happily.

Plants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

THE JADE

A FEW days ago I crossed the ferries and I had a hard time. I was afraid of myself for a brief moment. I had to go from the deck, inside, away from the sight of the sea. It looked too calling.

San Francisco Bay haunts me. It is of all places the place where I remember the bright days of my youth. I still see, in vision, the ships come in under sail from the ocean. What in them makes one so content? They seemed to be alive: as though the stars and wind cries had awakened them to an immortality of their own. There was about them a something completely in keeping with the mind of a young man. Perhaps they had stolen something from the motion of the universe and, adding it to the enhancement of their symmetrical top-hamper, of their gear and hulls, knew how to make the utmost use of the vividness of their bedecking. They witched young men, and old men also; as all men are, at times, despite themselves, bewitched by women whose voices soothe lullingly.

Who may know the meaning of a voice? Of the sea's voice? We take our chance with fate.

Is the sea true love, or courtezan?

Is she, filled with torture, replete with savagery, illimitably brutal?

There is light in her face. Her voice croons. We give her our hearts. How escape a siren?

Is she siren? Or but a tired love who, seeking some one to offer her heart's peace, calls to the spirit of man with unexpressed voices given to her by an omnipotent Master?

When the light in the sky is gone she sulks, and so, mockingly, bids youth to her arms.

Is she devourer, or giver of birth?

To be her lover is torture, for lovers should trust. How trust a face so-mocking? So filled with changing lights?

At clear dawns and sunsets there dwells no mockery in her gray eyes. When storms yell she calls to bravery: but courtezans do that, also. Which is she?

I, who have never found out, stare at her features. Would it be peace in her bosom, or long remorse?

Is it peace in her face? Or the sneer of a harlot who will laugh when her arms encircle me fallen asleep on her never to be contented breast?

I am thralled by the sea.

Sudanese Trails

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE BY Georges Surdez

Author of "The Mountaineer," "Black Honor," etc.

IN THE narrow, red ribbon of trail cutting through the bush, a lone man appeared, rifle in hand. Around his hips, a piece of print cloth was twisted. From the thighs down, his legs were bare. Remnants of a blue uniform coat, and a faded red *chechia* nevertheless marked him as a *tirailleur*, obviously the extreme point of an advancing column. He scanned the bush to the right and left, then, impelled by some instinct, glanced upward, and stood staring, mouth agape.

Above him, gloomy as prison bars, the gaunt limbs of a tree, shorn of all foliage, stretched against the red glow of the sunset sky, black and formidable. A number of the branches terminated in a peculiar growth, a sort of dark ball, like a species of giant fruit. And it was at the foot of this tree that the trail divided. The left branch led northeast to Dalla town, and further, to the Ouara-Ouara country. The right traveled on through the southeast, to the territory of Mossi.

A second *tirailleur* appeared, taller than the first, and wearing the chevrons of a sergeant on his sleeves. No words were exchanged, but the newcomer followed the gesture of indication upward. And he also stood legs apart and mouth wide, while more *tirailleurs* strung out from the bush into the small clearing at the foot of the tree.

At last, apparently satisfied as to the nature of the round objects, the non-com pulled out a pipe, filled and lighted it. Several others imitated him, and sat quietly in the shade. A bird flew low over the bush, in a loud whir of beating wings. But the men were silent.

After a few minutes had passed, the sergeant looked up expectantly. Soon a horseman rode into sight, mounted on a small black horse of native stock. The man was white, large framed, and the first impression of his face beneath the brim of the sun helmet was of a long massive nose, blue eyes, and a sandy mustache almost snowy against the tanned cheeks. On the wrinkled sleeves of his white tunic were the three horizontal stripes of a French captain, held in place by the cord twists.

Behind him walked forty or fifty *tirailleurs*, all in more or less dilapidated attire. They were large and strong, of the various Bambara tribes, some with the three tattoo marks high on the cheeks near the corner of the eye, others with the long clawlike scars running from brow to chin. The sergeant stood in the center of the path, and presented arms.

"Why did you stop here, Keita?" the captain asked.

Lowering his rifle, Keita lifted his hand toward the tree, as the point man had done.

Fastened to the trunk, a strip of sheepskin upon which a sentence in Bambara tongue was scrawled in Arabic characters was posted.

Captain Verneuil read, started, and bit his lips in a nervous contraction. Then he shrugged, raised a casual glance to the branches.

"Bilali did this?" he questioned.

Keita assented with a gesture. Nene'a Keita, whose genuine name was Fakko Keita, never spoke unless it was unavoidable. Nene'a means "lack-tongue." Keita among Bambaras is as common as Smith or Jones in English-speaking countries, Durand and Dupont in France. The Keita family is related, by immemorial tradition, to the Hippopotamus. The full name of the sergeant could be translated accurately enough by "Tongueless Hippo."

Verneuil knew what the strange, round objects were: Human heads. Those in the tree were freshly cut. Keita, scouting in the bush, reported the bodies, abandoned in the open. The corpses were clad in government clothing, therefore the heads in the tree had been cut from *tirailleurs*, and were there as a warning added to that of the placard.

With an imperative wave of the hand, Verneuil stilled the blacks around him, who were shouting angrily, maddened by the sight of the "fetish-tree." Superstition has a strong grip on both Moslems and fetishists, and passing before this warning was not a light matter for the blacks.

A second white man arrived, leading the rest of the infantry, and a troop of *spahis*. As a rider is conspicuous, Verneuil always preferred the advance guard to be composed of infantry. Guepard, commanding the cavalry of the little column, was therefore stationed in the rear, to watch over the two hundred and fifty bearers, carrying the supplies. Lieutenant Guepard was five or six years younger than his chief, a good looking, slim officer. His face whitened when he identified the nature of the objects on the tree.

"Probably the missing patrol from Mopti to Bandiagara," Verneuil informed him. "You remember—two or three weeks before we left. You know the general belief in this region: Heads at the head of the trail bring ill luck to the passer-by."

Then, for the benefit of Guepard, he translated the inscription.

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
MASTER OF MEN'S FATE
NO ONE MAY PASS

"What are you going to do?" Guepard asked.

For answer, the captain dismounted, tore the warning from the trunk of the tree. On the smooth skin of the reverse side, with a blue pencil, he wrote several lines in Bambara, using, as had the other scribe, Arabic character; for Bambara has no alphabet of its own.

Then under the silent contemplation of the negroes, he hoisted the sign higher than it had been before, and fastened it with the same wooden peg. Those among the *spahis* and *tirailleurs* who were able to read translated the meaning to their comrades, and a murmur of satisfaction rose.

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
MASTER OF MEN'S FATE.
WHITE MEN PASS WHERE THEY CHOOSE
THEIR SOLDIERS ALSO

"Puerile, if you wish," Verneuil remarked to Guepard, "but necessary for the men. By touching the sign, I am presumed to have taken upon myself the malevolent effect." He got into the saddle, glanced at the sun: "A few hours to night, yet. We better move on."

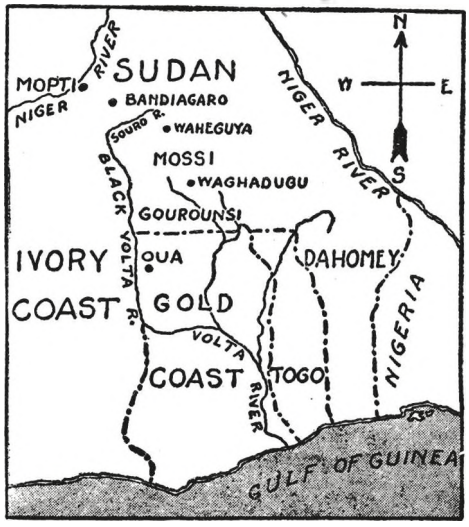
He was the first to pass the sinister tree, taking the right trail. Guepard followed; behind them, shuffling feet brought up a cloud of reddish dust, rising chokingly from the pulverized dirt of the path.

Undulating toward the circular horizon spread a moving sea of grass. After six months of dry season, the bush had lost the intense green for the softer tints of brown and yellow. Huge and red, the failing sun still beat from a white-hot sky, embracing the whole universe in a fiery canopy.

Verneuil heard the grunted admonitions of the *tirailleurs* to the bearers, who grumbled at the twenty-five kilo packs on their heads. Verneuil relaxed, wiped his face with a cloth. The sweat dripping from his nose had soaked his cigaret beyond possible use, and he threw it away. A private immediately picked it up. Nothing is lost in the Sudan.

The trail wound on. Bush paths were

not traced by the natives with a view to haste. At times, the road would circle a fallen tree, or followed a narrow stream for miles, to gain a spot where kind nature had



dropped a dead trunk to form a natural bridge. No European, no white man, can understand the principle, and the captain often cursed the meandering trails.

The sun slowly lowered. The cool wind blew from the west, rustling the grass and the leafy crests of the tree. The Mossi Mission disappeared around a bend in the path.

NEARLY a decade before Verneuil had landed in Africa, a young second lieutenant, eager and looking forward to a life of adventure. He had followed the unsung epic, which, starting below Kayes, carried the French flag beyond the Slave's Nile, as the Arabs call the Niger.

He was a legendary figure in the Sudan. The *griots*, bards of the Sudanese populations, sang his exploits. *Tirailleurs* on the march, throughout West Africa, could be heard singing his name.

Among his white comrades, his peculiar coloring and bulk had earned him the nickname of "White Elephant." So popular and generally accepted was this appellation that a story ran the rounds of the mess rooms, from Dakar to Timbuktu: A newly arrived officer, making out a report, had unguardedly replaced Verneuil's name by his sobriquet. The report, passing unnoticed through the Kayes Headquarters, as reports often did, went to the Ministry of Colonies, in Paris, where it caused considerable speculation.

Joined to his courage and strength, Verneuil's sagacity was equal to the cunning of any native chief. He knew the blacks' customs. He was well acquainted with the tongues of the Sudan. It is true that native vocabularies are very often limited to six or seven hundred words. But Verneuil, beside Arabic, was fluent in Soninke, Bambara, Bozo, Sya, and many others. Promotion, and various posts of honor had been offered him in Paris. But the grip of Africa held him by many threads.

Six weeks before, Verneuil had returned from the Sahel, north of Timbuktu, on the edge of the great desert. There he had accomplished a difficult mission, which ended at Raz-el-Ma, above the marshes of the Niger River. Arriving in Bafoulabe, head of the railroad to Kayes, he had been looking forward to a long leave in France, the fourth in ten years.

But an official envelop awaited him in Bafoulabe. He was placed in command of another mission, to the south of the Sudan proper, taking him through Bandiagara, on the extreme edge of pacified territory, into the Mossi and Gourounsi regions, which stretched north of the English Gold Coast and German Togoland.

When he first read the order, Verneuil was inclined to refuse. He was tired, needed rest, fresh air, and was entitled to a leave. But, as he read the details of the letter, the magnitude of the enterprize became clear:

Mossi-Gourounsi, twin names that rang like the clash of swords.

Several years before, a French explorer, Monteuil, had obtained treaties of protectorate from the *nabas*, chiefs, holding the territories. France had rested secure in that knowledge.

But, following Monteuil's departure, appeared Fergusson. Fergusson was a mulatto, from the Gold Coast. According to opinions, he was the greatest diplomat or the worst trouble maker in the entire Sudan. Fergusson interviewed the *nabas* in his turn. Loyally enough, treaties were refused him.

Fergusson, who was a clever man, promptly instigated rebellions, which resulted in the overthrow of the chiefs favorable to the French, and the rise to power of

leaders devoted to England. With these last, Fergusson signed a new set of treaties. Queen Victoria's agent thereupon returned to the Gold Coast, with another success to report.

Mossi-Gourounsi was of greatest importance to the French. Unless the republic obtained possession of these lands, her colonies would be cut off from one another, preventing an ultimate linking by rail. Holding first treaties, the French disregarded other events.

Samory, the Malinke conqueror, had retreated from his former empire to the Kong region. Timbuktu, newly acquired, must be made secure. All attention shifted to the Saharan border. Facing such warriors as the Tuareg, there was little thought to spare for the less appreciated southern Sudan.

Then, the Germans and the British were reported dangerously close to the French sphere of influence. Next, they were reported within the accepted boundaries. There was an exchange of correspondance between the three nations, and France was requested, before shouting her indignation, to look up the Berlin Agreement. A justifying clause was in fact found:

> In case of treaties having been signed by native chiefs with various nations, the first of these nations to have an effective military control within the disputed territory will be accepted as holding full Protectorate.

Fortunately, both British and Germans were interrupted by rebellions within their own colonies, and there was still a possibility of France occupying the lands involved. The wires hummed.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Sudan, in Kayes, desperately searching for the right man to send ahead, picked out Verneuil.

When Verneuil arrived in Bandiagara he found that Captain Marchas, in charge of the post, could spare but a few men. Forty *spahis* and two hundred *tirailleurs*, many of them inexperienced recruits, were all that he could offer. Verneuil was somewhat consoled when he found Guepard, long known to him, as officer of the riders, and prospective collaborator.

But in Bandiagara Verneuil also learned many things that perturbed him, things that had not been foreseen in the report of the situation handed him, and which would increase his task tenfold.

A native informed him that Komokho Bilali and his bands were not far south of the town. Also that Fergusson was known to have approached him. Though a vassal of Samory, Bilali since his master's departure had been playing an independent hand. His hatred of the French was old and deep.

The fetish-tree, evidently the handy work of Bilali, had confirmed the rumor. And Bilali had three thousand well-armed men at his disposal. The prospects for the Mission were therefore far from rosy.

Bilali had warned. He would strike. When? Where?

The captain suddenly recalled an incident that had occured in Bandiagara, on the morning the Mission had departed.

"Corpses marching away," some one said.

Feeling the eyes of his *tirailleurs* upon him, knowing that this discouraging prediction had to be faced and dispelled, Verneuil had taken two five-franc pieces from his pocket, heavy, silver coins known as *gourdes* to the blacks.

He addressed the native who had spoken:

"Here are two *gourdes*, prophet! Wilt thou agree to give back four if I return safe to Bandiagara?"

The man hesitated. He was a tall, rangy fellow, better dressed than the other natives, and marked as a personage of some importance by the green parasol he carried to shade his head from the sun. His features were more Arabic than negroid.

As Verneuil pressed his offer, the man gestured negatively. The captain laughed and spoke loudly, to be well heard by his men:

"If thou dost believe what thou hast said, why not accept the pieces?"

Embarrassed, the native lowered his parasol. Into it, Verneuil threw the silver coins.

"When I return I shall claim four," he warned. "What is thy name, and where can I find thee?"

The man smiled. A negro rarely smiles. He grins or remains stolid.

"My name, Captain? My name is Sukule. Men also call me the Bird-Man. Where I may be found?" Again the faint smile played on the thin lips. "Anywhere, everywhere. And thou shalt see me again."

He turned to pass through the crowd gathered to watch the departure of the Mission. Nene'a Keita, impetuously, tried to halt him.

"Let him be, Keita, he has done nothing," Verneuil had warned.

Now, the captain remembered the smile of Sukule, the Bird-Man. Perhaps, the black had a basis for his statement.

He glanced at Guépard, younger than himself, whom he liked deeply, and wondered. What would be the end? Where would they be a week from this day, three days, tomorrow?

IN THE darkness, on foot, Verneuil made his way along the line, muttering a word of encouragement to the *tirailleurs* as he passed—

"How is it with thee, Kamara?"

"*Y en a bon, mon capitaine!* It is good," came the unfailing answer.

It was Verneuil's habit, during night march, to travel a part of the distance on foot, encouraging his men. Feeling the white man close to them, treading the path softly as a bushman, the *tirailleurs* grew confident. Bambaras are invariably brave. When a judgment is pronounced against a certain outfit, the fault can generally be laid to the lack of skill of the white leader.

A few miles from the fetish-tree encountered that afternoon, Verneuil had seen unmistakable signs of a strong party of warriors ahead. He did not wish to engage in combat with Komokho Bilali, thinking rightly that he did not have enough men to beat him. The obvious course for him to follow, therefore, was to avoid open conflict if possible, circle the position of the former Samory man, and then trust to the speed of his men to outstrip his opponents.

A wider space between men, and the captain knew he was approaching the advance guard, for Keita did not need orders to take precautions.

He distinguished a shadow before him, stepping softly.

"Yeh! Baba! Where sergeant be, eh?" he whispered.

"Small way——"

His inquiries were answered in like manner by the next few men, and at last he reached Keita's side. He did not speak, but laid his fingers lightly on the black's elbow to let him know he was close by, and they progressed together. In the soft dirt Verneuil's boots made no sound. The vanguard of the Mission was like a procession of shadows. The captain strained his ear toward the rear; no sound. Guépard also was proving an able bushman.

An hour went by. Then Keita halted abruptly. Verneuil was positive that he could have seen nothing, but equally certain that something, or rather some one was ahead.

Keita had an uncanny instinct. He could actually "feel" a hostile presence. The black sergeant turned to Verneuil, found his arm and pressed gently, indicating that it was best for the captain to remain motionless where he stood. Keita then disappeared. Verneuil knew what was about to occur out there in the night. His heart pounded within his chest. He recalled experiencing a like sensation when, as a boy, he had tried to sleep in a darkened room after reading ghost yarns.

While Keita was clearing the way in his silent, efficacious manner, the long line halted, and waited stolidly for the signal to go on. With white troopers, given to nerves, some noise would inevitably have betrayed the presence of the Mission. Verneuil again realized that one must fight fire with fire, and black men with black men.

Again came the soft touch on his arm, and Verneuil knew that Keita had returned. He could discern dimly the broad shoulders and large head above the others.

"Sentry—" Keita informed him briefly. "We go ahead now."

Twenty yards farther Keita called his chief's attention to some bushes and Verneuil thrust his hand into them. Yes, a corpse was there. The sentry placed to guard this trail by Bilali, doubtless. Verneuil reached forward, and tapped Keita's bayonet, which was passed through the broad leather belt like a dagger, to avoid its beating against other bits of metal equipment. From Keita, the "Tongueless Hippo," came a low chuckle.

Once again, Verneuil was transported back to his childhood, when he had read Cooper and Gustave Aymar, stories of frontier fighting in America. Keita—and "The Last of the Mohicans!" The parallel made him smile. Yet Keita had a moment ago revealed himself as able a scout as any hero of the leather stocking tales.

A desire to smoke almost overcame his caution. He chewed the tobacco of one of the cigarets in his pockets. There was hope now that he could avoid Bilali, and the flare of a match might prove costly.

His knees ached and he stumbled once or twice, although Keita, who had been walking much longer, kept on unwaveringly. Probably he also was tired. But, being a *tirailleur*, he did what was asked of him. Verneuil, suddenly grateful, felt an impulse to reach out and pat the muscular back of the silent sergeant. Keita was devoted to him as he, Verneuil, was devoted to France.

But appreciation of the negro's qualities did not take his mind from his fatigue. He could not keep his eyes from blinking. He needed sleep. He stood aside, and allowed the men to file by, again exchanging low words with each one, receiving the constant assurance, "It is well," until his horse came by. He displaced the *tirailleur* left in charge of the beast, and mounted.

At one time, a tomtom vibrated, long and muffled, a great distance north. Bilali's tomtom, likely. At first, he was worried, fearing that his trick was discovered. Then, he decided that a religious ceremony was in progress. Bilali was a Moslem, and at certain seasons, men of his faith beat a tomtom, or shout a call just before dawn. With the faint rumbling of the war instrument proclaiming the might of Allah in his ears, he resumed his nap.

A blank space, then a touch on his knee. A *tirailleur* was speaking:

"Captain—helmet."

Fa N'daye,"the Lion," held out the headgear. Daylight would come soon, and the watchful private knew that the sun was not healthy for white men. Verneuil rubbed his eyes, straightened. N'daye was performing a like office for Guépard. The captain was mildly amused at the cavalryman's unkempt appearance. Pouches under his eyes, deep lines seaming the face from nose to chin, Guépard looked as if just returned from a spree. Unlike causes sometimes produce identical effects.

"I think we've made it," Verneuil called out, cheerfully.

"And after that, don't let any one tell me the race's degenerating. I should be dead—" Guépard replied, lightly enough. "Lord! What a night!"

"We can sleep all we wish when we come back from Mossi," Verneuil consoled him.

"And if we don't come back, Elephant, they do say that death is a long, long sleep." He smiled wryly. "If we knew it was we wouldn't take it so seriously."

"That," remarked Verneuil, "is where our philosophy, our combined religions fail to duplicate the fetishists. Did you ever see a native funeral in the Sudan?"

"I have," agreed Guépard, "but never paid much attention."

"You should. Native life is the little comedy of humanity rolling by, caricatured in black, but surprizingly like our own show in general outline. Near Sikosso, among the Senoufo people, I saw a dead man, a white bearded old fellow, laid on the ground. Rifles were fired at his ears, with the questions:

" 'Hast thou heard? Hast thou felt? If thou hast, speak!'

"After awhile, the corpse naturally silent, they decided he was dead. Four men picked up the body, and raced with it through the village toward the burial ground. They shouted:

" 'He is dead! He lived long! He was truly old! Didn't he eat a lot of rice? Yes, he ate a lot of rice! But now, finished, he won't eat any more rice! Didn't he have a lot of women! It was a shame to see so many women with one so old! But, finished now, he has no more women! Didn't he drink a lot of milk?' and so on.

"Instead of deploring his deprivation of life, they glorified his enjoyment of it, when he did live. Fundamentally, we think as the Senoufos do. How often have you heard, away from weeping relatives:

" 'Well, he was an old duck, had lived his life, and was due to die.'

"But we never had the courage to incorporate that in the funeral ceremony, did we?"

Guépard smiled.

"When it's the other fellow, it doesn't seem so final," he remarked. "But look at that sun, Verneuil, would you want to be deprived of the sight?"

The rim of the sun was edging over the bush. The horizon was suffused with scarlet and gold. Bluish shadows shifted over the landscape. Peculiar girdles of rosy vapors wrapped the glowing disk.

"Red sun in the morning set mill wheels a'turning—" Guépard went on, quoting the French peasant's saying that a red morning sun heralds rain.

"Not here," Verneuil objected. "This sun's African, and not bound by French rule."

The African sun—what a picture it conjured for Verneuil! The sun rising over

desert and bush, over jungles and surf-pounded beaches. A sun greeted by millions of Arabs, and more millions of blacks, the multitudes of the black continent, which was always glowing with light and color.

"What will this sun be?" wondered Guépard. "The golden sun of Austerlitz, or the last sun of Faust?"

"You're mixing your references, old man," suggested Verneuil, gayly.

"There's one thing I have clearly in mind," grumbled Guépard: "When do we rest?"

"Over there, in the clearing," promised Verneuil.

Reminded of the need for rest, Verneuil glanced at the men trudging on and on, worn gray faces under garish *chechias*. A few hours' rest and a bellyful of rice were badly needed. In the meanwhile there was something that could be done.

"Samba—a song!" Verneuil requested. Samba, the *griot* of the expedition, the man who had been point when the mission reached the fetish tree, walked ahead a few paces. A remarkable warrior, Samba was also an inspired poet.

He lifted his head, and chanted shrilly:

"There he rides, Venilli, our white chief!
He has the eye and the ear of the master who commands two rivers!
This ground where he will camp is his;
And the men with him are his men;
For he has saved them!"

"Flattering," observed Verneuil to his companion, "the master who commands two rivers; the Senegal and the Niger, I guess. For Samba, his chief is the only master in the Sudan. Queer sort of a cadence in his words, eh?"

"Not unpleasant," agreed Guépard, "though weird as everything else here."

"He rides on a black horse, Venilli,
Who has the eye and the ear of the master who commands two rivers.
The land——"

As the Mission reached the clearing, a volley greeted its appearance.

One knee on the ground, revolver in hand, Verneuil was posted at the approximate center of the defensive cordon. On the right, the *spahis* under Guépard had dismounted, and were for the moment acting as infantry.

Bilali's presence before him, when he had believed the native and his small army left miles to the rear, had at first puzzled Verneuil. Then, reasoning carefully, he found out that he had made a grave error in judgment. The body of troops that had left signs on his path had been but a powerful advance guard, to get in contact with the Mission. The main body had been several miles behind. After taking the side trail, Verneuil had swung back into the better established trail, and naturally, had run head on into the enemy.

The first onslaught had been beaten easily enough. Taking advantage of a lull in the firing, a portion of the men were dozing. The captain had hoped for an immediate follow up on Bilali's part. The volleys of the *tirailleurs* took fearful effect in closely packed bodies of warriors. But Bilali appeared to be well aware of Verneuil's desire, and was content with guarding the trail.

A swarm of riflemen in the bushes kept up a desultory fusillade, which passed too high to be dangerous. From a prisoner taken during the first rush, Verneuil had learned that Bilali was not acting under orders from Samory, who was at the time at peace with the French, but was playing a lone game. Doubtless Fergusson had once more been successful. Knowing the greed of Bilali, Verneuil easily understood why.

Verneuil realized he had been cleverly trapped. There was no way out. He knew well the impossibility of rushing the three thousand warriors before him. And, he could not retreat. Neither could he stay in this clearing in the bush. There was no water near by, and the nearest village where food could be obtained was miles away. In the initial scuffle, many bearers had been captured by the riders of Bilali, most of them loaded with ammunition. To make matters worse, a good proportion of the enemy was armed with modified Chassepots rifles, which fired the Gras cartridge.

In all his experience, Verneuil had never been in such a hole. Ordinarily, he could have retreated. But his actual orders forbade him retreat. And, to be shot at with his own cartridges capped the climax.

A renewed outburst of firing brought all the *tirailleurs* awake. Samba, heedless of the bullets, stood up, and sang.

"Venilli has a silver handled sword,
On the day of combat he holds it in his hand.
He scorns the rifle and walks ahead of the *tirailleurs;*
All the black chiefs fire at him,
A hundred rifles fire at him;
And he walks ahead of the *tirailleurs.*
All the black chiefs aim at him,
But the gleam of his sword scatters the warriors!"

The chanted words went to the soldiers' heads like potent wine. They became restless, fumbled with their bayonets, firing indiscriminately at the bush.

"Lie down, Samba!" Verneuil called out.

Samba, apparently deaf to his chief's orders, went on with his song.

"Down, Samba!" the white man called once more, emphasizing his wish with a shot from his revolver close to the *griot's* head.

Though well meant, the fellow's enthusiasm was dangerous. It would take little to shatter discipline and send the *tirailleurs* headlong into the bush. Verneuil had seen inexperienced officers lose control of their men, through disregarding the first manifestation of battle lust.

The black is a good soldier only when kept within iron hands. Give him his head, and he reverts swiftly to the elemental tactics of savage days. Even at that moment, a man was firing with the butt of his piece braced against his thigh, muzzle high, hitting nothing, but gloating over the detonations. Verneuil quieted him with a word.

"Fool stunt, coming out with irregulars," he told himself.

The majority of his men were showing their lack of seasoning. The first action had brought out their weakness. Keita, cool and business like, did what he could, as did the other veterans. But, as the day wore on, and the heat grew, the blacks became more nervous, a nervousness that might have a bad reaction.

Guépard, bending low, crept to Verneuil's side.

"What now, Elephant?"

"I'm stumped," admitted Verneuil, frankly. "I've been trying to find a way out all afternoon. But I keep going round and round in a circle."

"I'll guarantee to tear a hole through those fellows with my *spahis*," Guépard offered.

Verneuil shook his head.

"You'd be cut to pieces. Bilali's men are too scattered to be bowled over. Even if you did get through, they'd close in behind you and hold me back. This is what comes of expecting a handful to do a strong column's work."

"Did you see Bilali?"

"I think so. White *gandoura*, leopard skin gaiters, white horse. He was too far for a good shot, though."

"What about waiting for night, raiding his camp with a few good men, and killing him?"

"That trick's dead and gone. Never got us very far in the Sudan. Bilali's a cautious old boy."

He interrupted himself.

> "Maybe today is a day for death,
> For Venilli and the *tirailleurs*.
> Maybe——"

The irrepressible Samba was on his feet again, singing at the top of his lungs.

"Down!" Verneuil swore, then— "Keita, stop him!"

Keita and Samba were good friends, but when on duty, the sergeant had no friends. His butt swung, and thudded on the *griot's* skull. Samba dropped to his haunches, then fell flat on his face. Verneuil feared for a moment that Keita had struck too heartily, and that Samba was injured. But the singer stirred, rubbed his head, and reached for his rifle. A moment later, he turned his good-natured, coarse face toward his chiefs, and grinned.

Guépard laughed. Verneuil was compelled to imitate him. Samba was a clown, valuable in camp and on the march, but demoralizing before the enemy because of the reckless example he set.

"What did he say?" the lieutenant asked.

"Maybe today is day for death. It has just dawned upon him that we'll probably leave our skins right here. Perhaps it's for the best. Men fight well when they're sure to go."

Guépard rose to his knees suddenly.

"Here they come!"

Natives on foot were pouring from the bush in a solid mass, firing as they came. The yellowish smoke shredded in the gentle wind. Every leader in Bilali's force was mounted, and there was one leader to every ten men, so that the proportion of outstanding targets was great.

Keita, nonchalantly, stood and picked off his men. The clang of breeches resounded, the brass cylinders pattered to the ground, a bluish haze of smokeless powder lifted and vanished.

"*Karil Karil*" the shrill yell fused from the attackers.

Kill! Kill! Verneuil stood up, and called for a volley. The opposing mob shivered like leaves in a gale. Men tumbled. The front line decimated, those in the rear scattered and disappeared as briskly as they

had come. A rider galloped down the trail, from behind the firing line.

"That rush was hysteria on the part of a minor chief," Verneuil explained. "Bilali has sent that rider to summon him. I was right, the old fox intends to play a waiting game."

The two officers sank down to the grass. Guépard, silent, stared about him. After awhile, he indicated the sky to the east.

"What's happening?" he exclaimed.

Verneuil leaped to his feet: "Nothing! Save that heaven is intervening for us. It's the first tornado, the dry season's over."

The east had darkened. A tremendous bank of clouds, dark, heavy, bursting with water, blanketed the horizon. A low rumble shook the air. A cool wind arose, sped through the bush and trees with a formidable rustling. As the two men looked on, the clouds appeared to sweep around the blue vault, the sun dimmed, until the scene was wrapped in a constantly deepening obscurity.

The thunder increased, came nearer. Detonations crashed out in rapid succession. The wind swept broken branches from the trees. And, swift as a torrent, a tremendous downpour of rain fell. The light had gone completely.

"Guépard, get your *spahis*, crash through! We'll follow!"

Guépard was soon lost in the darkness. Verneuil located Keita, who transmitted orders all along the line. From the right, came the shouted orders of Guépard, dominating the wind, and the click of steel, followed soon by the sound of beating hoofs.

"*En avant!*" Verneuil called out, and the sections, in perfect line, swept forward. In the brief glare of the lightning, the captain took stock of his position.

"Bayonet!"

The blades slid from the scabbards, in a long bristling of metal.

"Charge!"

The bugle sounded. With a tremendous shout, matching the voice of the skies, the Bandiagara *tirailleurs* ran forward. Disorganized, isolated from their leader, Bilali's warriors lost heart. The circle of the enemy was pierced, first by the galloping horses and heavy sabers of the *spahis*, then by the *tirailleurs* and bearers. Some of the latter, armed with machetes used for clearing trails, gave a good account of themselves that afternoon.

"*Ralliez!*" Keita shouted, "*Ralliez!*"

The *tirailleurs* repeated the French word to identify each other, and keep in touch. When the lightning forked through the obscurity, Verneuil could see the struggle in the bluish light. Men grappled, wrestling and falling. From the saddle, he helped when he could, revolver ready. It was a nightmare combat between fantom opponents.

Verneuil involuntarily recalled that famous bit of humor: A coal black square hung in an art gallery, with the legend: "Negroes fighting in a tunnel." Plus the crackling lightning, this was an exact reproduction. Then Verneuil had the "feel" that he was through, that Bilali's shattered forces were in the rear, and not to be feared for many hours.

The Mossi-Gourounsi Mission was once more on the march. Guépard reported the trail free. Suddenly as it had come, the rain ceased.

The darkness slowly dispelled, giving place to the red glow of the sinking sun. For a few minutes, the sky was brilliant again, and vapor rose from the sodden bush. Then, once again, the sun disappeared, and genuine night fell, a wonderfully clear night, under a blue silk sky studded with the myriad stars.

"Venilli calls rain, and rain it comes,
He has the eye and the ear of the master of rain!
The ground where he marches is his,
And the men with him are his men;
For he has saved them!"

Samba was singing again.

Three hours after midnight, Verneuil called a halt.

Keita turned to the *tirailleurs*, and ordered them in grunted syllables to unsling their *bardas*, the voluminous packs enclosed in stout canvas. Rifles were stacked. Verneuil handed the sergeant a box of matches. Soon, tiny heaps of dried leaves flamed, were nursed, and blazed into full fires. Iron pots were brought forth, water sought at a nearby brook, and the rice, staple food of the negroes, set to boil. The cooks gravely squatted by the fires, and, illuminated by the red flames, appeared bent on mysterious incantations, gleaming eyes and teeth thrown into high light.

"Do you think Bilali will pursue us?" Guépard asked.

"No," Verneuil replied. "He is not fighting his own quarrel. He has done what he

was paid for: Barred our way. We passed. That's none of his concern now. Samory is at peace with us, and if Bilali lost too many men on a venture for personal profit, it would go hard with him when he returns to Kong. A few of his riders may follow us, drawn by the hope of loot. But that's all."

By tacit agreement, no mention was made of the other difficulties ahead. Both men were aware that Bilali had been but a prelude, and that the real task was yet before them.

THIRTY-TWO hours later, near noon of the following day, the Souro River, which flows into the Black Volta, was attained and forded.

On the far side of the stream, Verneuil found a group of natives who showed no desire for hostilities, but waited calmly for his arrival. He recognized among them a former Spahi, Konate, who had taken up trading in the region as a pretext for his real occupation; agent for the French. From him Verneuil learned the latest news.

In the nearest important town, Waheguya the enemies of the French held sway, under Saga, chief of Yoko town, who had evicted the legitimate *naba* from the capital. Saga was seconded by a strange negro, arrived but two days before from the north, and was firm in his intention to resist the French. Sakarey, the deposed chieftain, was one of the group, and expressed his willingness to help Verneuil occupy Waheguya, as the first base of action for further progress into Mossi.

Konate had news of even graver importance: Waghadugu, the real capital of Mossi, was occupied by two thousand warriors, several hundred of them armed with good rifles, the rest with bows and trade muskets. They were commanded by Bokary who was known to be of decided English tendency. Beyond Waghadugu, the Gourounsi was seething. There, the original inhabitants were oppressed by an invading tribe from the south, the Zabermabes, under Babato, of Samory and the English, and, a friend as a matter of course, an enemy of the French.

Within a few weeks, if he wished to be successful in his mission, Verneuil must reestablish the *nabas* of known loyalty to France, in every capital of the minor districts. And this must be done with a small force, already thinned by a severe encounter.

For a moment, Verneuil thought of camping where he stood, and sending for reenforcements. The work before him appeared superhuman. He had no cannon to batter down the gates of the fortified villages, and not enough men to occupy them.

Guépard, consulted, showed discouragement.

"We can't keep expecting tornadoes every time," was his opinion.

Verneuil turned to Konate.

"Where are the English?" he demanded.

"At Sapeliga, in the Gold Coast. There also is Samory's relative Saranke Mory. The English will come north very soon."

"When?"

"When more men arrive from the coast. Their blacks are ill. They are not from this land, and feel the sun like white men."

"West India Regiment, I guess," Verneuil informed Guépard. "As for Saranke Mory, I wouldn't worry about him. We're at peace with Samory, thanks to Allah, and the Malinke won't dare antagonize us until he has reformed his army. Saranke Mory, of all men, will not dare cross him. Karamoko's fate is too recent."

Karamoko, a son of Samory, once reputed his favorite, whom he had sent to France as an emissary to the President of the Republic, had come back with too many tales of European might to please his august father. Samory had stood his talk for a long time, then had simply walled him up in a mud partition near his palace, and allowed him to starve to death. Kinship was not guarantee of immunity.

"If we wait for more men," the captain went on, "the English will nose us out. As it is, they're taking their time, confident that we will be headed off by the various *nabas*."

"I wonder where they gather that confidence," Guépard stated, sarcastically. "They must have inside information."

"The English," Verneuil pointed out, "understand the colonial game. If our government was intelligent, it would do the same. There's ever a hint of jealousy in our anger."

"Perhaps," Guépard agreed, frankly. "But—as for us, we go ahead?"

"We go ahead!"

Sakarey, dethroned *naba* of Waheguya kept his promise. He gathered his motley

army about him, and followed the Mission. Saga, the usurper, barred the way repeatedly, but could not stand his ground. Sim, Soulou, Pogoro, Prembi, villages along the road saw savage engagements, none of which lasted more than thirty minutes. The first frenzy of the native attack past, the discipline of the white-officered troops asserted itself.

The rainy season had settled down in earnest. The roads were ankle deep in mud. Tornadoes, though favorable at times, proved very annoying at others. Verneuil, to fill the gaps left by the various combats in his ranks, had armed the bravest of the bearers, and these, as auxiliaries, framed by veterans, performed far above the captain's expectation.

Waheguya was taken, Sakarey was once again installed as chief. Without taking a full night's rest, Verneuil pressed on. At Yako, Saga made a stand. Verneuil, well ahead of his men, gained the main gate, blew it up with two sticks of dynamite, and swept the town clear. Guépard, at the head of his *spahis*, performed wonders. In turn engineer, infantry and cavalry, he built bridges across the streams in advance of the bulk of the Mission, sabered the disorganized natives at the end of the combats, took part in the attacks against fortified walls.

The tale of the white men's exploits spread throughout the region. Natives said that Verneuil and Guépard were protected by Allah, or by some great fetish, according to their religion. Hostile villages across the path of the Mossi Mission blazed through the nights, and vultures marked the progress of the *tirailleurs* from Bandiagara. In the annals of the Sudan, nothing like this conquest of a great territory by a handful had ever been witnessed.

The spirit of the captain had swept his men. Samba improvised songs of his own doings, those of his fellow privates, and the great deeds of Venilli and Guépi.

Human strength has its limits, and Verneuil, fearing that his followers would drop from sheer physical exhaustion, decided to camp in one place for three days. He hoped that past performances might pave the way ahead, and wished to avoid further conflict. He therefore sent Konate to Bokary, *naba* of Waghadugu, with a French flag to be hoisted as a sign of submission to the newcomers.

Konate returned with bad news.

Bokary had trampled upon the flag, thrown it on a dung heap. The emissary, protesting loyally, had been seized, and severely beaten. He brought to Verneuil but two words from Bokary—

"Withdraw immediately."

Verneuil expressed no surprize; the Mission moved forward.

The actual contact with Bokary's men occurred but three hours' march from the walls of the town. The inhabitants of Waghadugu were brave and better organized than Saga's followers. For a time, the fate of battle balanced. Then under the onslaught of forty men led by Keita, Bokary's right gave way, daunted by the bayonets.

The *spahis* followed up this advantage, and with the sinking of the sun, Verneuil saw another victory in sight.

He was following the path of the section under Keita, over soil strewn by dead and wounded Moshis, as the people of Mossi are called. A few hundred yards ahead, Guépard was riding slowly, his *spahis* now scattered in the grass in patient search for hidden warriors. And, as Verneuil watched, a tall native in white appeared at Guépard's side, threw down his musket as a sign of surrender. The captain saw his white comrade nod, and ride away.

Verneuil made up his mind to lecture Guépard for his carelessness. While pity is all right in its place, that place is not on the field, against treacherous foes.

It was then that he saw the negro, who had surrendered a moment before, draw a long-barreled pistol from within his *gandoura* and aim at Guépard whose back was turned. Before Verneuil could call out in warning a dry report snapped, and the man who had fired the shot dived for the shelter of the shrubs. Verneuil, seeing his lieutenant still in the saddle and apparently untouched, fired his revolver into the thicket.

Then he saw Guépard slither to the ground, and galloped toward him. The *spahi* had drawn himself to a sitting position and was fumbling beneath his tunic. He smiled apologetically as Verneuil dismounted to gain his side.

"Hurt?" Verneuil asked.

"Yes— Say, Verneuil, do you know who it was? Sukule, the Bird-Man—I never thought——"

"No one will think for you, old man,"

Verneuil grumbled. "You should have passed your saber through him before you turned your back."

As he spoke, he unbuttoned the wounded man's tunic. The missile, entering the back, had not come through, but had made a lump beneath the skin on the left breast.

"I guess it's nothing. It doesn't hurt much," Guépard remarked.

His eyes closed and he fell back. His legs straightened out. Verneuil, bewildered, shook him by the shoulder.

"Guépard—Guépard!"

The lieutenant's head rolled with the shaking, but his eyes did not reopen. His mouth gaped, and pinkish saliva moistened the pale lips. With unsteady fingers, Verneuil sought the pulse, then bent to press his ear over the heart.

Guépard was dead.

VERNEUIL ran forward, forgetting that his hands were empty, that he was leaving his men without a leader, jeopardizing the tremendous task before him. Warriors turned at his approach, faltered in their stride, glanced into his face briefly, and fled in the opposite direction. The captain's usually calm face was distorted. His one thought was to find, Sukule, the Bird-Man.

Keita was running beside him, shouting—

"*M'phal M'phal* Father! Father!"

His helmet fell from his head, but he kept on, exposed to the oblique rays of the sun. He felt himself grasped by the arm, tried to tear himself free. The move threw Keita off his feet. But the sergeant clung to his arm, and Verneuil was compelled to halt.

"Let go, Keita!"

For the first time in his life, Nene'a Keita disobeyed a white man. Verneuil struck him in the face with his clenched fist. The blow staggered the Bambara; but he held on, and repeated pleadingly—

"*M'phal M'phal*"

Samba, who usually could be found when needed, arrived, picked up the helmet, and replaced it on Verneuil's head. Then he grasped the arm left free by Keita. Together, the two *tirailleurs* tried to drag him back, out of danger. The Moshis might recover, and find the white man with but two followers. Verneuil ceased to struggle. His will was vascillating, and he was too maddened by the death of Guépard to know what was occurring.

"Sukule killed lieutenant, Keita—lieutenant is dead!"

"I savvy, captain," Keita replied, returning to the formal title, instead of the familiar word he had used in his first excitement: "I savvy. But, if thou dost go also, what we do?"

A SENSE of unutterable lassitude, of loss, gripped Verneuil. A morbid desire to end his own life here also, to drop this work too heavy for any man to carry through.

As he rearranged the dead man's clothing, he touched the smoother skin over the forehead, the crisp black hair. He struggled with himself to accept the fact that Guépard was gone forever, that he was alone among these thousands of blacks to whom he could not speak in his own language. It seemed absurd that Guépard would never talk again, in that half serious, whimsical way of his.

After a space, Keita touched him on the shoulder. Verneuil looked up. The sergeant pointed at a newly dug hole at the foot of a *baobab*-tree. True, Guépard must be buried, he could not be carried with the expedition. In silence, the captain permitted the body to be taken to the grave. There, he took from the pockets the personal belongings to be sent to Guépard's relatives. Keita, sliding into the pit, held out his arms, and lowered the body to the bottom.

Verneuil felt that he must say something. Men should not be laid away like dogs, even in a dog's country. He searched his memory for the appropriate ceremony. He recalled what he had said to Guépard about the native funeral, how Guépard had laughed. His mind was blank. The first spade lifted. The brown earth splotched the white of the uniform. Guépard's face had been covered, with a cloth. So absurdly simple! Men died and were thrown into the earth.

He must say something.

But no sound came——

The hole was filled now, and the *tirailleurs* were trampling the ground firm. Samba, the Moslem, and Nene'a Keita, the fetishist, were shaping a cross out of two slats ripped from a packing case. It was always the custom to place a cross above white men, they knew.

"Captain, write," suggested Keita, offering

a pot of black paint and a brush, found in the baggage.

Verneuil took the brush, and set to work.

Pierre Guépard

Lieutenant 1st Sudanese Spahis
Died at 26
For France

Verneuil had seen other graves. The soil is pitted with graves of Frenchmen, from Dakar on. By these graves, it is possible to follow the advance that beat like a mighty tide at the portals of Africa.

Dakar, Saint-Louis, Podor, Matam, Kayes, Bafoulabe, Timbuktu, Gundam, Mobti, all had their cemeteries. Medina, where Paul Holl had held out against the thousands of fanatics under El Hadj Omar, had its gloomy enclosure. All brave men, all young as years go. Guépard was simply another name added to thousands.

But Guépard had been his friend.

There exists no word to describe the feeling between two men who are friends. Friendship is never voiced, but demonstrated by action. Never, in the many months they had spent together, had Verneuil said to Guépard:

"You are my friend, I like you."

Even now, when Guépard was dead and gone, he could not phrase the words. But a mute, immense void somewhere within him throbbed painfully. Something had been torn from him, from his soul, he presumed, for his body was whole.

Verneuil had heard that men, amputated of a limb, still feel the ache. He compared his own feeling with that experience. He felt cold, not the cold of the material rain on his body. He thought of Guépard, underground, in the thin cotton clothing, in the tinsel of his uniform.

Verneuil had first seen him in Dakar, five or six years before, when he had returned from his second leave home. He could remember in detail the islet of Goree, sun baked rock a mile from shore, former stronghold of slave raiders, in turn owned by Dutch, English and French, wealthy in memories of the old Africa. He recalled Guépard, straight and lithe in new flannels, and his gesture toward the coast, toward Dakar, green, white and brown, spread out in the sun.

"Man-eating Africa! What a picture!" Guépard had said.

Guépard then had scarcely been a man, twenty at the most, fresh from school, with the lone stripe of second-lieutenant. Verneuil, twenty-seven, decorated, a lieutenant with a reputation, had felt that the younger man looked upon him as an ideal. He envied the boy his freshness of impression. He wanted to repeat the thrill of seeing Africa with European eyes.

Through Guépard, he had felt again the fascination of the Sudan, had forgotten the disenchanting facts that he had learned in previous years.

Together, they had made the railroad trip through the torrid Cayor, from Dakar to Saint-Louis, in the asthmatic, rattle-trap wagon. They had laughed at the snail pace, which did not prevent slow-footed oxen from being crushed by the locomotive. On the *Richardtoll*, venerable paddle wheel dispatch-boat, they had traveled up the Senegal River to Kayes.

Verneuil, who knew the history of the conquest, narrated anecdotes, dropped personal episodes, spoke of his adventures. Guépard, enthusiastic, listened and admired. This frank admiration, Verneuil admitted now, had been precious to him. It was with Verneuil's sporting rifle that Guépard had shot his first crocodile. Verneuil had initiated him into the meaning of the various noises: The roar of lions, the bellowing of buffaloes, or the splash of the prowling hippo.

Then Guépard had fallen sick; malaria and sun-stroke combined. Coals from the squat funnel of the *Richardtoll* had burned tiny holes in the deck awnings through which the sun filtered treacherously. Guépard, with the green man's self-confidence, had neglected to cover his head. Verneuil, recalling the looming walls of the Matam blockhouse, the full moon, *sorgho* and mais fields on the banks, the black smoke rising straight in the still air, where the embers rose like winking red stars against the translucent night. The quinine had had no effect, and the doctor had shrugged his shoulders.

From the three lighters in the rear, where *tirailleurs* were packed with wives, children and family live stock, came varied, but monotonously unpleasant odors. Far off, tomtoms rumbled; black Africa greeted the moon. A *laptot*—Senegalese sailor—crooned a *griot* song that Samba sometimes sang:

"The moon is high, and hearts are gay—
Die tomorrow, but live today."

Verneuil had talked to Guépard for hours. He spoke of the column then forming at Kayes to move against Samory. Guépard, his desire for action crushing the disease, had refused to die. The column now was history, forgotten save by them who had fought in it.

Guépard, though still showing the effect of his sickness, had shown himself worthy of any man's liking, a joyous companion in camp, a dependable officer in action. Kerouane, Samory's capital at the time, had been taken. Verneuil and Guépard, standing together, had witnessed the explosion of Samory's powder-magazine, far up on top of a mountain.

And Keita had said:

"Powder, plenty noise one time, no one hurt. Little noise many times in rifle, plenty men die."

This was Keita's longest recorded speech, and had been torn from him by the stupendous detonation, resembling a cataclysm of the Earth.

Yes. Keita had been there, too, five years ago, or was it six? The night before the explosion, Keita had been extreme point of the advancing column. That is, he walked alone, a hundred-and-fifty yards ahead of the first detachment to detect signs of the enemy, and prevent a surprize.

Coming around a bend in the trail, Keita had found himself face to face with an hostile warrior, who covered him with his rifle, and announced, "Thou art dead!" The warrior had acted true to his instinct for bombastic utterance. Keita, less talkative, more practical, had fired while the other spoke. Yes, Keita had been there. And Guépard, who had been with him also, was gone.

Verneuil had loved him as one loves a brother—and more. He had loved him as a friend. There was no dutiful love, nurtured and encouraged by centuries of custom but a new, strong feeling, growing and sweeping the mind. And Verneuil hated Guépard's murderer.

The thought of grasping Sukule and crushing him made the captain reel as if drunk. In him the double heritage of blood united, the fiery anger of the Nordic with the somber, persistent hatred of the Latin.

THAT night, once again, the tornado caught the Mission in the open.

The whipping rain against Verneuil's face seemed to sooth his hot forehead. He must think: Ahead, before the walls of Waghadugu, Bokary would make another stand. The captain must decide which of the sections should bear the brunt of the fighting.

Keita could always be depended upon to carry his objective, no matter what men were with him. But Verneuil feared to lose the sergeant. Konate, the former *spahi*, had taken charge of the cavalry. He was intelligent and brave, but would lack the "bite" that a white man possesses. Guépard had had, to an unusual degree, that mysterious quality which makes a cavalry leader. The black was not born who could lift a charge over a firing line with the impetuosity of the lieutenant. Rating the riders as one hundred per cent. efficient under Guépard, they sank to forty per cent. under Konate.

Later, although the walls of bush rose high on either side of the trail, the captain was aware that an open space was ahead. Out of the darkness came Konate's voice:

"The town is just ahead, captain."

"All right," Verneuil replied.

The rain ceased. The last of the thunder rumbled away gradually, as if nature was clearing the scene for the actions of men. The sky was wiped clean of clouds, lightened as the huge moon appeared. Above the regular walls of Waghadugu, a red reflection struck the night. A tomtom resounded, and voices hailed the moon.

Verneuil recalled the song:

> The moon is high, and hearts are gay.
> Die tomorrow, but live today.

"Circle the town, Konate," Verneuil ordered, "and hold the *spahis* ready."

Below the walls, for several hundred yards, the ground had been cleared. The brilliant moon apparently precluded the possibility of a surprize. But Verneuil moved on, followed by the *tirailleurs*, and no challenge came. The unbelievable occured. Two hundred and fifty men crossed an open space without being detected, in the flooding light of the moon. Either the sentries were asleep, or had abandoned their post to see the dance.

Under the gate, Verneuil dug a small hole for the dynamite, scratched a match, and lighted the fuse. The Bickford cord was either damp, or of poor quality. The captain was compelled to strike another match. In the meanwhile, a single rifleman on the wall could have shot him down at fifteen

feet. This time, the spark was fanned to a glowing tip which slowly ascended the length of fuse.

"Back," said Verneuil.

A safe distance from the charge, he spoke rapidly to the man nearest him, who transmitted his words along the line:

"*Tirailleurs*, you saw your lieutenant killed. Before this night I have said: 'Spare those who can fight no longer.' Now I say: 'Kill, kill—' "

He faced the gate in time to see the explosion. A sheet of flame cut through the night, and the dull detonation resounded. Around the *tirailleurs*, stones and pieces of wood rained for a second. The tomtom within the town ceased abruptly, and an immense cry went up.

"*Vingt dieux!* Charge!"

Verneuil rushed for the shattered gate. Behind him, with a single surge, regulars, auxiliaries and armed bearers leaped. Beyond the gate a narrow street yawned between two rows of mud houses pierced with small doors. In the middle of this lane, a lone man stood bewildered, loaded gun forgotten in limp hands. Verneuil plunged his sword into his chest, hurdled his falling body and disengaged his sword with a twist.

"You bearers," he shouted, "clean up the houses. *Tirailleurs*, after me!"

He ran on. Behind him, the bearers, recently elevated to the ranks of combatants, threw themselves upon the doors, ripped them from the hinges. In the narrow earthen stairs leading to the terraces, they plunged. The occupants met them, and fought desperately, knowing that they could expect no mercy.

Verneuil reached the center of the town, where the dance had been held after the rain. Before him and his men, a confusion of white garbed figures swarmed, the presumed defenders of Waghadugu, who had allowed themselves to be caught off guard, trusting that the French would not dare resume their advance until daylight. The first volley took whatever spirit was left them.

There was an irresolute stand. Then the bayonets came into play. Packed tightly, stupid as sheep, the Moshis were herded before the swooping blades. Verneuil, finding his sword broken, threw the hilt away, and picked up a trade musket. Holding the heavy barrel, he swung the butt in a swift arc. The wood soon shattered, but the barrel, thick as a crowbar, proved a better weapon.

The *tirailleurs* killed as they willed. Throughout the rush from the north to the south of Waghadugu, not one of them was so much as wounded. Near the southern gate, however, a reflux of men warned the captain that Konate and his riders had been seen. Feeling themselves cornered, the Moshis might fight desperately.

"Sections—halt! Form ranks! Volley—fire!" Verneuil's stentorian shouts dominated the tumult.

So perfect was his control that the *tirailleurs* abandoned the exhilarating killing with the steel, and formed lines, opened fire. At short range, the Gras, '74 model, will go through four men with ease. Every shot took full effect.

Between the bayonets and the sabers, the Moshis had hesitated. The volleys poured into them solved the dilemma. They fled, from the town into the open. Konate, instead of spreading his riders out net-fashion, charged in solid formation, with the result that many of the fleeing natives gained the bush.

Verneuil reentered the town.

Everywhere the bearers were pillaging. The armed members had been joined by the others. Verneuil, appalled, ordered Keita to halt them, but it was already too late.

Fires had been started, and blown by the wind from hut to hut, were blazing high. Verneuil ordered that the women and children be spared, and gathered in the central place. The streets were soon filled with a procession of women of all ages, many with tiny babies astride their hips, others leading older children in a squealing herd. They were passive, frightened, and their faces bore the imprint of dumb submission.

War in the Sudan is a savage occupation, and these women had seen worse. The taking of Waghadugu, bloody as it seemed to Verneuil, was part of their life. Samory and other black conquerors did not spare women and children, but usually englobed the whole population in extermination. When they understood that Verneuil was saving them, many, as they passed, touched his hand, his sleeve, in gratitude.

When the next sun rose, Waghadugu was only a skeleton of a town.

The next three weeks were a nightmare of action, of marching and countermarching. Twenty-one days in which Verneuil and his

men covered seven hundred miles over muddy trails, in the heat of the sun and under the downpour of the tornadoes. Twenty-one days, during which the Mossi Mission had fought no less than seventeen engagements, four of them pitched battles.

Verneuil's metal cot had been broken in one of the quick departures in the dead of night, and he slept on his blankets, fully dressed. His razor and brushes had been lost. He had not shaved in weeks. A stubble of white blond hair two inches long bristled on his cheeks and chin. The mud from the trails was on his face. His uniform was in rags. The braid from one of his sleeves had been torn off, and that on the other arm was tarnished, green. Lines seamed his face, deep lines.

His men were even worse off, especially the *tirailleurs*, who walked while he rode. Their uniforms had long ago completely disappeared, left behind on the thorny bushes of the paths. They were attired in *gandouras* and loin cloths. Only the *chechias* and the belting were left to differentiate them from other blacks.

Gourounsi was almost pacified. Verneuil had taken the side of Hamadiah, rightful leader of the land, against Babato, who was now in flight toward Kong. But, through it all, Verneuil could not banish the vision of that trampled rectangle under the *baobab*-tree. It was a recurring thought, as the motive in a musical composition, or the undertow of the surf.

Then, more than ever before he wanted to succeed in his mission, he wanted to find Sukule, the murderer. His victories were empty for him. The former satisfaction of achievement was gone. A sort of a feverish impulse constantly drove him, even in battle, to pause and scan the natives, hoping to see the smiling face of the Bird-Man.

One night, he called the evening halt in a village, the name of which he did not know, somewhere north of the Kassini River, which separates Mossi from Gourounsi. He slept heavily. But, as so many times, he was awakened very soon. The sentry outside the abandoned hut where he had spread his blankets, was arguing with some one, who insisted on entering.

"Captain's asleep—wait until morning——"

"Now! I can not wait."

Verneuil recognized Konate's voice. He rose wearily.

"Let him in," he called out. And Konate hurried to him.

"Venilli, Venilli," he panted; "a runner from a border chief to Bokary has been caught. The Englishmen are coming."

Verneuil reached for his boots. He was too tired to curse.

"Get the men up, Konate."

Uncomplaining, the *tirailleurs* formed ranks.

"Whom we go fight this time?" one asked another.

"Englishmen," came the reply.

True, reasoned Verneuil, a night march usually meant a fight in the morning. It had been so for many days. The *tirailleurs* had fought a dozen different races, and thought all men their enemies. This was a dangerous frame of mind. A hasty finger on a trigger might cause trouble.

"English are white men. No fight," he warned.

The village was left behind.

Verneuil hoped to head off the British force before they broke camp in the morning. His calculation was correct. In the pale light of early dawn, he perceived regular rows of dying fires, and the glinting of sentries' bayonets.

Only negroes in white men's pay possessed bayonets.

"Who goes there?"

"A French officer," Verneuil replied in English.

The sentry, a muscular fellow in a well fitted khaki uniform agleam with brass ornaments, was manifestly doubtful.

Realizing the man's perturbation, Verneuil helped him out—

"Call your sergeant."

The sentry obeyed, and another negro, much chevroned, even better attired than the first, from boots to round skull cap, came leisurely down the aisle between the fires.

"I'm a French captain," Verneuil informed the new arrival, "and I wish to speak to your commander."

"Yes, sir. Captain Sanders is in command. If you will wait, I will call him at once."

The sergeant saluted, and walked smartly toward the two tents, which were erected in the center of the camp, and separated from the men's fires by twenty feet of clear soil.

Verneuil, with professional interest, examined the orderly camp, admired the

uniforms of the privates. He did not compare them with his own men as they now appeared, but rather did he imagine them in their best uniforms. The West Indians' uniforms were more practical, with many pockets, instead of the baggy garments and makeshift trousers. Several of the *tirailleurs* had drawn near, leaving their rifles behind. They were frankly envious. And the Britishers were as frankly scornful of the newcomers.

But if he had any fear that his men would prefer to serve under another flag, he was soon set at peace by Samba, who voiced the general opinion.

"English give blacks fine trousers," he admitted, "but Venilli give plenty fighting."

Another cause for speculation among the Bambaras was the fact that they could not engage in conversation with the West Indians in any tongue of the Sudan.

"Don't talk French, no savvy black man's tongue. Where they come from?"

Presently a white man approached, lanky, rawboned, with a clean shaven face, and resolute gray eyes.

Verneuil dismounted, offered his hand.

"Captain Sanders? I am Captain Verneuil, First Sudanese *tirailleurs*, commanding Mossi Mission," he introduced himself.

"Very glad to know you, Captain Verneuil," replied the other, shaking the Frenchman's hand cordially. "Your arrival was signaled a few minutes ago."

Verneuil smiled apologetically:

"My duty is to inform you, Captain Sanders, that you are within French territory."

"We'll have a chat about it," suggested Sanders. "I'm having breakfast. Will you join me?"

Verneuil brought his hand to the visor of his battered helmet—

"I am honored, Captain Sanders."

A folding table was erected before Sanders' tent. And Verneuil partook of the best meal he had tasted since coming east of the Niger — canned sausages, eggs, jam, fresh bread, and cold beer, cold by some miracle of Anglo-Saxon ingenuity. He then lighted a Jamaica cigar, and smoked as Sanders unfolded a map.

"We're at this point, Captain. Right?"

Verneuil nodded.

"The last convention," Sanders went on, "marks your limit of extension as running from Say to Barroua, doesn't it? Well, I am south of the line."

"The convention," Verneuil objected courteously, "also agreed that your limit of extension was about eleven degrees north. The territory between your line and ours remained to be occupied. I have occupied it. If you intended to proceed as far as Waghadugu, Captain, I am able to spare you the journey. Waghadugu is occupied and held by a *naba* with whom I have signed a treaty, a valid treaty this time. Mossi and Gourounsi can give evidence of effective military occupation."

Sanders looked steadily at Verneuil, then offered his hand.

"Congratulations, Captain Verneuil." After a brief pause, he added—

"I received my orders too late."

"Fortunately for me," the Frenchman admitted.

"So much for Mossi and Gourounsi. But, as for this place, I arrived here first, and I believe it is an open question whether this particular district belongs to Mossi, or Gourma. The best thing to do is to report facts as they are, and let the diplomats settle it."

"Entirely my opinion," accepted Verneuil.

"I could stay here and hold the place until the agreement has been reached. But I have many sick men, and would like to return to Oua, where I can find a doctor."

"I give you my word that I will not try to extend my holdings in this direction if you go. I found you here, and will say so." Verneuil added, as an afterthought: "Recall, Captain Sanders, that I am a soldier and not a diplomat."

"There is no mistaking your trade, Captain Verneuil," Sanders said, with subtle praise.

"Sorry I can't return your invitation, Captain Sanders," Verneuil deplored, as he rose to go, "but all I have is rice—and game."

Sanders waved the apology aside.

"If you'll allow me," he offered, "I will send you a few things; potted ham, chicken, tinned meats, you know."

Verneuil was too tempted even for polite protest.

"Thank you," he said simply.

As he rode toward his camp, the captain felt more cheerful than he had for quite a time. The good food, the change from tepid filtered water, the cigar, most of all conversation with a white man, contributed to his new attitude.

The interview with Sanders had been most amiable. Once again, Verneuil had found that controversy between governments altered nothing in the relations of the individuals.

He compared Sanders' well-equipped force with his own, less than three hundred to conquer two valuable provinces. Had Mossi-Gourounsi been of as primordial importance to Britain as it was to France, he felt certain that Sanders would have had enough men to do the thing properly. France lacked foresight, but had men. Britain had both foresight and men, a different type from Verneuil's, but quite as capable.

Immediately upon entering his camp, he was approached by Konate. The worried expression of the black's face foretold more trouble. Konate was decidedly a bearer of evil tidings.

"What's wrong now, Konate?"

"Keita," replied the Spahi, "Keita has gone into the Englishman's camp — and taken a man away. Their blacks are very angry."

"Thunder!" Verneuil muttered, and went forth to investigate.

A group of five or six men stood about some one, who lay on the ground, tied hand and foot. In this group was Keita.

"Nene'a Keita," challenged Verneuil, "What in —— have you been doing?"

To his surprize, Keita attempted no explanation, but taking his hand, drew him closer to his prisoner. Verneuil looked down into the man's face.

It was Sukule, the Bird-Man.

"FREE his feet," Verneuil ordered.

The rope around his ankles severed, Sukule was dragged to his feet. Seeing him closely for the first time, Verneuil understood why he was called the Bird-Man. Sukule, long legged, and long necked, resembled a wading bird.

The man who had killed Guépard had no illusion about his fate. He lowered his eyes before Verneuil's glare, and his face turned gray. He shivered from head to foot.

"Sukule, we meet again; I'm alive," Verneuil pronounced. "But the other white man is dead. Dost thou know who slew him?"

"No, master," Sukule replied, without opening his eyes.

"Think well, Sukule, and know that my friend was not dead when I reached his side."

"Then, why speak idly, master?" Sukule demanded.

"Why didst thou shoot my friend? He had spared thy life, left thee behind him, unhurt."

"It was thus," explained Sukule, "the Moshis did not want to fight longer, saying Allah protected both white men. I wanted the Moshis to know they were wrong. I loaded the pistol with a slug, watched my chance, and fired. He fell!"

"Now, thou wilt be killed, Sukule," Verneuil said.

"It is just, that I be killed: I have killed. It is not my fault that since the beginning I was meant to kill thy friend, master. When my mother bore me, it already was written that I should. It may be written that thou wilt kill me. I fear to die—though I am a Moslem. In that my real shame lies. Shoot quickly, and be done. I have said."

Verneuil thought of Guépard, of the cloth over his face, stained where it touched the lips by a pink stain. He would have reached for the revolver at his belt, had not Konate stayed him with a quick gesture.

"Englishman," he said.

Followed by a half-dozen armed soldiers, Sanders had in fact entered the French camp. When Verneuil faced him, he perceived a marked difference, a certain tenseness around the man's mouth.

"What the —— —— are you men about, Captain Verneuil?"

"Sanders, you keep out of this," Verneuil said, shortly. "I want this man for murder."

Sanders smiled coldly, brushed him aside, and walked toward Sukule. Verneuil saw that the Englishman was determined. He also noticed that Keita and his men had quietly picked up their rifles and were watching the armed West Indians with little amenity.

Verneuil grasped Sanders' elbow.

"Just a minute, Sanders," he protested. "Let me explain."

He related briefly the reason for Sukule's arrest. Sanders did not appear impressed.

"I don't doubt you a bit, Captain," he declared, "but Sukule is a British subject, and was taken in my camp. He is my guide."

"Your guide!"

"He joined me a few days ago in the Gold Coast."

"That doesn't change the fact that he was arrested on French territory, and he will be shot here," asserted Verneuil. He pleaded, in an undertone: "For God's sake, Sanders, tell your men to drop their guns. My *tirailleurs* are pretty restless."

Sanders gave a brief order.

"Now," he replied, "I have no intention of offending you. Personally, I don't care for the —— nigger. But this is not yet French territory, and I'm responsible for my men. I'll put him under arrest and he'll be tried."

"And acquitted——"

"Not if you can prove what you say. You should know that an English Court of Law is just."

"That's just it," Verneuil pointed out: "Unless you take as proof my statement, there is no evidence. I have my friend's words, and even I couldn't swear that it was Sukule running. He made a confession just a minute ago, before my men, but——"

"We'll see. In the meanwhile, I must take him back."

Sanders laid a friendly hand on Verneuil's shoulder.

"I understand the way you feel, Verneuil. Remember also what position I am in. I cannot allow you to shoot a British subject, can I? That would get us all in an awful mess, old man."

For the first time, Verneuil was faced by the conflict of personal interest with duty. He had strict orders to avoid dispute with the English. A whole paragraph of his instructions had been devoted to that question, and he had been picked out partly for his knowledge of English, and his reported understanding of the race with which he was possibly to be brought in contact.

Sanders was right, and would go any length to take back Sukule. Verneuil had no doubt about the result of an encounter between his men and the British. His *tirailleurs* were veterans by now. But the first shot fired, nothing could prevent a catastrophe.

He glanced at Sukule, who was torn between hope and fear. Verneuil's hands quivered now, his face was white with repressed rage. Sanders, silent, was waiting for his decision. The Frenchman indicated the Bird-Man.

"Take him away."

Sanders faced him mutely, reached for his hand. Then he turned to the sergeant with him.

"Untie his hands."

Verneuil, feeling the surprized eyes of the *tirailleurs* upon him, strove for calm, and presented a peaceful countenance. With trembling fingers he lighted a cigaret.

Then, fascinated, his glance sought Sukule.

The Bird-Man had fully recovered, and again the thin smile played on his lips. Sukule, who had murdered Guépard, was walking away.

"Come on, then, you —— nigger," urged Sanders.

Sukule, leisurely, followed the soldiers who had rescued him. His majestic stride, his attitude was provoking. Verneuil dug his nails into his palms.

"I'll be here until morning, Verneuil," Sanders invited. "We'll make out the necessary papers. Need reports and that sort of thing, you know."

The incident, during which they had so nearly clashed, had brought the white men strangely close together. For, while Verneuil was thinking, Sanders had been, as well.

"All right, Sanders, take him away," Verneuil's voice, even to his own ears, sounded queerly. He was forcing himself to speak against all instinct.

A shot. Sukule fell. For a moment, no one moved, no one spoke.

Nene'a Keita threw down his rifle and folded his arms. The West Indians recovering from their surprize, made as if to rush the sergeant and seize him, but Sanders halted them with a word. Verneuil, dumfounded, bent, and turned Sukule upon his back. The top of the face was a bloody mass, but the lips still smiled, the enigmatic smile.

Keita had killed him.

"HE'S dead all right," Verneuil announced, looking up into Sanders' face.

"Small loss," Sanders replied, calmly.

Verneuil hid his shaking hands in his pockets and asked—

"Well?"

"Well," the Englishman repeated, "well——"

"That settles the matter, it seems," Verneuil remarked.

"Sukule's palaver is over," agreed Sanders, "but what about your man?"

"My sergeant," Verneuil was bewildered.

What of Keita? What could be said to him? What would be done with him?

Sanders laughed shortly.

"It is my turn, Verneuil, to ask you for a man. I want the man who shot Sukule. Not that I blame him, you know, but it's my duty."

"And, it's my turn to say: Keita is my sergeant, and I will not allow you to take him. He'll be tried by a French Court."

"With this difference," Sanders pointed out, "that my men and I, and yourself, have all seen the act."

"In any case, Sanders, the shooting took place in my camp. Keita will be tried, if advisable. You can make out your report, I'll make mine."

Sanders indicated the negroes about them:

"We can't talk here. There is no sense risking another shot. I believe there's been enough of a mess to satisfy anybody."

"Right. We must not let ourselves be stampeded into a hasty decision," agreed Verneuil. "Just now, I am as you are, not quite coherent. Suppose I drop in tonight, or tomorrow before you go and we'll match our reports. It'll be bad enough without a quarrel between us."

Sanders nodded, and turned to go.

Verneuil touched Sukule's body with the toe of his boot.

"Do you want *that?*" he asked, "or shall I take care of it?"

Sanders ordered the men with him to pick up the dead man, to be taken to the English lines.

Verneuil watched the procession crossing the low bush, toward the encampment, a half mile away.

SAMBA, legs apart, shouting his new song, in the center of an interested circle of listeners.

"By the fire sits Venilli, our white chief,
Who has the eye and the ear of the master of *tirailleurs*.
Keita has killed, for the quarrel was his,
And Keita is *M'pha* man."

Verses had followed each other, picking up in detail the departure from Bandiagara, the combat against Bilali, the escape in the rain, and the death of the lieutenant, the revenge by Keita.

In the crude tent manufactured from three poles and a tarpaulin, Verneuil sat on a packing case. He had sent for Keita. The Bambara squatted by his side.

"Thou canst smoke, Keita," permitted Verneuil.

Keita brought up his short stemmed clay bowl from a fold of his loin cloth, picked a coal from the fire in his horny palm, and puffed contentedly.

Verneuil, who had been thinking all the afternoon, and into the evening, began:

"Nene'a Keita, I have known thee since thou first came into the *tirailleurs*, long years ago. Between us, a white man and a black man, there need be no hidden thoughts. We have fought like the two hands of one man, and I know that thou hast trust in me, as I have in thee."

"Yes, *m'pha*."

"For the time, let thy tongue run. There is a time for silence, and a time for speech, Keita. Tell why thou didst kill Sukule, after I had allowed him to go free. Do not say that thou couldst not understand what I was saying. It was plain that I had listened to the other white man's words, and found them worthy."

Keita laid his pipe on the ground.

"*M'pha*, for I will call thee as we blacks all name thee among ourselves, we truly have lived long together. Even when thou wert back in thy country, over the wide sea, Keita had but one master, among white men or black, thou. My face is black, my hands are black, but look into my heart: It is white. The little lieutenant, the *spahi*, thou didst love even more than thou dost love me. I know, and say: It is right. He was slain. And I saw thee, who art a strong man, running madly in the sun, with the damp of sorrow showing plain."

Verneuil nodded.

"For many nights, when thou wert seated by the fire, I watched thee, thou who wert thinking thoughts that are no good to think. It was as if thy liver had been torn from thy belly. We fought, we won. Never, as formerly, didst thou say: Keita it was a good fight. No speech was heard from thee, no laughter. I knew that sorrow was aching."

"It was, Keita."

"When thou wert speaking with the Englishman in his camp, I saw Sukule, within his lines, and into my head came the knowledge: If *m'pha* washes his hands in

Sukule's blood, it will wash the grief from his heart. I therefore took Sukule. The soldiers of the Englishmen looked on, spoke, but did nothing. It was good for them that they stayed quiet, or I would have killed.

"After thou hadst spoken to Sukule, and wert about to kill him, as he had killed the little white man, many days ago, the Englishman came. He spoke, and his words were words that were heard by the head, and not by the heart."

"Yes, Keita. My head understood, my heart did not."

"I savvy. Sukule was going away. Never again would we see him. And thou wert thinking of thy little white man, who was long dead. Keita he is black, and does not understand words that are spoken to white heads. But he knows a white heart. I know well that, for what I did, I will pay." Keita toyed with the pagan amulets strung about his neck. "In spite of these, for never did black's *grigris* protect from white man's law. But the rifle was in my hand, Sukule was there, and thou, *m'pha*——"

"And I dare not obey my heart," Verneuil concluded.

"Perhaps, Keita will be shot, perhaps he will make roads, for moons without count. But Sukule will be dead, and *m'pha* will be happy again, for he can say to lieutenant, 'Blood calls for blood. The call is answered.' "

Verneuil assented gravely.

"The call has been answered, Keita. Be at peace."

Keita rose, saluted, and left.

Before Verneuil the situation in its bare outlines presented itself with startling clarity: A man, a guide, had been taken from a British camp and killed by a sergeant of *tirailleurs*. What the captain might say would count for little. Of course men in the Sudan would believe him, understand, as Sanders had understood. But the question would not be debated between colonials. The British government would present a formal protest, demanding satisfaction. The press in Europe would take up the question.

Probably, Sukule would be extolled as a heroic black man, defending his home, shooting a white invader. For those who would speak would not know that Sukule was far from his home land. Mossi and Sierra Leone seemed very near together, from Europe.

There existed in France a strong element, who regarded colonial expansion as useless, and the men taking part in it as professional killers. This element was represented in the Chambers, and would demand justice, as they saw it. Keita would be made the scapegoat for the antipathy of these people, for everything concerning African conquest. They would seize greedily on the incident.

"He fired the shot, and Sukule died.
For him who has the eye and the ear of the master,
For the revenge was his,
And Keita was his man."

Prompted by Samba's song, a thought occurred to Verneuil: When Keita was punished, what would the *tirailleurs* think? Something would occur in their primitive minds, minds that did not reason, could not grasp why, in the name of International understanding, a right must at times be called a wrong and punished.

Their trust in him would depart. And not trusting him, whom they considered as a model white man, they would not trust others. Every officer in the Sudan was but a stone in an edifice existing only thanks to the *tirailleurs*' and *spahis*' devotion. Verneuil could not recall that any Frenchman had ever failed his men.

Would he be the first?

He would, if he allowed Keita to be convicted. But if he said that Keita had but obeyed his orders, he would call upon himself the reprobation of his government. The task that he had accomplished would be disregarded, and only one thing would be known of him: He had ordered a British subject shot. The horror of Waghadugu would be brought out, laid to him, no one would investigate his reasons.

He did not have to fear trial. The French government would merely remove him from command in the Sudan, transfer him from the colonial army to the metropolitan forces, with an official blame. He would vegetate in a small garrison, with the reading of newspapers and the training of recruits to while his life away. He would leave behind his *tirailleurs*. He, who had been in the thickest of action, would not see the epilog of the giant work: The capture or killing of Samory, the progress to Lake Chad.

It was hard to give up all that. It was more bitter than a swift death, this gradual sinking into a commonplace background, after having known the Sudan.

But Keita had taken up his quarrel. Could he abandon Keita? Verneuil was just. His decision was made. He would go to Sanders, and tell him that Keita had acted under his captain's orders.

Doing this, he signed his recall from the Sudan.

THE next morning, Sanders left. And Verneuil sprang into his task once more.

It was several days later the report reached him of another column, led by several white men, arriving from the south east. Verneuil, thinking it was the German Mission, under Von Karnap, set out to meet it.

He was greeted by the sound of a familiar bugle call, and encountered other Frenchmen. It was the column from Dahomey, arriving at last, to do what he had done. Verneuil, immediately, informed the major in command of the Sukule incident, gave his reasons for taking the blame. Several of the officers present declared that he took natives too seriously, but the major indorsed the "White Elephant's" action. But he also declared himself certain that it could have but one result; Verneuil's recall, and an official blame.

The captain's *tirailleurs* gathered that Verneuil would not be with them very long, and tried in awkward ways to show their affection. They brought him various gifts, most of them puerile to a white man, but of great value to them. Verneuil was thus compelled to accept a mouth-organ, and five sewing thimbles linked together into a necklace.

The Dahomey Mission went ahead into Mossi-Gourounsi, leaving Verneuil near the Gold Coast frontier, to recuperate. It was obvious that his men could not carry on longer.

Then the Oua catastrophe occurred. Saranke Mory, with the bulk of Bilali's warriors joined to his men, attacked the English, following a vague dispute. The British were compelled to retreat, and abandoned within the town two cannon. From their commander, came a request for permission to retreat to French soil, as he was in danger of massacre. Verneuil not only granted the permission, but went to the white men's help, created a diversion. His men, thinking that it would prove their last chance to perform before him, were superb.

"This," thought Verneuil, "is the swan's song."

With the British safe, he settled down, and waited for the expected recall. Instead, official recognition came from the Governor of the Gold Coast for his prompt action, together with many letters of thanks from private sources.

The Sukule matter was not mentioned again, until Verneuil and Sanders met, a few months later. Each was a member of the International Commission to define the new boundaries between the Gold Coast and Mossi-Gourounsi.

The British members having come north to Waghadugu to meet the French, Verneuil and Sanders naturally became fast companions. On a certain afternoon, Verneuil dismounted before a tiny monument of white stone. Sanders, respectfully, lifted his helmet.

"Pierre Guépard, lieutenant," he broke off. "Did you know him?" he asked.

"Yes," said Verneuil. He was silent. Then he asked abruptly: "Whatever happened to that report?"

Sanders pursed his lips, wrinkled his brows.

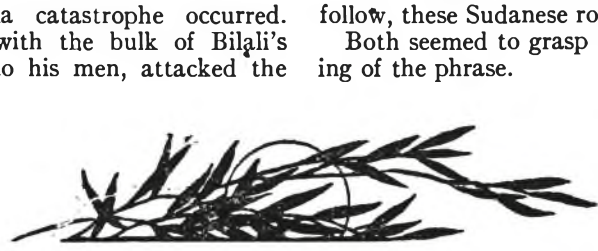
"A report. Oh, that Sukule palaver. I'll tell you, old man, to the best of my knowledge, it was lost somewhere, after that Oua mess."

"Queer——"

"Quite. I sent it in. But, in the meanwhile, the trails had been tangled. I suppose some one took the right fork."

"Yes. Too intricate for white men to follow, these Sudanese roads, eh?"

Both seemed to grasp the obscure meaning of the phrase.



The Homesteaders

A FIVE-PART STORY — CONCLUSION

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Iroquois! Iroquois!" "Rifle Rule," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

ALONZO FALL and his wife with their children, Murray and Alice, started homesteading in Blue Earth County, Minn., in the Autumn of 1859, that then being the jumping-off place. Their neighbors—each two or three miles away—were the Cray family and old Peter Clush, the latter a retired army man. Out of the tall wild grass came "Mad Martha," whose parents had been murdered by Indians near Sauk Center on the old Red River Trail nearly a score of years back. Her great problem in life was to learn whether the murderers were Sioux or Chippewas. The bow and quiver of arrows that she carried indicated what she would do when she found out. The Indians feared her as being both "mad" and as being a medicine woman.

Other friends were Papa Baptiste, who avoided Mad Martha; also "Codfish" Billings and old man Pollacker with his hard-drinking sons, Bert and Ed. The Pollackers were suspected of selling whisky to the Indians.

In the spring of sixty-one there was more excitement locally over finding the body of a murdered white stranger than there was over the fall of Fort Sumter. Martha asserted, "No Injun did it."

A year later old man Pollacker was so badly gored by his bull that he died. Murray Fall set out to kill the brute. When he came up to it he saw it pursuing a blanket Indian. Before he could shoot, three white horsemen appeared, firing at the Indian. Murray shot at the bull, which whirled on the three pursuers, thereby giving the Indian a chance to escape. As he passed he tossed the white youth a medicine crowskin. By the skunkskins wrapped around both wrists Murray recognized him as Little Crow, a chief of the Mdewakanton Sioux. Murray pinned the crowskin to his shirt.

The other three whites killed the bull, though one of them, a man named Bisen, was wounded in the affray. The other two, whom Murray heard called "Archie" and "Mart," explained that the Indian had tried to steal their horses.

The Falls took Bisen into their home till he got well. Two days after he left, a posse drew up and announced that they were after Bisen and his pals for horse-thievery.

"SHANTY MOSE" worked for the Crays, and Abner Page was the Falls' hired man. They were always at swords' points, for each was a tall talker, Mose's specialty being bragging about the days when he was a great man in the lumber camps, while Page got colorful over his experience in former years as a pilot on the St. Croix and the Mississippi. Phil White, the Pollackers hired man, had nothing much to say.

"Blue Earth country is a mighty good place to come," Mose remarked of Page, "*if he wants to hide.*"

ON THE pretext that he wanted to get a job from Joseph DeCamp, who ran the sawmill at the Redwood, or lower agency, Fall took his family on a semi-vacation trip to the reservation, leaving his wife and daughter boarding at New Ulm on the way. Arriving at the mill, they found that De Camp had gone to the upper agency, thirty miles farther along, to help the Indians spend the summer gold which the Government gave them in return for the cession of certain lands. Fall gravely decided to continue his make-believe errand thither.

On the way a negro named Godfrey who had thrown in with the Indians tried to rob Murray of his rifle. Murray was protected by Little Crow, who saw the medicine crowskin he had given the white youth.

When the party reached the upper agency they found the Indians wrathy because the summer

money had not arrived. However, they soon had something new to think about, for some white men had run off Little Crow's ponies from his village on the Redwood. A posse of civilian volunteers was made up to recover the stock and thus prove the white man's good faith. The party consisted of Clush, Page, Murray and two others. As they set out Mr. Fall with many misgiving started back for New Ulm without remembering to complete his "errand" of finding DeCamp.

The posse had not gone far before they saw a man wrapped in a green blanket dash by on horseback.

"Sioux don't wear green blankets except when they're dead," remarked Clush.

A little later they found a murdered Indian with the neck of an empty whisky bottle tied to his left wrist.

"There you have it!" cried Page. "White man robbed an Indian burial scaffold of a green blanket. He took it because it was new. Then he rode down here and murdered a blanket Indian who'd stolen a bottle of whisky from his whisky-cart. We'll follow that cart trail and find the man who did the killing. It won't take us away from chasing horse thieves as it leads south."

Soon the wheel tracks gave evidence that the wagon had been unloaded. Indications pointed to the conclusion that the load of whisky had been cached in a near-by burial scaffold of the Sioux—a safe hiding place, inasmuch as whites seldom passed near them, while the Indians kept strictly away.

"Whisky can't run away," Clush reminded them. "More to the point to find the men who left it there." So the posse pressed on without investigating further.

Just as they made camp that night Page announced that he'd "take a ride." In the middle of the prairie he was caught by a storm which forced him to take shelter in a sod hut, where he met a suspicious character calling himself Martin. On the pretext of getting him a drink, Martin caught Page off his guard, knocked him senseless and set fire to the hut. When he came to he was surrounded by his friends and Martin was gone.

"Feller with the green blanket did it," Page announced. "I found the blanket while he went out to the horse hovel for the whisky."

After giving Page a couple of days to recuperate they rode on to the little settlement of Fairmont. Here Murray was introduced by Clush to "Miss 'Lizabeth, Edgar Potter's gal. Mighty likely young woman too."

"In another month I'm going to visit Mattie Williams, who's coming to see her uncle, J. B. Reynolds," she told him. "The Reynoldses live near the lower agency. It doesn't seem as if the time would ever come."

In the middle of the night one Oaks with two companions came to town leading a string of horses destined for the Union army. When they tried to run off the posse's horses Page shot at them and brought one man down. To his horror he heard the fallen man scream.

"Good God! You wouldn't shoot me, Mart?"

A downward shot from the saddle and two men were galloping on, leaving a dead man behind them.

"The murdering——!" gasped Page. "Did it to keep him from blabbing."

Oaks and his companion got away, but were forced to leave the horses. Of these nine were recognized as horses stolen from Jackson men, and ten as ponies the Indians had lost. The posse's search was over.

When the dead man was buried, he was covered with a green blanket Oaks had given the Potter girl the day before.

"Oaks' real name must be Mart," commented Page.

"That's the name of one of the three men who were chasing Little Crow when Pollacker's bull was killed and the man called Bisen was hurt," addded Murray.

Page felt his head and grimly remarked:

"Not only a horse thief but also mixed up in smuggling rum on the reservation. He hustled the stolen ponies down Jackson way while his friends were getting rid of the cart and whisky."

THE trader Robinson Jones gave Mad Martha a cameo of her mother which he had received in trade for a bottle of whisky from an Indian named Man Who Crawls. In return she promised to find the Indian Brown Wing and demand from him the return of a gun which Jones had lent him. She trailed Man Who Crawls and found him boasting drunkenly of the killing of her parents, years before. When she left him he was dead with one arrow in the side and another through the throat. But before she killed him she learned that the only other survivor of the band of assassins was an Indian named One Ear.

The death of Man Who Crawls was attributed to the Chippewas, and his village held a dance against them. The dance was led by One Ear. It was at its climax, while he was facing the bush growth, both hands held high and head thrown back, his mouth gaping to sound the war cry, that a feathered arrow struck him below the left nipple and split his heart.

THOUGH the Indians knew that Mad Martha had done the killings, they held no grudge against her. However the outcome of Jones' attempt to get his gun back was the massacre of several whites, and the Sioux about the village immediately rose, soon to be joined by other bands. There followed a series of massacres which was to cost more than a thousand white lives. Although the blood-crazed redskins were bent on killing all the white people in the vicinity Murray went unharmed among them, being protected by the symbolic crow-skin which he wore on his breast.

By the aid of this medicine given him by Little Crow Murray saved the life of Shanty Mose when he was captured and brought to one of the Sioux camps to be killed. Little Crow then advised them to take shelter in a deserted cabin near the camp where they would be safe, under his protection, from the frenzied Indians. In the cabin they found Mrs. DeCamp and her children who had also been saved from the massacre by Little Crow.

The refugees in the hut were soon joined by Elizabeth Potter and several of her girl friends, all of whom had just escaped being murdered. One of the girls was badly wounded and soon died.

By some quick thinking and quicker acting Murray rescued the little band in the cabin from the renegade colored man, Godfrey, who attacked them in the company of some drunken Indians. Shanty Mose finally made good his escape and departed to warn the whites in neighboring villages of the coming of the Sioux; in so doing he killed one of his guards. The enraged Dakotas accused Murray of bringing

about the man's death but he was exonerated by Little Crow. Elizabeth Potter and Murray then succeeded in leaving the cabin unharmed and took the direction of a near-by settlement to carry the news of the uprising to their friends.

Finding a ruined house in their flight, they hid in it during a short thunderstorm. When Murray looked out of the window he saw a man approaching leading two horses. Kneeling on the floor, he raised his rifle to shoot.

THE grass swayed violently, and Mad Martha and Papa Baptiste appeared

"We must reach New Ulm," said Mad Martha, and they set forth. After a brisk skirmish with the Indians they dashed into the town safely. The defense, it appeared, was in charge of Judge E. Charles Flandrau. Men were set to patrolling the streets and scouting the outskirts of the town during the night. Women ran bullets all night. All were wondering how so slim a force and one so poorly armed could hold back Little Crow's many warriors.

There was much excitement when two covered wagons were sighted dashing toward the town with five blanketed Indians riding desperately to cut them off. For a background was a long line of Sioux racing to be in at the death. The five horsemen failed by a few rods of cutting in ahead of the galloping horses. Murray Fall and the other spectators screamed exultingly.

Then the five horsemen pivoted sharply. Riding low in the saddle, they overtook the hindmost wagon and enfiladed it with a volley. Without pausing they passed the leading wagon and raked it with a similar volley.

"Both drivers killed! Hosses bolted!" screamed a spectator as the wagons overturned.

Then came the surprize. From the wagons supposed to be filled with settlers, Sioux Indians in feathers and paint were frantically crawling. Those who survived the parting fusillade ran toward the onrushing horde coming up from the southeast.

And the five horsemen cast aside their blankets and became white men. As the first of the five men cantered up the slope Murray ran to meet him, his eyes blind with tears.

"Oh, Ed! Ed!" he sobbed. "That was wonderful!" It was Ed. Pollacker. Abner Page, Bert Pollacker, Shanty Mose and Phil White, the other "blanket Indians," came up and threw themselves on the ground, panting.

"Blankets too hot," puffed Mose. "Had to keep our heads covered so long."

At last came the day of the assault in force. Murray noted movements in the grass, where files of Sioux were crawling up the slope toward the town. Lifting his eyes, he saw a long line of horsemen advancing at a walk, the ends ahead of the middle and beginning to curve forward and inward.

A shrill cry was sounded from the middle of the line. Undoubtedly this was the signal for the men in the grass to rise, pour in a volley from their double-barrel shotguns and follow it up with a rapid advance, loading as they ran.

THE sound of the signal had barely passed away before two horsemen swept on the slope from the north end of the town and raced along the front of the men in the grass. Each man was over the side of his horse, Indian fashion, and as they rode each fired rapidly with a heavy revolver. Some of the Indians who had got to their feet fell forward on their faces. Others howled sharply, somewhat demoralized by the unexpected and audacious attack, and threw themselves flat.

Shotguns commenced roaring; but it was noticeable that most of the guns were discharged after the last horseman had passed the hidden marksman. When nearly abreast of the brick house the men wheeled and rode among Dodd's skirmishers, who covered their retreat with a smart volley. Although volleyed with bullets and buckshot the two men, Phil White and Bert Pollacker, by some miracle escaped unharmed.

Loud yells to the left of the brick house claimed the attention of the spectators, both white and red. This new alarm came just as the reckless riders were turning their backs on the Sioux and was doubtless responsible for so much lead going wild.

Two horsemen raced into view, repeating the maneuver from the lower end of the town. These were Abner Page and Ed Pollacker, superb in their folly; and, safe guarded in a measure by the bewilderment occasioned by the first brace of riders, they swept even closer to the hidden Indians than had their friends. Their fire, each using up two revolvers, was murderous, and the foremost Indians frantically endeavored to creep farther down the slope. Captain Dodd shouted a command, and his skirmishers began firing before the horsemen swerved up the slope toward the brick house.

Murray screamed as he saw Ed Pollacker's mount go down on his knees. But the next moment Ed was up and running for cover, his face twisted in a broad grin, one side of his head bloody where buckshot had scraped, or the rough fall had registered. Panting, yet trying to crow like a rooster, Ed flopped his arms, then dropped beside his brother and hurriedly reloaded his two guns.

To repeat the trick would have meant death before the four could gallop a rod along the hidden Indians.

"Darned foolish and reckless and not according to any military training I ever had," loudly condemned Peter Clush.

"Shut up!" thundered Shanty Mose. "Can't you see it's shook the Injuns' nerves? They thought we'd die in our tracks like sheep, but the first thing they know they have a fight carried to them."

Aside from the damage the four men inflicted—and their rapid fire found several victims—the bold act nonplused the Indians and made them suspicious while stiffening the courage of the besieged.

Peter Clush consulted his big silver watch and announced, "Ten o'clock."

"They're coming in earnest!" warned a skirmisher.

The line of mounted red men, which had come to a standstill under the surprize of the four men's attack, was again in motion. It moved slowly up the slope, the warriors shouting and firing on the skirmishers as they advanced. The Indians hiding in the grass formed on foot behind and between the horsemen as fast as the latter came up to them.

Flandrau took in the situation at a glance. With their great advantage of numbers giving them confidence the Sioux came on in a steady, determined manner. They were watchful for more of the white man's surprizes; yet they could not imagine the town resisting them. There was no fortification, nor heavy guns here. To Murray Fall the commander sharply ordered:

"Go and tell the men in the outside houses below the brick to fall back at once and fort themselves in houses just inside the grain stacks."

Turning to Clush, he ordered him to convey the same message to men in the houses above the brick. The veteran remonstrated—

"But the Injuns will enter the buildings and fort themselves."

"——, old man! That's what I want. This attack must be broken up or we'll be driven into the river."

VERY possibly this maneuver saved the town that day. The enemy's strength was variously estimated at from six hundred and fifty to eight hundred men. Captain Dodd's skirmishers fell back slowly and in good order. The little garrison in the brick house kept up a galling fire, and the attacking force threw the bulk of its weight below that building. Sheriff Boardman sent a runner from the center of the town, who reported to Flandrau—

"The Sioux are in the houses within a short distance of the Dakotah House."

"A good place for them. Go back and tell the men not to try to clear them out yet."

Murray now returned and said—

"The men have quit the exposed houses."

"Go back and fire the grain stacks. Be careful. The Indians are in the abandoned houses by this time. After firing the stacks return to the center of the town and help watch the river. They must be crossing from the north bank by this time."

Miss Martha came up as Flandrau gave the order. She at once attached herself to Murray. In her quiet voice she said—

"They will be in all the houses along the riverfront next."

"They are everywhere," groaned Murray. "All they have to do to finish us is to close in."

"But they don't like to close in," she softly reminded him. "See there!"

And she pointed to a house recently deserted by its defenders. Guns were flashing from the windows and firing on the town.

The red attack thus far had lost its force by the first lines taking to cover. It was something like a huge wave shattering itself on a breakwater, the empty houses being the barrier. Had the Sioux kept out of the houses they could have swept over the town by the weight of numbers. Miss Martha was quick to detect the faults of the attack.

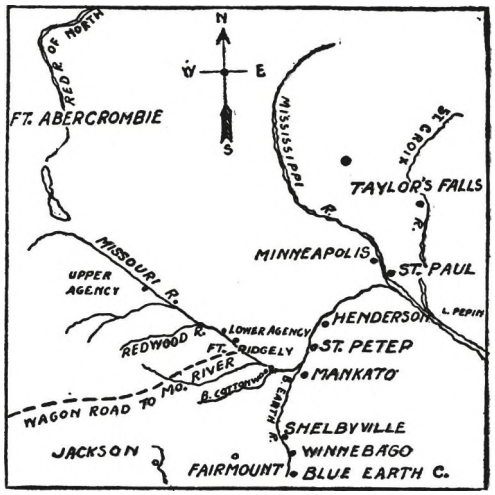
"They should have set fire to those houses instead of entering them, and then rush through the town under the smoke. No! no!" The last as Murray prepared to fire the first stack. "We will begin at the lower end and return under cover of the smoke."

As they passed behind the first stack white men in a house on their left excitedly called out to them.

Miss Martha pointed to the nearest house held by the Sioux and gave a pantomime of firing a gun. The defenders at once understood her request and opened a lively fire on the hostile house. Under cover of this the two ran to the protection of the second stack. By repeating this maneuver they reached the next to the last stack, where Murray insisted Martha should remain until he returned. At first he feared she would refuse; then she agreed but insisted on changing the crowskin to his right sleeve. There was no house held by whites near this position.

Murray left his rifle, and, bending low, ran his best. If any shots were fired at him it was when he first showed himself. After that he did not hear the whistle of a single bullet.

His return promised to be more dangerous, for yells of rage broke from the hostile house as the smoke curled up from the



stack and the Sioux began to comprehend what the white boy and woman were doing. Taking advantage of the first heavy volume of smoke, Murray retreated safely to Martha's side. She was ready to fire the second stack the moment he arrived. They were invisible to the enemy when they fell back to the next stack. Above the shouting and shooting and the general confusion they could hear the whites in the nearby houses cheering roundly as the strategem became apparent.

By this time Dodd's skirmishers were inside the line held by the brick house, that structure being surrounded by Indians who were powerless to stop its plunging fire. Several exposed houses were fired by the Indians, and the smoke from these and the stacks spread a low yellowish canopy over white and red forces.

Understanding the red nature as he did, Flandrau knew that time was fighting for him. Could he hold out for the day the Sioux would be discouraged or believe their medicine was weak and would retire, even though knowing the town's defenders had been reduced to a very small number. Lacking the pertinacity of the white race, the Sioux must win in a rush or retire to seek easier game.

From Provost Marshal Buell, Flandrau received word that several houses along the riverfront were now held by the enemy.

"Be ready to fire the buildings when I send word. If they don't break through this line I'd rather have the ——s cooped up in houses than fighting in the streets. Tell Buell I'll be with him soon."

Captain Dodd came up and reported:

"I believe they are growing bolder, sir. Their mounted men are among the houses."

"They're growing desperate, not bolder," snapped Flandrau. "Hold this line as long as you can without being butchered. If they advance much farther we must drive them out at all costs. Don't take the initiative until so ordered. I'll be back soon."

With his presence demanded at several points of the fighting Flandrau hurried to Minnesota Street and ascertained the situation at the upper and lower barricades. Clush and others had driven the women indoors and induced them to keep flat on the floor to escape the bullets. Therefore Flandrau was surprized and annoyed to meet the Potter girl walking in the open street. Her face was pale and her eyes staring. In her two hands she was carrying the big revolver.

"Get to cover at once, miss," he sharply commanded. "Some man should have that gun. We have too few."

"Take it," she said. "I was keeping it to kill myself."

"There'll be no call for suicide," he sternly told her. "But keep the gun and use it to protect the women in the warehouse. Go in there at once. Tell the women the worst is over."

Fiercely determined to make good this optimistic message, he proceeded near the houses along the river bank. Several of these seemed to be filled with Indians. There was almost constant firing from the windows into the houses higher up the slope. All through the attack the Sioux were liberally supplied with ammunition, and one shotgun was worth half a dozen rifles in the confused fighting.

A hand touched his arm, and Papa Baptiste was bowing before him and saying:

"*M'sieur*, our commander. Please to be so good as to watch the two chimneys on the house ahead. Old Baptiste, the last of his race, is about to go into action."

Then the Red River driver darted into the nearest doorway and up to the attic window from which Murray had seen the smoke of Lafayette burning. Flandrau from a sheltered spot studied the river-front and endeavored to estimate the potential danger lurking in the several houses. So long as these Sioux remained indoors they would do but little damage. Were they reinforced or did they charge up the slope even in slender numbers the town would be between red pincers, and only a miracle could save the two thousand citizens and refugees. To burn the buildings was to risk setting fire to the heart of the town.

A sharp yelp from the peak of a house reminded him of Baptiste. A little window in the end of the house, up under the ridgepole, was all he could see. He shifted his gaze to the two chimneys Baptiste had specified.

From behind each chimney protruded the head and shoulders of a Sioux. They had emptied their guns several times without having their fire returned. They feared no danger. From their position they could see the smoke swirling above the doomed houses, the curling red flames and clouds of sparks. The exultant yells of their comrades came sweetly to their ears. Very soon, when the odds were further increased in their favor, they would descend and bound whooping to aid in exterminating the last of the defenders.

Then would follow the genial task of murdering the women and children. Godfrey, the colored man, had boasted in Little Crow's village of killing seventeen helpless ones in one day. Cut Nose had rivaled him in horrible coups. But never before had the northern Sioux—nor the western Sioux for that matter—been presented with such a rare opportunity for wholesale butchery. Refreshing themselves with such pleasant anticipations, the Sioux behind the chimneys ceased indiscriminate firing and watched to learn just when the red tide should overwhelmingly engulf the town.

The big revolving rifle began its loud explosions in the attic. At the first shot a Sioux slumped half over the ridgepole, his arms spread wide before him. The hole through the top of his head showed very plainly to Flandrau's approving eye.

Almost instantly the second sharpshooter gave a convulsive start, dropped his gun and stretched his head high. The third bullet caught him in the breast, but it was wasted. He was dead before he had been hit the second time. The remaining two shots were sent into an open window where several Sioux were stationed.

Baptiste limped painfully as he emerged from the rear door. He grimaced wofully as he rubbed his aching shoulder and reported:

"Each bullet was extreme torture, *m'sieur* our commander. I suffer more than the enemy. Should the Sioux capture this, extreme badness of all guns, they will make a prisoner shoot it and it will kick him to death."

"Baptiste, that was magnificent work. It was well worth waiting for!" cried Flandrau. "Would I had twenty marksmen like you and armed as you are! See how quiet those houses are now. They fear a trap. I'd wager if we could look beyond the houses we'd see some of the Sioux crossing to the north bank. Your post is along this line so long as the Indians show themselves."

"*M'sieur* is most polite. I stay. I shall be kicked to death, but not until both shoulders give out. If I see the fighting is near the middle of the town I may come?"

"You will come, for it will be all over; and it's best to die fighting."

EVEN as he talked the firing on the south side of the town increased in violence. New smoke was rising above the housetops. All evidences were suggesting the crisis. Flandrau rushed to the scene and found Dodd's skirmishers had been driven some distance from the brick house. Captain Dodd and not the enemy had set the fires so as to despoil the Sioux of additional cover.

Peter Clush had lost his rifle and was now armed with a long pole, tipped with the blade of a butcher knife. He advanced steadily into the smoke and suddenly found himself face to face with an Indian whose face was painted like a checkerboard, the squares being red and white. Without changing his stride the veteran pressed forward and spitted the man. Then he awkwardly scalped him, ignoring the howling and shooting all around him, limped back to Flandrau and querulously urged:

"If you'll git poles for the men and tie knife blades to 'em we can clean out these

rascals. They never could, and never will, stand up to cold steel."

And he threw the scalp on the ground and turned back to spear another victim.

Bert Pollacker broke through the smoke, his face blackened with power grime.

"They seem to be falling back, mister," he announced. "But me 'n' my friends think they're up to some new game."

"We'll welcome any new trick if they'll only give us a breathing spell!" cried Flandrau. "But the fighting seems as hot as ever."

"That's the front line making a noise to cover up their falling back," wearily explained Bert, his deep chest rising and falling like a smith's bellows. "I wouldn't be here chinning it if wa'n't so."

Captain Dodd called on his skirmishers to charge, and he led them as far as the brick house with the enemy giving ground rapidly, His men began cheering and only by the greatest exertion did he restrain them from chasing the Sioux out into the open. His stentorian voice kept warning:

"Come back here, you —— fools! They're trying to get you into an ambush. Come back here at once!"

This insistence finally halted the men. From an upper story of the brick house a defender yelled down to the captain:

"White men coming up the river road from the lower ferry. Injuns below the Dakotah House will bag 'em!"

When Dodd carried this news to Flandrau the latter cried:

"Huey's men coming back! The fight's won! But he mustn't be trapped!"

Dodd gave orders for his men to hold the line at the brick house and then hastened with his commander back to Minnesota Street. Shanty Mose at the lower barricade reported:

"There's fifty of them, coming in single file. There's the flag!"

They all saw it, a large American flag, and for a moment the danger of the reinforcements being ambushed was forgotten as the men cheered the colors.

"They're not Huey's men!" cried Dodd. "He had no flag with him. They're reinforcements from down the river. Good God! They'll walk right into the trap!"

This seemed very likely as the Sioux in the houses below the Dakotah House were no longer betraying their presence. Dodd called for volunteers to clear the enemy from the houses so the reinforcements might enter. The sudden withdrawal from the other side of the town was explained; the Sioux had abandoned that line of attack for the time being to ride around the south end of the town and close the trap once their companions in the houses drove the newcomers back with a murderous fire.

Shanty Mose and others readily responded. Dodd mounted a horse and yelled for the men to follow. They streamed out from behind the barrier after him.

Waving his hat to the long line down the road and hoarsely shouting a warning, Dodd galloped on, drawing ahead of his men. Disregarding the forted Indians and leaving their expulsion for the men on foot, he held to the road to meet the reinforcements and warn them of the danger of a rear attack.

He passed the first hostile house and was abreast of the second when guns began discharging at windows. Shot three times, he yet managed to wheel his mount about and ride back. As he did so the men behind the American flag began firing on him. Bewildered, the volunteers checked their advance, emptied their guns into the gaping windows, then turned and ran after their leader.

The horse fell dead before a log blacksmith shop, and Captain Dodd was carried inside to die of his wounds. Had the Indians in the houses held their fire until he and his men had advanced a few more rods all the volunteers undoubtedly would have been killed.

The men with the flag continued firing. Recovering from their astonishment, the volunteers fired on them furiously and put them to flight. But the flag and the civilian clothes the Sioux were wearing completely deceived the besieged long enough for a very brave man to be killed.

The effect of this trick greatly depressed the spirits of some defenders, while enraging others to the point of madness. At first it was supposed that each suit of white man's clothing represented a white man recently slain. Peter Clush exploded this belief by giving what later proved to be the truth. Nearly two years before the Federal Government had issued a hundred and fifty suits of clothes to those Indians who pledged themselves to become farmers and dress as did the white men. Much of this clothing had never been worn. As

for the flag, throughout the Sioux war many flags were carried, some being those received by chiefs while on a visit to Washington.

But there was no time now to grieve over Captain Dodd's death. The firing back of the town increased rapidly, and more smoke was rising from that line.

One of the skirmishers found Flandrau and cried:

"Tell Captain Dodd they mean to come through this time, sir. They're firing the buildings and attacking with all their men."

"Captain Dodd has been wounded. Return at once and tell the men I will lead them. Hold the line!"

Shanty Mose left the barricade and ran at Flandrau's heels. As they arrived in the danger zone Mose cried:

"They're inside the town! ——'s to pay!"

"We'll pay it with dead Sioux," roared Flandrau, his voice sounding surprizingly loud for a man of such a slight physique.

Some distance from the brick house he met the defenders slowly falling back.

"What the —— does this mean? Drive those Sioux back. Follow me!"

He snatched young Fall's rifle from his hand and dived into the thickest of the smoke and fighting. Sixty men endeavored to keep up with him. Papa Baptiste, long since tiring of the now quiet riverfront, sounded his Chippewa war-whoop and bounded along as if he were twenty instead of threescore years and ten. A hand fell on his shoulder, and he whirled belligerently to find that Martha was beside him.

The rush soon smashed against a hundred and twenty of the Sioux, and the fighting was wickedly sharp. A mixed-blood Indian leader was killed at the outset by a heavy ball from one of Phil White's guns, and his fall took some courage away from his followers. The Pollacker boys shouted madly, Ed's shrill, reckless laugh reaching Murray's ears. Young Fall had picked up two heavy stones and was striving to get near enough to damage a foe. The Pollacker brothers, Page, White and Shanty Mose were fighting as a unit, using their revolvers. But always in the lead was Flandrau, calling on his men to spread out.

The mass became a tight line. The men howled like wolves when they realized they had regained ground as far as the brick house. From this structure a hot fire was poured into the retreating Sioux as they split into two bands in passing the house.

Miss Martha was Mad Martha now in earnest. Her voice was no longer colorless but rang out in terrible shrieks as she shot her arrows at short range. Papa Baptiste, his big gun empty, stormed at her side and used the rifle as a club. And always was he shouting his Chippewa defiance. The butt of the gun was bloody. The blows the old man dealt were terrible. One Sioux who ducked a blow stayed his hand from killing Baptiste because of the fury in Mad Martha's face.

"The medicine woman!" he panted as he ran away.

Now all the enemy had been driven from the cover of the burning houses, driven beyond the brick house, and were breaking up in little groups as they reached the open slope. But two Sioux men delayed in escaping from the house where Murray Fall had done sentinel duty, burst through the smoke behind Mad Martha and Baptiste and emptied their guns at them. The woman fell. Baptiste, dying, staggered, then clubbed his rifle and shattered the head of one of the Indians. Bert Pollacker shot the other man and cursed him horribly after he was dead.

Baptiste slowly sat down beside the woman and in a croaking voice gave the Chippewa war-cry. Then he slowly settled down on his side. Ed Pollacker dropped on his knees beside Martha and seized her hands. The woman said:

"I heard a Chippewa cry. My old friend must be near."

Baptiste heard her and rolled over so he could see her face.

"Old Papa's voice, *m'm'selle*," he mumbled, bleeding from the mouth. "A bit of Chippewa on his grandmother's side, they say. I felt red blood working in me."

He became silent, staring intently at the pallid face. Martha released one hand, pressed it to the cameo and became very still. Ed Pollacker was softly sobbing. The firing was dropping now. The charge of sixty had put a hundred and twenty to flight and had taken the fighting heart out of nearly eight hundred warriors.

Murray kneeled beside Ed and faintly whispered—

"Is she badly hurt?"

"A bit of Chippewa, they say," muttered Papa Baptiste. "Behold! Here is a little girl walking down the trail. . . . It

is very light. . . . A little girl comes walking. . . . *Mon Dieu!* Whoever saw the shaded trail so light. . . . I can not hear the wolves. . . . Tell *m'm'selle* the Pembina trail is very light. And there are no wolves."

But *m'm'selle* already had found the bright trail Papa Baptiste was entering. Perhaps it was she he saw ahead of him.

CHAPTER XI

FIVE MEN GO RIDING

THE Sioux were slow to renew the attack on Sunday. The defenders were ready to fight for their lives early in the morning, but it was not until after Martha and Baptiste had been buried beside nine other victims that the fighting was resumed. The enemy lacked in confidence, and soon it became apparent that there would be no repetition of Saturday's ferocity.

The belief that the Winnebagoes had, or would, join the Sioux was now dispelled. Also it was plain that during the night several bands had departed. Those remaining were attacking so as to hold Flandrau's fighters in the town while the outlying hamlets were being plundered.

Instead of assailing the rear of the town the advance was made at the upper end, supported by a brisk fire along the river-front. A short distance from Minnesota Street the ground fell off abruptly to the river bottom. In the center of the town and along the edge of this little bluff the Sioux gained the rear of the frame buildings. Their fire, while not heavy, was at close range and galling.

Flandrau ordered these buildings to be burned, and once this was done the enemy rapidly fell back and crossed the river. From second-story windows and roof tops the defenders made the discovery that the entire force of the Sioux was withdrawing. Splitting up into small bands, the Indians rapidly scattered to the northwest and west to search for less expensive plunder.

Men at the lower barricade set up a hoarse shouting. Those on guard at other parts of the town at first feared that some new danger was threatening. But the shouting became a joyous cheering, and word was passed that more than a hundred volunteers were coming to town by way of the lower ferry. The reinforcements consisted of citizens from Sibley, Nicollet and Le Sueur Counties. They were led by Captain E. St. Julian Cox, of St. Peter, and they had been rushed to New Ulm by Colonel Henry Sibley, who was selected by Governor Ramsey to bring the hostiles to terms. With the volunteers marched the remainder of Lieutenant Huey's command.

It was a time for thanksgiving, and men and women who had braced themselves to die fighting suddenly gave way to hysterical joy. Yet had the Sioux renewed the siege with the fierceness that characterized Saturday's efforts the presence of the newcomers would not have added greatly to Flandrau's strength. Half of them were armed with Austrian or Belgian muskets which were virtually useless, although being the best Colonel Sibley could furnish. But the Indians had commenced to retreat before Captain Cox arrived; and never again were they to appear in force as far east as New Ulm.

It was the old story of the red man's futile endeavors to push back the border. Surprize attacks gave them initial successes; then white resistance took the offensive and settled the question for all time. But in fairness to the red combatants it must be remembered that the outbreak did not include all the bands of the Sisseton, Wahpeton, Wahpekute and the Mdwakanton tribes. Had the entire strength of the Minnesota Sioux been loosed against the frontier the Winnebagoes might have been brought in as allies, and in any event the history of the massacres would have been much longer.

The Blue Earth County men and the Potter girl from Martin County were impatient to start for home. Colonel Flandrau ordered the town to be evacuated on Monday. Dr. Daniels and others were for holding the place because of the moral effect such a defiance would have on the hostiles, and for the further reasons that the town was now stronger than ever and that the sanitary conditions were good.

He argued with much point that Colonel Sibley would come with, or send, more men, and that to march nearly two thousand persons thirty miles to St. Peter or Mankato would be exceedingly dangerous. The progress of the refugees must be slow, and much of the way would be through woods. It was also insisted that to abandon the town would mean overrunning a sister town, already

congested, and would add thirty more miles for fugitives from the west to travel.

Flandrau remained firm in his purpose. He declared that the volunteers came to New Ulm on one errand; to rescue the citizens and refugees. The impatience of men from Sibley, Nicollet and Le Sueur Counties to return and assure the safety of their own families was unmistakable. Only the extreme danger of New Ulm had drawn them south of the river. Even though the commander had elected to remain and hold the town he could not compel service from the volunteers. It was decided to fall back to Mankato, that town being on the same side of the river.

Preparations were hurriedly made. In addition to the sick there were eighty wounded to be moved. A train of a hundred and fifty-three wagons and carts was formed and loaded with children, women and the wounded. Fire had well near reduced the town to ruins, and in the reek of smoldering timbers and littered streets the long procession was formed. Only one obstacle was to be overcome in the march to the southeast—the Big Cottonwood. Fortunately this river was fordable.

The Blue Earth County men were glad the town was to be evacuated; for had it been decided to remain they would have refused to stay. Now that the Indians had scattered there was no knowing how widely they would raid. The red program was undergoing a change. Having had enough of besieging strong towns, they would content themselves with remote and weakly defended communities where success was assured. So great was the impatience of the Blue Earth men to be gone that the Pollacker boys insisted on riding direct to Crystal Lake and making the river at Vernon, thus cutting off some miles of travel.

Murray was equally impatient; but with the Potter girl to be protected and with the wagon train needing defenders, he announced he would make the journey to Mankato. To his surprize Phil White and Abner Page were of the same mind. Shanty Mose was anxious to be clear of the southeastern stretch of the Minnesota and apparently cared but little whither he traveled.

It was a slow-moving procession that withdrew from the ruins of the town. Women exhausted for need of rest, children fretful from hunger, the sick and wounded striving to smother their groans as the carts bumped along, would have formed a sorry spectacle even had there been no danger of an Indian attack. That the Sioux would cut off the train was firmly believed by many. For in leaving the town the refugees were entering the scope of the new red program.

Murray Fall and Ed Pollacker were among those to make sure no one was left behind. Their last impression of the town was dismally depressing; stark chimneys of burned buildings, open doors and broken windows of the structures still standing, streets littered with household furnishings and goods removed from stores only to be abandoned. The desk from the post-office and some scattered stamps made a lasting impress on Murray's mind.

Ed Pollacker forgot his reckless laughter and wept silently on beholding a child's doll trampled in the dirt. To offset this bit of weakness he lifted his mellow voice in the simple pathos of "Departed Days" and ceased his singing only when Murray remonstrated:

"Don't. Isn't all bad enough and sad enough without that?"

"Had to do something," grumbled Ed. "Saw a girl's doll. Made me feel like bawling."

At the end of fifteen miles' slow travel, with no sign of the Sioux, even the pessimistic began to believe the withdrawal was not to be opposed. Having covered half of the journey Flandrau camped at Crisp's farm with a hundred and fifty men. The Blue Earth County men were among those who went on with the train. Very few of the volunteers were willing to return to New Ulm until they had learned the fate of their families north of the river.

The train was loudly cheered on entering Mankato, as that town had feared the worst for New Ulm. Nor did Mankato feel safe. Some of the citizens were packing up their goods; some families already had started east. It was known in Mankato that Fort Ridgely had repulsed the attack on Friday, the Indians withdrawing at sunset just as success appeared to be theirs. A messenger who had got through said Little Crow was not active in the actual fighting, but had directed the assault from a discreet distance.

The Blue Earth County settlers were greatly perturbed by the news brought in by a messenger from the south. He arrived

shortly after the train reached the town, and announced that the settlements on East Chain Lakes were lacking ammunition and that the Indians had appeared in Jackson County.

"Just as I was leaving before sunrise a man come in from the town of Jackson after riding all night. He said lots of folks were killed at church service yesterday."

"That shows they're down there. Wish we'd struck a bee-line," bitterly complained Bert Pollacker.

"And probably been killed on the way," snapped Shanty Mose. "If we'd rode due south and hadn't been stopped we couldn't arrived in time to prevent something that was all finished before we even started."

"Oh, let's not get to jawing," advised Phil White. "We'll find Shelbyville is an armed camp. All settlers west of the Blue Earth River have had plenty of time to get there. We'll find them safe and sound."

"But not the folks in Martin County, my folks in Fairmont," remarked Elizabeth Potter in a trembling voice.

"Yes'm! Your folks are all safe," heartily Phil White assured her.

Then in an aside to Ed Pollacker, who was whistling his favorite song—

"Shut off that —— tune!"

Some new rumor began spreading. Women ran up and down the streets, searching for their children, and there was a general movement to Leeche's three-story stone building. Shanty Mose caught and held a wild-eyed man who was running frantically, shook him into a semblance of sanity and fiercely demanded—

"What do you mean by cutting up such rinktums?"

"The Sioux! Right on the edge of the town!"

Mose flung him aside and, followed by the Pollacker boys, rode out to make a hasty survey. They soon returned and announced there were no signs of the enemy. The New Ulm citizens for a week had envied the security of those in Mankato. Now that they had made the town many were eager to leave.

With New Ulm abandoned the border had been pushed back east thirty miles.

Mankato was now a frontier town. The able-bodied men started for St. Peter to join Colonel Sibley's command; the helpless traveled eastward.

IT REQUIRES at least two generations to turn out a frontiersman of the old type, the breed that sowed and harvested and raised a family, cool of spirit and crafty in red warfare; a man who spent a lifetime in matching wits against the red man's cunning. There were not many of this kind on the Minnesota frontier. The majority of the homesteaders were Eastern farmers, anxious to mend their fortunes with Western land. There were many Norwegians, Swedes and Germans, who knew nothing of red fighting.

Instead of each homesteader being inseparable from his rifle the greater number of farmers had never fired a gun at a human target; and some confessed they never discharged a firearm until the Sioux started their killings. The gruesome story brought from the south by the Blue Earth man revealed how helpless border families could be when unexpectedly attacked. For at the church service in Jackson fourteen white people were killed by five Indians, and the Sioux lost not a man.

It logically followed that at the outset the panic should extend from Fort Ridgely to St. Paul in the north, and to and below the Iowa line in the south. As the Sioux broadened their field the fear covered the country from Fort Abercrombie on the Red River of the North to Mankato, some five hundred miles, and blanketed the entire southern and western part of the State. This fear was warranted; but it persisted where there was no danger. Far east of the Blue Earth and Minnesota Rivers families were frantically making for the Mississippi, while on the eastern border many other families were hurriedly crossing over into Wisconsin.

Harvests were being sacrificed where the Sioux would never penetrate. St. Paul was crowded with refugees. Those living a few miles from the city surrendered to fright and poured in although there were no killings within a hundred miles. The driving power behind these hurried flights was the realization that the Civil War had taken most of the able-bodied men from the State and left it sadly lacking in firearms and ammunition. The Indians were far better armed at New Ulm than were the defenders.

Such was the general condition of affairs when Colonel Sibley led his poorly armed force in search of the hostiles and when

the Blue Earth County men started south with the Potter girl.

At the Pfeffer House, a tavern half a mile below South Bend, the travelers met a man from the south. In answer to the anxious queries he replied:

"Shelbyville is filled up with homesteaders from west of the river. Some say the town can hold out; some say it won't."

"Hold out? Why shouldn't it?" wrathfully demanded Ed Pollacker.

"Good Lawd! I don't know. Mebbe it will."

"And if it can't what's to stop the people moving back farther east?" asked Bert Pollacker fiercely.

"Look here, stranger! I ain't to blame for all this trouble. But if I was in Shelbyville this minute I'd be seeing how fast I could make Winona. And if that trip didn't tucker me out I'd keep right on going till I was safe in the Union Army."

"White-livered!" sneered Ed Pollacker.

The Potter girl motioned for him to be quiet and softly asked the man: "About Martin County folks? What have you heard?"

"Oh, I don't think they have any chance, miss. Every one in Jackson County's been killed. So Martin County——"

"Shut up!" rasped Phil White. "You've been nowhere; you know nothing. You ran for it before seeing an Indian. This little woman has folks in Martin County; and, by ——, they're all right! You understand? By this time they're safe in Shelbyville."

"Of course, of course," mumbled the man. "Quite so. Think I'll be moving on."

The six men took turns trying to drive the despair from the girl's face. She did not complain nor lament, but it was evident that she could not be comforted until she knew her people were safe. They had left Mankato late that afternoon, and their horses needed rest. She was for continuing the ride through the night. It was with great difficulty that they persuaded her to wait until morning; and they succeeded only after convincing her that they would finish their journey the sooner by waiting. They agreed to start before sunrise, as otherwise she might have slipped away alone.

The Pfeffer House was deserted as the people around South Bend had retired to a strong stone building in that town. Elizabeth slept indoors, the men spreading their blankets outside the house beside their horses.

Murray Fall was the first to awake. It lacked an hour to sunrise; but the girl had saddled her horse and was ready to ride. He joined her and said:

"You haven't eaten. You can't start without eating."

"I'm not hungry. It doesn't seem as if I can ever be hungry again."

"You're going to eat something just the same. You mustn't hold us back by being taken sick or fainting away. We all must eat. The men are up and will have breakfast ready in no time."

She permitted him to lead her horse back. Shanty Mose hurried into the house with their supplies and boiled coffee and fried some meat. They ate outdoors and compelled the girl to drink her coffee and eat some bread. She would not touch the meat.

The east was blood red when they took the road. The rim of the sun was visible when they mounted Pigeon Hill, a mile south of the tavern.

"It'll be a hot day," remarked Page as he gazed to the east.

"It's red," shivered the girl.

Ten miles beyond the hill they halted to breathe their horses, and the girl begrudged the delay. On resuming their journey they began to meet refugees on foot, mounted and in carts. One man had two unbroken steers hitched to a cart. When first seen they were coming on a mad run, the cart bouncing and swaying. The man had no way of guiding them, and they piled up beside the road a short distance ahead of the Blue Earth County men.

The Pollacker brothers galloped to lend assistance. The cart was righted and filled with children and a few household effects. The woman appeared to be dazed. She did not speak, and her gaze was vacant as she watched her husband struggle with the steers.

The man was frantic with fright and talked incoherently in German. No one was hurt by the upset. White shook the woman by the shoulder and asked:

"Where are you from? Where are you going?"

The woman gazed at him dully and managed to reply:

"Many times we turn over. Help my man."

"Where are you from?"

She made an effort and replied:

"Vernon. We go where peoples go. Help my man."

"We get bumped," called out a little girl.

Elizabeth patted her head and asked—

"Have you seen any Indians?"

The child's eyes grew big with fear, but she answered:

"No. But they'll kill all of us with knives."

Whereat the other youngsters set up a doleful wailing and refused to be comforted.

With the cart and steers in the road the man's technique in handling the steers was simple. With the yoke in place he stood at their heads and restrained them until a space had been cleared for him in the front of the cart. Then he sprang clear and leaped aboard, and the steers ran madly until their blind course took them into the bushes or among the trees.

At midday the seven rode into Shelbyville. Fresh rumors had preceded them. The streets were alive with those refugees who suddenly had decided they must move on. They would not go north as the withdrawal from New Ulm had been represented early in the day as entirely contrary to fact: New Ulm had been captured and destroyed, and only a few survivors had reached Mankato. The truth was given by the Blue Earth County men and the general fear allayed.

But those who had prepared to travel would not tarry. It was one of many mad stampedes. Some would get the best of their fear by the time they reached Wilton. Others would pass on as far as Owatonna; and some would not sleep in peace until they reached Rochester. At the same time several families came in from the east, having fled when the first news of the lower agency massacre reached him.

Shelbyville was more open to capture than New Ulm had been, as there were scarcely any guns in the town. The arrival of six armed men was greeted with cheers.

The blacksmith explained:

"We've got about ten guns. Sent a man to Mankato for powder and lead, but he ain't returned."

Then, recognizing Abner Page, he grinned broadly and assured him:

"This time I'm mighty glad to see you, mister. You can wear any clothes you want to, and they'll be just the kind of clothes I admire."

"Where can this little woman rest up and get something to eat?" cut in Bert Pollacker.

A dozen eager citizens offered hospitality. It resulted that she was escorted to one of the strong buildings, turned over for the women and children. She appeared to be very tired and went along willingly. But she took her horse to the house and would not listen to surrendering it to her companions.

After she had left them Shanty Mose remarked:

"I was afraid she'd begin ask about her folks. We've got to make a hunt for them."

"That's the only thing on her mind now," said White. "She doesn't believe they're here, or she'd asked quick enough. And here's Murray, keen to learn about his folks."

Murray could sympathize with the Potter girl, for he was feeling much as she felt. They scattered and canvased the town, but none learned any news concerning the Potters or any of the Fairmont citizens. Ed Pollacker and Page met in front of the blacksmith shop and confessed failure. Ed refused to take a gloomy view and insisted:

"Never believed we'd find them here. They went to Blue Earth City. It's nearer. Or they may be at Vernon, or Winnebago City."

"We must tell her the truth, and that means we must go with her to Blue Earth City," decided Page. "They may have lighted out for Iowa and are safe below the line long before this."

Ed frowned and reminded him:

"And we haven't seen anything of the Falls. Murray must be worrying."

"I'm a fool," growled Page. "Took it for granted they're all right, living so near. Never asked about them. All I had in mind was the Potters."

Murray came hurrying up. Before either of the men could speak he was saying:

"Postmaster says my folks came in early. Some one from the Cray place woke them up in the night. They didn't stop here only long enough to rest the oxen. They must have gone to the east."

"Good! We know they're safe. Wish we knew as much about the Potter girl's

folks. Can't learn a word about them. She'll be all upset."

They procured something to eat and decided that Murray should call on the Potter girl and endeavor to make her believe her people were safe in Winnebago or Blue Earth City.

He soon came back and reported:

"Didn't see her. One of the women said she was asleep. Took the revolver to bed with her. Has her horse under the shed back of the house. I took the saddle off and fed him. I think she planned to ride away before we knew what she was up to, but was so tuckered out she couldn't do it."

They wandered aimlessly about the town, Page and Mose walking together and arguing over something. Each appeared to be insistent on some point but finally worked into a more amiable mood and rejoined their comrades. The six of them were standing in front of the post-office when a man called out:

"Darned if here ain't more of them coming back! They run away. They tire out their animals. Then they come back. In a day or so they'll be making east'ard again. I had the itch to travel at first, but didn't have a hoss. If I'd been mounted guess I'd gone right through to where I come from—Augusta, Maine."

Murray gave a whoop of delight and ran madly toward a little procession plodding up the village street. Ed Pollacker stared for a moment, then grinned broadly and announced:

"If it ain't the Little Hornet! That's what Little Crow named her. There's Alice. Fall seems to have weathered well since we last saw him, but his oxen look thin."

They saw Murray fling himself between the wheels of the cart and embrace his mother. When the cart came up Murray was walking beside it and holding his mother's hand. The men advanced with hearty greetings. The child Alice held up her doll for them to admire. Mrs. Fall could not speak but continued to weep softly. Fall was talkative enough and explained:

"Never would have budged from this place if they'd been any guns here. But I had to think of my family. We've been scared to death about Murray. Just the same as give him up for dead. If he'd been with us we'd probably kept right on going till we hit Oshkosh, Wisconsin. And now we're back. What's the news?"

Speaking optimistically, the men explained the general situation. Fall sighed and regretted:

"I had more time than I thought. But it was night, and one don't think clear when he's waked out of a sound sleep. We was quite a bit excited. So we turned the animals loose to feed and took only some food and a trunk. Didn't even think to shut the door of the house. Now I must put these oxen up and bait them and see about a place to sleep tonight. Tomorrow we'll go back to the farm."

"No; not tomorrow," corrected Abner Page. "You'll not go back to the farm until Colonel Sibley has whipped the hostiles."

MURRAY went with his folks, and his friends did not see him again until late that evening. In the meanwhile Ed Pollacker called on the Potter girl. He found her helping the women prepare a late supper. He reported to the men that she appeared to be in much better spirits and seemed to take it for granted that her people were in one of the river towns south of Shelbyville. In concluding he added—

"She has fastened a strap to that hand gun and wears it hanging down from her neck."

Bert rolled onto his blankets and sleepily remarked:

"Tomorrow some of us will ride south and look for her folks. No use all of us going."

"We'd better keep together," said Shanty Mose.

Bert was too sleepy to be interested; but Ed started at him, then laughed and boasted:

"I can ride alone from here to Fort Abercrombie. Going to protect us, or because you'll feel safer with us?"

"I'll feel safer," quietly replied Mose. "Now let's get a little sleep."

There was no question about riding south once morning came. Murray Fall hunted up his friends and excitedly announced:

"Elizabeth Potter's gone! Left before sunrise as none of the women saw her get her horse. Good land! What can she be thinking of!"

"Her folks," muttered Page as he hastily

buckled on his belt. "We must overtake her. She headed south?"

"Yes; she took the river road," said Murray. "I managed to learn that much from the blacksmith who saw her riding from town. She's making for Winnebago City."

"And if her folks was that near they'd be up here before now," grumbled Mose. "They'll be fretting about what's happened to her. They'll want to keep close to the Minnesota till they find out."

While the men ate a hasty breaskfast Murray went to get his horse and to inform his folks that he was riding south. The six men had slim hopes of overtaking the girl and were not disappointed, as they saw nothing of her while covering the few miles at a gallop. Winnebago City presented the same scenes to be observed in Shelbyville. The armed riders were warmly welcomed, for here as in other exposed towns there were few guns and but little ammunition.

Abner Page, acting as spokesman, at once inquired about the girl. She had been there, searching for her folks. Doubtless she was resting or sleeping. The men did not believe this, but to make sure they scattered. Satisfying themselves she was not in the town, they prepared to ride on to Verona, and to Blue Earth City if need be.

As they were about to start they found their plans spoiled by the word brought by three mounted men who were escorting a cart containing a woman and several children. This party had been on the road for two hours and declared they had not met the girl, nor any person traveling south.

After the cart and escort had passed on into the town the men stared at each other blankly. Ed Pollacker was the first to speak. He said:

"Boys, she doesn't believe her folks are below here. She's struck across the prairie for Fairmount. She's been planning to do that little trick all the time. She didn't run around and ask about her pa and ma when we reached Shelbyville. And when we told her they weren't there she didn't act surprized or excited. Last night she was in better spirits than at any time since we quit New Ulm. That's because she'd made up her mind. And that's why she took the gun to bed and then hung it around her neck."

"Afraid that's the right of it," grumbled Shanty Mose, and he rubbed his side whiskers with both hands. "That means we must ride after her."

Page insisted:

"Before doing that let's spend a bit of time here and see if any one saw her riding west."

They kept together this time and at last found a man who had come from the river and who had seen a girl riding astride and riding fast to ford the river just below the mouth of the Chanyuska.

"I hooted for her to turn back," he added. "But she didn't hear, or wouldn't listen. And there's something bad happening west of the river. I was out a few miles to see if anything was left of my crops and saw the glare of a fire up in the northwest. It was before sunup and it showed plain. They're burning out there sure's sin."

"That's enough," growled White, starting for the river.

They made the crossing at the Chanyuska and took a direct course for Fairmount. They were in the open, the favorite fighting ground of the Minnesota Sioux, who ever preferred tall grass and bushes to heavy timber when on a warpath. Murray had his carbine. His friends carried two heavy revolvers apiece. Each time they gained the top of a gentle rise they hoped to see the girl ahead, and feared lest they behold painted men.

After half the distance to Fairmount was covered without their sighting the girl Phil White drew rain and suggested:

"Perhaps we'd better scatter and look for her. Maybe we're wrong in thinking she could hold a straight course. She may have wandered too far south, or north."

"And that feller back by the river saw a fire in the northwest," muttered Ed Pollacker.

"I'm willing to do what you men think best, but I believe she has gone straight to Fairmount," spoke up Murray. "She knows the prairie. She's made the trip to Winnebago City and Blue Earth City."

"It's a —— of a note, her running off alone like this," grumbled Ed Pollacker. "Say we go on for another mile or two. She'll have to stop and breathe her nag or find herself afoot."

Neither Page nor Bert Pollacker liked the plan of separating. The latter argued that one man couldn't help her if the Sioux attacked. He became silent when

reminded by White that it would never do for the girl to be alone if Indians appeared.

"If only one of us had been at the Jackson church service and armed with just one six-shooter when those snakes appeared they'd be some dead Injuns and fewer dead whites," he told them.

They agreed to ride two miles and then separate if the girl was not in sight. After the two miles had been covered and they could discover no signs of her White insisted that they scatter and search more widely.

Murray suggested:

"Let me ride to the next rise. If I don't see her I'll keep straight on, and you men can pick different paths."

They halted, and while they were waiting for Murray to make the slight rise Shanty Mose insisted that he could see smoke in the west. White thought he could see it, but the others saw nothing. And Ed argued:

"We've got prairie eyes, and you, Mose, have logging-camp eyes. Phil thinks he sees it because you said you saw it."

"All right, young man. Keep on knowing more than your elders and you'll be mighty wise a million years from now," observed Mose.

Murray halted on the slight elevation and stared anxiously ahead. Then he was standing in his stirrups and waving his hat wildly. He was beckoning for the men to advance. The next moment he had disappeared.

As one the five raced forward. On reaching the rise they saw him entering a hollow some distance ahead. A quarter of a mile beyond him and riding slowly up a slope was the girl.

"She's nearly run her nag off his feet!" exclaimed Ed. "We'll overtake her so much the quicker and take her back to the river."

"I'm thinking you'll go with her to Fairmount if you hanker for her company," said Shanty Mose. "She's made up her mind to know the truth, good or worst, and she'll go the whole distance. She planned all this the minute she reached Shelbyville."

That he had shrewdly estimated the girl's indomitable spirit was proven when they overtook her and Murray. She was seated on the ground while her tired horse grazed. Murray, still mounted, turned a flushed face on his friends and said:

"What do you think! She says she won't go back with us. I say she's stubborn."

She smiled sadly and gently corrected him:

"Not so much stubborn as horribly afraid, Murray. I must know the truth about my people."

"That's human natur'," gravely agreed Shanty Mose. "And now we're so near we might as well go the rest of the way."

"Of course we'll go along, Miss Elizabeth. No danger. We'll fetch your folks, and any other who want to leave, back to the Blue Earth."

The men dismounted and smoked while waiting for the horses to rest. To Murray it seemed a very long time since he visited Fairmount, and when Page spoiled the plans of Mart, the horse thief. At last Phil White announced:

"We must be going. Your horse is fit. If he isn't you must ride with one of us."

Murray helped the girl to the saddle, and she led the way. Her horse was in fair condition, now he had rested, but they did not hurry. They covered five miles at a leisurely pace when Page called a halt and pointed ahead. A horseman was coming over the grassy horizon.

The girl was for riding on and meeting him, but the men held her back. The town was below the skyline, and if evil had befallen it they did not intend to ride into a trap. They watched suspiciously, but the man rode alone. Ed Pollacker decided:

"White man. Injun don't ride like that."

The girl fretted, but held back. As the horseman came nearer she cried—

"Why, it's Mr. Curtis!"

And the color left her face.

"Well, he ain't hurrying. Everything's all right," Bert comforted her.

The Fairmount man waved his hand and rode faster. When he came within hearing the girl cried—

"My people, Mr. Curtis?"

He continued advancing, and as he did not answer she pressed her hands to her heart and swayed in the saddle.

"What about this little lady's folks?" roared Shanty Mose.

"They're all right. Hello, 'Lizabeth. Thought 'twas your ghost. Lord, but it's good to see you! We've been fearing you was killed along with the other poor people at the Redwood Agency. How in the land did you escape?"

"My people? First, tell me about them. No! I'll ride on and find out for myself."

She was becoming hysterical. Phil White patted her shoulder and spoke to her in an undertone.

Curtis wiped his face and explained:

"Your folks rode down into Iowa at the first alarm. They had plenty of time. They're perfectly safe."

"But you don't know that they're all right!" she cried. "I too will ride to Iowa."

"But you'll be foolish to do that," remonstrated Curtis. "They've gone east by this time. They planned to cross the head of the Blue Earth River and then make up the east side until they find out something about you. They was fair crazy when word come something was wrong on the Redwood. We got word on Thursday, and they started south at once. We sent a man to Winnebago City for ammunition. He couldn't get any there. He started for Mankato, but met men who said there wa'n't any there.

"On Saturday twenty men came from Winnebago City, making for Jackson. They was overtook at Fairmount by a messenger with orders for them to ride north to Madelia. If they'd kept on they'd prevented the killings at Jackson on Sunday. That was an awful piece of work——"

"We know all about it," harshly broke in Page.

"Fourteen folks murdered in church by five Injuns," Curtis completed.

"If only one of us could have been there!" groaned Bert Pollacker, his hands gripping his belt guns.

"Don't! Don't!" begged the girl. "I can't bear to hear any more, see any more. All I want is to find my folks. I must satisfy myself they've not been killed while making for the State line."

"Never was any folks righter than they are this minute, I tell you," insisted Curtis. "They rode with an Iowa man who looked to be a fighter. Two big revolvers and a rifle. He was called Archie. He said there wasn't any danger. Wanted all us folks to go, but we didn't believe the Sioux would git so far south."

"I know that man," spoke up White. "He is a fighter. He can lick a score of Sioux with the twelve loads in his six-shooters and the magazine in his Spencer rifle. Your people are perfectly safe, Miss Elizabeth. Archie could pick off all the Indians that could ride against him in the open before they got within pistol shot. But when your folks reach Blue Earth City and Winnebago and don't find you they'll be sadly worried."

"I don't know anything about this man Archie," slowly said Page. "But if White vouches for him that's good enough for me."

Murray wrinkled his brows and tried to remember where he had heard the name. His gaze happened to rest on a clump of elms and some low bush growth south of their position, marking the border of a chain of shallow lakes; and he remembered. Archie was one of the men with Bisen when the latter was wounded by Pollacker's bull. He started to say as much, thought better of it and kept silent.

White announced:

"Now that we know there's no call for us to go to Fairmount you folks ride back to the Blue Earth with Miss Elizabeth. I'm riding south. May cross the line."

Shanty Mose jerked up his head, combed his fingers through his side whiskers and glanced at Page. The latter said to Murray:

"You and Elizabeth ride on with Mr. Curtis. We want to talk with White before he leaves us. We'll soon overtake you."

White was a bit puzzled. Bert Pollacker curiously asked:

"Secrets? Or shall we stay?"

"Stay by all means," heartily urged Page. "It'll interest all of you. You be trotting along, Murray. Mr. Curtis is in a hurry, or he wouldn't be riding east."

"I'm going to try for ammunition. I am in something of a hurry," admitted Curtis.

Murray was perplexed. The Potter girl was thinking only of finding her people. Curtis was impatient to be on his errand. The three galloped away.

Page took time to load and light his pipe and slipped from the saddle. White was eying him thoughtfully. Page had trouble with his pipe and took more time. Getting it to drawing to suit, he glanced after the three riding east and announced—

"Now I'll talk."

Shanty Mose suddenly presented two revolvers and commanded:

"Don't either of you three make a move. I'd hate to shoot."

Page drew one gun and added—

"It comes tough, but Mose is speaking for the two of us."

The three gaped in amazement. Then Ed Pollacker faintly exclaimed— "Well, I'll be ——!"

Bert and Phil White glanced from Mose to Page, and then at each other. In a hoarse voice White suggested—

"One of you'd better do some talking mighty sharp."

IT WAS Page who explained. He said:

"We've been through quite a lot together, and this comes mighty hard. But duty's duty. The part you three've played ought to get you clear; but that's for the courts or Governor Ramsey to say."

"—— and ——! You mean you'll arrest us?" cried White, his eyes glowing.

"You're already arrested," warned Page. "Keep your hands away from those guns! Like Mose, I'd hate to shoot, but I will if you show any fight. Now I'm going to take your guns."

"Not by a —— sight!" snarled Ed.

Bert caught his hand, jerked it away from his belt and growled:

"Why be a —— fool? I, for one, am not going to get myself killed by either of these cheats. Take our guns and tell who you are. But this matter isn't settled till it's settled right."

Page stepped forward and with his free hand jerked White's guns from the belt and tossed them behind him. Then he disarmed the Pollacker boys. His forehead was wet with nervous perspiration as he finished, and he muttered:

"Whew! I'm glad that's over with and no one killed. If I could have seen what was coming I'd quit before tackling this job. Now we'll talk. I was sent to Blue Earth County to work in partnership with Iowa officials in rounding up horse thieves.

"White, you know a band has been working on both sides of the line. Many horses have been run off. Two years ago there was a white man found dead couple of miles below the Pollacker place."

"Killed by Sioux!" indignantly broke in Bert.

"No! Killed by Iowa horse thieves he was trailing. He was Fred Lasen, one of our best men," Page sternly corrected him.

"We never stole any horses," angrily cried Ed.

"I don't think either of you did. But White, your hired hand, stole horses."

"Saying that and proving it is two different things," sneered White. "You'll be saying I killed the white man next."

"One of your gang, fellow called Mart, killed him. I learned that much below the line."

"I know nothing about stealing horses. Neither does Bert," earnestly protested Ed. "All Bert and I ever did was to sell a little whisky to the Sioux. Lots of men were doing that. If you don't believe we stole horses why hold us up like this?"

Shanty Mose spoke up and informed them:

"I was sent down here to stop the whisky smuggling. Sent by the governor as the county sheriffs wouldn't interfere and the Indian agent didn't seem able to do anything. Page and I have worked together often. But this time our work was divided. The horse thieves' trail led him to the Pollacker farm after White went there. My trail led me to the same place.

"Take it easy, boys. Our sworn duty is to bring you in. If it wasn't for Lasen's murder it would be the rottenest piece of duty we ever had to do."

"I can prove absolutely that I was east of the Mississippi serving a short term in an Illinois penitentiary when the man Lasen was killed. I had no knowledge and no hand in that. I'm not that kind of a killer," declared White.

"That makes it both harder and easier for us to take you in. If you can prove an alibi about Lasen's death we'll put on record the good work you've done the last ten days. Was Robinson Jones, at Acton, mixed up in your whisky deals? He's dead. Saw him killed. You needn't mind telling."

"He wasn't," shortly replied Bert. "No one was mixed up in it. The Indians would have rum, and most the traders were selling it. So we took our profits."

"That Jones trail was a false one. Nearly got me killed," mused Mose. "White, you used to go by the name of Bisen. When you took a new name you shaved your beard off."

"You can't prove I ever stole any horses," doggedly insisted White.

"Oh, yes, we can. But they were from Little Crow's and Little Six's villages, so I don't think the charges will stick,"said Page.

"Then why all this bother?" harshly cried White.

"Because I'm charging the three of you with smuggling whisky," said Shanty Mose.

"See here!" passionately declared Ed Pollacker. "Murray Fall and the girl are coming back. I'll die before I'll have them learn the truth out here in the open. It'll be bad enough for them to know it after we've left them at Shelbyville."

Page glanced to the east and was surprized to see the two riding toward them.

"Murray has known right along about the whisky-selling. We found where you cached whisky on Hanska Lake, and he and the Potter girl found one of your hides in an old house when they were making for New Ulm."

"I'll die before I'll let him see me under arrest!" cried Ed.

Page glanced at Mose, who nodded his head and thrust his guns through his belt. Page said:

"All right, boys. I'm going to unload your guns and give them back. We won't tell them anything. White'll say he's changed his mind about riding south."

He dropped on the ground, quickly unloaded the six forty-fours and restored them to the three men. And he earnestly reminded them:

"I'm trying to make it easier for you. But you're prisoners. Don't be tempted to make a disagreeable matter very much worse."

Phil White, *alias* Bisen, smiled drearily and promised:

"I sha'n't make a move so long as the boy and girl are present. We'll go back as quiet as lambs."

The men supposed that Murray and the girl had grown impatient, then anxious, over their friends' failure to ride after them. But when the two rode up it was quickly observed how flushed were their faces, and that they labored under great excitement. Murray cried out:

"Indians coming down from the north. Curtis' horse is fresh, and he's holding on for the river. We didn't dare try for it."

Ed Pollacker balanced himself on his feet in the saddle and after gazing to the north reported:

"But I don't see them, Murray. You must have been mistaken."

"No, no!" broke in the girl. "We even counted them. I made twenty-seven; so did Mr. Curtis. Murray counted twenty-five. Mr. Curtis saw them first. Two had disappeared in a long slough that runs north and south and reaches down to a point directly west of here, before Murray began counting."

White pointed toward the timber on East Chain Lakes in the south and suggested—

"There's good cover."

"But there's the folks at Fairmount!" cried the girl.

"And Curtis told us they was short of guns and ammunition," added Murray.

Page rubbed his nose, stared at his companions inquiringly and read their answer in their eyes even before he said:

"It won't do for us to ride to Fairmount with them at our heels. But the settlement must be warned and given time to prepare the best fight it can. I'd say it's our job to stop the Sioux from riding west from that long slough."

"By ——! You're a man!" yelled Ed Pollacker; and the old reckless laugh rang out.

Bert Pollacker nodded eager approval. Phil White began unfastening his shirt, smiled contentedly and remarked—

"I wish I'd been the first to think of that."

To Murray he said:

"Take Miss Elizabeth into Fairmount. We're going to give them a fight."

"We'll show them fighting that is fighting," grimly declared Shanty Mose, his eyes lighting up as if from the contemplation of some pleasant task. "They'll learn the difference between killing Norwegian farmers and having a real fuss with us old he-hellions. Get along, Murray, before they come in sight."

Heart-broken at leaving his friends to undertake the desperate venture, yet realizing that some one must go with the girl, Murray choked back the sobs. But when he came to unfastening the crowskin and was trying to pin it on Ed Pollacker's shirt he was snivelling audibly.

Ed took the skin from the fumbling fingers, quickly replaced it on Murray's shirt, rubbed the boy's hair down into his eyes and rode his horse to one side.

"Take the rifle at least!" whispered Murray.

"Go on! Go on! You'll need the rifle for the girl. Fairmount will need it. Be off!" harshly commanded Page.

The two set off. Murray brushed the

tears from his eyes and looked back but once. Phil White had stripped off his shirt, and his skin was very white in contrast with the bronzed neck. Conspicuous across the brawny shoulders was a red welt. Extending downward from it was an older and less vivid scar, forming the letter T.

"Why! He's Bisen!" hoarsely whispered Murray.

ONCE the two rode away Page restored the ammunition. The revolvers were quickly loaded, and the five rode northwest to meet the red horsemen in the hollow.

"Slow up!" commanded Page. "Ed, go on foot to the top of the next rise and see if they are in sight."

All dismounted; young Pollacker hurried through the grass and after advancing a few rods dropped on his knees. He reconnoitered briefly, then signaled for his companions to join him. They went forward on on foot, leading the horses. The Indians were coming down the dry slough. Once they rode up the low eastern slope they would discover the white men.

Phil White decided:

"They saw us, but they had taken to cover before Murray turned back. They didn't see him and the girl fetching the warning. They don't plan to break cover till they think they're between us and Fairmount. They haven't any idea Murray and the girl returned to us and are now riding to the settlement. I think we'd better start in now. A surprize will be worth a dozen men."

They mounted and walked their horses up the slight elevation. Ed Pollacker was laughing recklessly.

"Now spread out and all together," softly commanded White, who held the middle of the line.

The five shot into view as one and were galloping madly down into the slough befor the Sioux could comprehend the amazing situation. Ed Pollacker, guiding his mount with his knees and holding a heavy gun in each hand, commenced singing "Departed Days."

"Five white men go riding!" roared Page.

The Sioux howled excitedly, the foremost riders checking their ponies so sharply that those behind crowded into them. Page took the lead away from White as the five raced to see who would be first to strike the milling mass. As the Indians began to recover from their confusion and discharge their guns Ed Pollacker swept to the front, still singing the pathetic ballad, and beginning to shoot,with deadly deliberation, first one gun and then the other.

Half of the Sioux forged ahead and wheeled to receive the charge. The rest remained where they were when the white men were discovered. But the whites had no intention of riding through the gap thus occasioned and finding the horde on their backs.

Young Pollacker swung into the rear group, singing and shooting as he rode. Close behind him swept Bert Pollacker, who did not fire a shot until at close quarters. And a short distance behind Bert rode Phil White, his breast crimson from a terrible wound.

Page and Shanty Mose charged the foremost group, shouting like mad men and riding stirrup to stirrup. They blasted a hole through the band and wheeled to ride back. Dead and wounded Sioux told of the terrible execution five men can inflict on five times their number when each is a marksman and has twelve bullets to use.

The wild attack, the crashing impact with the heavier American horses knocking the ponies aside, and the bewildering ferocity of the riders, shattered the two bands inside the first two minutes of fighting. The Sioux were handicapped by their plunging ponies and their shotguns and rifles, awkward weapons at close quarters. They could not use their full gun strength without shooting their own men.

The red leader slid from his pony and shouted for his men to dismount. Page was shot in both legs and slashed across the thigh by a knife. He hurled an empty gun into a warrior's face, snatched a double-barrel shotgun from the weakening grip and discharged both barrels to the side where Shanty Mose should have been riding.

Phil White, slowly bleeding to death, had emptied his weapons and had secured a shotgun. This he was using as a club, swinging it in wide, vicious circles. Bert Pollacker, spitting much blood, had got hold of a short ax and was keeping close to his brother. Ed Pollacker's singing continued, although weaker now, as he smashed his horse against ponies and clubbed his heavy revolvers.

Success was ready to abide with either side when Page rode in between White and Bert Pollacker, with Ed holding the right of the line. The four as one wheeled their wounded, maddened horses and charged a circle of Indians on foot.

White was fairly riddled, yet kept his seat. With his last strength he lifted his mount ahead of his companions and drove between two mounted Sioux, one of whom had eagle feathers to prove he had been a very brave man in campaigns against the Chippewa.

White reached out his empty hands and dragged the two men from their ponies. He held one man under his left arm by sinking his teeth in the copper-colored neck, and with his two hands broke the wrist of the warrior wearing the eagle feathers then dislocated the arm at the shoulder.

The other man, lying face down, stabbed his savage captor with a skinning knife. With a last effort White supplemented the work his teeth had commenced by burying his fingers in the red throat. The knife rose and fell at his back, but the blows grew weaker and weaker as life was slowly torn from the mangled neck and throat. Then both fell dead to the ground.

The surviving four whites were now afoot, their horses dead or dying, and from the ground they secured weapons and pressed the fighting. The Sioux may have decided that the singing man was protected by a very strong medicine, and some avoided him while others concentrated upon him. White and Mose were now dead. The red leader was dead.

From the west side of the slough a carbine cracked, and a warrior dropped. Almost instantly it cracked again, and another Sioux went down. A white voice began shouting:

"Charge 'em, boys! We've got them!"

And a third shot shattered the thigh of a warrior.

Panic seized upon the Sioux because of this unexpected attack. Ponies were mounted, and the wounded and some of the dead were scooped up, and the survivors of the war party began a mad retreat up the slough to the north.

The shouting at the west side of the slough continued, and from the tall grass the carbine kept up its barking at the fleeing foe. Then Murray Fall ran on to the battlefield, weeping.

The Pollacker brothers were sitting back to back, each serving as a prop for the other. Ed was stabbing a broken knife into the ground and huskily singing his song. Page was cutting off a trousers leg to get at the wound in his thigh. Buckshot had passed through his cheek, tearing out several teeth and fracturing the jaw. White, dead, was covered with wounds. In after years some of the Indians said it was the dazzling whiteness of his skin that attracted their aim.

Page stared dully at Murray for a moment, then jerked his head for him to wait on the Pollacker boys. Ed attempted a grin on recognizing Murray and feebly pushed a hand into his face. He was shot high through the chest and had one leg broken above the knee. As Murray cut off Ed's soaked shirt to get at his other wounds the boy counted ten made by stabbing or slashing.

"Old Bert. Look after him," mur.-mured Ed.

Murray nodded and used most of his own shirt in swathing Ed's back and chest. Bert did not present such a ghastly spectacle as did his brother, but his face was gray and much sunken. Page limped to him as Murray began searching for body wounds. Bert's white lips twisted in a little smile as he beheld Page's horrible appearance. In a whisper he requested—

"Show Ed."

"He can look and laugh all he wants to after I've 'tended to you," mumbled Page, his voice a series of grunts and groans.

He removed the shirt and found two blue holes, one through each lung.

Bert's gaze wandered to White, and he whispered—

"You'll never take Phil in."

"I'll never take you or Ed in," grunted Page, the pain from his wounded jaw causing his eyes to close.

To Murray he said the one word—

"Help."

And he pointed toward the settlement.

"Elizabeth is to send help," sobbed Murray. "I turned back before the first shot was fired. But I couldn't get here in time to do any good."

And, being helpless to aid Page, he rested his head on his knees and wept bitterly.

"—— foolishness. You scared 'em off. I'll lick you tomorrow," faintly promised Ed.

Page gently moved Bert so he could recline against a dead pony and proceeded to examine Murray's work on Ed.

"How's old Bert?" Ed whispered, his lips trembling.

"Hurt bad. But he has a chance," Page managed to answer. "You'll be all right."

"Don't want to if Bert ain't."

"Sing," faintly requested Bert.

In a weak voice Ed sang, his choice continuing to be "Departed Days."

Having done all he could do for the brothers, Page limped to where Shanty Mose had fallen. Except for the mortal wound Mose was practically unmarked. A bullet had caught him between the eyes. Page held the dead hand for a few moments and muttered:

"Many times together, old friend. Well, we fought our bigness."

Ten men rode out to the slough, bringing bandages, whisky and poles for making stretchers. Page insisted on riding to the settlement. The Pollacker boys were carefully carried in. Halfway to the village Elizabeth Potter met the procession and wept in misery at the spectacle.

Fairmount people were used to caring for emergency cases. All night Murray and Elizabeth were among those who watched beside the Pollacker brothers, although it was believed that Ed was out of danger. Bert spoke only once, and that was to advise:

"Sioux guns. Get 'em."

"The men have brought in twelve shotguns and one good Springfield rifle," Murray told him.

Neither Murray nor the girl took any rest for forty-eight hours. At the end of that period Page drew them aside and announced:

"He'll recover. He'll never be the man he was, but he will live. Poor Phil White! Poor Mose!"

CHAPTER XII

THE END OF THE STORM

LEAVING Abner Page and the Pollacker brothers at Fairmont, Murray and three men escorted Elizabeth Potter across the prairie to Winnebago City, where they learned that the girl's people had passed up the river the day before, bound for Shelbyville. At Shelbyville the girl found her parents, the Falls having halted their journey of inquiry to the north.

The alarms continued as the Sioux were carrying on a guerrilla warfare against many small settlements. Murray hurried to the Minnesota and joined Sibley's forces.

It was now known that some of the hostiles wished for peace. Sibley placed a letter in a cigar box and tied it to a pole where the enemy's scouts could find it and deliver it to their leaders. In this message Sibley announced that he could be seen at any time by those wishing to arrange terms of peace, and that he wished to learn what the fighting was about. Preliminary to any such conversation, however, all prisoners must be given up. This offer to discuss peace terms, providing the prisoners were delivered, was made shortly after the Birch Coulee fight.

The letter had a strong effect on those leaders who were sick of war or feared the accumulating consequences of the many massacres. The letter served to undermine Little Crow's influence.

The soldier lodges began to weaken. Gabriel Renville brought more pressure to bear on the hostiles in striving for peace. He was very prominent in the councils of the Wahpetons and Sissetons before the outbreak. His mother was Winona Crawford, a mixed blood and granddaughter of Walking Buffalo, mentioned by Lieutenant Pike. His maternal grandfather was a prominent British trader in the Northwest before and during the 1812 war.

Caught up in the retreat from the Yellow Medicine Agency and surrounded by hostiles and members of the peace party, he had traveled with and camped near the hostiles. He was soon the center of a large number of Sioux who regretted the outbreak and wished for peace.

He was untiring in his efforts to end hostilities, and several times his activities nearly brought the opposing factions into bloody combat. As the leader of the Sisseton and Wahpeton peace party he called for a big council west of Dr. Riggs' Hazelwood mission. Nearly a thousand Sioux were present.

Little Paul was selected as spokesman for Renville's band. He urged the surrender of all white and mixed-blood prisoners. He was answered by Thunder That Paints, mouthpiece for the hostiles,

who insisted that the prisoners must be held as hostages and share the privations and sufferings of the war party.

Little Crow declared that he was the supreme leader of the hostiles and that no white man should touch him until after he was dead. His medicine was to grant this wish.

The hostiles refused to return any property taken from mixed-blood "cut-hairs." Renville took and restored several carts and horses without precipitating a fight. Three hundred mounted warriors rode up to his peace camp, fired their guns at the tops of the tepees and sounded their war-cries, but did no other damage.

Renville continued his endeavors, and finally Little Crow consented to acknowledge Sibley's message. This was sent by Thomas Robinson and Thomas A. Robertson. The answer brought back announced that the writer was an enemy only to those who were enemies to the whites, that the prisoners must be surrendered and that after that was done the writer would meet any of the hostiles who came openly "in the road."

Wapasha, Good Thunder and other influential men, whose hearts had never been in the fighting, secretly sent letters to Sibley. Only among red men could such a strange condition of affairs have continued, the two factions camping side by side with each hour presenting the danger of bloody fighting between them.

When Murray Fall overtook the army it was about to march to Wood Lake, where, the scouts had reported, the Indians were gathered in large numbers.

It was at this lake that the hostiles planned an ambush in a ravine formed by the outlet. The place selected was a mile northwest of the lake.

Big Eagle, who was friendly to the whites but who had felt impelled by the insistence of his men to identify himself with the war party, says that only an accident prevented a slaughter of Sibley's men. He states that Sibley failed to keep his scouts out far enough and that only chance discovery of the ambush prevented much damage from being done to the army.

Early in the morning of September 22 several wagons of soldiers started for the old Yellow Medicine Agency, five miles away, to dig potatoes. Big Eagle insists that these men set out without having gained permission. They drove their wagons into the ambush and prematurely brought on the battle.

His account of the fight shows hundreds of Indians too far away to take part. These warriors did not fire a shot, Big Eagle says. According to his narrative the men in the ravine and in the line connecting it with the road did practically all of the fighting. His own station was on a hill west of the road, he and his men were driven from this position and did no fighting.

Renville, soon to be made Sibley's chief of scouts, gives a different version of the battle and the conditions leading up to it. He claims that Little Crow's plan was to creep up to the army in the night, fire a murderous volley and then rush upon the sleeping camp. Renville says friendly Indians were keeping close watch of the hostiles and that he himself, to discourage the hostiles, declared the soldiers outnumbered the red men. Further to prevent a surprize attack he had Two Stars, a "friendly," argue against Little Crow's plan and in place of it suggest the ambush.

This chief insists that Two Stars' proposal was made to gain time and to give the friendly Indians an opportunity to warn Sibley of ambush or night attack. The discussion lasted nearly until morning, and the night attack was not made.

Both these chiefs agree that the fighting began when the Indians fired on soldiers going to dig potatoes, and who all but drove their horses upon the men lying in the grass. The soldiers fell back to the camp when the attack rapidly increased in ferocity. The camp was surrounded and raked from all sides until Sibley ordered a charge. Then the Indians scattered and fled.

During the fighting the peace-party men dug pits in their camp and hid in them many white prisoners stolen from the hostiles' camp. After the battle the Indians fled north. Some hostiles brought their families into the peace camp and pretended that they had not taken part in the outbreak.

In this engagement Mankato, the Mdewakanton chief, was killed by a spent cannon ball. The ball appeared to be rolling very slowly; and although the chief, lying on the ground, saw it, he was not afraid and did not attempt to get out of its path. It struck him in the back, killing him

instantly. Directly after the fighting ceased Big Eagle and many others surrendered.

This defeat of the Sioux destroyed Little Crow's prestige. He and the greater part of the hostiles fled to Dakota Territory. In the following year the campaign was finished when Sibley entered Dakota and penetrated nearly to the Missouri River. A military commission sentenced three hundred and three hostiles to be hanged and eighteen to be imprisoned for life. President Lincoln ratified the death sentence of but thirty-eight.

After the battle at Wood Lake Murray traveled to Shelbyville and learned that his people had returned to the farm and that the Potters had gone back to Fairmont. He hastened home to help his father. Much of the crops had spoiled, but the stock had grown fat.

After working a few weeks he announced his intention of enlisting, and this time there was no effort to dissuade him. But Chetan Wakan Mani would not have called the mother "Little Hornet" could he have seen her sad face when she was alone. Nor did Murray ever suspect how it struck her to the heart when he found the old bugle and blew military calls until the hawk remembered and swooped down to be fed.

Before going to Fort Snelling to enlist there was a ride to Fairmont. Elizabeth appeared to accept his enlistment as a matter of course and was very calm in discussing their plans for the future. Like the mother she betrayed no fear, no sorrow in bidding him good-by. And he never knew with what terrible forebodings the two women watched him in turn ride out of sight into the wild grass.

Then followed the terrible period of waiting, of scanning the prairie for the husband's return from Shelbyville, where he went regularly to read the list of dead and missing. There was the same dread each time a man rode up to the door; the fear he might be Death's messenger.

And there were many who missed Mad Martha and Papa Baptiste; who missed Ed Pollacker and his reckless laugh and fondness for sentimental songs, now he was off to the war. But never again would the frontier fear the Sioux coming over the skyline to burn and kill. Little Crow was shot to death six miles north of Hutchinson by Nathan Lamson and his son on the evening of July 3, 1863, or a few hours after Pickett's charge at far-away Gettysburg had failed and Murray Fall, of Custer's brigade, had been shot from his saddle by one of Stuart's bold riders.

At last the boy came home, unannounced. He was emaciated but on the road to recovery, and the mother was dumb with happiness. Ed Pollacker came back, boisterously waving his one arm.

Then out of the tall grass crept an iron road, crawling across the State and reaching the Missouri River. Over the road snorted and puffed the iron horse, never to be satisfied until it had raced to the Pacific.

With peace came more settlers, more plows. Like the red man the wild grass gave ground. And there came a time when years mellowed retrospection, when Mrs. Fall talked much and fondly of their first home in Minnesota. When the reminiscent mood was upon her she would tell her grandchildren how Little Crow had named her "Little Hornet;" and she would make unruly youngsters shiver and go to sleep lest in the morning they find moccasin tracks around the commodious farmhouse.

But although the most indulgent of grandmothers and bidding fair to spoil the rising generation by indulgence, on one point she was very firm. None was allowed to climb up and disturb a stuffed crowskin, hung above the door of the "best" room.

"Itth bad medicine," wisely lisped a towhead to "Uncle" Bert, the invalid.

"No, son; it's good medicine," corrected Uncle Bert. "Your dad found it so. But Chetan Wakan Mani had bad luck after he gave it away."

THE END

To the Dogs

by CHARLES VICTOR FISCHER

Author of "East or West," "Salt on a Bird's Tail," etc.

IT WAS midnight, and Gogo had been squatting on the beach since sundown. He heard not the roar of the surf nor the rustle of the wind through the coconut trees that fringed Guam's western shore line. Nor did he see the tumbling breakers, silver crested in the light of the great white moon and the millions of dancing stars. The little brown man saw, heard and felt in his imagination only. Body and soul, Gogo was dominated by one concept—vengeance.

Over his left shoulder, not many hundred yards distant, the city of Agana, capital of the island of Guam, stretched away to the southward. With a single exception, its several hundreds of thatched-roof shacks and bungalows were in darkness.

The exception was a small, trim-built bungalow, on the outer verge of the city, down near the beach. From this a light shone, and every few minutes a burst of raucous, half drunken laughter issued. And each time Gogo heard that laugh he spat venom into the wind and fingered the handle of the knife sheathed in his belt.

"Laugh, Hererra, Spanish beast!" he snarled over his shoulder, in a mixture of Spanish and Chamorro. "You shall never laugh again after tonight! Drink your wine and brag. Tell your brother officer-pigs what dogs we natives are. Slap your big fat belly and twist your mustache, and brag of how you had my father put to death on the garrote, for defending my mother against the Spanish beast Hererra! Yes. Then laugh again and tell your brother officer-pigs how my mother threw herself into the sea rather than submit to the Spanish beast Hererra!"

It was time for Gogo to put his vow into execution—the vow made six years ago, when the Spanish army officer Hererra had destroyed his father's home.

Hererra had attempted to outrage Gogo's mother. Gogo's father, coming home at the moment had struck the Spaniard down with a club. For this he was put to death. And Hererra had continued his bestial persecution of Gogo's mother, till finally she had thrown herself into the sea.

Only a frail, underfed stripling of twelve then, yet Gogo had made his vow. That night six years before he had promised his mother one day to kill the Spanish beast Hererra. That was the night his broken-hearted mother had thrown herself into the sea.

It was time. Gogo was now grown to a little brown man, hard-muscled and with a splendid depth of chest and breadth of shoulders. He was ready to sink his knife hilt-deep into Hererra's yellow heart. No more natives would the fat pig Hererra have put to death. He had sent his last native out on the public square to be lashed.

Gogo was short, scarcely five feet tall.

He was broad-shouldered, thin-hipped, had short, muscular legs and long arms, his finger tips reaching below his knees. His face was broad, with thick lips, a flat nose and a forehead somewhat higher and broader than that of the average Chamorro. He had almond-shaped black eyes that were full of fire and Oriental passion.

Over the Island of Guam was being mouthed the news that Hererra would soon return to Spain.

Hererra would never return to Spain! For the ten-thousandth time young Gogo repeated his vow as he squatted on the beach that cool moonlight night, while the object of his hatred, Hererra, his fat face flushed and his evil black eyes sparkling with wine, his black mustache pointing upward, his enormous paunch shaking with laughter, made merry carousal in his bungalow with a few other Spanish army officers.

With the patience of an Indian Gogo waited for the party to break up. The tide came in till the spent waves were reaching in and lapping about his bare feet. But not till he was ankle-deep in it did he become aware of this, so intent was he upon the red deed in hand.

It would be easy. He knew the architecture of Hererra's bungalow. The bedroom lay in the rear and to the left of the large living room. The native houseboy would give him no trouble; he slept on the back porch—and the native of Guam is a sound sleeper. The front door was never locked. Gogo had only to crawl in through the living room, into the bedroom, sink his knife into Hererra's heart, then crawl out again.

As Gogo arose and backed away clear of the inrush of water a chorus of hilarious laughs, followed by the *thump thump thump* of drunken feet told him Hererra's party was breaking up. He heard the interchange of good-night greetings. Then a burst of song, as the group of revelers went staggering up into the dark city.

It was time. Hererra was alone, save for the house boy. The light would soon go out. The house boy would soon be snoring on the back porch. Then, "*Adios*, Señor Hererra!"

GOGO was about to squat on his haunches again when he saw something. It was a dark object, out beyond the breakers. The moon was behind a cloud for the moment and he could make out nothing of detail. Some native fisherman, he thought.

But the next moment the moon rode clear, and Gogo thought differently. That craft out there was too high, had too much of free-board to be a native's canoe. Now that he saw it in the full white light of the moon he perceived that it was a large whaleboat. But what aroused him in earnest was that the boat appeared empty. No forms rose above the gunwales.

He watched it slowly ride in on the tide. There was no one aboard it, he soon became certain. For the boat was now tossing in the breakers, broadside to the inrush. Had there been a man aboard he would have endeavored to hold her head-on.

Fearful lest the boat capsize, Gogo waded out till he was up to his neck and then swam to it. He pulled himself up over the bow. As he scrambled aft in the tossing boat he stumbled over a body and heard a groan. But his main concern for the moment was to get the boat straightened out. He picked up an oar, jumped back in the stern sheets and, using the oar as a steering sweep, brought the craft around pointing for the beach.

In a few minutes the boat grated on sand. Gogo jumped in the water and pushed her up, high and dry. Then he clambered aboard again and bent over the man lying in the bottom of the boat.

It was a most horrible face—what little could be seen of it, which was only the upper portion, forehead, eyes and nose; the lower portion being covered with a heavy black beard. The deep-sunken eyes were wide open, bulging, and stared up at the white moon in glassy vacancy. The high broad forehead was heavily furrowed. The nose was prominent, and rendered more so by the sunken portions beside it. He might have been thirty, and might have been fifty.

He had on only a much torn shirt and a pair of trousers.

Gogo spoke to him and gently shook him. The man not so much as grunted. His mouth was wide open. Through the heavy whiskers Gogo could see his teeth and tongue. He was breathing laboriously, in choking, asthmatic gasps.

Gogo forgot Hererra. This man was dying for water! Gogo jumped over the gunwale. The next moment he had the man in his arms and was bearing him up into the

city to his little one-room hovel. The man was a giant in frame, but so emaciated that he was no heavier than a boy.

In his little hovel Gogo laid him out on a straw mat, which was the only bed he had, and then lighted all his candles, five. He had a bambooful of water at hand. He filled a gourd, and from it allowed the water to drop slowly into the man's mouth. While thus engaged he heard hurried footsteps without. He turned to face a Spanish soldier, one of the guards, entering through the front door. In those days the native of Guam was ever under the eye of the Spanish watchdog.

The soldier took a wide-eyed look at the prone man, listened to Gogo's hurried and excited explanation, and then went out on the run, to make report to Captain Hererra, who was his immediate commanding officer.

Gogo allowed the gourdful of water to trickle slowly into the man's mouth. The man then commenced babbling deliriously, in a language which was outlandish to Gogo, who understood only Chamorro and a smattering of Spanish.

He opened up the man's shirt front and thereby exposed a leather tobacco pouch, attached to a string about his waist. It was full of coins by the feel of it. Gogo removed it and tossed it over on a small rickety table which, along with two rickety chairs and the straw mat comprised his entire furniture.

The man was now bawling loudly. Gogo was in a quandary. He dared not give him any more water. He had once seen a man in a like condition die from being suddenly given too much water. He must get a doctor. But the man was becoming maniacal, writhing and squirming and throwing out his arms in his agony—and Gogo feared leaving him alone. Perhaps the Spanish soldier had gone for a doctor. He would wait.

But instead of a doctor, Hererra came. He tramped in, staggering slightly and stood akimbo, his shifty black eyes fixed on the suffering man, the points of his mustache pointing straight up—two hundred pounds of fat self-importance and arrogance. He wore skin-tight knee-breeches of black velvet, a short coat to match, white stockings and a loose blouse of fluffy white silk. From one of his sleeves hung a white silken handkerchief. With a deft snap he jerked this forth and commenced mopping his fat greasy face.

Gogo told him all there was to tell, in his mixed Spanish and Chamorro. Hererra listened in haughty attitude, his double chin held high, his arms folded across his fat chest. The man on the floor kept up his mad babbling.

"Either a dog of an Englishman or a pig of an American," said the Spaniard. Then his roving eyes came to rest on the pouch over on the table. He stepped over, picked it up, hefted it, feeling its contents. "Is this his?"

Gogo nodded. Never had he so wanted to sink his knife into Hererra's heart. But he would do that later.

Hererra loosened the pouch string, held it over to the light of a candle and looked in it. Gogo caught a flash of his wicked black eyes. Hererra stiffened. Then he recovered himself and quickly drew the purse strings tight again. He turned an accusing glare upon Gogo.

"Well, young thief, how much did you take from this man's purse?"

Always had the Spaniard addressed the Chamorro as "thief." Because, when he discovered that string of islands, a few natives attempted to steal one of his boats, Magellan named them the Ladrone Islands—"Thieves' Islands." Considering the method of their acquisition, he named them well.

With difficulty Gogo kept his right hand from moving toward his knife. He could have drawn, stepped in and lunged, and then and there finished Fernando Hererra. But Gogo was not so great a fool. On an Island thirty miles long by six miles wide a fugitive had little chance. He swallowed his gorge and returned the Spaniard's glare.

Hererra didn't repeat the question. He turned and bent over the raving man on the floor. For several minutes he appeared to be intently studying the wild-eyed and whiskered face. He felt of the man's heart. Finally he straightened up.

"This man can not live," said he. "He will die before sunrise. I have sent the private for Surgeon Pinzon. You will go for Padre Delgado."

"And mark this, thief," he flung after Gogo as the lad went out: "For each minute you take longer than fifteen, you shall receive ten lashes in public at noon tomorrow."

Hurrying up the narrow, crooked street, Gogo said to himself:

"For each minute Fernando Hererra is

alive after sunrise tomorrow, I, Peter Gogo, will take a thousand lashes in public!"

WHEN Gogo returned with the Spanish priest, a score or more of curious natives squatted in a semi-circle before his door. At the door stood the Spanish soldier. Entering, they found the little one-room hovel well-nigh crowded to capacity.

Surgeon Pinzon was there, along with three attendants. A stretcher had been brought from the hospital, and the patient made comfortable. He had been given a little more water, then an injection of morphine. He was now resting quietly. It was best, said the doctor, not to remove him to the hospital immediately.

The doctor sat on the floor with one hand on the sick man's forehead. The priest took his place at the man's other side. The three attendants stood to one side. Gogo squatted on his haunches in a corner. Hererra took up most of the room; he paced back and forth nevously, his black eyes darting to and fro, his fat fingers twitching at his side.

An hour of quiet passed. Then the sick man commenced to rave again.

"Hold on, Joe! he broke out. "—— you, Joe, don't, don't, don't jump! To —— with the rest of them Joe! They're all yellow—quitters! Hang on, Joe! You've got guts! Look at that cloud, Joe! She's gonna rain! Rain, Joe, rain! We'll win through, Joe—you and I! Hear me, Joe? Rain! Jim Bell never told you wrong! Did 'e? —— you, Joe, don't, don't jump! Hang on! What? You can't! All right then, you —— squealer—go ahead—go ahead! All right, Joe! I thought you had guts. Good-by, Joe—good-by—good-by——"

And thus he went on for several minutes. He was given more water. Then he became quiet again, lapsing into a half doze.

Nearing three o'clock the man had a lucid period. He awoke. For fifteen minutes there was reason in his eyes and he talked rationally.

His name was Jim Bell. He was an American. He had been first mate on the schooner *Bella Duncan*, bound from the Philippines for San Francisco with a mixed cargo, mostly of tobacco. Eight days after clearing Bernardino Strait a fire had broken out in one of her holds. The skipper and nearly the entire crew were drunk. The fire soon got beyond control. They had abandoned her. Eighteen of them—all hands, had shoved off from the schooner's side in the whaleboat and watched her burn to the water-line.

They had drifted willy-nilly, for how many days, Jim Bell did not know. It might have been three weeks, possibly a month. He had lost all count of days. Their water gave out. From then on it had been ——. They fought with one another like so many cats with tails tied together and thrown over a clothes-line. Some had prayed for rain; others had cursed the Almighty for not sending rain.

There had been long intervals of stupor and delirium. And always, when he awakened to lucidity, there had been fewer men in the boat. One after another they had dropped over the gunwale and gone down to the dead men—till at last there were but two left, a seaman named Joe Miller and himself. Then Joe had gone, and that was the last Jim Bell remembered.

A few minutes of profound silence followed, which was broken by Hererra.

"Señor Bell had a purse," he purred in good English. "Does he recall how much it contained?"

At this the sick man's wasted hands began feeling about his waist.

"Oh, be at ease, señor," Hererra assured him, holding up an impressive fat hand. "We have your purse. But—" with a sidelong, significant glance at Gogo, who still squatted on his haunches and who understood not a word of what was being said—"itchy fingers had toyed with it before I arrived."

"Why, yes," the American answered. "There wasn't much money in it—about three hundred dollars in American gold. But there was a diamond, a big diamond in the rough."

The doctor, the priest, and Herrera interchanged looks. The rest within the room didn't understand English.

"I bought the stone from a down-and-outer in Borneo," Jim Bell went on, "for two thousand dollars. A lapidary in Manila told me it would cut down to a ten-thousand-dollar stone, and that the fragments would pay for the cutting and polishing."

Hererra stepped across the room, picked up the pouch and dumped its contents on the table, a heap of gold coins, mostly

twenty-dollar gold pieces. But it contained no big diamond in the rough.

Hererra stood back, looking from the heap of coins to the man on the stretcher.

"The señor had a diamond?" he said with perfectly feigned curiosity.

But Jim Bell didn't hear him. Those few minutes of talking had drained his reserve forces. He had fallen back into that stupefied state that neither knows nor cares. He lay there with his mouth wide open, breathing hard, his eyes open but unseeing.

Here the doctor ordered his attendants to pick up the stretcher and carry the man to the hospital.

"One moment, doctor," Hererra cut in, again holding up that fat hand. Then he turned and fixed Gogo with a black glare.

Gogo hadn't understood the conversation; but he knew from Hererra's actions and attitude that the Spaniard was playing one of his games of rottenness, and that somehow he, Peter Gogo, figured in that game as the "goat."

"Well, thief?" Hererra said presently in Chamorro. "The American's diamond—where is it?"

Gogo straightened up and stood glaring at him.

"The American had a diamond in his purse," Hererra went on. "You took the purse from round his waist. It was there on the table when I came."

Still Gogo made no reply. He was thinking. He now saw what his tricky accuser was up to. If he didn't look sharp, Hererra would have him in the calaboose in not many minutes. He, Gogo, would be out at sunrise building roads, along with the rest of that gang of unfortunates up in the calaboose, under the surveillance of six Spanish watch-dogs, all armed with pistols and blacksnake whips. Ay, and those Spanish soldiers took fiendish delight in the whistle of those whips. Gogo knew. He had seen. He must act, not talk.

"Come, come, thief!" Hererra rasped impatiently. "The American's diamond!"

Gogo stood as immobile as a post. He appeared to be looking down upon the floor, but in reality was gaging the distance to the one window of his hovel. This window was simply a large oblong opening. There was no glass in it.

"Ah well—" Hererra made a sweeping gesture—"I think we can find a way to loosen your tongue."

A clap of his hands brought in the soldier.

"Take this thief and lock him in the calaboose," Hererra commanded in Spanish. Then he turned and said to the doctor:

"A diamond, even a large one, is a very small thing and easy to hide. But I think——"

He stopped. Gogo had acted. He had made a clean leap of five feet that carried him through the window. Hererra, the doctor, the priest, the soldier and the three attendants piled out through the door. But Gogo was gone. It was an easy matter, with so many shacks built so close together, to dodge from one to another, keeping in the shadows and make a getaway.

HERERRA had the guard turned out. Search the city! was the order. As if a score of Spanish soldiers—or a hundred for that matter, could catch a Chamorro at night in Agana's maze of crooked streets and alleys and dark back yards. Gogo knew every hen-coop and kennel. He zigzagged this way and that, jumping fences, scaling walls, now and then lying concealed in the shadow of a hedge or a shack, chuckling, as he watched his hunters running to and fro, bleating and babbling to one another like so many sheep.

They were moments of excitement, yet in them little Gogo was planning. He would not be cheated out of his vengeance. Hererra would never return to Spain! He would kill Hererra before sunrise. But first he must recover the American's diamond.

Circling widely, he zigzagged his way down toward the beach, finally fetching up at Hererra's bungalow. Here was the safest place he could have hidden; the soldiers were all up in the heart of the city, searching the labyrinth of crooked streets and alleys and back yards.

He slunk around to the back porch. Heavy snoring told him Hererra's houseboy was oblivious to the world. He returned to the front of the house and, after a searching look up the street, catfooted up on the front porch. The front door was open, and the big living-room into which it opened was in darkness; but through the door to the bedroom a light shone.

Gogo entered, stealthily crossed the living-room and peered into the bedroom, which was dimly lighted by an oil lamp. There was no one within, Hererra having

not yet returned. The room contained a large bed, a dresser, a large round table, three deep, soft-cushioned chairs and an immense mirror that stood about six feet. Three large magnificently framed pictures hung on the walls; one of Christopher Columbus, one of the Queen of Spain and one of Hererra's own sleek-headed fatness.

Over in a corner stood a long, single-barreled shotgun. This drew Gogo's curiosity. Also it caused an idea to sprout within his prolific mind. Breaking the barrel he noted that the gun was loaded. He extracted the shell, just to make sure it was a good one.

He knew now how he would recover the American's diamond. Also, he saw a better way of sending Hererra on his way rejoicing to warmer regions. A load of shot was much more certain of fetching a man's heart than was the point of a knife. The knife-point might strike a rib and be deflected.

He put the gun down again, and then stepped out into the dark living-room. Over on one side was a large couch. Gogo lay down between this and the wall.

In a short time Hererra returned. He stamped up the steps and into the living-room, halting at the table in the center. Was the Spaniard going to light the lamp? Gogo wondered. No. He heard the cloop of a cork, then a long gurgling sound, finally a piggish, "Ah!" Then the bump of the bottle as Hererra set it down, followed by *thump, thump, thump,* as he tramped into his bedroom.

Followed a few moments of profound silence. Then Gogo heard a grunt—a deep chuckle—*thump thump*—the squeak of the bed springs.

It was time. Gogo arose and stepped over the couch. With the stealth of a cat he glided over to the bedroom door. Snorting and grunting Hererra sat on the bed, bending over and unlacing one shoe. Four noiseless steps carried Gogo over to the corner in which stood the shotgun.

Bending over his shoe Hererra got a vague glimpse of those swiftly moving brown feet. He straightened up. But too late. He looked into the muzzle of his own shotgun. The hammer was back—a brown finger crooked on the trigger—and behind was a brown face with a pair of black eyes that blazed murderous intent.

GOGO wasted but very few minutes questioning Hererra. When the Spaniard stoutly maintained that he didn't have the American's diamond, Gogo simply but grimly commanded him to get up and march.

He couldn't shoot the Spaniard here, without bringing the entire guard on the gallop; and then he wouldn't have time to search for the diamond. No. He would march Hererra out into the wild, the jungle. Perhaps the Spaniard had the diamond on him. If not he would force him to tell where it was; torture it out of him. The American's diamond recovered, he would carry out his vow—shoot Hererra.

"Remember, Spanish beast," Gogo warned him before they set out, "a word, a cry, any noise from you, and I will pull the trigger. You killed my father and drove my mother into the waves, and I would shoot you as I would a wild pig. March!"

And march Hererra did. Down to the beach, then to the southward, with Gogo prodding him in the kidneys with the muzzle of the shotgun, grunting, heaving, sweating, the Spaniard labored along. A shout from him would have brought a score of soldiers in as many seconds; but he knew that they would arrive only in time to find him wriggling in the sand, with his fat-encased carcass full of shot. And life was sweet to Hererra.

Close to the water's edge, along the sinuous shore line Gogo marched him. The shacks on their left thinned out as they approached the city's southern outskirts. The little brown man felt exalted as never had he felt before. His was the joy of the slave driving his driver. Each jab of the gun in the Spaniard's kidneys brought a swinish grunt, and each grunt started a chuckle down in the deeps of Gogo's stomach.

When they had cleared the city Gogo ordered his captive to turn to the left. They passed through a sparse coconut grove, then crossed the narrow road that connected Agana with Piti, the harbor port.

As they left the road and were about to plunge into the densely wooded section on the other side, Gogo called a halt. What prompted him to do this was a cow. He didn't want the cow, but he did have use for the rope with which it was tethered. After helping himself to about thirty feet of the rope, which he coiled and slung over his

shoulder, Gogo resumed prodding his captive in the kidneys.

The way led up a lofty ridge of mountain. On the other, eastern side, this mountain sloped down into a deep, dense-grown valley, through which flowed the Agana River. Down in that valley one day long before, while running down a wild pig Gogo had come upon an old abandoned shack. He had thereafter lived in that shack for a long time. He knew the valley as did no one else on the Island of Guam. Down to that shack would he march Hererra. There would he hold him captive, till he forced him to divulge the hiding place of the American's diamond. Then he would release him—to the gods!

Hererra grunted and yammered for it was an arduous climb, and he was soft, flabby. He snorted and blew like a locomotive. He whined and begged to be permitted to rest, but all he got each time he opened his mouth was a sharp whack, two or three, with a bight of the rope across the seat of his skin-tight breeches. And it stung, that rope.

"You know now, Spanish beast," Gogo panted, "what the lash feels like. But think you, fat pig, of the many natives you have had lashed in public. Fifty, seventy-five, a hundred lashes across the bare back! I have seen you stand and grin, as men fell unconscious!"

And *zip zip zip*, went the rope across Hererra's fat thighs.

The black hour before dawn was approaching. As they topped the ridge the moon was dipping over the watery world's edge in the east, and the stars were fast dimming and dying. There was no wind. Far below them lay the wild valley, dark and ominously silent.

Ere making the long, steep descent Gogo called a halt, for he too was panting and winded from the long climb. Also he was in some slight perplexity as to how to get the rope around Hererra's wrists. He dared not lay down the gun. For Hererra, despite his fatness and softness, was a powerful man. His was nearly twice the weight of Gogo. Gogo was taking no chances on a hand-to-hand grapple with him. He saw only one way: He would have to lay the Spaniard out with the butt of the gun, then lash him up and wait for him to come to. He would do this when they got down in the valley.

And now there floated up from that valley a noise that caused Gogo to tense and listen. It was the far-away, dirgelike baying of a pack of wild dogs. At first the howling came from far across the valley. But it grew louder rapidly. Gogo chuckled deep down in his stomach. That vicious pack down there would save him the gruesome task of burying Hererra.

They stood up there on the crest for several minutes. The howl of the pack below came nearer and nearer. Finally Gogo snapped, "*Allee!*" which is the way the native of Guam tells his *carabao* to "Giddap." And he accompanied the "*allee*" with a well delivered whack of the bight of rope.

THE thing happened accidentally. Of course it would have happened anyway. Hererra was doomed never to leave that valley. It was Gogo's wholesouled purpose to kill him and feed him to the wild dogs. But not till after he had recovered Jim Bell's diamond.

The descent was steep and the mountain being barren up near the top, the going was slippery. Hererra was having difficulty holding his feet. A couple of times they shot out from under him and he went sliding on his rope-sore hams. It kept Gogo on the hop to keep close behind him. And it was this that caused him to stub his toe on a small jut of rock. He went over head first in a somersault. And in performing that somersault Gogo accidentally pulled the trigger.

Hererra received the full charge of shot in the back. He let out a wild, piercing shriek, and then went tumbling and rolling down the mountain, with Gogo skidding not far behind.

Gogo checked his downward plunge ere he reached the bottom. He lay there on the mountain side, listening to Hererra's death-groans issue up from below. It was an awful moment for Gogo. He was trembling. Icy moisture oozed from his every pore. He felt nausea at the pit of his stomach and foggy giddiness in his brain.

Why was this? he wondered. He had killed his man! Hererra! He had committed the deed to which for six years he had looked forward as the crowning achievement of his life. Yet now, that it was done, he felt no exultation. Not that he felt any compunction. He was neither sorry nor

glad. But why this weakness, this sickness at the stomach, this trembling all over?

He lay there for some time. The groans below ceased. Again he heard the howling of the wild dogs, and they were close now. Finally he pulled himself together and made his way down.

He found Hererra. The Spaniard lay on his back, stretched out stiff. Gogo stood at a distance of a dozen feet from him. Somehow he couldn't bring himself to approach any nearer. His motor-centers were momentarily paralyzed, so that his legs refused to obey his will. His knees were knocking together.

Then of a sudden Gogo's mind leaped back to the hazy mists of six years before. He visioned the faces of his mother and father. They smiled in approbation at him. He had done right. Their smiles seemed to convey those words. He had slain not a man but a beast—a monster of sin and iniquity, with the mind of a snake, the heart of a rat and the passions of a wolf, that had no excuse for being, that lived only to gratify its own desires and make others suffer. He had done right. He had rendered humanity a service.

Gogo's weakness left him. His knees ceased trembling. He suddenly grew conscious of an increased vital power. He felt strong enough to throw a bull.

He advanced and knelt down beside his victim. There was no heart action; the Spaniard was as dead as dead could be. Gogo went through his pockets. A few pesetas, a gold watch and chain, a silver cigaret case, were all he found. Piece by piece he took off Hererra's clothes, stripped him, feeling thoroughly through each garment, save those portions in the back of the shirts and coat which were blood-soaked. He found no diamond.

There remained but one thing to do: return to Agana. He must go up over the mountain, down to the beach, and then back to the dead Spaniard's bungalow. There was yet time. He could reach there before dawn. The houseboy wouldn't wake up till after sunrise. By then he would have searched every possible hiding place in Hererra's bedroom.

Hererra must have hidden the diamond during that moment of silence that had followed his entering the bedroom, thought Gogo. Perhaps beneath the pillow, after he had sat down on the bed. He recalled the Spaniard's chuckle, just before the squeak of the bed springs.

He ascended the mountain. It was a long, laborious climb, and when he reached the top his muscles ached and he was breathing hard. So he squatted for a rest.

Again he heard the doleful baying of the pack of wild dogs, and now from almost directly below him. He tensed, straining to hear. They howled again, and Gogo leaped to his feet, for if he knew anything of wild dogs, that chorus of howls was tinged with a note of exultation. They had scented the meat! Crouched, every fiber and ligament taut, in vain Gogo strained to penetrate the black, void-like space below.

Silence, for a minute, three, five. Then he fancied he heard a sniffing sound. A growl. More growls. A snarl. A yelp. And then there burst forth such a confused and mingled jumble of growls and snarls and yelps as never had Gogo heard before. They were at it! Down there at the foot of the mountain was a battle royal of a dozen ferocious and wolfish mongrels, and the bone of contention was Fernando Hererra.

DARK-GRAY dawn enshrouded Agana, as Gogo slunk northward along the beach. He met no one. Had he seen anything like a human form approaching he would have taken to the water. A cur barked at him as he came abreast of the more populous part of the city. That was all.

Hererra's houseboy was still snoring terrifically. Again Gogo catfooted up on the front porch and entered the living-room. The oil lamp still burned in the bedroom. Gogo began searching.

First he turned to the bed. With the deftness and thoroughness of a custom officer he went through sheets, blankets, mattress and pillow. Next he turned to the dresser. The first thing his eye fell on was a lump of cotton. He noted that a small portion had been pulled from this. He crushed it in his hand, then threw it on the bed. Then piecemeal he took the articles of clothing from one drawer after another, felt through them, and then tossed them in a heap on the bed.

In like manner he searched all the uniforms that hung in the closet; also shoes, slippers, hats. He piled every article searched on the bed. He poked about the room, nosing behind pictures, into every

corner and hole that looked like a possible hiding place. He found no big diamond.

Gogo blew out the light, for it was now daylight. Then he slouched out into the living-room, halting at the table where Hererra had stopped on his way in and drunk his farewell nightcap. A few empty bottles stood on the table. Gogo spat on the floor, viciously.

Where had that Spaniard put that diamond!

Had he given it to someone else to hold for him? To whom? The doctor? No; Surgeon Pinzon was an honorable man. The priest? Emphatically no. Gogo was not a catholic, but he had a profundity of faith in the righteousness of kind-hearted old Padre Delgado. The three hospital attendants and the soldier were out of the question! The almighty Hererra would never have stooped to implicate himself in crime with lowly enlisted men.

Then had Hererra passed the diamond to some other army officer, somewhere between Gogo's hovel and his own bungalow? Why should he? He couldn't have feared being searched. Who on the Island of Guam would have the effrontery to question the puissant Hererra? No. Hererra had not passed that diamond into other hands.

But where was it?

With a snarl of baffled rage Gogo spun on his heel and returned to the door of the ransacked bedroom. The diamond was not in that room. He had searched every . . . The thought petered out, as his eyes lighted on that small lump of cotton on the bed at the foot of the heap of clothing. Like a lighted match dropped into a tubful of gasoline, the spark of an idea fell on his imagination and set it ablaze. He had it! he had it! he had it! In one brilliant moment it flashed to him that Hererra might have hidden that diamond in the one place he had not searched.

It should be repeated that from that lump of cotton a small portion had been pulled, as was evidenced by the gossamer shreds sticking out. Coupled with this in Gogo's mind was the fleeting glimpse of a tiny ball of fire that had fallen to the ground, when he shot Hererra up there on the mountain side. He had it! Hererra had hidden that diamond in the barrel of his shotgun! On top of the diamond he had stuffed a wad of cotton down into the barrel, as a precaution against its rolling out, should his houseboy go monkeying with the gun.

Then where, oh where, was the American's diamond now? In the belly of a wild dog?

Gogo shot out of Hererra's bungalow like an arrow. As he galloped southward along the beach, his fingers and toes touching sand only at long intervals of ten feet or so, a few native fishermen stared after him in wide-eyed bewilderment. But Gogo heeded them not. He galloped straight on to the city's edge, then turned to the left, shot through the narrow strip of coconut grove between the beach and the road, then plunged into the thicket; then up and over the mountain.

Of course the diamond wasn't in the belly of a wild dog. What dog, wild or domesticated, would be so great a fool as to swallow a big, sharp-cornered diamond in the rough?—a diamond so big that it barely fitted into the barrel of a ten-gauge shotgun. Dogs had better sense.

They did, however, eat all there was of Hererra—ay, the last fat and flabby ounce of the flesh of him. And carried off his bones. All that was left when Gogo slid down the mountain to that spot was the American's diamond. He took it down to the river and gave it a thorough rinsing off. Then he set about burying Hererra's clothes.

WHAT had become of Hererra? For weeks and weeks the question had been on every tongue. The ship that was to have carried the Spaniard home had come and gone. Soldiers had literally combed the island; not so much as one of Hererra's stockings had they found.

Everything pointed to Peter Gogo. His inveterate hatred of Hererra was generally known. And it must have been he who had ransacked Hererra's bungalow that morning; for he had been seen running along the beach. Every one drew the same inference —Gogo had made away with Hererra.

Natives grinned at one another, but shook their heads in somber foreboding. Little Peter Gogo had acted the brave man, but not the wise one. Sooner or later he would be captured. Then—ah then! What an example the Spaniards would make of him! The ants! Yes; it would be the ants. Molasses and ants. A gallon of molasses smeared over his face, in his eyes, ears, nose and mouth—then a caskful of black ants turned loose on him. Poor Pete Gogo.

But there was no finding Peter Gogo. A few times, though, his hunters were exceedingly warm. Once a group of them smoked and talked for an hour beneath a coconut tree in the top of which was Peter Gogo.

Another time, at night, two of them all but stumbled over him; but he was off through the brush with the speed of a bullet, growling, snarling, yelping, and the soldiers thought it was a wild dog. Again, for a whole day he lay in Agana River, concealed by a lump of brush, while all about him the wild valley echoed with the voices of Spanish soldiers.

Meanwhile Jim Bell recovered, and was discharged from the hospital, once more a hale and robust young giant of thirty-three, every inch of him the indomitable sailor of the old era of wooden ships and iron men. He paid his hospital bill, purchased a scanty outfit of clothing, then rented a small partially furnished shack, and sat back to await the coming of some wind-boat or other in the hope of securing a berth.

He had no hope of ever recovering his diamond. Like a thousand other day dreams, that bubble had burst. He had hoped to realize ten or twelve thousand dollars on that stone in San Francisco. With this, and the few thousands he already had, he had purposed purchasing a small schooner, or a sloop.

Such had been his dream for years. But always had it turned out a bubble—just when it seemed about to materialize. It was an old story, and Jim Bell was used to it. He grinned and hoped for another time.

He made many friends among the natives. Among these was a wrinkled and dried-up old fellow named Vicente Cruz. Jim Bell and this old boy had much in common. Cruz had gone down to the sea in wind-jammers in his day. Also old Cruz understood English. They became inseparables.

This intimacy was soon being talked about in official Spanish circles. What gave it significance was that Vicente Cruz was Peter Gogo's grandfather on his mother's side. But as well might the Spaniards have tried to get information out of a mummy as from Jim Bell.

Then one day a doughty little schooner, the *Albatross*, put in to Apra Harbor. She brought a cargo of rice from Japan, and was to pick up a cargo of copra consigned to a merchant in San Francisco. The gods were with Jim Bell. The *Albatross* was without a first mate. Moreover, her skipper, a down east Yankee, was an old shipmate of Jim's. The berth was his for the asking.

From out on Orote Point, overlooking Apra Harbor, day after day Peter Gogo watched the unloading and the loading of the *Albatross*. He was waiting for the word. One evening his grandfather, Vicente Cruz, brought him that word. It was that the *Albatross* would sail next morning at dawn; that all was arranged.

Late that night Gogo swam out to the little schooner. The powerful hand of Jim Bell gripped his and helped him over the rail.

The *Albatross* sailed next morning with a new first mate and a new cabin-boy.

TWO years later the little *Albatross* once more put in at Guam. Then it was that Peter Gogo quit his job as cabin-boy. Not that he was tired of the job. Indeed the skipper and owner of the *Albatross*, Jim Bell—he had purchased her in San Francisco—was a man whom it was a pleasure to be with and to work for. But Gogo had money now, more than a thousand dollars; and it was time he built himself a home, took a wife, and began raising a family.

He could put foot upon his native soil with impunity now. For Guam was no longer under Spanish rule. During those two years Uncle Sam had reached out and taken the island. Brute force and oppression had ceased. Under the administration of American naval officers Guam was now the happy little isle God meant it to be.

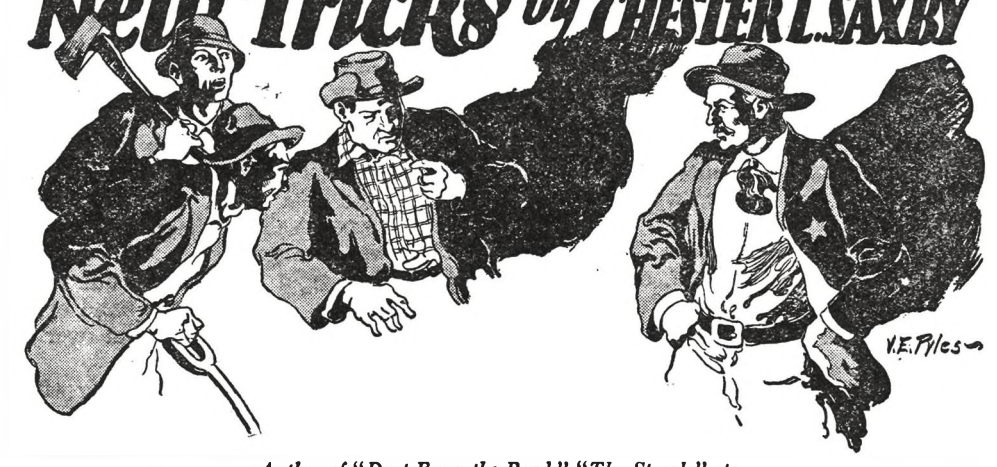
So skipper and cabin-boy parted, over a bottle of sparkling champagne down in the cabin of the *Albatross*.

"We —— good friend," said Gogo, who by now had added another language to his accomplishments. "You my big white brother. But this —— be on sea all time no good. I go raise family, —— big family."

He has lived up to that. Up to six years ago he had sixteen children; nine sons and seven daughters. For aught to the contrary there may be more by now.

The Old Dog Learns New Tricks

by CHESTER L. SAXBY



Author of "Dust From the Road," "The Streak," etc.

THEY came to tell Gale that Ott Knowles had been murdered in his cabin. A small crowd of them escorted McCreedel, the rural route postman to Gale's office. McCreedel brought the news into town of Ott's killing.

Gale looked at them thoughtfully, counted them, watched their faces.

"Fixing to get me murdered, too. Easy way to get rid of me," he said.

They answered him.

"You're sheriff, ain't you? What you going to do?"

He met those questions singly.

"Yes, I'm sheriff till election day. I reckon that's Tuesday week. This comes just right, don't it?" These men were his enemies. They considered that Ben Gale was getting old. "Being sheriff, I'll ask you boys to step outside while McCreedel gives me the particulars. Maybe after that I'll be able to tell you better what I'm going to do? Sit down McCreedel. Outside, boys."

He closed the door and sank heavily into his chair. He had put on weight during his last term of office and he had added some gray hairs. These carping jays could easily find a basis for throwing him over. He was slowing up.

He waved his hand.

"Well, let's have it," he said and, tilting back his chair, half closed his eyes which nevertheless regarded McCreedel hawklike from the concealment of thick eyelashes.

Old, yes. Fifty-five. But no fool. He set himself to arrange the picture in his mind as McCreedel in a bothered, jerky, nervously rapid voice described what he had come upon up there in the hills.

The narrow wagon road, winding up and down and up again through thick timber, circled bare knobs from which the equinoctial rains washed landslides of gravel and big stones the size of a man's head down into the rutty pass. The last house was Erk Welsh's place with the gaunt, blasted oak in the front yard. Then there was the long stretch, three miles maybe, before you reached the Knowles cabin. The clearing was just wide enough for Ott's dejected dwelling, and a shed, a small, low smokehouse, a sty. Ott lived a poor mean life away from everybody, preferred to for one reason or another. It was said he had a good deal of money.

McCreedel jabbed out his final observation, slumped like a worn-out little old woman, wiped his beaded narrow forehead and blinked his jumpy eyes.

Gale nodded.

"That was this morning at nine-thirty you found him? Came right back in, did you?" He snapped open his watch. One o'clock. He looked sharply at the scared rabbit of a man. "Roads bad? Um-hm.

Strangled with a rope, choked besides, and shot. A nasty business. One man couldn't do all that, could he?"

The postman clamped his jaws, jerked out, "No," and mopped his face.

"Nor a small man either," went on Gale. "Ott was right tall. What stumps me is that anybody could get him, being as he toted that shotgun of his most every step he took. You didn't see that gun, did you? All right. Don't go far away, McCreedel."

When the door opened those who waited outside crowded in. They saw the sheriff standing at the window. In profile his face appeared very solemn, even dismal; but when one of them snapped a curt, "How's that for a good job to stay off of?" and he turned around, he wore a fairly indifferent expression.

"For them that handle real estate," he replied blandly, and all but his quizzer laughed, so neatly had he turned the joke. "I'll be hitching up," he added.

"You'll be packin' a shootin'-iron this trip, eh, Ben?"

Gale shook his head.

"What would I be wanting with a gun?" He had never carried a gun in his life. He restated his maxim: "A gun don't protect a man. It gets him into trouble."

"No-gun" Gale, the county called him, rather pleased with the distinction of having a sheriff who went about unarmed. But sixteen years usually bring a change in theories.

Never a large man, Gale had in the past depended upon a remarkable quickness and strength, and time sucks these virtues out of a man before anything else. Hence the question. The agitators wanted to see him back down. They were disappointed. Two pairs of hand-cuffs went into his coat pockets, and a six-inch length of steel tubing half an inch in diameter with notches cut in it by a file. Into this tube he had thrust a tightly rolled slip of paper.

Within the hour he was rattling out of town behind a presentable but not fast sorrel horse. In the buggy with him he took a tin lunch box and nothing else. He sometimes remarked good humoredly, when twitted on the score of the fat he was adding to his girth, that he always traveled light. A poor retort, of course.

In the open grassy country the sun still shone hot at midday, but he had no sooner entered the woods that would stay by him most of the seven miles remaining than the late fall season became immediately noticeable in the coolness of the air and the red and brown and yellow foliage and the fruiting heads of rank undergrowth. A pretty time in these hills if a man was out to find prettiness. Not so Gale.

His shoulders slouched forward as he bumped over outcroppings of the rock formation whereon this grinding road was laid. He scowled straight ahead, now that he had no need to cover his emotions, just as he would scowl at Ott Knowles when he found him. The county was a peaceable one not given to crime in any form, at least in the last six years. Before that there were ruckuses, the tail end of a bad feud, moonshiners, a spell of race troubles; but these came in the period of Gale's greatest vigor, and he had made quite a name in his handling of them, as his uninterrupted re-elections proved.

He asked no more reward than that; he was not cursed by the fever of ambition. In his big, smoldering, brown eyes, his naturally slow speech, his easy smile, one read a satisfaction with life and the comfort and luxury of wholesome, honest friends. Unfortunately some of these friends were falling away, growing suspicious of his ability as the public protector. He tried to explain it.

"Afraid the watch-dog's losing his teeth," he put it. "But it's not that so much, either. It's the war and high prices and bad crops and indigestion."

So he declined to grow sour, preferred to grow mellow. He wanted nothing more than to keep his place among them, his place of respect, and that meant his job.

Still, he owned up to a loss of that old-time confidence now and then. He flexed his muscles and discovered that they were tightening somewhat. He surveyed his hair and observed how sprinkled with gray it was. The old dog *was* losing his bite, perhaps. And election was only nine days off.

The horse stumbled frequently now. Bad roads, yes, and more bad weather coming in those banked, black-streaked clouds. Gale looked straight up at a bare face of rock, rising sixty feet sheer from the roadside, loosely packed, always a danger, imminent now. He would rather be sheriff than postman on these roads. And then he thought of Ott Knowles and scratched his head and was not so sure.

ERK WELSH'S house appeared on the left. The century-old oak held out its blasted limb like a leper's white arm beckoning and warning at the same moment. Nobody was to be seen about the place; out in the fields, maybe, dulling their hoes on the stones, trying to scrape a living out of tobacco. Gale hunched down to the three miles of desolation to follow. What a place for a man to bury himself! No human company; the squalls of wild animals at night; utter silence during the day.

Gale drove into the clearing at twenty minutes to four. He marked the exact time to compare it with McCreedel's. He had been climbing; McCreedel had been descending. If the little fellow was frightened, he ought to have driven faster than that. So thinking, he walked up to the house and entered it.

On the floor by the kitchen door, one hand at his neck the other spread wide beyond his head in the direction of a rude chair, the murdered man lay on his face as if peering into a crack in the warped flooring. His hair was tousled and, at the ears, matted to his skin.

Around his neck was a rope resembling a hitching rope, not noosed but knotted in a peculiar manner so that it must tighten its grip at every tug of the loose end. From Ott's upper body a finger-wide stripe of dry blood ran to one of those cracks in the pine floor and disappeared. Gale squatted and turned the corpse partly over. Yes, it was Ott Knowles, walrus jowls, sagging eye-pockets and all. Under the chin purple marks of deeply pressed fingers just showed.

Methodically Gale examined the room, the rest of the three-room house, the yard and its mean outbuildings. The room held nothing of much interest—a table cluttered with dirty dishes over which the sheriff frowned because there were too many forks for one man to dirty, or two men, for that matter. Some poor food lay scattered about. Not a suspicious object could he find, not a thing left behind to serve as a clue. It was the same in the other rooms, mere alcoves furnished by a pauper.

Outside Gale moved about as vainly. Nothing in the sheds, not even what there should be. Sitting down on the back door sill, he studied the few notes he had made and waited for the coming of Doc Fellers the coroner, for whom he had left word. He hoped Doc would not be long. A bad road in the dark.

He looked up at the sky, then. The clouds were sweeping along mighty fast; it certainly gave the appearance of a real storm. On the edge of the nearest cloud a dark clot broke loose and whirled in wide circles lower and lower until it seemed to stand over the clearing, and Gale knew it to be an enormous buzzard wheeling, watching, waiting. The sign of death, the mysterious scavenger that knows miles away that life has gone out and that something a moment ago alive and unattackable is now carrion. Gale stared at it in disgust.

He had sat there a quarter of an hour in the deep, clouded hush that held a new grimness in it. He was gazing off into autumn coloring filling a shallow ravine a stone's throw beyond the sty, his mind on the business at hand, grappling with the problem of where to start, when he heard a movement in the front of the house. He assumed that this was Doc Fellers and felt relieved. Opening the door, he went through the six-foot kitchen and across the threshold into the room where Ott Knowles lay.

What light the one low window gave was fairly shut off by an intruder who was not alone. In all, three men stood motionless surveying him, three not wholly desirable-looking men, hard eyes every one, poker faces, drooping lids, sagging jaws like the dead man's. They were roughly clothed and hatted. They had just entered. One bore a pickax on his shoulder; one had let down a spade and leaned on it. The third, who held nothing, yet seemed to clutch an invisible thing in two forward-hung hands, cupped as if they were bearing a tub of water or hefting an iron bar.

The first two were dark of eyes and hair and skin; the third with the peculiar hands was blond, blue-eyed. They had no word for him, although he recalled the one with the spade as a farmer living on the Tineville road which forked off this one two miles below Welsh's place. His name was Renkin. He sometimes came to town. The other two men Gale had never seen, which meant that they must be transients.

"Hello!" he said slowly. "What do you want here?"

The man with the pickax let it down. Renkin was studying him with a beetling, searching stare as if to recall him. The blond man said—

"How about you?"

"I'm browsing around," Gale told him. "Thought there might be something of interest."

He spoke slowly, giving them time. Little things he was trained to look for. What he noticed was that they did not glance and gaze at the sprawled corpse. To Gale this had immense importance. They had entered before he did. The figure was impossible not to perceive at once. Their eyes roved a little but not to it.

The man with the pickax got his voice.

"We looked in on the way by. I'm new here. Grubbing out a claim southwest about a mile. These boys are helping me."

Now that he spoke he exhibited none of his previous dullness, dullness like Renkin's, for instance. In his eyes flashed changing lights. His face was thin, his features sharp. Having set down the pickax, his hands fluttered restlessly.

"What's happened to *him?*" he asked, pointing to Ott Knowles's body.

"Nothing wrong now," Gale declared. "He's dead. His collar fitted too tight, and a gun stung him in the ribs. Happened this morning, because there's his breakfast on the stove and littering the table. McCreedel, the postman, found him."

Renkin came to life, finished his problem and gave his answer thickly as if angered by it:

"Hey, I know you-all: Sheriff. Name's Gale." His lip thrust out.

His dark companion started. The blond man's feet shuffled. Gale nodded.

"I've got my work cut out for me, too. If it wasn't a bungled job, I'd sure be up a tree. Kind of smart work, but kind of a bungle, too."

"Let's we-all be trampin'," muttered Renkin. "Come on, Foley."

It was the man with restless hands he called by name. Foley sauntered up and looked at the dead man. His fingers extracted a cigaret from a package with a neat movement. They were long slender fingers, too soft for manual labor.

"What's your theory, sheriff?" A silky voice his; the sort that fools.

"I reckon," drawled Gale, "I'll take my man first."

"You figure you know who he is?" Foley sounded eager. "Strangled and shot both; one man couldn't do that very easy."

Renkin stumped to the door. He fairly growled—

"I says come on!" He swung a clumsy arm. "Hain't you-all aimin' to move, York? What you-all waitin' fer?"

"And choked—strangled, shot and choked," Gale explained to Foley. "I say it's smart work, but bungled. I don't mind telling you it got my goat first off. One man never killed Ott three ways at once, no. Fact is, he killed Ott with the rope. He strangled Ott and finished him; then he set out to fool the law. Pumped a shot into his victim's body at close range—the kind you'd never get on Ott when he was alive, you bet. Then he choked him—pretty clever, eh? We-e-ell, that didn't fool me much. Fact is, I've been sheriff of this county sixteen years. Yep."

Renkin slouched into the room again, his mouth open. The blond York had shuffled back ahead of him and stopped close by Gale. York's eyes were angry.

Foley blew smoke out of his nose.

"That's keen figuring, sheriff. That's —— keen. You're good, ain't you? Sixteen years. You must be worth big money."

"I don't care for the money. It's the game. Matching my wits against the criminal. Yep, I don't know as many men would see through that."

He tilted on his toes—just once, and not too much. Ben Gale swaggering!

York, rugged, angular, uncouth, put his big nose almost into Gale's mouth as he blurted:

"I ain't believin' that, matey. Ye're spinnin' a yarn about the rope bein' whut killed 'im. The rope never done fer 'im no more 'n anything else."

Gale showed a huffy air. He bent down and turned the corpse over.

"Look at his face—bloated, see? Don't know, don't I? Sixteen years at my profession!"

"Of course he's right," agreed Foley. "That's just what happened."

"Ye're a dod-rotted liar!" bawled York. "That 'ere knot won't kill nobuddy! Gi' me a rope an' I'll prove it!" He gazed about anxiously to find one.

Gale pushed him aside.

"It's a fancy knot did it. Shows what you know about knots, my friend. I've studied knots. You can't come along here and tell me——"

York grew truculent.

"Ye lubber! Me not know knots? Sa-ay!"

"It's a sailor knot. I've got a book," stubbornly maintained Gale.

"A book—me eye! J'ever sail. That's whut I want 'o know. J'ever learn to *make* them knots? —— if I had a rope! Jes' lay the bight in my han's once!"

Gale was crestfallen.

"I know danged well— Take the rope off his neck?"

York reached down, touched the rope, drew back and mouthed—

"Fetch me a fathom o' line an' I'd show ye!" Again he reached down. He could not manage it.

And while they gathered there—Gale and York scowling at each other, Foley watching through the smoke, Renkin gaping over his shoulder—the storm broke. A flash of lightning, a clap of thunder, and the splash of rain on the roof. Gale sprang up. He rushed to the window and looked out at a sheet of falling water.

"Got to get my horse in the shed," he said and hurried out of the cabin.

Unhitched, stolid and faithful, the animal stood where it had been left. Quickly Gale unbuckled the harness and led it around to the back and into the poor shelter of the shed. Once inside, he took his time, looked for hay and, finding none, went to the door and stared at the house.

It was dark, about dusk in point of time and fairly night under the low canopy of clouds. He went back to the horse's head, turned him and with a careful eye on the house—there was no window in back—led the placid creature out of the shed and around it toward the ravine. Here scrambling, stumbling, fighting among the rocks for his footing, he came on an old tote-road that, as he was aware, angled into the Trenville road, then into the road he had come by and thence back into town. He slapped the horse's flank.

"Go home Jock!" he ordered crisply. The horse turned and looked at him, its ears cocked forward! "Go home! Go on now! Sorry, Jock! Home!"

Obediently it ambled off, slipping a little, down the overgrown way. Gale ran up the hill, banged the shed door as he passed, jerked open the kitchen door.

"No hay," he complained. "Stole some out of the chicken house, though."

THE three had sat down. Foley occupied the chair near the body, York a stool by the pantry shelf; Renkin sat on the floor next the front door, his back against the wall. Gale knew they had been talking, for York's face was set and red, and Renkin wore that look of animosity that dull wits easily put on at the least occasion. They had lighted the kerosene lamp. Didn't like the dark, Gale thought. Well, this settled a thing or two, this rain. Where had it caught Doc Fellers? A night alone in such company he frankly shrank from; but beyond this one night lay years which would be good years or bad years for him, depending on what this night did for him—if he lived.

"It's sure to storm a right good spell," he informed them. "I reckon you fellows can't get very far in this. I'm hungry." He strode to the table whereon stood the lamp. "Kind of like to clear up here and cook up something. Don't reckon the coroner would like it if I disturbed anything, but seeing as it's a right plain case——"

He proceeded deliberately to pick up knives and forks and scrape the dishes.

"Tell you one thing," he leveled at them, his eyes twinkling; "you boys weren't starting out as late as this to grub out trees. You heard Ott was dead; Welsh told you, or maybe McCreedel; yes it was McCreedel, he talks a lot—talked too danged much this trip."

Renkin stirred. York's stool came down onto all four legs. Foley spoke.

"What would we want here?" he queried, a soft menace in his tone.

"Ott's buried treasure, of course. Pick and spade—oh, you don't fool me any. Folks have been drifting up here for years and digging around. Ott kept his shotgun for 'em. Myself, I don't think he had a dollar, but McCree—" He broke off suddenly. "Maybe we can find something to eat," came his lame afterthought.

"Going to leave *that* there all night?" Foley shot out in irritation.

Gale knew he meant the body.

"I don't like stepping around it, but Doc Fellers'll holler if it's moved. Where would we put it?"

York indicated a trap in the boarded ceiling. "H'ist it up there."

Gale pushed back the dishes and climbed onto the table. He slid the trap to one side.

"There's room. I don't know. Well, all right. Lift it up here."

Foley cast a quick glance at the corpse. Renkin and York moved not a muscle. Gale repeated his request. He said—

"Ott's not so heavy; right skinny."

Foley got up. He glared at the other two. They got up likewise. They stood over the corpse. They had no taste for this. Foley whispered; they stooped.

"One of you stand on the chair and give me his head."

York's lot this fell to. His face was working horribly. He missed his step, and the dead man's left arm flopped against his side. He yelled. Foley kicked at him. Renkin's face was so far averted that he tended to drag York down. But with a desperate lunge they lifted their burden high.

Now Gale's full strength was called into play. Alone he raised the leaden torso to the trap, while the weight of the lower body passed to York. Alone he deposited Ott Knowles in the dark loft with the beating rain for company. When he jumped down Foley's eyes were on him, measuring him. He paid no attention.

York's hands brushed one on the other, palm brushing palm, again and again. Renkin's eyelids jerked as with St. Vitus dance. Both men sweated so freely that the smell of their bodies permeated the room, although it had not done so before. Foley went to the water bucket on a low bracket in the corner next the kitchen. He raised the dipper to his mouth—and dropped it nervelessly. The water wet his clothes. He fumed under his breath. He pulled up his coat to wipe it with his sleeve. Gale saw the butt of a revolver sticking out of his hip pocket.

"Who's this McCreedel?" Foley swung about to demand. "Did he know—*him?*"

Gale was drawn from his renewed table-clearing as to a subject more attractive than eating.

"Well, McCreedel knew Ott had money hidden, because he told me so this noon. Made him mad, from the tone he took. He delivered Ott's mail. That's a funny thing, too. Ott's box is down on the road, a long walk up to here. But McCreedel found him, found him right here in the house."

Now that he was started, Gale had an excited look in his eyes, an exultant tremor in his voice.

"McCreedel's a little man, got little hands, fingers are narrow. Remember those finger-marks on Ott's throat? Full print; he dug deep. Small, weren't they? Narrow—like a woman's. And Ott got letters, two or three a week. He came to town once; came to tell me somebody was opening his mail. I asked him if they were after his money. That's how I know he didn't have any. He told me that stuff about his money was a big lie, and he'd mortgaged the place to pay his taxes."

Renkin broke his long silence.

"I allus says he didn't have none."

So savage was his tone that Gale looked at him. He was fairly snarling.

York wriggled on his stool to which he had returned.

"Didn't he? I say he did! I say he had thirty thousan'! When he left the sea, it was on account——"

Nothing more. York scraped his palms and peered at Foley, who was showing his teeth.

"That's not enough to convict McCreedel," Foley filled up the break.

"Hey! You're going to tell me my business, too, are you?"

Gale's enthusiasm certainly had carried him away. From a pocket he pulled a yellow slip of paper. He opened it.

"Look! That's McCreedel's hair! I followed him to the barber shop and got a chunk of it—just leaned on the barber chair while I talked to him. He told me Ott had some hair in his fist. Sure he had. McCreedel put it there. It's out of a bear skin robe. I've got that here, too. McCreedel's a bungler. Ott did get some of McCreedel's hair. It's between Ott's fingers now. It'll stay there."

The three came to look at his find.

"See?" Gale said to Renkin, his eyes examining Renkin's unshorn tufts about the ears, so near to each other they were. "Coarse, as coarse as a dog's coat. No man ever had hair like that. He bungled."

Renkin's fingers twitched. Gale folded up the paper.

"Let's eat."

He went out into the kitchen to start a fire. He heard York chuckle and Renkin make a noise in his throat. He thought that what Foley hissed was—

"That bird's wise!"

The wood was dry and burned well, but the drafts worked poorly and filled the house with smoke so that he had to open the back door. It still rained hard.

A side of bacon he took down from a peg and fried a good plateful. Cheese dry and cracking, a box of hardtack, a bowl of stewed prunes, coffee—these made up the meal. He washed the dishes in lukewarm water while the bacon and coffee were cooking and set the table afresh. From the kitchen he brought a box to sit on.

"Draw up boys. Let 'er rain. We'll make out—with thanks to Ott." His interest was claimed by the food to which he helped himself and passed around. "Don't know how we'll put up for the night. Just the one bed; two of you can have it. A blanket on the floor will do me. Wish I could find that bear robe the hairs came from."

Renkin rumbled—

"Reckon I'll go on home ef'n the rain leaves off."

"It won't," said Gale, his mouth half full. "You'd have the walk back in the morning if you're going to start grubbing. Or whatever you came for."

"It ain't a thing to you what we came for, is it?" This from Foley.

"None o' yer —— business, I 'low," said York, who was not eating. Neither was Renkin. Foley dabbed at the bacon with his fork.

"What's the matter with my cooking?" Gale asked. "That's good bacon."

"Ate before we started," remarked Foley. "Sheriff, Renkin knows this McCreedel. He says Knowles could bust him in two. Ain't that a fact?"

Gale poised his fork reflectively.

"There's a lot of store put by strength, but I'd back quickness against strength every time. McCreedel or whoever it was got the jump on Ott, got behind him and slipped that rope over his head. One tug cut off Ott's wind. Then he jumped on Ott's back—a little man could do that better'n a man like York—or me. Be harder for you. Another thing: That knot's left-handed." He pretended not to see York drop his knife out of his left hand.

"I says the rope never done it. Ye hear that now?" York blared.

"You testify to that in court then. We need you anyway, being as you've got some knowledge of Ott before he came here. They might want to trace those letters. Renkin now—I know where he lives; but I don't know as he's any good to us. Foley the same way. You'll get paid, besides witness fee."

York's face grew dark; the veins in his forehead stood out.

"Ye don't haul me into no court! By ——, ye don't! I know them places! They get ye there, an' they bang questions at ye, an' purty soon they got ye tangled up an'—you go to ——!"

"You better leave him alone," said Foley. "He was just kidding you. He wouldn't be any value. That rope story you gave us sounds right to me."

"Oh, the rope did it. I know that," Gale agreed smugly. "Only thing is his hands. They're small, like I say. You've got small hands for your size, Foley. About like them, I'd think. If Ott hadn't been strangled, and you being a stranger, you might be suspected. Got to be a motive, though. You don't live hereabouts."

It was not Foley but Renkin who glowered at Gale.

"Meanin' I do, mebbe. I know yer ways, Gale. But there ain't nothin' you-all kin git on me."

Gale assented.

"As I say, it was the rope." He looked at York. "Yes, I kind of figure York ought to come along. He might turn the evidence."

York was livid.

"Don't say that ag'in! Quit now, I'm tellin' ye!"

"Shut up, York," said Foley. "He can't make you go."

"Can't I? He might know more than that. He might know *when* it was done. If it was last night, McCreedel could claim an alibi. York, were you alone when you came by here last night?" Gale asked sharply, suddenly.

"No! Ye don't come that on me!"

"Was Ott alive then?"

"Ay, an' ye quit bangin' questions at me!"

"And when you left, are you sure he was dead?"

"Deader'n gravy. He never moved—Sa-ay, what ye tryin' on me?" The hopelessly dull eyes, plagued and baffled, showed slow-gathering torment. "I told ye to quit, see? Questions—I can't stand 'em! They twist me all up!"

GALE bit into the hardtack and laughed heartily. Renkin got up, knocking over his chair, and started for the door. When he opened it, the rain pelted into his face. Foley's hands jerked spasmodically. When Gale nudged him, he jumped.

"Hear what he says? Tangled up is right. That's some statement, York!"

For answer York lunged across the table and struck Gale in the mouth. He whimpered as he struck. He was beside himself. He babbled incoherently.

Flung back off the rickety box, Gale picked himself up slowly. Foley was standing, his right hand under his coat. He pushed York back, and York struck him, too, grunting heavily—a great, distraught, lumbering child. He bawled:

"Don't ye touch me! I never done it! The rope never killed 'im!"

Foley seized him by the throat, shook him in fury.

"Come out of it!"

"Don't ye do it! Take them killer han's off'n me!"

He choked. His eyes protruded. He was striking out at Foley's head without avail. He began to cough. Renkin came from the door like a charging bull and tore the two apart. In the mix-up Gale put his hand into his coat-pocket and extended it before him slightly. In his other hand he held steel bracelets.

"Step away Foley! And you, Renkin! I want this man! Hold out your hands, York!" He brushed around the table and got one of York's wrists. A lock snapped. "Now the other! *Bring it over quick! Quick!*" He had him handcuffed.

York stared down at his hands. Too numb to speak, he shook pitiably.

Gale faced Foley and Renkin.

"I'll have to trouble you to go in with me," he told them. "It'll be all right. You see those letters came from a sailor who'd shared bunks with Ott. Ott showed 'em to me. They threatened him. I know how he worked it. He got you to come up here and hunt for treasure; then he got into a fight with Ott. I blame you for not telling me sooner, but you wanted to find the money."

Foley lighted a cigaret and drew deep on it. "Well, I'll tell you now."

York began rattling the handcuffs, his craze returning. He shouted—

"That don't go! I held 'im, but I never killed 'im! Them two——"

Gale drowned out the rest of it. He roared:

"You shut up and don't make it worse! Keep a tight mouth; that's my advice! Everything you say will be used against you!" By dint of this and that he stopped the frenzied burst; frightened York into silence. To Foley: "Of course you didn't want to squeal, but if he got away, you'd be guilty of aiding him. You too, Renkin. You ought to be ashamed."

Renkin's jaws could be heard gritting. Foley nodded.

"I own up to it sheriff: I was afraid. As to the money, you're wrong. I'm located up here as I told you. I—York got me to do it. Now I see why. I wanted to run away yesterday after this happened, but York wanted to come back; they always do. I agreed that we'd stay and prove up instead of being chased around the country." He shrugged. "Course that threw me in with black birds." He corrected himself— "With a black bird. I met him first—no, I won't go over all that now."

"That's right; do your talking on the witness stand, not here!"

Foley hastened to get in:

"But the killing—we didn't see that. We don't know for sure York did it, Renkin and me. We never came inside."

York started cursing him.

Gale said, "I'll put him in the bedroom," and pulled the balky sailor after him. When he came out he muttered: "Don't want him busting out at us. At the best we won't get a very good night's rest. Raining bad."

"Maybe, but it's kind of a relief to have a showdown, ain't it, Renkin?"

Renkin looked up at the sound of his name. He had not been listening.

Gale cleared away the dishes and the food, and they sat moodily silent for an hour or more, dropping a stray word now and again. He jumped up at the end of that time.

"My lunch box is out in the rig getting wet." He hurried out for it and was gone some time, then came back dripping water. "Put up the buggy top and dragged her around on the other side." He opened the box. "You boys hungry yet? Here's some sandwiches I brought along. They kept dry." He offered them. There were six

sandwiches and all six were consumed without any help from him, he noticed.

They sat another long time. Periodically York's voice babbled vengeance. At each gust Renkin started and closed his fist. He was in an evil mood. Gale was putting off turning in because he preferred to keep the lamp burning since it was his only ally. But Foley said they would bunk on the floor, he was that tired. Gale decided to stretch out in the kitchen. The light was blown out.

Eleven o'clock. A long vigil until daylight. Now advancing age would tell; an hour or two, and he would be drugged for sleep. In the earlier days he could sit bolt upright for five hours on end, every nerve alive. Yet in those days he would not need to. He would have ridden these fellows with bit and spurs and squeezed their confessions out of their gullets with his hands. Yes, all three of them. But now, in the morning Gale might be with Ott. Not a pleasant thought.

What he did though, was not to save himself but to save York who was in just as grave danger as he was. Into the big room he walked.

"Danged if I'll let him sneak off on me. Clamp him to the bed," he said in their hearing and passed through the bedroom door. In his arms he carried a sack of flour which he set down softly. He covered York's mouth with his big hand, put his mouth to the man's ear and whispered, then cautiously pulled him to his feet. Here was one situation that the dull wits could grasp readily. One hand on York's wrist, one hand to deposit the sack in York's place on the bed and pile up blankets and pillow into a decent substitute for a sleeping man. It was done.

He whispered:

"Straight through to the kitchen. Walk in step with me. One false move, and I'll blow your brains all over the wall." His right hand on York's shoulder held the steel tube against the skin, his left hand guided his captive at the waist.

"Left foot first—*this* one." He jogged it. They began to walk as one man. At the kitchen door Gale chuckled. "He can't tote the bed out with him. He's safe. How you fixed, boys? Not so good, I reckon. Want one of Ott's blankets?"

"Fagged out," murmured Foley. "Ain't going to bother."

If he wouldn't, neither would Renkin. Gale led to the kitchen, step for step. He lowered York to the floor; punched him, and York lay down. Gale required five minutes to unlock one of the handcuffs and snap it around the stove-leg which he padded first with his handkerchief and two dishrags wound tightly around the leg. He made it very plain to York that he was guarding him from the others who would want to kill him so that he could not "squeal" on them. He emphasized that the rope had *not* done the killing, that he had known that when he first saw Ott—as he really had.

The night dragged into a torture. To be sure of keeping full consciousness, Gale removed the crystal of his watch and felt the hands. At what he guessed to be three or four-minute intervals he pinched himself brutally and twisted the skin, thus discovering beyond a doubt that his mind remained clear of torpor.

So he heard a footstep after an interminable waiting. It stopped at the kitchen door. He breathed slowly, audibly, and was glad and surprized to hear York snore. The poor dolt had not brains enough to keep his nerves taut. Held for murder, he could sleep—the result of a life before the mast where a seaman had only four hours of sleep. Gale itched, went cold, pulled his legs under him. But the steps entered the bedroom. Stealthily the sheriff rose and edged to the door, through it, and toward the bedroom. No windows were at his back. But the window in the bedroom limned the figure moving to the bed. A moment of pause—then a hand lifted and drove down so fiercely that a grunt was expelled from the lungs. Three times. The figure turned and came out.

GALE'S nerves tightened to the inner command. If he should miss, it was all over. Such a shadowy mark to risk one's life on! He hit for the chin; a partial miss, for his fist glanced off. Another behind the ear; this with the handcuffs. The figure fell back into the bedroom. He dropped onto it, knees in the stomach. Ten seconds in getting his second and last pair of bracelets snapped; ten seconds of mortal expectation of the attack from the doorway! He sprang up.

"You there! Get that lamp lit!" he bellowed.

A sleepy voice— "Wh—what?" Shoes scraping. "What?"

"Strike a match! Light the lamp!"

Thank ——, the fellow was across the room! A match flared. Foley's face was illumined.

"The lamp, I say!"

Foley went to the table and did as he was told.

Gale advanced to the table. "Sit down!" Foley sat down in a chair and rubbed his eyes. A good actor! "Well, Renkin's gone after York with a knife. You didn't know about that, did you?" Gale's right hand bunched in his pocket.

Foley blinked.

"No. Why would he do that? Did he *kill* him?"

"I reckon. I don't want to be hard on you Foley, but you're in bad company. You maybe know how to clear yourself. We'll just sit here till morning."

Foley said nothing. He looked at the lamp. Gale said slowly, "You might have a gun. Most men around here tote guns in these woods. I better take it."

His hand in his pocket did not stir. Foley reached to his hip and surrendered his gun.

"I'm glad that's gone," he smiled. "I'm a nervous man, Sheriff."

"So am I," Gale replied. "I reckon it's two o'clock anyway. Lay down, if you like. I've got to take you in town, you know. No charges against you."

Foley nodded. He seemed upset by what Gale reported. He talked—about Renkin, about York, about himself. He deluged himself with sympathy; talked on and on.

Gale offered nothing to any of it. He felt easier and warily triumphant with Renkin definitely committed to assault with intent to murder. Foley, the ring-leader, could not possibly rid himself of taint. With the lamp for his beaming ally, Gale could put his whole thought on how to get these three to town without a horse. Jock must have reached the stable long before this. If there were still friends in town, they would read his need of them in the horse's return. They knew where he was. And meanwhile he would sit tight. He could do that even if he was only an old dog.

Yes, he could have and he would have, if the lamp had not failed him. A warning sputter drew his eyes. The oil was running out. The light flickered up and down, gave off a puff of smoke. Perhaps it had been sputtering for some minutes, and he had not noticed. If only the dawn would break! He stood up slowly.

"Got to have some oil. Wonder where Ott keeps it."

Puff! The light snuffed. Darkness! Too late! He moved to the front door.

"In the shed I reckon." He went out and stood in the night.

The shed? No chance of going there without losing Foley who would run into the woods if given half an opportunity, for the man was guilty as the other two combined. Gale had seen his scalp-lock with the black hair trying to hide a lacerated spot.

No use. He would have to go back and sit in the dark. The gun—oh, yes. But he had never pulled a gun. He didn't think he could use it; didn't think he could bring himself to shoot. In sixteen years he had never shot a man. Still, Foley knew he had it. Foley wouldn't walk into it. If it came to the worst— Sighing, he took the key to the handcuffs from his pocket and flung it across the clearing into the bushes. Resigned, he pushed open the door and stepped inside.

He realized that somebody was very close to that door. He made to spring back when a stunning blow on the head ended all thought. He pitched to the floor.

He woke to a ringing headache. Gradually he saw objects dimly—the table, the chair. Renkin sat in the chair. Dawn was breaking. The revolver was in Renkin's hands. Memory returned. He had done a foolish thing. He was getting old and stupid. He had been dealt with just as he had dealt with Renkin. How the man's vicious face could twist itself; like an animal's! Foley hurried in at the front door, whereupon Gale tried to rise.

And at sight of life in this body that was believed lifeless, Renkin bolted at him, swinging the gun into line. Gale looked straight at death. But Foley fairly left his feet in rushing on Renkin to halt the shot.

"You fool!" Foley had the gun now. To Gale— "Your horse ain't in the barn. You said you put him there. Where is he?"

Gale pressed his hand to his head. "Maybe he strayed—don't know."

"Get back Renkin! I'm doing this for you. Listen, Sheriff; you lied about York. That means you suspect me. A stranger's got no chance in a small town. I've got to get out of the county with these boys. But

I'm giving you a square deal. We've got to have a horse. You find yours, and you're let off, see?"

Gale shook his head.

"If he's gone, he's gone.

Foley cursed furiously.

"Renkin where's there a horse near here?"

"Erk Welsh has got one," the angry farmer growled.

"How far is that? Three miles? We've got to do it!"

"Then le'me have that gun a minute!" raged Renkin.

"Calm down, I tell you! Go out in the kitchen and lift that stove so York can get out. Hurry up!" He prodded the hulking frame. Renkin went out. Heavy grunting, a hissing breath. Here came York, sullen, frightened, stumbling.

"Listen," barked Foley. "I'm taking the sheriff along as far as Welsh's. Come to think of it, we'll take the buggy, too; one horse won't do the three of us unless we got the buggy. Shut up, Renkin! Listen! Nobody seen us come up here, and nobody's going to see us leave. The sheriff's going to ask Welsh for the loan of the horse because Welsh knows him. And I'll be right behind the sheriff. See?"

Gale read in this his death notice. Nobody had seen them; that is, nobody who would live to tell about it. He closed his eyes to keep his misery hidden.

"Get up!"

Gale got up, tottered, grasped the table and got his poise. They all went out of the house into the filmy light of fresh early morning. Gale filled his lungs with the sweet, newly washed air. How good it was! ——, if there was only a way through this! They had him! Only Foley's stern command kept Renkin from doing away with him in a rush. And Foley would see to that later. The buggy was wheeled around.

"Get hold of the shaft, Sheriff!" He got hold. "Now walk!"

His head was a roaring turmoil. They reached the road.

Foley was talking. "If we see anybody Sheriff, you explain. They'll maybe know Renkin. You tell 'em we met up with you and are helping you out because your horse got loose. You've got to excuse me, Sheriff, because I guess I can't take any chances. I'd have to shoot you first pop, then hold off anybody else and get into the woods. You see where I am? I'm right behind you. You boys keep your bracelets hid. Renkin, drop back here with me. Leave them two on the shafts. We'll push."

Gale looked back. Foley had a hand on the back of the buggy-seat and walked behind the rear wheel. Renkin dropped back beside him and pushed on the other side. Two in front and two behind.

"Play fair, Foley!" he said. "What do I do at Welsh's?"

"You walk up past the oak and stop twenty paces from the door, then call. Don't go nearer. Make him bring the horse around. I'll be behind the tree. He won't see my face. Friend of—friend of Fellers' you say. Stayed to ride back with you."

The road descended, then straightened, then took an abrupt rise. Gale seemed trying to pull, but he shook his head. At that Foley began pushing more.

"Push 'er, Renkin! We want to make time out o' here."

Like an ox York trudged with head down. Over the summit and down again. A bird suddenly began to trill; it sang and sang. Gale lifted his haunted eyes to the sweep of autumn trees. His breath came long and deep. This morning, with the glory of things he had seldom noticed, to look down on the quick tragedy, the old dog would die. Oddly the coming election flitted through his dulled mind. No fear of that now. A little farther along in the road he would lie sprawled when the first wagon came. He gazed ahead to try to see where it would be. His eyes caught the bareness of a precipitous hill-face standing up where they would pass. He stared at it. When they reached it, they found the road badly clogged with gravel and sand and huge stones.

He spoke: "The storm loosened it," he said as if to himself. "A big one up there ready to topple down any minute. Two men were crushed that way near here. The next one it was." Out of the corner of his eye he marked the fact that the others looked up swiftly, even York. "A dog running under their buggy wasn't hurt. A dog knows where it's safe. They say he dodged under there quick as light."

They kept on. Down-hill it was hard holding back with the stones to slide on, stones wet with the rain. Every foot of the road they were sloshing through mud; now and then they waded shoe-high in muddy

water. It was silent on the road, peacefully silent to a man who was thinking that way. But none of these men were thinking that way, not even Gale.

The road straightened out, flattened, for a quarter of a mile. Then it started gently upward in a short roll. And on the right, near at hand, another bare-faced knob loomed almost perpendicular, a shaggy, pimpled front of a hill. Gale scanned it as they approached; his half-pause called general attention.

"Git on!" snarled Renkin, and he added appalling names. "Scairt, huh?"

Gale gripped the shaft resolutely. He shook his head again, and Foley bent his weight on the back of the seat. The rock-face was at their shoulders.

"Ya-a-arh! Here she comes! Jump!" shouted Gale at the top of his lungs, in a voice of tense and hopeless fright. At the same time he braced himself and plunged backward with the shaft, jerking the buggy with all his might back upon the two who followed.

Renkin recoiled from the rear wheel, flung about a few times and stood up in the ditch. But Foley on the yell had doubled over as if to dive under the buggy and was struck squarely by the axle. The wheels danced over him. Gale, following them, clipped him on the head with his toes and fell across him. His arms flailed in and out; they gave no pain, for Foley was unconscious before they struck him. Lucky, indeed. Gale's muscles surely had stiffened.

The aim of Gale's scheming showed in his fumbling through Foley's pockets. He had out the gun. Renkin was climbing out of the ditch and half-way to safety in the trees. Gale clenched his teeth and shot at Renkin's legs. The farmer tumbled over and over into the ditch again. York heard the shot and, throwing his manacled hands above his head, stopped charging up the road.

"March back here! Lively, York! I guess you know you'd be dead but for me." Gale still clutched Foley by the neck. "Push that seat up and bring the strap!"

York bleared at him, at Foley who was being throttled, at Renkin rolling in agony. He went to the buggy, bunted up the seat, and dragged out the strap. That act afterward saved him from hanging, that and the fact of his seaman's pride, or whatever it was that made him stick to his story that the rope did not strangle Ott Knowles. Without that testimony and proof Gale's case might have failed altogether, well supported and cleverly planned though it was.

THE men who came rattling up the road, a self-sworn posse of those who had word of the horse's solitary return, a few of the many friends whom Sheriff Gale claimed without hesitation after election day, came on a rare sight.

On a buggy-seat wide enough for only two sat three men holding hands—or so it looked. The buggy was crawling slowly over a slightly upward canted road. And in the shafts, his chest thrust against a rope he had taken from Erk Welsh's clothes pole, a toiling human figure pulled the conveyance wearily.

He looked up, panting, when they sang out to him.

"What you got there?" they wanted to know.

"I've got a strangler, a choker, and a shooter," he said.

They gaped in awe.

"Why didn't you get a horse from Erk Welsh?"

He mastered a feeling of sickness at the question. His answer, had they been able to realize it, spelled a fearful thing. He said—

"Erk had taken his horse and gone to Trenville yesterday."

A little thing to say, but if Foley had still been in command when Welsh's place was reached and no horse to be had—Gale filled his lungs with more air.

"——, but it's a grand morning!" he added.

They remembered this last statement, such a queer thing to say with three murderers behind him. What a poet might have uttered.

The one blemish lay in Renkin's wounded leg. He nodded.

"Yeah, I used a gun. I didn't want to. But an old dog's got to learn new tricks, boys. They say he can't; but he's got to."

On the steel tube he filed two more notches—two more men. The file was poised above for the third notch, but he shook his head. And on the slip of paper rolled inside it he wrote the names of Foley and York.

Renkin's notch was the first notch in his gun.

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Arthur D. Howden Smith

Swain's Inlawing

Author of "Swain's Outlawing," "Swain Kingsbane," etc.

THE twilight seemed to submerge the skalli's high-roofed emptiness in recurrent purple waves. The embers of the banked fires on the central hearth took on a deeper glow; torches flared here and there in iron holders attached to the side pillars; on the high table by the southern wall candles made tiny stabs of light, which flickered over the bearded faces of the three men who sat there, drinking—two of them quaffing ale from silver-mounted horns, the third toying with a golden cup of water.

It was very quiet; but suddenly one, the smallest, lifted a cautionary finger.

"Hark!" he cried. "What is that!"

The sound floated down to them from the long, narrow smoke-vent in the roof, a harsh, clacking murmur, louder and louder.

The other two men roused themselves and stared up through the smoke that curled above the hearthfires; but almost at once the larger of the two sank back in his chair.

"It is the wild geese," he growled. "They fly north at last."

The third man leaned farther across the table. He appeared to be endeavoring to pierce the shadows, the smoke-clouds, the beams and planks of the roof, the outer darkness, in his effort to peer beyond the bounds of space. A very tall man, this, nigh as tall as he who had just spoken, but lean of body where the speaker was burly and heavy-shouldered; and his gaunt face and smoldering eyes proclaimed the dreamer whereas the other big man stared forthright at what was close by, keen in his glance as he was brusk in his speech.

"True, Swain," assented the third man, straining still to see the hidden sky—his voice rang with a mellow note, resonant, clear. "But it means more than that the wild geese fly north. It means that spring is here. It means that on every Orkney stead the farmfolk may fare afield for the planting, and the fishermen may shove out from shore with better chance of filled nets and of returning safe from the sea. It means an end to snow, sleet and the bite of the north wind. It means that the skalli door may stand open. It means that men may travel at will——"

"Humph!" grunted the burly man. "It means first of all that the seapath is open for our longships. You scalds, Armod, are not quick to see the important things."

A glint of merriment shone in his cold blue eyes.

"As for the wild geese, I foresaw the coming of spring sooner than they. Else why

did I set the shipmen to work on the strand a week ago?"

The little man who had spoken first tipped up his horn and drained its foaming contents, his seamed, brown visage becoming all mouth for the feat.

"I have seen the viking look in your face ever since the last snow, Swain," he acknowledged. "Where do we fare this season?"

Swain shook his head.

"I do not know, Oddi. If Olvir Rosta (Roysterer)——"

"If Olvir appears on earth again it will be in Norway," interrupted the tall scald, Armod.

"That is probably true," Swain agreed. "And it is likely that the ravens will fly toward Norway this summer, but I can not honorably go there until King Ingi lifts the outlawry he imposed upon me two years past."

"If indeed the ravens head for Norway, Ingi will be swift to inlaw you," said Oddi, who by reason of his diminutive stature was known as Oddi the Little, "for that will mean that King Eystein gathers his spears to fight for the supremecy of the whole land—and it was only to loosen Olvir's grip on Eystein and to placate those of his folk who were jealous of you that Ingi agreed to outlaw you."

" 'If, if' " growled Swain. "If is a word which gets no man any further on his way."

"Yet as you yourself have said," pointed out Armod, "your shipmen have had the sheds off our water-dragons this past week, and when they are *boun** we must have a destination for them."

"Any destination where there is plundering will suit me," answered Swain, "providing only that I have not secured trace of Olvir Rosta or that Ingi does not recall me to Norway."

He drank the last of the water in his cup, a magnificent piece that once had decorated a Latin church.

"Two objects have I in life," he went on in his rumbling voice that held always an underlying snarl of temper on leash. "One is to slay Olvir, who slew all of my family that I loved—father, mother and brothers."

"Ha, a red feud it has been!" cried Oddi with kindling eyes. "Between you, you and Olvir have slain as many folk as die in most kings' warfare."

"Yes, yes," echoed Armod. "Red it has been, and Swain is the one who has reaped honor by it, for if Olvir slew the most of Swain's folk, nonetheless is it true that Swain burned Frakork, Olvir's grandmother, despite the witchcraft she wrought against him; and ever since that day Swain has pursued Olvir from country to country, over every sea that keels can furrow; yes, from Mikligard, where the Greek Emperor rules, to Wineland the Good across the Western Ocean."

"Peace, scald; peace," ordered Swain curtly. "I know what I have done, and I am not one of those chiefs who would hear his deeds celebrated. Keep your sagas and lays for other ears. I said I had two objects in life. The one is to slay Olvir. The other is to unite all Norway under one king. And may Fafnir eat me if I know which task is hardest!"

"To slay Olvir!" exclaimed Armod.

"Not so; to make Ingi King of all Norway," objected Oddi.

Swain grinned at both of them.

"It is not in nature for you two to agree," he said. "Yet I think that both are right. And I think, too, that I shall unite all Norway before I slay Olvir."

"You have to slay Olvir first for that," replied Armod.

"Then is it not easier to slay Olvir than to bring all the Norse folk under the one rule?" retorted Oddi.

"That is not sense," growled Swain. "If I must first slay Olvir to compass the union of Norway, it is plain that Olvir is the more difficult task I have to deal with. But the truth is that I can unite Norway without slaying Olvir, if ill luck draws him from my path. And it is also true that I think I shall unite the land before I slay the Roysterer. He has run from me for many years. I know of no reason why he should not elude me for many years more. He is no fool, the Roysterer!"

"You speak as if you forelooked the future, Swain," remonstrated Oddi.

"I am no forelooker, as you well know," denied Swain. "But I study men's actions and the ways of the common folk, and by such means it is possible to determine what the future will bring. That is, it is possible, but not certain."

Armod looked puzzled.

"I do not take your meaning," said the tall scald.

*Equipped, ready.

"Why, I mean this," answered Swain. "A few years past there were three brothers who reigned as kings in Norway—Ingi, Sigurd and Eystein. Ingi was a cripple, but wise. Sigurd was brave, but a braggart. Eystein was a viking farer, but stingy—and a bastard in the bargain.

"What happened? Sigurd and Eystein plotted to take his power from Ingi, and each likewise plotted secretly after that to slay his brother and possess the whole land for himself. Then Ingi sent Erling Skakki (Wryneck) to me, asking my aid, for he knew that Erling and I were old comrades in arms, eh, carls? And I agreed to go to Norway with Erling, not for Ingi's sake, but because Erling had wed the Princess Kristin and his son might some day come to the throne—and that only if Erling was sufficiently powerful to fight for him.

"So we went to Norway, and we outwitted Sigurd and Eystein and wrenched them apart, and I slew Sigurd in Bergen."

"What says the rime?" interrupted Oddi.

And he sang softly:

"Three kings had the land—
Swain made them two!
Now wait we for the hand
Shall halve the two."

Swain nodded.

"Two kings are better than three. But one king is better than two. Well, we should have had one king before this, but Ingi's folk grew weary of war and unease, and when it came to the point of cracking shields they dragged their feet and were all for peace. So much I saw, and by my advice Ingi contented himself with a compromise which humbled Eystein, forcing Eystein to agree to pay fines for the damage he had done to Ingi and his friends and exiling Olvir Rosta, who was Eystein's chief counselor. Yes, and I advised Ingi, too, that he should not object when Eystein insisted that if such punishments were visited upon him, it was no more than fair that I should be outlawed for the slaying of Sigurd."

Armod shook his head.

"I could never understand that, Swain," he said. "If you had held your ground we could have compelled Ingi's folk to stand with us."

"To what purpose?" countered Swain. "There would have been ill feeling and perhaps defeat. It is not my way to snatch quickly, and miss, when by careful work a prize may be won without fail. I tell you, the Norse folk were not ready for union two years ago. Since then they have had more experience of Eystein's viking rule and of the struggling and disorder that must go on when one king sits in the north and a second king sits in the south, and the *lendermen* (barons) and *boendr* (farmers) and merchants are pulled this way and that way, and levied upon now by this party and again by the other, and two taxes must be paid and no man or *Thing* can enforce order or restrain the lawless."

He fell silent, and after a moment Oddi prompted him.

"And now, Swain? Do you think that now——"

"If it be now, I do not know," replied Swain. "But I think that soon we shall hear Ingi has prevailed upon those *lendermen* who hated me to believe that for their own good I should return to Norway. It may not be this year, but——"

A man stumbled, panting, into the hall.

"A strange *snekke* (cutter) has beached in the cove, Swain," cried the messenger. "Erik Skallagrim's son is conducting a visitor up to the *skalli*."

"It is not Jarl Harald from Orphir?" questioned Swain.

"No, a Norseman, a great chief. He carries his head a little on one side——"

"Erling!" exclaimed both the scalds.

Swain stood up, and his blue eyes seemed to spark frostily in the dim candlelight.

"Ho, varlets," he shouted, so that his great voice rang through the skalli. "More lights! Build up the hearth fire! Carry word to the kitchens that we have an honored guest. Fetch up an ale barrel. Afoot, all of you. If Erling Skakki comes, we can not honor him too much."

"Hark!" urged Armod as Swain resumed his seat.

And down through the smoke-vent again came the distant honking of the wild geese, flying northward in their snowy-winged flocks.

"It is not for nothing that the sky-passers greeted us,' said the scald. "From the far southlands they come, Swain, from Serkland (northern Africa) and the countries around the Inner Sea (the Mediterannean) over Spainland, Valland (France), Bretland (England), Scotland and our Orkneys they fly. And whither do they go to nest? To the Norse lands!"

"An omen," cried Oddi the Little. "Thither shall we sail, too. I think that our outlawing is at an end, Swain."

But Swain revealed no more emotion than was shown by the icy sparkle in his eyes.

"Bide," he said calmly. "There is more than one errand might bring Erling to the Orkneys."

II

SWAIN'S summons stirred a hum of life throughout the *skalli*. Men swarmed into the hall, tossing armfuls of wood upon the hearth fires, dragging from the anteroom the trestles and planks that formed the long tables for the house carls and serving varlets.

Swain Olaf's son was the richest and most powerful man in all the northern lands of those who held no title. Wide farms he owned in the Orkneys and in Caithness on the Scots main. His hall was the largest in those parts, and he was accustomed to maintain constantly with him at least eighty men, who slept and ate under his roof. On the strand of the cove on Isle Gairsey, beneath his *skalli* and homestead, lay two dragons and four longships, with which he was wont to put to sea upon his viking cruises or whenever he took part in civil struggles either in the Western Isles or in Norway.

All men feared him, but all men who were not his enemies honored him. A relentless foe, he was also a tireless friend. And he delighted above all else to maintain the old Norse virtues of sea-roving and warfare, which were not so commonly upheld in those days as they once were. When he was not farming his lands he fared oversea, and took whatever plunder came his way, and in this fashion he had obtained a great portion of his wealth. But of recent years his fame had embroiled him more and more in the affairs of Norway.

Except for the interval of his outlawry during the last two winters, he had been obliged to dwell eastward about the court of King Ingi, and leave the farming of his property, even the upbringing of his two sons, to his forecastleman, Erik Skallagrim's son, who was Iceland-born and reputed one of the wisest men who ever came into the Orkneys. Swain counted himself particularly fortunate in having Erik to serve him, but he often said that he would be glad when he had straightened out the troubles of the Norsefolk and might return to his former habits of viking-faring and home farming.

"The far-sailing carl loves the hearth best," he would say.

And whenever he talked thus his friends would smile in their beards and jog one another in the ribs under the table top, for ever since his youth Swain had been a wanderer and a fighter.

After he raised up King Ingi to a level with the two other kings, Sigurd and Eystein, and finally slew Sigurd in the street-fray in front of Sigurd Saeta's house in Bergen, he was dubbed Kingsbane, and this was the nickname he carried to his death.

He was not such a great man in stature; other big men were bigger. But his muscles were like steel bands, and at swordplay he was never known to tire, while there was that about the cold wrath which he displayed toward his enemies which aroused men's fear to a higher pitch than the hot blast of other chief's anger. Also, he was uncommonly clever at estimating his opponents' intentions, and wily in laying his own plans; and despite the fact that he had practised warfare all his life, men agreed that nobody could be certain by what he had done in the past what step he was likely to take in any given situation.

"He is a sudden carl, is Swain," quoth one of his enemies.

And it would be difficult to find a better description of him. Sudden he was, and violent in a cold, implacable way. Whatever he did was unexpected, and albeit he trapped others no man was known to have surprized him. Only one man was able to stand out against his enmity, and that man was Olvir Rosta, who succeeded in keeping the life in his body so long as he did by the craftiness of his wits and his willingness to take flight if Swain pressed him unduly close.

A lone wolf Swain called Olvir, and a lone wolf he was, crafty like a wolf, elusive, cruel, selfish, but in a pinch a doughty warrior. They blundered up and down the world, together and asundered, fighting and following each other.

Where Olvir was Swain would surely follow. If Olvir fought for one king Swain would aid his enemy. And if Olvir was strong enough he would fight back at Swain, struggle sedulously to destroy the Orkneyman.

But he would never bide the brunt if the tide once turned against him, for it was not in him to stand honorably and scorn to turn back on foe. Time and again Swain challenged him to fight out their quarrel once for all in holm-gang, but Olvir laughed for answer or held scornful silence.

Their last meeting had been at the Seleys near the Naze, when King Ingi and King Eystein had come face to face with their hosts; and the upshot of this was that both had been outlawed from Norway. Olvir had taken ship immediately, with the band that owned him chief, and fared east to Gardariki (Russia) to take service with the king of that land. Swain, so soon as he learned this, fared after him, and when Olvir heard of his enemy's coming, the Roysterer fled northward again into the lands of the Lapps, vanishing out of all men's ken. Some said that he was dead, others that he had disappeared through the efforts of a Lapp sorcerer, than whom there are none more powerful. But Swain laughed all such rumors to scorn.

"I have known Olvir to die or seek warlock's aid before this," he said. "We shall yet see him again, for he will live until my sword bites his neck, whenever that may be."

And this was at the end of the summer preceding the coming of Erling Skakki to Swain's *skalli* on Gairsey. From Gardariki Swain had returned to the Orkneys, plundering certain Saxon (German) and Swedish merchants he encountered and being careful not to come within reach of King Eystein, who, he knew, would be blithe of any opportunity to slay him. It was a profitable voyage, and Swain and his folk had the satisfaction of knowing that they had not wasted their time.

They were back in the Orkneys in ample time for the harvest, and some of the younger men had even gone westward into the Sudreyar (Hebrides) autumn-viking after the crops were all in. But Swain had spent the fall and winter on his property, and this day was the first occasion he had discussed his plans for the spring with any of his folk.

On the hearth the fires roared as the fresh wood kindled; additional torches burst into flame on every side; cupboys fetched tall candles to place with those already lighted on the high table. The shadows were put to rout. The twilight fled. Gaunt rafters, pillars and walls hung with heads of beasts and trophies of arms, rush-strewn floor, the hall took shape in the growing illumination.

Three men staggered in from the anteroom with a barrel of ale, upended it by the door and knocked in the head. The long tables began to stretch from the dais-foot toward the entrance. The trampling of scores of feet sounded outside, the mutter of voices. And the leather curtain draped over the inner door was pushed aside by a mailed arm.

Swain and the two scalds rose to meet their guest.

III

OF THE two men who entered the hall first one was as short as Oddi, but very broad, and his legs were absurdly bowed. He was Erik, Swain's forecastleman, who was sometimes called Crooked Legs; his beardless face was riven with countless lines and wrinkles, like a dried apple, and his little eyes gleamed with a sardonic intelligence that found its outlet in a flow of wise saws which had made his name famous.

"Ho, Swain," he called from the doorway, "here is Erling Skakki come with a message from King Ingi."

The two scalds beside Swain exchanged looks of exultation. Swain's face was unmoved as he answered:

"From Ingi or not from Ingi, it was a fair wind that blew Erling hither."

The messenger, who tramped up the hall with Erik, smiled in the torchlight, so that his ugly face became almost handsome. He was a large man, well built, with the manner of a warrior, but his outstanding features were his amazing ugliness and the trick he had of carrying his head upon one side because of an old wound he had received in a sea-fight. His eyes were gray, and those who knew him well said that albeit no man was braver in battle, few were so cautious in avoiding risk before the shield-walls clashed.

"Well said, Swain," he cried for answer now. "But it was no fair wind I had, for my rowers toiled as though Olvir's warlocks were blowing up all the winds in the west to keep me from you."

He reached out his hand, and Swain leaned forward over the table and clasped it.

"You speak of Olvir?" said Swain.

"I do, for Olvir is come out of Lapland,

with a crew of wizards and spell-forgers to fight for Eystein's hand, a foul band, by all accounts—and we have need of you in Norway."

"Good tidings," said Swain curtly. "Come and sit here, and tell us what is toward. Erik, do you see to the folk of Erling's *snekke*. Let them not lack for meat and ale."

"We have already slain an ox," retorted Erik, "and the ale barrels are waiting without."

Armod and Oddi started up, saying that they would assist the Icelander in his duties, and as the three left the dais Swain's housecarls and the folk of Erling's crew commenced to drift into the hall and take places at the long table. The *skalli* that had been so quiet a few moments since now hummed with talk and the clatter of men's movements, bursts of laughter, tag-ends of jests. But in the midst of the clamor the two chiefs at the high table found the privacy they sought.

"Well, have the Norsefolk learned their lesson?" asked Swain.

"I think so," assented Erling. "These two years have not been good for any one in the land. Ingi's folk and Eystein's folk have wrangled and broiled. Eystein has sought to levy Ingi's taxes, and Ingi has impounded Eystein's for penalty. The fines Eystein agreed to pay in return for your outlawing are still in his strong-boxes. There have been disputes about jurisdictions, and not a few *skalli* burnings and outfalls. And now that Eystein has suffered Olvir to return, all the people of Ingi's way of thought are disgusted and ready to grip swords."

Swain grunted reflectively.

"Am I to be inlawed?"

"You are inlawed. Ingi called a *Thing* at Nidaros two weeks since, and proclaimed that he had lifted the sentence upon you, seeing that it had been passed unjustly in the attempt to conciliate Eystein and keep the peace, and he likewise pointed to the return of Olvir, saying that if so dishonorable a man was received in their enemies' camp they might not scruple to invite Swain's aid. The truth is, Swain, that the *lendermen* who once were jealous of you and called you a trouble-maker are now so bent upon stirring up trouble that we are at pains to withhold them from committing some rash deed."

"That is the way of such folk," said Swain contemptuously. "But I am not surprized. People think slower than their leaders; it is occasionally necessary to let them taste misfortune, in order that they may see what otherwise they would be blind to. Who stands the strongest, Ingi or Eystein?"

"Ingi," answered Erling promptly. "He has not forgotten your advice, and has endeavored to rule with a light hand. The priests and the merchants are solid for him. So are the small *boendr* and the common folk. As for the *lendermen*, he has enough in his favor, and men say that many of those who have clung to Eystein are become wroth over the Bastard's niggardliness."

"Eystein was always one to cling to what he had," agreed Swain. "Has he ravaged the land?"

"No, his viking forays have been oversea, but he has not hesitated to seize ships that belonged to folk friendly to Ingi."

"And where is Ingi now?"

"He is at Nidaros in Throndhjem, mustering his forces. The bowyers and the fletchers, the smiths and the shipwrights, are laboring night and day for him."

"Is Gregorius Dag's son with him?"

Now this Gregorius Dag's son was the greatest man in Norway, after Erling, and some men asserted that he might justly be ranked with Swain as the foremost chief in the North. He was a *lendermen* of vast wealth and possessions, and in former days he had shared with Swain and Erling the advancement of King Ingi to the powers the crippled king had gained. In person he was handsome, a mighty fighter, and withal wise in counsel. But it was said of him that he was inclined to violent action, even as Erling was loath to be committed to any course until he must take it.

"No," he replied Erling, "Gregorius is in Bergen, for that town is the resort of men of both the kings' factions, as also of those who still hang between, making up their minds which way fortune lies. It was our thought that he should do what he might to draw the doubters to our side, and lure away some of Eystein's fainthearts."

Swain nodded approvingly.

"That is well done. Now what is your message for me?"

"This," returned Erling. "Ingi bids you return, saying that the moment you yourself had foreseen is come, when a strong push may unite Norway."

"That means the moment is come to slay Eystein," observed Swain grimly.

Erling shrugged his shoulders.

"If he does not flee the country. A viking king is inclined to the sea path."

"We must contrive so that he does not take to the sea!" exclaimed Swain energetically. "But that is for the future. Tell me, has Eystein a son?"

"No, but his folk have produced a son of Sigurd, whom you slew, and they say that he shall be Eystein's heir."

"Humph!" grunted Swain. "I never heard of this. What is the tale?"

"As Eystein's folk tell it," answered Erling, "some years back Sigurd was in Viken, and as he rode by the stead of Simon Thorberg's son he heard a maiden singing. He liked the sound of her voice, and he dismounted from his horse and went into the stead yard, where she was grinding meal in a hand mill. He asked her name, and she told him she was Thora, servant to Simon.

"The king then sent for Simon, and told him he would visit him a while, and the end of it was that the girl bore a child, who was considered the king's son. It is certain Sigurd never denied him. The boy was named Hakon, and Simon brought him up with his own sons. He has grown to be a strong youth, and the folk call him Herdabreid (Broadshoulders)."

"Another bastard!" growled Swain. "Well, we will reckon with him after we have disposed of Eystein. He would not be the first king's son to become monk. Or if he merits his nickname, he had better have a knife in his throat."

Erling coughed doubtingly.

"This slaying of kings is a dangerous business, Swain. You have earned the name of Kingsbane. If you had the blood of another on your hands——"

"Bah!" snorted Swain. "A king and a common man die the same way. If I find I must slay Eystein and Hakon, I will slay Eystein and Hakon. But I am not one to seek trouble unnecessarily, as you know. What else have you to tell me? What plan have you and Gregorius laid with Ingi?"

"Why, concerning that, we deemed it advisable to await your coming. As I said, Ingi has endeavored to conciliate the people in whatever he has done, and we are sure of a brave muster when the banners are flown and the war-arrows are sent through the dales; but——"

"But you wait for me to breathe life into your array," interrupted Swain. "Perhaps you are wise. Is it well for me to take a numerous company with me?"

"We can find use for every man and ship," responded Erling.

"I have six ships ready for the water—and seven hundred carls will follow me east. If all chiefs do as well, Ingi will have no cause for worry."

Erling smiled.

"If you came with two men to your back, the king's mind would be at ease, Swain. It is not your followers he requires so much as it is your wit. For it is a perilous path that a king follows when he seeks to increase his power above a brother king."

"All paths are perilous. It is in my mind, Erling, that in this quarrel—as in most—the victory will be won before the first arrow is loosed. Get you to Nidaros, and tell Ingi that I sail for Bergen to join forces with Gregorius—and when the king has his host mustered, let him embark them on shipboard——"

Erling looked puzzled.

"You said a moment ago that we should contrive so that Eystein would not take to the sea," he objected.

"So I said, and so I plan," answered Swain. "If we come at him by sea, and in the fashion I intend, it is probable that we will frighten him ashore. He is a man who has never had any luck on the land."

"For that reason he is not likely to leave his ship," protested Erling.

Swain shrugged his shoulders.

"That is to be seen. If my intentions prevail, however, he will choose the land. But in such matters the gods play sorry tricks with the best-laid plans."

Erling crossed himself.

"If a priest heard you call upon the Old Ones Swain——"

"Priest or Jarl, I care not," said Swain. "It is my belief that any gods will favor a man who uses his wits, but the Old Gods have more liking for bloodshed and warfare than this God the priests nowadays proclaim to us."

His fingers closed on his sword hilt; his eyes burned with cold fire.

"Heh, but there should be a red feast over east before the summer wanes!"

Erik, with Armod and Oddi, came up on the dais as he spoke, having provided for the house carls who crowded the hall; and

the Icelander glanced shrewdly at his chief.

"I hear the flapping of ravens' wings!" he exclaimed. "Do the water dragons crawl to sea?"

Swain dropped a heavy hand on his forecastleman's shoulder.

"There will be a kings' hewing soon, little man," he said; "but not all of us can fare thither."

"If you think to leave me home to play nurse to your two cubs—" Erik meant Swain's sons—"you are amiss. Let Jarl Harald guard them, and your lands, too."

"No, no, Erik," returned Swain, "I can not leave them without one they know."

"They know Jarl Harald, and he has sons of his own for them to brawl with. I tell you in your teeth, Swain, I have heard already that Olvir Rosta is back from Lapland with a witch-crew, and the Two Kings are manning their longships to fight for Norway, and if you think that I will bide at home in the Orkneys when such fare is to be consumed at Odin's board you have forgot whatever you once knew of——"

Swain joined Erling and the two scalds in a great burst of laughter.

"Was there ever man with such a shrewish tongue?" he roared. "Peace, peace! Yes, you shall go, and Jarl Harald shall take the cubs to his stead at Orphir. I doubt not he will guard them well. And now let us eat, for we have work to do, and men must take boat and carry the muster-word from end to end of the islands before tomorrow's sun sets. I have six ships to man, and I wish to show the Norsefolk what an Orkney chief can do in the matter of raising raven's meat; eh, carls?"

The roof rafters lifted from their pins as the answering hail surged upward from ten-score throats.

"Skoal, Swain, skoal!"

"Budli the sea king's path!"

"Up, raven-feeders!"

"Out swords, Orkneyfolk!"

IV

LONGSHIPS lay crowded almost prow to stern off Bergen strand, dragons, *snekkes*, *skeids* (those with unornamented prows). A few merchant craft lay scattered here and there, but the predominant note was warlike. It was no ordered fleet, no compact fighting force. The ships were berthed in separate groups, and the shipkeepers in every group cast jealous glances at other craft.

Swain, on the poop of his dragon *Deathbringer*, swept a considering eye over the scene the while he conned his own vessels to a satisfactory anchorage. He recognized the signs of a situation which Erling had hinted at.

Obviously Bergen was the meeting place, by accident or purpose, however it might be, of many conflicting elements. Here must breed suspicion, distrust, fear, foreboding, greed. Here were chiefs of both the kings' factions, spying out the future, looking for opportunities to trade upon their strength, watching for chance alliances, intriguing with one side or the other, even with the two sides.

Bergen was the center of Norway in the present crisis. South in Viken King Eystein bided with his hired viking crews. North in Nidaros King Ingi, dauntless and unafraid, despite a hump back and a crippled foot, slowly gathered an army and a fleet.

But the real center of the land was Bergen, where the outposts of the factions came together in a kind of armed truce, mingling with the horde of doubtful folk who hesitated to intrust themselves either way.

So much Swain perceived before he set foot ashore, and he had not taken two steps up the strand when his perceptions were confirmed. To one side he saw a *lenderman* he had noted of old in King Eystein's faction, Simon Skalp, a son of Halkel Huk, one of the most powerful chiefs in the southeastern parts by Viken; while hastening toward him from the opposite direction came Gregorius Dag's son.

Simon Skalp made a move to advance to meet Swain, but one of the men in his train whispered in his ear, and he turned abruptly upon his heel. Gregorius hailed the Orkneyman from the strand edge.

"There is no man I would rather see than you, Swain. By the Mass, you have come quicker than I expected. Where is Erling?"

"He fared for Nidaros," answered Swain. "How is it with you?"

"Why, it is well and ill. I am whole of my body, as you see, and no misfortune has beset me, but I can not honestly say that I have put myself in the way of accomplishing what I came hither after."

They were by now so close together that they could converse in ordinary tones, and there were no folk within earshot, except

those who attended them. With Gregorius were a dozen or more ship captains, younger sons and tenants. Swain had fetched ashore with him a score of his chiefs, the picked men of the Orkneys, not one of whom but had Jarls' blood in his veins, and some might boast of the lineage of kings, who were famed long before Harald Haardrade's time.

They were for the most part fine, tall man, with long, flowing hair and beards, and they all carried themselves as if they were accustomed to ordering whoever came in their paths. Their mail was of the best Flemish and English smithy work; their cloaks were of rich Valland stuffs; their helms were gilded or crested; their shields were gaily painted; their sword hilts were covered with gold and silver and uncut gems.

That is, this was true of all save Swain. His mail was battered and rusty, and his helm was in similar case; his cloak was torn and patched. Only his sword Hausakliufr, ((Skollsplitter) might be compared with the gear of his followers, for it had a hilt of tooth (ivory) wound about with gold wire to make a hand-grip. Otherwise he was garbed more plainly than most house carls.

But the Bergenfolk knew him. The word sped through the town as soon as he landed:

"Swain is here!"

"What? The Orkneyman?"

"Yes, Swain Olaf's son. He is come with six longships. Ingi has inlawed him."

"Ho, carls, do you hear that? Ingi has inlawed Swain!"

"Hutatut! He is not wrong who says there will be sword music before the snow flies!"

But of this Swain reckoned nothing. He cared no more what folk said of him than what they thought. What he wished to do, he did. What he desired, he took.

And he said what he thought. If he was in the presence of a king, he told that king the truth as he saw it. If the king did not like what he heard that did not concern Swain. So now he answered Gregorius with a gruffness that the great *lenderman* would never have tolerated from any other man, not from King Ingi himself.

"Something of this Erling told me. The idea was good. But I told Erling, as I tell you, that it is not in you to blow the breath of life into such a plan. As usual, it will be for me to contrive it."

Gregorius smiled.

"It is doubtless true what you say," he admitted. "And Erling and I are the first to say that you can accomplish more than any one in Norway. But come with me to my lodgings, and we will discuss the situation in private."

Swain nodded in assent, and the two leaders fell into step, their followers mingling behind them.

"To tell the truth, Swain," continued Gregorius, "I thought in the beginning that I could manage this affair, but I know now that no Norseman can do it. It is for an Outlander to handle."

"An Outlander who was exiled because the *lendermen* of Norway said that it was dangerous to admit to the land an Outlander who had been the death of a king!" snarled Swain.

They were in the narrow, twisting streets of the town by now, and the people who crowded against the housewalls to give them room to pass whispered as eagerly as had the folk on the strand.

"Yes, that is Swain Kingsbane!"

"Blessed Saints! Will there be fighting in the town again?"

"Ho, sister, will you ever forget that red eve when Ingi's men hewed down Sigurd's?"

"And Swain slew Sigurd in the street!"

"Ha, by Saint Olaf, it was over there, not twenty ells! In the doorway of Sigrid Saeta's tavern——"

Swain himself remembered the spot as they came abreast of the inn, the gate of its yard jammed with men, whose faces were lowering and uncertain.

"You do not lodge at Sigrid's, it seems," he remarked.

"No," said Gregorius. "The folk divide in the old fashion. Our faction go to Unna's Inn, and those of Eystein's persuasion are at Sigrid's, where Sigurd was wont to dwell."

"And what of those who hold for their own hands?"

"Oh, they lodge as they please and according to what influences work upon them; some at Unna's, some at Sigrid's. But the town is so crowded that only the greater chiefs can find room in the inns. The rest must live on shipboard or lodge with some merchant or townsman."

Swain grunted for answer, and walked on in silence, his face clouded with thought.

"Touching what you said as to your outlawing, Swain," observed Gregorius. "You

can not have forgotten that if you had heeded my advice you would not have accepted it so complaisantly."

"I had no thought of blaming you," replied Swain with an impatient gesture. "I know my friends, Gregorius—and my enemies. Also, those I disdain to class with either sort."

They came to the gate of Unna's house, and a number of men who were there stepped forward to greet the Orkneyman. They were all men of note, but Swain received their hasty words with the same impatience he had revealed toward Gregorius.

"Oddi!" he called.

And the little scald detached himself from the group of followers and came to his chief's side.

"Yes, Swain," he said.

Swain took him by the arm and drew him with Gregorius behind the gatepost, where no man could hear what was said.

"Who of those at Sigrid's tavern are loath to stand by Eystein today?" he asked of the *lenderman*. "Who of them is anxious to come over to us if he had the opportunity?"

"Close to all of them," returned Gregorius. "All, but for a few who have been sent by Eystein to keep watch upon his friends and what we do."

"Yes," said Swain, "but who are chief amongst the unsteady ones?"

Gregorius pondered the question.

"Bard Brynjolf's son and his brother, Halder—and Jon Halkel's son; yes, and Jon's brother, Simon Skalp."

"I marked Simon on the strand," interrupted Swain. "He made as if to speak with me."

"He is a sly fellow, Simon. Those four are the chiefs amongst the wabblers. Their fathers are still with Eystein, and without them he would be lost. It is through them he controls the Vikenfolk."

"Who of the four is the wiliest?" demanded Swain.

"Simon," answered Gregorius immediately.

Swain turned to Oddi, who had listened silently to all that had been said.

"Little scald," said the Orkneyman, "you are ship-weary and thirsty. Go to Sigrid Saeta's tavern, and make yourself merry there. Sing to them your roundest lays. Tell them sagas. They will welcome you gladly, both because you are a scald and because they will hope to secure information as to me and my plans. But be wary what you say of me. Seem to say much, but let your words have little import."

He waited, and Oddi quirked up his brown mask of a face in a grin of understanding.

"This is easier than many tasks you have set me, Swain. I suppose I am to keep my ears open. And what else?"

"Get word with Simon Skalp, and between you, make an opportunity to escape from Sigrid's and come secretly to me. I will have Erik outside in the street here to guide you into Unna's by the kitchen entrance."

"Set the ale-horns for us," replied Oddi. "We shall be with you soon, Simon and I."

Swain watched the little scald bustle down the street.

"You would not depend heavily on Simon and his sort in a weapon-clash!" remonstrated Gregorius.

"It is possible that there will be no weapon-clash," answered Swain. "I am of a mind to try what poison will achieve against Eystein."

His teeth gleamed in the ruddy tangle of his beard.

"We will see what magic Olvir's Lapp sorcerers can weave in opposition to me."

"But poison!" gasped Gregorius unbelievingly.

"Not in men's bellies—in their heads. The poison of words repeated from mouth to mouth, of fear and misgiving, the most potent poison ever brewed, Gregorius. It was the poison that outlawed me. Therefore I know what it can do. Many men whispering and talking over *skalli* fires, in the fields, on ship's decks. 'They say Swain Olaf's son is an outlander. He has no stake in the land, yet he was Sigurd's bane and waxes rich. Why should he thrive? Ho, let us cast him out!' That is how it is done, Gregorius. It is a bitter poison, and he is lucky who does not die of it."

"You would starve the ravens!" exclaimed the *lenderman* half-childingly.

Swain's answering smile was as bleak as the winds that blow off the icy seas of the Ginnungagap which lies west of Greenland.

"One way or another the ravens must be fed," he said.

V

SWAIN and Gregorius sat together in a private chamber which opened off the buzzing hall of Unna's *skalli*, a low box of a room under the pitch of the eaves, with a single door at which Armod the Scald stood guard, and a window high up in the outer wall. Through the door dinned the racket of guests who drank at the hall tables, nobles and chiefs on the dais, ship-captains and younger sons near by, the common folk from thence to the door, which, in turn, was blocked by a shuffling throng of the less fortunate who could not find space within. From the window came the droning murmur of the town, and it was to this that Swain bent his ear.

"Have you had any brawls in Bergen?" he asked.

"No," answered Gregorius. "Eystein's folk seem unwilling to fight. They say that he is content to let matters drift along as they are."

"Humph!" growled Swain. "And why have you not won over any of the drifters who hang between the factions?"

The *lenderman* leaned forward eagerly across the small table at which they sat.

"That is what I spoke of as we were walking up from the strand, Swain," he said. "When I said this was a matter only an Outlander could handle."

"How? An Outlander?" rasped Swain. "When I was last in Norway the folk had scant use for such as I."

"Ah, but they know better today! The men who were foremost in the plot to have you outlawed now are glad to welcome you back."

"They will not get my friendship," warned Swain.

"Nor mine, nor Ingi's," returned Gregorius. "But the fools will do anything to make up for playing into Eystein's hands two years ago. There were many who thought then that it would not be so bad to have a viking king in the land. You remember how they said that it was well to have a king who was a warrior, rather than trust entirely to a cripple like Ingi?"

"I remember," answered Swain.

"Well, they reaped naught for their efforts in your despite. They had not reckoned with Eystein's stinginess—he keeps his own house carls in arrears, men say. And as for Ingi, he would do no more than give them ale and meat when they came to court."

"Will none of that crew skoal for Eystein?" asked Swain curiously. "It would pay him to offer them——"

"It is too late for him to offer anything," said Gregorious. "He has a bad record for promising—and not performing. Moreover we have contrived it so that Ingi's gifts and distributions of lands have hedged about every one of the *lendermen* who were hostile to you and to Erling and myself with carls who can be relied on to draw swords whenever we bid them."

"Then why have you been unable to pull in these doubters in Bergen?" demanded Swain again.

"I have told you. They will not deal with a Norseman. They fear us and distrust us. So much blood has been shed, so many wrongs have been done, in this warfare between the kings since their father, Harald Gillichrist, died, that Norseman looks askance on Norseman. Here are only suspicion and foreboding."

"Suspicion and foreboding are what I propose to deal in," replied Swain. "Do you mean that such folk as Simon Skalp will trust me?"

"Yes. It is widely known that despite all you did for King Ingi you would accept from him no reward in lands in the kingdom, and that is the reason why men no longer distrust you. Every *lenderman* plots to advance his own family, and therefore they are all unwilling to do anything to assist me or Erling or one of our faction. And aside from that, as I have said, they would not trust any promise we made them."

"Ha!" exclaimed Swain sarcastically. "That is a sorry admission for an honorable man to make."

Gregorius drained his ale horn before replying.

"Nobody but you might say that to me," he said quietly. "That it is true is not my fault."

"Doubtless that is so," agreed Swain carelessly. "Yet if it is not to your discredit it is sadly to the discredit of the land, Gregorius."

"We may take it as another proof of the necessity of uniting the power under one king," said the *lenderman*.

"Yes. Two kings in a land breed trouble; of that there is no gainsaying. Well——"

The door of the room opened, and Armod peered in at them.

"Here is Oddi, Swain," said the tall scald. "And one with him."

"Ha!" exclaimed Swain. "Bid that one enter. Do you and Oddi keep the door, Armod."

The scald bowed and stood aside to make way for Simon Skalp, who swaggered in with a chink of mail.

"So you are in Norway again, Swain?" said Simon bluffly. "I heard tidings from Nidaros that Ingri had inlawed you. Men say that with you here the long ships will not grow weedy."

Swain regarded the Vikenman with the full force of his cold blue eyes.

"I am not responsible for idle talk," he answered. "But it is likely that my enemies will suffer scathe this summer."

Simon moved his feet uncomfortably as if he stood in front of a very hot fire. He was a large man, with a hard, bony face, over which the skin was stretched tight as a wind-bellied sail. His hair was black and descended in a greased lock across his forehead. He had a shifty eye.

"I am not your enemy," he said.

He looked uneasily at Gregorius, and burst out:

"Nothing was said of meeting any one but you, Swain. I came at Oddi's word from you. You would never——"

Swain's eyes silenced him.

"It is not my habit to slay men treacherously," returned Swain. "But if you say that you are not my enemy I say that you lie."

Tiny beads of perspiration broke out upon Simon's forehead. But they were the sweat of fear, not rage.

"No, no," he expostulated. "I ask only the opportunity to——"

"I have never seen you yet on the same side of a shield wall with me," broke in Swain.

"Ah, but give me a chance, Swain! It is true that my father has always been Eystein's man; but now——"

He hesitated and looked at Gregorius.

"Go on," commanded Swain. "Your father is still with Eystein, it is said."

The uncertain look in Simon's face became a cunning grimace.

"Why, that is so," he admitted. "But my brother and I are here in Bergen. We and some others who think the same way."

"And how do you think?"

"We think that it is a waste of time to feed horses at an empty bin."

Again Swain's icy glance swept the Vikenman's features.

"Do you seek a filled bin?" he asked.

"Yes. And we think, too, that there can not be two filled bins in the same barn."

"You are wiser than I had supposed," commented Swain. "Are there many of your opinion?"

"Very many, Swain. And we are not all here in Bergen."

"Humph," growled Swain. "Is it possible to find others of your kidney on the Vikenside?"

Simon hesitated again.

"Have you a reason for asking?" he parried.

"I never speak without reason," retorted Swain.

"And what inducements will you offer for——"

"I have yet to hear anything which would deserve of payment of any kind. Now, I will be frank with you because that is my pleasure. If you answer me as frankly, well and good. If you give me windy words—humph! I will take care of that as I see fit."

Simon wriggled as he stood on the floor rushes.

"Yes, yes!" he cried. "Let us speak frankly. That is what I came here for, Swain. If there is anything I can——"

Swain brushed him aside with a single gesture.

"It has been told me that you and your brother and Standale Brynjolf's two sons and certain others are here in Bergen, seeking an opportunity to come over to King Ingi's side. Is that true?"

"Why, we have talked together, Swain, some of us, and we agreed that if——"

"Is it true?"

"It might be true, but you see, we——"

"I will have a frank answer."

"Well, it is true that Eystein's service gives poor pay," conceded Simon. "He uses his gold boxes for a bed, and that is small use to any one. If Ingi——"

Swain's eyes drilled into the Vikenman's flushed face.

"You seek the winning side," stated Swain.

"That is every man's search."

"Not every man will adopt either side in

order to be victor, Simon. But I am not concerned for that. You may take it as certain that Ingi will be king of all Norway before Summer ends."

"And Eystein?"

Swain shrugged his shoulders.

"Eystein will be dead. A live king in exile is as troublesome as though he was on his throne."

The cunning look returned to Simon's eyes.

"Men call you Kingsbane, Swain," he said, "but it is scarcely likely that you should slay a second king. You must have great assistance to compass such a task."

"I shall not lack for help," replied Swain. "But as I have spoken frankly to you hitherto, I will continue frankly, and say also that the more help we have the less chance will there be of Eystein's being capable of offering us any serious resistance."

"I have many friends," proffered Simon. "We can put fifteen longships in the water."

"And your father is with Eystein!"

"Oh, as to that, my father grows restless, too. It might be——"

He paused significantly.

"I am not interested in your father at this time," answered Swain curtly. "Unless he will come over to us."

Simon shook his head.

"That he will not, Swain, for he would fear that the king would do harm to his property in Viken."

"Humph!" snorted Swain. "I supposed as much. Well, will he fight us when the longships crash?"

Simon's eyes glinted.

"There might be an arrangement. But do you plan to fight Eystein afloat?"

"Surely," replied Swain casually. "He has always boasted that he is a viking king, and we will prove to the people that viking or no viking, Ingi can master him on his own element."

He turned to Gregorius.

"Well, it is plain we have little to fear from Simon's folk," he added.

"Little enough," assented Gregorius with a grin.

But this did not please the Vikenman.

"I can add fifteen longships to one fleet or the other," he began. "If that means nothing to you, perhaps——"

"Ho!" said Swain. "So you make us an offer, eh?"

Simon glowered from one to the other of them. It was not so that he had fancied himself driving his bargain.

"It was you who sent——"

"Do you make us an offer?" barked Swain.

"Why, if my aid is worth a fair price——"

"What do you call a fair price?"

"For myself? Ten silver marks or the value thereof in land, and as much for any——"

"I will not be pinned down," Swain cut him off. "If you and your friends choose to cast in your lot with us you shall have whatever reward King Ingi apportions amongst his supporters, with your due proportions of confiscated farms and captured longships and other property."

Simon caught him up so quickly that a grin lurked in the ruddy tangle of Swain's beard, and Gregorius smiled openly.

"Yes, yes, that is a fair bargain. I should be satisfied with that. I am no chaffering merchant to whine and——"

Swain slapped his hand down upon the table top.

"Enough, Simon! Be off to your friends, and find if they will come with you at the same terms."

"Oh, but they will."

"They will? How——"

"When Oddi told me that you wished to see me I spoke hastily with them under cover in the yard of Sigrid's tavern, and they said that if Swain offered fair terms we should accept." Simon waxed confidential. "Eystein totters to his fall, and all men fear it, even those who still cling to him. The day has gone by when a king can become powerful by viking warfare, more especially if he is chary of spending his treasure for keen swords in his need."

"So be it, then," rasped Swain, veiling his contempt as well as he might. "You and your folk are Ingi's men from this night. And you will do as Ingi bids you."

"Yes, yes, Swain. Will you have me fetch them forth of Sigrid's at once?"

"Not so. Bide at Sigrid's until you hear from me. And say nothing of this to others than your friends. Nothing, carl! I shall know if you betray me."

"Betray you!" echoed Simon with quavering indignation. "Never! I am an honorable man."

"Humph!" growled Swain. "I have other matters to discuss now."

And he gave the Vikenman his back.

Simon pulled his cloak around him and shambled from the room in very different fashion from his entry. Gregorius grinned anew at the picture, but became abruptly serious as the door shut on their ally's back.

"He and his sort are no carls to trust beyond eyesight, Swain," he said fearfully.

"I do not dispute you," returned Swain. "But we have detached him from Eystein, and the moment misfortune smites Eystein he and his friends will be like wolves after a sheep to pull the king down—because they have been his men and can not suffer him to live for that very reason! Also, I think he will pass on to his father what I said as to our fighting at sea."

Gregorius wagged his head admiringly.

"I told Erling that you would straighten out this matter in a day's time, and it is to be said that I was right!" exclaimed the *lenderman*. "But what shall we do with Eystein's real friends? Slay them?"

"Bide until the morrow," answered Swain. "I have another plan."

VI

IN THE morning Gregorius asked Swain what he intended to do next.

"Call up our men," answered Swain, "and we will drive Eystein's folk from the town."

Gregorius's eyes glistened.

"Ha!" he said. "Then I had best bid them fetch ample store of arrows from the ships—and there is a stone-casting machine on the holm over against the town that——"

"No, no," interrupted Swain. "If this goes as I intend, there will be no slaying. We have not come to that yet. Call up our folk and see to it that they are armed. Leave the rest to me."

So the *ludr* horns brayed through the town, and a thousand men and more gathered in front of Unna's tavern while the word ran along the strand to Sigrid Saeta's house of what was toward, and Eystein's men mustered in the yard under arms and Simon Skalp and those of his persuasion shifted from one foot to the other, not knowing which way to turn.

The Bergenfolk took to their dwellings, barred the doors and shut the windows, and whispered fearfully as the horns grumbled and the clanking of armored house carls echoed from street to street.

"If Swain comes, swords whistle," the merchants said.

And presently a handful of the bolder spirits went to where Swain talked with Gregorius and other chiefs and pleaded with him not to use the torch, seeing that the flames might sweep the town.

"Did I burn the town the last time I marched to Sigrid's house?" returned Swain gruffly. "No! Very well then; be satisfied."

"But we are loyal to Ingi," pleaded the merchants' spokesman. "We will give ships and men for——"

"If you are loyal to Ingi you will not stand in my way," said Swain. "Advance the banners, carls—" this over his shoulder to the mass of his followers—"we will see if this is to be Ingi's town or Eystein's."

A hoarse roar of voices responded, and the long column swept after him, filling the narrow street from housewall to housewall, so that the merchants were compelled to skip along beside the chiefs to avoid being trampled by the house carls.

And in Sigrid Saeta's house Eystein's folk ran to close the yard gates, and sent bowmen up into the lofts and spearmen on the roofs and stationed guards at every window and entrance. A *lenderman* named Bjarne Sigurd's son—he was no relation to the dead king—assumed the leadership of this faction, and he hailed Simon Skalp indignantly because Simon and nigh half of the men in the tavern enclosure continued to hold themselves aloof from the preparations for defense.

"It is to be seen without difficulty who is faithful to Eystein in this moment!" cried Bjarne. "Do you intend to shelter yourselves behind our shields?"

Now Simon was ill at ease. He had not expected such a movement from Swain without any warning given to himself, and the other chiefs who had agreed with him to go over to Ingi's side were become suspicious of his good faith toward themselves. Ever since the blasts of the *ludr* horns had announced the gathering of Ingi's folk they had been clamoring at Simon to know what they should do. And therefore, when Bjarne challenged him in face of all the men in the courtyard of Sigrid's house, he could only fume and bluster.

"I am not of those who will be entrapped into fighting foolishly," he answered Bjarne.

"All men know what befell King Sigurd when he sought to hold this house the last time Swain came against it."

"Will you join with us then if we leave the house, and go out into the open?" demanded Bjarne.

"Of what use would it be to go out into the open?" replied Simon. "We should be outnumbered and slain."

"Will you join with us in cutting a path to the strand, so that we may take ships and escape by water?" pressed Bjarne.

Simon looked around him at the worried faces of his adherents, and listened to the swelling roar of the voices from the column Swain was leading through the streets from Unna's tavern.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "We should stand no better chance by water, for they would put four ships alongside each of ours before we could gain the sea."

"It is in my mind that you will not fight at all," shouted Bjarne. "But be sure that I will not hold my shield in front of you."

Simon's people and Bjarne's gathered instinctively into two opposing groups. But Bjarne was as unwilling to come to an open issue as was Simon. He leaped in front of his own group and raised a protesting hand.

"Down swords, down swords," he called. "We are sore beset, carls, no matter what happens, and if we come to blows here Swain will stamp us into the earth without difficulty."

"Yes," shouted a chief named Aslak Jon's son, "but if we do not slay Simon and his knaves now they will smite our backs as soon as we are engaged with Swain."

"That is true," assented Bjarne, "and my advice is that we give Simon the choice of fighting with us or else being thrust forth of the tavern."

Bjarne's side shouted agreement to this suggestion, but Simon was not so willing. He was wondering what greeting Swain would accord him.

"You shall answer to Eystein for this!" he cried. "What? Shall we be driven upon Swain's spears simply because we are loath to fight a useless battle?"

"What you say will be pleasant hearing indeed for Eystein's ears," sneered Bjarne. "There will be much spoken of it by men who discuss this day's events, but I do not think you will reward any scald for his remarks concerning you."

"It is not fair that you should treat us as traitors when we have done nothing against you," protested Simon.

Bjarne laughed.

"If I am unfair, there are as many of your folk as of mine," he answered; "and you can act as you see fit. Also, I do not think that any honorable man will agree with you that you have done nothing against us when you propose to make us fight for you, without aiding us."

"Why should we fight at all?" proposed Simon. "Let us——"

Bjarne began to unbar the gate.

"Here is the way out, Simon," he said. "Stay and fight—or go!"

A great snarl came from the ranks of the men loyal to King Eystein, and a fellow in an upper window cast down a stone that shivered to pieces on the ground at Simon's feet, so that he jumped back in fright. The snarl turned into laughter; but Bjarne's folk set to drumming on their shields, and first one, then another, cried:

"Out, Simon, out!"

The chiefs with Simon, and especially the sons of Standale Brynjolf, became concerned lest they should be involved in a fight with Bjarne's side at the moment Swain attacked; and they plucked at Simon's shield arm and whispered to him that it was better to risk Swain's wrath than to bide in the tavern yard, with the certainty of death from one foe or the other.

"Swain spoke you fair yesterday," they said. "He will not turn upon you today."

And their men muttered—

"Forth, Simon; forth!"

"This does not fall out as I had reckoned it would," said Simon; "but he is a fool who presses the sword to his throat."

And he led his people out of the gate, not far from twelvescore in number, Bjarne and his men shouting curses and threats and denunciations after them, and the last of them pushed pellmell into the street before a shield wall that was formed at their heels.

Simon encountered Swain about midway between Sigrid's house and the smithy shops, and it was repeated afterward that when Swain spoke to him the Vikenman was white in the face.

"Do you come to join forces with me, Simon?" asked Swain.

"Why—why—as to that, I— You said

naught last night— I— Yes— whatever you bid——"

"Humph!" growled Swain. "What did Eystein's folk say to you when you left them?"

Simon flushed suddenly.

"They bade us fight with them or——"

"Ho, I see!" exclaimed Swain. "And did you tell them that you and those of your company were Ingi's men?"

Simon thought hard.

"It was you told me that I was to say naught of this to any one," he objected.

"True," assented Swain, "and I see that you did not."

"I could not say anything, seeing that you had——"

"No, you could only leave the stoved boat," said Swain curtly.

His tone cut, and Simon, who was no coward, despite his liking for the winning side in a struggle, gripped sword-hilt.

"Put me in the front of your array, and I will hack down that gate for you," he snapped.

But Swain waved him aside.

"I have no part for you in this fray, Simon. Take your folk to Unna's tavern, and bide there until you hear from me."

"Suit yourself," rejoined the Vikenman, shrugging his shoulders. "Bjarne and his folk will not yield readily, and you are like to suffer sore man-scathe before you take them."

"I think it will be unnecessary for me to lose so much as a thrall," retorted Swain. "I have already sought what I desired in coming against Sigrid's tavern. But now that we are here we may as well make a clean sweep of the town."

Simon regarded him in wonder, but perceiving that he would say no more finally went off with his men, turning into a side street which led them across the Sand-Bridge and so back to Unna's tavern at the opposite end of the town.

"You would have committed those carls past recovery, Swain, if you had made them lead the attack," objected Gregorius. "And if you think you can slay Bjarne without man-scathe you do not know him. He is a good fighter."

"So I am aware," returned Swain, "but I do not expect to fight with him today."

"Not fight! Why——"

"And as for Simon's folk, how can we commit them deeper than they have committed themselves, marching out and leaving Bjarne and all others loyal to Eysteinto to face our assault? Eystein will never trust them again."

"That is so," agreed Gregorius; "but even so, we can not slay Bjarne's party without loss. Will you burn him out?"

The chief of the merchants started forward.

"Of what use to burn Sigrid's house, Swain?" he cried. "It is we townsfolk who would be the sufferers thereby. Let me go to Bjarne and make a composition with him."

Swain shook his head.

"No, for that is what I am going to do."

"Make a composition with Bjarne!" cried Gregorius. "What? And let him go free?"

"Let him go whole of body and limb, and those with him," replied Swain. "Do you remain here, Gregorius, and the rest of our folk. I will go alone to Sigrid's house."

And so he did, nor could they deter him by aught they might say.

The guards at the tavern gate were vastly amazed to see this single figure approach, and still more amazed when they recognized Swain.

"Ho, Bjarne," they called, "here is Swain himself, and he comes alone to the gate."

"If he comes alone, he shall be met alone," returned Bjarne, "sword in hand or sword in sheath, as he pleases. Take down the bars, carls."

And so Bjarne stood forth to meet the Orkneyman.

"Single combat or single speech, Swain?" he hailed.

Swain grinned, not displeased that he had to deal with a man of spirit.

"Speech for this present, Bjarne," he answered. "As you know, I am for Ingi, and I have seized the town in his name. Therefore I must expel all folk who hold for Eystein, and I take it for granted that you are not of those who cry for one king one day and a second king the second day."

"I am not," answered Bjarne shortly. "And if you expel me it will be by force."

"No doubt; no doubt," assented Swain. "But I am not of a mind to slay you or other honorable men if it can be helped, so I will make you a proposition. You shall return to Eystein without loss or scathe, taking with you all your goods and gear and traveling in your own ships, and providing

that you go peacefully and at once, I will take oath that no man of our faction shall move to hinder you."

Bjarne coughed to cover up his surprize.

"From any man less honorable than you, Swain, I would hear such an offer with suspicion," he said. "But it is my duty to warn you that if we leave here alive we will all fight for Eystein at the first opportunity. We are not traitors like Simon Skalp and his friends."

"I had supposed that you would be loyal to Eystein," retorted Swain. "But there are only fourteen or fifteen score of you, and you can do nothing to save him. My advice to you is to return to your farms and forget this quarrel between the kings; but I do not suppose you will heed me."

"I will not," rapped Bjarne, "nor will any man of mine or any *lenderman* who has my friendship."

"That is an honorable course to adopt," Swain approved. "However, it is no concern of mine. The question is: will you and your folk leave Bergen at once in peace, agreeing to return straight to Viken, or must we crack shields and slay folk who might better be saved for the king's hewing that is to come?"

"We will go peacefully," promised Bjarne. "And it is my hope that when that king's hewing befalls I shall have a chance to cross blades with you."

"For your sake I hope not, Bjarne," said Swain. "Now muster your folk and march to the strand. It is best that there should be no delay."

VII

GREGORIUS and the other *lendermen* of King Ingi's faction were aghast when Swain bade them leave the way open for Eystein's folk to march from Sigrid Saeta's tavern to their longships on the strand.

"Here are three hundred stout carls added to Eystein's fleet," expostulated Gregorius. "They will say that we feared to close with them, Swain!"

"Not they," replied Swain coolly. "They will say that I told them we were not concerned over whether or not Eystein gained three hundred men. And they will carry back to Viken tales of their betrayal by the sons of Brynjolf and Halkel Huk, and that talk will distil through the ranks of Eystein's host the poison I spoke of.

"Bjarne and his friends will denounce Brynjolf and Halkel, claiming that the fathers of such sons must be equally dishonest. And Brynjolf and Halkel will be wroth with Bjarne and his friends, and concerned for their own futures. They will pass messages to their sons, and their sons will send messages in return—and we must contrive that those messages be of a color suitable to our purpose. You will find Eystein torn between opposing counsels, confused, harried, uncertain. In that situation we will strike him as we please."

"I had not thought of it in that way," admitted Gregorius. "But surely you will not trust to traitors?"

"I will trust them as far as I can see them, so long as we are successful," replied Swain. "You need not concern yourself. Simon Skalp and those carls who deserted Bjarne's folk can win no more than an ell of steel in the bowels from Eystein's crews. They might sell us in adversity—but that is for us to guard against. The man whose eyes are open is never betrayed."

They discussed the situation further, and the result of their deliberations was to dispatch word to King Ingi summoning him and Erling to come south to Bergen with whatever forces they had raised. In the meantime, Swain called upon the Bergenfolk to make good their promises to aid King Ingi, and he employed the two scalds, Armod and Oddi, to pass back and forth across the country from the Hardanger Fjord to Viken with messages to friends of Simon Skalp and his party and with rumors and tales, both true and false, for the consumption of allies and enemies.

In this way several weeks were occupied, and in the course of this time the poison Swain had distilled circulated through the Vikenside. Men who were honestly doubtful as between the merits of the two kings were impressed by Swain's casual release of Bjarne's party. Men who were mercenary by nature and sought to estimate which side was most likely to win were similarly impressed. All men, whether selfish or unselfish, honorable or dishonorable, made no attempt to dispute the importance of Simon Skalp's desertion of King Eystein.

"When the barn burned the rats were first out," folk said.

King Eystein summoned a House *Thing*

when he first had news that the sons of Halkel Huk and Brynjolf had deserted him, and to it came all of his *lendermen* and chiefs. And he spoke out openly in the *Thing*, and demanded of Halkel and Brynjolf how they might excuse the action of their sons.

Brynjolf refused to answer him, but Halkel said:

"Let your chests of gold defend your land, O King, My sons grew tired of empty service."

Eystein flushed crimson.

"Is it only of gold that a chief must think in giving service to his king?" he asked.

Many *lendermen* spoke up, praising the king and denouncing the sons of Halkel Huk and Brynjolf, but without making any reference to the two fathers or to Halkel's remark, until at last Bjarne arose.

"The king has asked if a chief must think only of gold in giving him service," he said. "Now I think we should do well to consider our situation and decide how many of us will fight for gold and how many will be true to the king out of loyalty. And I say too that Simon Skalp and the rest with him deserted me in Bergen without regard to the men with me, and thinking solely of their own safety. I am willing to believe that their fathers can not explain their conduct, but at least Brynjolf and Halkel can pledge themselves to make it up to the king."

Halkel stood up, and his face was a thundercloud.

"Let the king's chests of gold follow him, and he will not lack for followers," he said.

And with this he stalked from the *Thing*.

Brynjolf, seeing that some statement was expected from him, also got up, and spoke in a rambling fashion for a long time, but the gist of what he said was that it was unfair to suspect his loyalty, since no proof had been brought against him.

"As for my sons," he concluded, "they are men grown, with their own properties and attendants, and I can not be responsible for what they do. Nor can Halkel be held accountable for his sons for the same reason."

Nobody at the *Thing* was satisfied by this; but King Eystein was encouraged that no more *lendermen* showed hostility to him, and he steered the discussion around to what they should do against Ingi.

"I have so many and such excellent men," he said, "that I have no intention of flying from my brother, if you will follow me, as I am sure you will. I am for making a strong push and ending this uncertainty at once."

His *lendermen* were only lukewarm to this proposition, and several advised him that they would be hugely outnumbered by the forces Ingi was collecting.

"And what if that is so?" returned the king. "My men are mostly trained vikings, who have fought in company these many years and have fared widely oversea. My longships are all substantial vessels, built for warfare. Ingi's crews will be composed mainly of levies of the countryside, and he will have few large ships in his fleet."

"It is strange that Ingi should undertake to come at you by water, Lord King," said Bjarne, "when you have always had an advantage over him at sea."

"All the tidings we receive indicate that such is his purpose, however," answered the king.

"Yes," said Brynjolf," the word is all over the countryside that Ingi will come at us by sea."

The king and the other *lendermen* eyed him askance, for they suspected that the "word" he spoke of had come from his sons.

"Perhaps," said one chief, "it would be advisable to bide ashore if Ingi intends to take the sea path. It is a good plan to do what the enemy intends not to do."

"And suffer Ingi to boast that he had driven me from the sea!" snarled Eystein. "Never! We will float every ship we can find, and I will sail home with Ingi's head on my prow. I have borne with him long enough."

"Fight we must," asserted Bjarne. "Most of us will suffer in life or property if Ingi becomes sole king, and there is no other way out."

When Bjarne had spoken a man who was sitting close behind the king stood up. He was of medium height, but very broad in the shoulders and with immense length of arm. He had a thick black bush of beard, out of which his swart face peered with a kind of evil vigilance. This was Olvir Rosta, and albeit he was an outlander and a man of no wealth except for the longship he fared in, every man in the *Thing* gaped at him as he opened his mouth, and some few crossed themselves or murmured a prayer. For no man in the North had a greater reputation for cunning than Olvir. Men feared

him as they feared Swain, if in a different way and for different reasons.

"Bjarne has spoken what we all must realize to be the truth," he said. "It is too late to argue against fighting. Moreover, he who refuses to fight when he is attacked must abandon his possessions and flee. That is all very well for me—" he grinned wickedly— "for I can carry my property with me; but you chiefs who own lands on the Vikenside and elsewhere can not very well take them with you.

"Yet there is this to be said in favor of fighting at sea. Afloat in your longship you can flee at need and in more than one direction. Ashore if you are beaten you can run in one direction—backward. My advice is that we fight at sea, especially because as King Eystein has said, we are more accustomed to that than Ingi's folk.

"But in fighting it is always advisable to know what the enemy intend to do, and so I suggest that the king send several ships to observe Ingi's strength and seek news of him. I will accept such a mission myself—" and again he grinned in an evil, knowing way that made men shudder—"and perhaps I shall be able to achieve something to spoil Ingi's purpose. I have fought Swain many times before and am still here to tell of it."

Those who heard him concluded from his expression that he meant to exploit sorcery against the enemy, and all were reluctant to offer to accompany him; but Bjarne, who prided himself on fearing nothing, mastered his squeamishness and said—

"I will go with Olvir if the king is willing."

"I am heartily willing," replied King Eystein. "Do you two fare to sea, and if you can do aught against Ingi, without too great risk, all the better; but what I would have you endeavor principally is to gather tidings of his plans."

Now several others spoke up and offered to go, among them Aslak Jon's son and Arne Sturla, young *lendermen* and gallant; and after some debate it was decided that the four should sail in company, and that while they were absent on their mission the remainer of King Eystein's fleet likewise should get to sea and fare north to the Graeningasund, where Olvir's ships should later join them. It was commonly said in the ranks of Eystein's followers that Bjarne, Aslak and Arne were brave fellows to venture to sea with Olvir's Lapp sorcerers.

"As like as not, Olvir will brew up a storm against Ingi and Swain," men said, "and a witch storm can wreck the witch's friends as well as his foes."

VIII

KING INGI came to Bergen with fifty ships. Swain and Gregorius, what with their own forces and the contributions of the merchants and the neighboring *lendermen* who were friendly to the crippled king, and the men who attended the sons of Brynjolf and Halkel Huk, already had gathered upward of thirty ships, and they had more than enough folk to provide crews for this number. When Ingi sailed up Hardanger Fjord at the head of his armament and joined the ships lying off Bergen strand there was a fleet assembled such as seldom had been seen in Norway.

Swain and Gregorius were at the strand to meet the king as he came ashore, and the martial spectacle made Ingi's eyes sparkle with the warrior's ardor that went ill with his misshapen body. This king was handsome in the face; he had fine eyes, silken hair and a lofty forehead. But withal his features bore traces of the pain which had been his lot in consequence of the hump on his back and the twisted foot that had come to him in his fatherless infancy when Thjostolf Ala's son had carried him in his belt through all the perils of Mynne fight. He was very generous in disposition despite an occasional inclination to bad temper, and although his infirmities made him of little worth in a stricken field he was as fearless as any man.

For Swain, whom once he had disliked, he held now an affection beyond that he accorded even to Gregorius and Erling, for, as he was accustomed to say, repeating the cant phrase which was bandied from tongue to tongue throughout the North:

"Erling serves me on behalf of his son who may some day reign after me; Gregorius is faithful because my interest is his interest. But Swain and I fight for the one purpose: to make Norway whole under one king."

Swain assisted him to mount from the poop of his longship to the wharf, where a horse was awaiting him, for, because of his twisted foot, it was difficult for King Ingi to walk.

"Ho, Swain!" exclaimed the king. "I would rather see you here than all the ships' crews in the fiord! It was a sad day

that took you out of Norway, and a glad day that fetched you back again."

"I went for a purpose, and I returned for a purpose," answered Swain. "If we obtain what we seek, what does it matter that I was Orkneyward for a year or two?"

"If we obtain that purpose indeed, I shall agree with you," said Ingi.

He spoke in friendly fashion with Gregorius and other *lendermen;* and after those who had bided in Bergen had welcomed Erling and the principal chiefs in the king's train they all went up through the town to Unna's tavern, where the great folk were feasted in the hall. But Ingi retired into the chamber wherein Swain and Gregorius had received Simon Skalp, and with him were only the three who shared his most intimate confidence. Erik Skallagrim's son and the two scalds, Armod and Oddi, kept the room door, and passed in the food and ale Unna's thralls carried from the kitchens for the king's meal.

"Well, Swain," said the king when the door had been closed, "what do you think of our luck? We have more than eighty ships here, and a greater sufficiency of men than ever attended us in the past. It seems to me we ought to push keels after Eystein before he can fare oversea."

"We have a notable fleet here," spoke up Erling, "yet I am loath to agree that we can come to any sure profit by approaching Eystein by sea. It must be remembered that Eystein is an accomplished viking leader, and he has always succeeded in his sea ventures. Let us rather take to the land and try a shield-wall push."

"And in that case probably," Gregorius struck in, "even if we defeated Eystein he could take to his ships and flee. No, no; Swain has a better plan."

"If it is Swain's plan it is a good plan," said Ingi; "and I am glad that he is for sea-fighting, for Eystein has always boasted that if I ever came at him by sea he would show the Norsefolk the difference between a viking king and a crippled king."

Swain smiled slightly in the tangle of his ruddy beard.

"As it chances, I do not agree with any of you," he said. "Unless it be Gregorius, who knows somewhat of my mind concerning this affair."

"What do you propose, then?" inquired the king.

"I propose that we go against Eystein by sea, but I shall aim to contrive matters so that he will be compelled to take to the land."

The king wagged his head uneasily.

"You have a shrewd brain as I know, Swain," he said; "but I think that you attempt too much here. How can you compass it that we should attack Eystein on the element he knows best, and he should yet be induced to forsake sea for land? And when he takes to the land, what benefit shall we have from it? For we will be at sea on our ships."

"The king speaks for me in this," said Erling. "It is advisable that whatever we do, we do it cautiously. There are great issues at stake."

Swain smiled again.

"You are ever in favor of the cautious path, Erling," he remarked; "and sometimes I am not able to agree with you thereupon. But now it happens that the path I plan to take is the path of caution—and you will not set your feet in it!"

"How?" exclaimed Erling. "I do not see that! You leave too much to chance. If we fight at sea the chances will be against us——"

"Perhaps. But we have nigh twice the ships that Eystein can float."

"Ah! But Eystein's ships are all dragons, and his crews are trained vikings, house carls who spend their lives in warfare. Yet even if we defeated him afloat, I say, still he might reach the land and evade us. And in the sea fight we should be bound to suffer sore man-scathe. We might not be able to pursue him. That would give him time to raise men, and when he had replenished his losses he would be stronger than before, and we——"

Swain waved Erling to silence.

"You have not heard my plan," he rebuked the *lenderman.* "What I intend is that we shall be insured against man-scathe. I will avoid both sea fight and land fight."

The King and Erling looked surprized.

"What?" cried Ingi. "You can never slay Eystein without a battle, Swain. And his folk will not be put down save by the sword."

"I thought I had heard talk of a kings' hewing," Erling commented sarcastically.

"A kings' hewing, yes. But not a folk's hewing. Bethink you, all. What was it set the Norsefolk's minds toward peace two

years ago when we might have slain Eystein had we received men's support? They were weary of bloodshed. They said that if the kings continued to struggle the land would be empty of men, and the fields would all be graveyards."

Ingi regarded him curiously.

"It is not like you to preach against bloodshed," commented the king. "You sound like a priest."

"I never thought to agree with the priests," retorted Swain, "but in this matter I am one with them. It serves no purpose to slay common folk. The land's wealth is in their produce. If you lack hands for the fishing and the harvest, where will you get taxes? In but one way, the way Eystein has chosen. That is, by viking-faring oversea.

"Well, no man knows more of viking-faring than I. Eystein has never driven his keels so far as I. And I say that the day comes when we Norsefolk will no longer find it profitable to plunder abroad, for in the Southlands the folk who once were tame as cattle to harry now wear mail, and their chiefs dwell in castles of stone, and their house carls fight on horseback better than we, and their shipmen are eager to fight instead of craving our mercy the moment we board."

"But what has this to do with the question how we shall go against Eystein?" prompted Erling.

"Everything, carl. I am for saving the common folk from death, despite themselves—Eystein's folk as well as Ingi's. For the chiefs and *lendermen* who follow Eystein I say naught. Certain of them must die, even as their king must die, seeing that if they lived they would continue to plot our ruin. But the more common folk we keep alive, the more wealth can Ingi obtain from the land and the better will he be able to hold his own in face of all his enemies."

The king's fist crashed on the table top.

"By the Mass!" swore Ingi. "There spoke a king's brain. Ah, Swain, it is you should be King of Norway!"

"I am content as I am," returned Swain.

And the Orkneyman grinned sardonically.

"Why should I wish to be king if the king will heed my advice? It is the thought rules, not the title."

"But this plan of yours?" demanded Erling. "I remember now you spoke somewhat of it when I was in the Orkneys, but he is a fortunate man who slays a king without a struggle."

"I said naught of doing without a struggle," returned Swain, "for a struggle we shall have; yes, and more than one. But what I do intend is that we avoid a battle wherein thousands must die."

"How?" pressed the king.

There came a knock on the door, and Erik thrust his head inside.

"Here is Simon Skalp and one of his folk," growled the Icelander. "Simon would speak with Swain."

Swain looked to the king, and Ingi nodded.

"Have him in, Swain. I must meet this king-changer soon or late. Better today."

So Erik stood back, and Simon entered, his bony face distorted into a smile that made it all the more hideous. At his heels trailed a lean, hook-nosed fellow with a patchy yellow beard. Eyjolf Gunnar's son was this man's name, and he was a tenant of Halkel Huk in Viken.

"Greeting, lord king," said Simon. "I ask your leave and good will, in that I had tidings of importance which required Swain's attention—and, it may be, yours too."

"I am glad that you are diligent to serve us," answered Ingi coldly. "They tell me you and your brother and Brynjolf's sons have cast in with us."

"Why, so we have," assented Simon. "It tastes well on no man's tongue to drink one king's ale and then reach a day when that king's service becomes unjust; but I am straightforward in my ways, and I do what I think is right, no matter what others say. Eystein is no king for me."

"Humph," quoth Ingi. "In what was he unjust to you? Perhaps I can secure redress for you. Did he fine you or take from you your property—or permit a slaying to pass without manbote paid?"

Simon peered perplexedly at the king from under beetling, high-ridged brows.

"As to that—humph! It was not—You see— The— Humph! I mean, lord king, he— Why, there was no fine or slaying, and— But he is over tight-fisted with his gold and silver to suit my habits."

"I see," said Ingi. "But I warn you I am no gold-scatterer."

Simon scuffled his feet.

"I have always heard that you were generous," he replied. "Even your enemies say so. Yes, and they say too that you shall master Eystein."

"It will go ill with you if I do not," jeered the king. "Well, what is your errand with Swain?"

Simon appeared relieved at the turn in the conversation.

"This man," he said, pointing to Eyjolf behind him, "has just reached me with a message from my father. It is that Eystein has held a house *Thing* at which it was decided—albeit my father and others of the *lendermen* in the *Thing* were opposed to it—to meet you at sea, and to this end the king dispatched Olvir Rosta, in company with Bjarne Sigurd's son, Aslak Jon's son and Arne Sturla, four longships in all, to feel out what King Ingi's folk were about."

He hesitated, and Swain boomed out:

"Is that all? What else said your father?"

Simon beckoned Eyjolf forward.

"Tell what you told me," he ordered.

The house carl cleared his throat and spoke in a high, whining voice, mincing his words precisly.

"If it please you, lord king, Halkel Huk bade me say to Simon that only fools would risk life in a miser's cause."

There was a moment's silence; then Swain growled:

"Ho, Simon, how do you understand your father's words? Is he on his way to join us?"

"If he came to Bergen, Swain, Eystein's folk would harry his lands."

"So he will not join forces with us," observed King Ingi with unconcealed sarcasm. "Will he bide with Eystein?"

"While he must," replied Simon.

"Are there others who feel as he does?" questioned Gregorius anxiously.

"Full many," answered Simon.

"But they will fight if they must?" interposed Erling.

"Some will; some will not. It is hard to say. There is discontent amongst Eystein's folk—but any man will fight to save himself when he is pinned in a corner."

"What of Brynjolf?" inquired King Ingi.

"If it please you, lord king," replied the house carl Eyjolf in his reedy voice, "Brynjolf also grows restive, but he was unwilling to speak out in the *Thing* as Halkel Huk did. But Halkel thinks that he will not bide a weapon-push if he is given any excuse to flee."

"I would not stand in Eystein's boots!" exclaimed Ingi derisively. "It seems he has faithful followers!"

"Yet we will do well to practise caution," advised Erling. "Eystein has many good house carls, and some chiefs will——"

"Bah!" snapped Swain. "We will break the spirit of his men before they ever see our sails. And first I will attend to Olvir Rosta and those with him." He turned to Ingi. "I have been in two minds whether to strike now or to bide the summer's passing," he went on; "but I believe from what Simon says that we may safely cry, 'Out oars!' and begin."

"How?" questioned Ingi with a note of eagerness. "Will you take the whole fleet against Olvir, and——"

"Not so! My own ships will be enough. The rest of you must wait the word from me."

He swung around upon Simon.

"Will you earn a certain reward from King Ingi?" he rasped.

"I— There is no— Whatever is honorable——"

Swain laughed shortly.

"What I ask of you is not honorable, Simon, and the bare truth is that the position you have adopted is dishonorable of itself. There is no other way for you except you return to King Eystein—and I do not think you will receive any reward from him unless it be a sharp stake to sit on."

Simon went red and white in patches all over his ugly face. The house carl Eyjolf trembled.

"Will you do what I say or will you not?" demanded Swain.

Simon nodded assent.

"Have you other fellows—like him?" Swain indicated Eyjolf. "Fellows who can find their way into the Vikenside? Who have friends or brothers in Eystein's crews? Common men whose passing to and fro will not be noted?"

"Why, yes, Swain; but what——"

"Here is what I will have you do. Do you and Halder and Bard and your brother Jon pick out from your companies a score or so of such carls. Then send them south into Viken, bidding them sift here and there, wherever they may, spreading the news as they go that Eystein can never stand against Ingi, that half of Eystein's folk will desert him before the prows crash, that all who do so will receive favorable treatment from Ingi."

The bones in Simon's face seemed to be trying to tear themselves apart.

"And—and if I do, Swain? What—what——"

"King Ingi will amply reward you," promised Swain without a glance at the king.

"And my father? And Brynjolf?"

"If they do not oppose us, their conduct will be considered in the division of the spoils after Eystein's death."

"Yes," said the king with the sarcasm he had revealed before, "I am prepared to be generous toward faithful friends."

"And you may send word to your fathers likewise," added Swain, "that we shall keep a strict watch over you and those who joined us with you. If there is treachery——"

He drew a finger across his throat.

"Oh, no, Swain!" cried Simon.

Eyjolf clucked sympathetically, the prominent lump in his throat shooting up and down its skinny length in the excess of emotion.

"That is all," said Swain. "Ho, Erik!"

The door swung open.

"These carls go out."

They clumped from the room, the door slammed shut, and Gregorius protested:

"But if you have your way, Swain, there will be no fighting!"

"There will be fighting whether I have my way or no," returned Swain. "But my way, as I have said, is to spare from the slaughter all the hapless folk who join the levies because their masters make them do so."

Ingi was deep in thought, but Erling agreed with Swain.

"Yes, yes," he said. "It was time some one gave thought to winning a struggle without the welter of blood that clashing shield-walls bring. But I do not see why Swain should sail against Olvir Rosta's ships. Let them come and spy. When they see our numbers they will return and advise Eystein——"

"That he should flee to Denmark or the south while there is time!" exclaimed Swain scornfully. "No, Erling, my plan is to destroy Olvir, but in case any escape me and carry word to Eystein of what has happened I must have the rest of you so close upon my heels that Eystein will not dare to put to sea."

"But why will he not dare?" asked the king, puzzled. "If he knows we are so strong, if he hears that Olvir has perished, will he not carry his fleet south? I would, if I stood on his poop."

"Ah," said Swain, "but when that moment comes, king, Eystein will have no fleet to lead—for the poison I have been dripping into men's ears will have paralyzed their courage; and the news that Olvir has been trapped, Olvir, the warlock, the grandson of Witch Frakork, with his crew of Lapp sorcerers, that news will send them helter-skelter into every vik and inlet. They will think only of getting their feet upon dry land, of breaking free from all association with Eystein. And I think Eystein will follow them, despite himself. He dare not risk putting to sea with a handful of followers when we can scatter eighty ships in pursuit of him."

"It is a good plan," said Gregorius doubtfully. "But perhaps it will not work as Swain has foreseen. To see over a hill you must climb to the summit."

"If it is a good plan it has a chance of success," said Ingi swiftly. "Also it is the only plan we have short of hurling our ships prow after poop at Eystein's. It is like Swain to attempt to defeat craft by mother-wit; he has done it before, as we know, and I believe he will do it again. Therefore I am in favor of it. A king without fleet or army is easier to slay than one who is fenced by longships and surrounded by guards—and at the worst, if Swain fails to destroy Eystein with his poison, it will be for us to try our swords upon the Vikenmen's array."

There was no gainsaying this argument, and Gregorius and Erling agreed that Swain and his six Orkney longships should put forth from Bergen in the morning and fare in quest of Olvir's ships. The remainder of Ingi's fleet was to sail the following day, and certain fast-sailing *snekkes* were to keep in touch with the Orkneyfolk. A meeting-place was appointed at Moster Isle, so that they might be well to the south of King Eystein, in position to bar a possible flight to Denmark.

"This day has been long in coming," said King Ingi. "I would run no hazard of failure."

"Words used rightly are surer than steel," grunted Swain. "There will be no failure."

IX

VAGUE rumors came daily to Swain's ears as he cruised the coast in search of Olvir; but he had his first definite tidings of the Roysterer from a Daneship, north-bound for the merchant town of Nidaros. The Dane blundered into Swain's little fleet in the early haze of a hot June morning, and was all for scrambling out of the Orkneyman's path, fearful lest these lean sea-crawlers should prove as predatory as those he recently had escaped; but Swain ran up on his larboard quarter and brought him to with a stern hail and a show of drawn bowstrings.

"Yes, yes, Swain!" cried the Danes' captain. "We ran from Olvir under shelter of last night's dusk, and I doubt not he is hard after us. Four ships he had, and only the blessed Saints brought us safe from——"

"Are you sure he followed you?" barked Swain.

"Sure? Yes. My steersmen swore they sighted the glint of the sunrise on his sails just now, and I thought you must be he, come around in front of us by some exploit of black magic, since all folk know he has traffic with the Evil one, and himself is spawn of——"

"On with you, Dane," interrupted the Orkneyman. "And if you see King Ingi or any ship of his, tell them that Swain was about to bring Olvir to battle."

The Dane crossed himself ardently.

"And that is something I should not like to do, myself," he proclaimed. "Viking rovers and heathen Letts I can face if I must; but as for wizards and these Lapp sorcerers, I——"

The Dane's words dwindled in the fog, and Swain hallooed through joined hands to Kolbiorn Jon's son, who commanded the next ship to his own *Deathbringer*.

"Olvir steers this way, Kolbiorn. He can not be far over the horizon's rim. Row forward until you sight him, then turn in fear and come back. He will think you likely prey and give chase. The rest of us will be lying under the lee of that islet there—" Swain nodded to a cluster of rocks which rose from the water betwixt them and the mainland to larboard—"and so soon as he is up with us will come out and fall upon him, all together."

Kolbiorn smote shield with sword.

"A baited trap, eh, Swain? Well, Olvir is not the wolf to pass a lone sheep on the hillside. It is in my mind that this will be the time he does not escape you."

"I am finished with predicting what will fall out between Olvir and me on a given day," rejoined Swain. "Slay him I shall, but be it this day or another I do not know—nor much care. Out oars!"

Kolbiorn gave the word to his rowers, and sped off into the haze that was rapidly burning away under the sun's rays, while Swain and the other five ships berthed themselves on the side of the islet toward the main shore, protected from observation from the sea by short prongs of rock which ran back from each extremity of the islet, making it in semblance like a half moon with the hollow face landward.

Here they lay for some time, with a party of watchers ashore on the islet to give warning of Olvir's coming, and made use of the opportunity to prepare their ships for battle. So that, when the watchers sped down from the rocks, shouting the alarm, all Swain's folk were primed and ready, and they nosed around the northern prong of the islet and bided there with oars in the water, only awaiting the blast of Swain's horn to urge them forward.

Kolbiorn's lead was scant, and it was plain that his rowers were throwing every ounce of energy they commanded into the bucking oars—the breeze was useless to both pursued and pursuers. Olivir's ships, too, were driving their keen prows in a welter of creamy spume; their oar blades flashed up and down, up and down, so swiftly as almost to dazzle the eye. Helms and spearheads were blobs of steely light on poop and forecastle of every craft. Very faint and far away sounded a roar of voices.

Erik Skallagrim's son, from a toehold on the scaly neck of the dragon, the head of which Swain bestrode, squinted thoughtfully at the approaching ships.

"Kolbiorn will not make it," he said. "They are closing him,"

"He will run no risk of not pinching their jaws in his bait," assented Swain.

"Humph!" said Erik. "Four to one is long odds. Shall we——"

"Let them ring him first," bade Swain. "In the confusion we will come on them so that they will not know which way to turn."

Ell by ell Olvir's ships overhauled

Kolbiorn's high-curved stern. Arrows commenced to flash. Spears were streaks across the watery gap that narrowed with every breath. The shield-bearers who were protecting Kolbiorn's steersmen were pressed to give their charges the safety that was essential if the ship was not to lose speed, and presently one went down—and the unlucky steersman behind him was feathered with quick-driven shafts.

Kolbiorn's ship yawed. Instantly two of Olvir's leaped up on either board and a third swung in, driving its iron-shod beak full tilt into the starboard oar bank with a grinding, shattering crash of timber that could be heard distinctly over the tumult of the fighting.

Olvir's fourth craft ran across Kolbiorn's bow and barred further flight. The ring was complete, and as Swain trod upon Erik's fingers in the haste of his descent from *Deathbringer's* prow a trickle of enemies poured into Kolbiorn's waist.

Swain slapped his *ludr* horn to his lips, and the hoarse, grunting bellow reverberated from the rocks.

"Backs into it, carls!" he roared. "Arrows, bowmen; arrows ready! Ho, spear casters, stand by!"

The five longships streaked from the cover of the islet so rapidly that they were half way to their destination before Olvir saw them, realized his peril and cried his own men to their ships. Kolbiorn, hemmed with threescore survivors of his crew upon his poop, was forgotten under threat of this misadventure. And Kolbiorn himself proceeded to take advantage of the disorder amongst Olvir's folk. With his threescore whole men behind him he leaped into the ship that had locked on to his starboard gunwale, and, outnumbered though he was, made such an onslaught that his enemies were unable to get their ship away.

As Swain swept up he motioned Havard Gunnar's son to take his ship to Kolbiorn's aid, and Havard and Kolbiorn slew every man of the company of Bjarne Sigurd's son, who was chief of the ship that Kolbiorn had boarded. Bjarne they took alive, and because he had a high name for honor, Swain afterward lodged him at Bergen, saw to it that his wounds were properly attended to and in the end sent him back to his lands after he had paid a slight mulct to King Ingi on account of his rebelliousness.

In the mean time Swain with his other four ships kept after Olvir's three. Aslak Jon's son was overhauled first, and Swain left Orm Ottar's son, of Hrolfness, to attend to him—which Orm did with some assistance later from Havard after Bjarne's ship was cleared.

Of his three remaining ships Swain detached two in pursuit of Arne Sturla, who started to run in toward the coast, evidently in intent to make the shore if possible. But in this Arne was disappointed, and like Aslak he and all his company were slain, for the fighting was so bitter and so closely waged, and likewise it was over in such a short time, what with the heat of the opposing folk and all, that no quarter was asked or given. Men slew and were slain. There were eighteen score men slain on these three ships of Olvir's.

It was reported that only one lad, a servant of Arne's, escaped to the shore by swimming. If others escaped, there is no mention of them.

And now Swain was free to confine himself to the pursuit of Olvir, whose dragon was larger and faster than the other three—and who also had been first to sight Swain's approaching ships, and had not scrupled to flee them without waiting to aid his less fortunate companions.

Swain had this advantage: That his men were fresher than Olvir's; and albeit Olvir placed two men at every oar, and cried to them promises of rich gifts and the pick of the next loot they took, Swain's *Deathbringer* gradually crawled up upon the Roysterer. Armod and Oddi stood in the gangway in the waist and sang by turns to hearten the rowers, timing the strokes with blows of sword hilts on shields, and the pants of the oarsmen and the gasps that burst from their chests each time they pulled the ash blades home mingled with the rattle of the helves in the oar holes, the drip of the feathered blades and the swash as they bit the water.

Swain sent all his best archers and spearmen up to the forecastle, and they commenced fighting at long range, endeavoring to do as Olvir had done in slaying one of Kolbion's steersmen. For a while they had no luck, and Swain bade them shift their aim and try to hit the rowers in the waist, and they were so successful in this—for every time they struck an oarsman he would fall upon his sweep, and those in

front of and behind him on the benches, as well as the man sitting beside him, would be interrupted in their strokes—that Olvir was compelled to take the extra men from the oars and detail them to cover the rowers with shields, even as the steersmen on the poop were protected.

The effect of this was to reduce the speed of his ship, and Swain no longer had any difficulty in forging abreast of him within easy arrow shot. The Orkneyfolk showered Olvir's deck with their shafts—and Olvir, not to be daunted, ordered his shield bearers to leave the rowers on the larboard side unprotected, and had them add their efforts to those of his poop and forecastle men in replying to the attack. Men began to fall in Swain's ship, and he lost headway because rowers were smitten in the midst of their strokes, and their trailing oars became tangled with those of their mates.

Olvir himself stood forward as fearlessly as Swain by the gunwale on his poop. He had no shield but his own to cover him, and when he was not urging on his folk or encouraging the rowers or pointing out to his archers a mark for their arrows, he was casting spears with a deadly aim. It was said of him that he could strike any target within range of his cast, and again and again he hurled his spears across the gap between the two vessels with a force which drove them through shield, mail and bone.

"Well is it for our steersmen that our poop does not overlap Olvir's," commented Swain when Olvir smote down his third victim. "Let me try what I can do. It will not be the first time we have exchanged spears."

He plucked the gory spearhead from his house carl's broken shoulder and sent it whistling through the air. Olvir's bushy black beard inclined to one side as he swerved his body; the spear glanced on his slanted shield and flew down into the waist, piercing the back of one of the squat little Lapps who labored at the jumping oars.

"You never have luck with the spear, Swain," taunted Olvir.

"No, my weapon is the sword," answered Swain. "Hold your course, and I will show it to you."

"It is not my custom to accommodate my enemy," gibed Olvir.

But there was an anxious furrow between his brows as he watched the space of open water that separated the two ships. Once more it was dwindling, dwindling, as Swain's rowers, with the bodies of their slain mates heaped in the gangway, addressed themselves unhindered to the task of pushing the ship ahead.

"Nevertheless, I think that you must accommodate me whether you will or no," replied Swain. "A few ells more, and we will give you our beak." He hailed his own folk. "Faster, carls; faster! Give us a path to Olvir's gunwale."

"A path to Olvir's gunwale!" roared the rowers in response.

Deathbringer bounded forward under the urge of their buckling sweeps. Up she crept; up. Her prow reached the overhanging dragon's tail that arched above Olvir's poop.

"Ha, Olvir," shouted Swain, "you must make magic to save yourself now."

Olvir's teeth were a white line in the black tangle of his beard.

"Yes, yes, Olvir!" roared Swain's folk, tense for the crash of their beak against his hull. "Show us some magic! Show us how your Lapp sorcerers' work!"

And they commenced to laugh as one of the archers on Olvir's poop, an absurdly small, broad-shouldered, little man, with a flat, sinster face and slanting eyes, caught his chief by the arm and pointed toward the land.

"Ho, ho!" they mocked. "Now we shall see Olvir's Lapps play with magic!"

For Swain's folk were not as others in their fear of Olvir's dabbling with the black art. They were too confident in the Orkneyman's prowess—and they had seen Olvir's back too often. They knew the Roysterer would never bide any fight unless the odds were in his favor.

Olvir's lips parted in a snarl.

"Laugh, dogs; laugh," he shouted back. "I tell you, the laugh will be on my side soon. Magic? Yes, I will show you a spell that will benumb your arms."

He shoved the Lapp from him, and the little man sprang down into the waist, gathering others as he sped to the foot of the mast that towered amidships of the dragon.

"They are raising sail, Swain," called Erik.

"Let them," snapped Swain. "We can sail, too. If they take to the land——"

One of *Deathbringer's* steersmen interrupted him.

"The wind shifts, Swain!"

Swain started, and turned his own face to seaward. It was true. The wind had died in that quarter. But almost at once he felt a gentle caress against his left cheek. He looked to the land—and there was the perceptible ripple of motion along the water's surface that indicated the sudden movement of air.

"Make sail!" he bellowed. "Ho, Erik, sail!"

The breeze struck the two craft simultaneously, but Olvir's was ready an instant previous to Swain's, with sail trimmed and spread, and the big dragon heeled gracefully to the impulse, swung around in response to the thrust of the steering oars and headed out to sea across *Deathbringer's* bow. A moment afterward Swain, too, had worn around and was standing after his enemy.

They were still within arrow shot, and the hiss and smack of shafts was ceaseless on both decks; but the land-breeze freshened from moment to meoment, and soon it was blowing so strong that the arrows swerved in their flight. The dragons rolled and bounced on the lifting sea, and the rowers on *Deathbringer's* benches tumbled here and there, striving desperately to keep their order and pull their oars home in time with the monotonous beat of the scalds' measures.

Erik shook his head and ran aft along the gangway to where Swain stood.

"This is no rowing weather, Swain," cried the Icelander. "The oars are dragging in the water. They hold us back."

"It is the truth," assented Swain heavily. "In oars then. We must trust to the sail."

"We shall require more than a sail to enable us to catch up with Olvir now," spoke up Oddi from the foot of the poop ladder. "Look what he heads into!"

Swain and Erik followed the little scald's pointing finger out to sea. A gray curtain had formed on the horizon, and Olvir's prow was directed straight into it.

Other men saw it, too, and a howl of anger rose from the bloody decks.

"It is magic!" men exclaimed. "The Lapps have called up the sea-fog."

Oddi crossed himself.

"Who knows what perils they have concealed in that mist?" he said.

Swain reached down and dug his great fingers into the scald's arm until Oddi yelped.

"Little scald, little scald!" he said quietly. "Is that the way for a warrior to talk?"

But even Erik looked dismayed.

"The sky was clear a moment since, Swain," he remonstrated. "Then that Lapp came up to Olvir—why, I could hear his shoes creak as he leaped from the poop! And after that came the shift in the wind, and the fog. It has a bad look to me."

"Humph!" growled Swain, releasing Oddi. "Be it magic or bad luck, we will not turn tail. After them, steersmen! Put men in the prow and along the waist to listen, Erik. If we can not see Olvir, at least we can hear him."

But they lost him immediately. The fog shut down over them, thick and impenetrable. Even the wind died, and when they must put out their oars and begin rowing again, the rattle and splash deafened their listeners. Finally Swain decided that, however they had headed, Olvir must be steering in the contrary direction, and he had the ship put about and stood back, as he thought, over the course they had followed. But all the rest of that day they saw nothing, and it was morning before they found themselves rocking alone on an empty expanse of sea, out of sight of land.

Olvir had escaped; and with sorry hearts they headed east to search for the ships they had left when they took up the pursuit of the Roysterer.

X

DEATHBRINGER encountered the five other ships of Swain's fleet in the lee of the islet off which the battle with Olvir had been fought; and in company once more—carrying with them the three of Olvir's ships they had taken—they turned their prows south for Moster Isle, whither King Ingi had sailed in accordance with the plan he and Swain had arranged at Bergen.

Ingi and all his chiefs welcomed Swain gladly and paid him much honor for his defeat of Olvir, albeit they shared with him his regret that again he had been disappointed in slaying the man he hated above every soul that lived.

"And there is this to be said in the matter," quoth Ingi, "that it was necessary for you to permit certain folk to escape, in order that they might carry a panic to Eystein's fleet."

"Better it had been any one than Olvir," replied Swain.

"No man succeeds in all his undertakings," the king reminded him.

Swain nodded gloomily.

"Now it is to be seen whether my poison has worked," he said.

They had proof of the potency of Swain's poison the very next day when the outlying *snekkes* that kept guard about King Ingi's anchorage ran in with word that a dozen longships were approaching from the northward, where Eystein lay in the Graeningasund.

Swain put to sea at once with forty ships and met the newcomers south of Galaness. The leading dragon displayed a peace-shield; and indeed it was plainly to be seen that here was no hostile intent.

"Who are you?" shouted Swain, ranging alongside.

A large man with a flat, bony face mounted the dragon's gunwale to answer him.

"I am Halkel Huk, of the Vikenside," answered this man. "I have with me my own folk, as well as Brynjolf of Haukdale and his folk. We are sailing to join our forces with King Ingi's."

A cheer beat up from the deck of *Death-bringer*.

"It was a deadly enough poison that you brewed, Swain," cried Armod the Scald.

"Ho!" exclaimed Oddi the Little. "I think that Eystein must be very sick at this moment."

"Near death," laughed Erik of Iceland.

But Swain gesticulated impatiently for silence around him. His face was as bleak and threatening as when he had first hailed the strangers.

"You are from Eystein's fleet?" he challenged.

"We were with Eystein," admitted Halkel. "But we are his men no longer. We hold for Ingi."

"You have turned sides then?" sneered Swain.

Halkel flushed uncomfortably. He was amazingly like Simon, his son, to whom he referred in his next speech.

"It was impossible for Brynjolf and myself to come to Ingi when we wished to," he said. "But we sent our sons to pledge him such support as we were able to give, and we have come ourselves at the earliest——"

"I perceive that Eystein must be losing most of his folk," Swain cut in with the same sharp edge to his voice.

"That is true," assented Halkel. "And my sons and Brynjolf's should have credit for that, seeing that they dispatched emissaries who so worked upon the minds of many of Eystein's folk that——"

"Give credit where it is due," snapped Swain. "Your sons sent those emissaries because I made them. How many ships has Eystein with him today?"

Halkel considered this a moment.

"Yesterday Olvir Rosta returned with a shadow of the company he had sailed with," said the Vikenman: "and the tale he told capped the harm your emissaries had wrought. In the night many chiefs fled. Some abandoned their ships; others sailed north or out to sea; others accompanied Brynjolf and me. I do not believe Eystein can have more than ten ships left to him."

"Follow me to Moster Isle," ordered Swain. "I do not wish to hear any more from you."

"But what reception shall we have from Ingi?" protested Halkel.

"Ingi pays a fair price for aid given," answered Swain.

"Do you pledge safety to——"

"I pledge nothing. As for your lives, we have no need to hurt them—at present. If you are faithful it may be the king will permit you to return to your estates under proper bond."

Nor would Swain say any more. He put his ship about, and with Halkel's and Brynjolf's vessels in their midst, he and those with him sailed back to Moster Isle. And so soon as he had reported Halkel's tidings to King Ingi the king gave the word to up anchors; and the entire fleet went out, with such a roaring of voices and clatter of weapons and rattling of oars and gear as no man had heard since Magnus Barefoot's time. That was a great seafaring.

They coasted north without sight of their enemies and turned into the Graeningasund, and there in a sheltered vik they came upon the stranded hulk of Eystein's Great Dragon, which was built after the fashion of Olaf Tryggvi's son's Long Serpent and was the largest and handsomest ship in the northlands. Planks had been sawn out of her bottom, and the oars hidden and sails removed, and Eystein had even given orders

to befoul the food and start the ale barrels.

King Ingi landed with a considerable number of men, including Swain; and they consulted the country people in the vicinity and learned from them that Eystein had gone north in the ship of Eindride, son of Jon Mornef, with Olvir Rosta and a thousand or more of his own house carls. But before Ingi's folk could put to sea in further pursuit of the viking king a fisherman brought word that Eystein had landed in Sogn and was marching overland for Viken; and after counsel had been taken of the various chiefs Swain advised that they should return south by water, coasting outside the skerries to Viken, but sending men on horses to ride through the country and discover the road the fugitives were following. And this Ingi agreed to do.

King Ingi's fleet had favorable weather, and when they had sailed south as far as Fold men fetched them the news that Eystein was in that neighborhood with only 1,200 men in his company. Ingi promptly summoned a ship *Thing*, and again it was Swain who advised that they should not continue their voyage to Viken but should endeavor as best they could to take Eystein before he regained his own country.

"For," said Swain, "in Viken he will be able to purchase more assistance and can probably secure the means to cross to Denmark or fare over the Uplands to Sweden. "

"That is not to be disputed," agreed Gregorius.

"But if we take Eystein what shall we do with him?" queried Erling.

No man spoke for as long as is required to buckle a hauberk.

"Slay him," said Swain then.

"There will be ill talk——"

"There is always ill talk. Ingi will never be safe so long as Eystein lives."

"But Eystein's folk will set up another king," protested Erling. "Those of them who can not expect Ingi's peace will be quick to raise more wrath against us."

"Bah!" rasped Gregorius. "You are always thinking of more kings, Erling. Can not you forget your son?"

Men laughed at this, and all Erling said in reply was:

"My son's day will come in time. All I think of now is Ingi's advantage."

"It is to Ingi's advantage to slay Eystein," returned Swain. "Norway will never be happy until it has but one king for master over the folk."

"I am content, if others are," said Erling. "Perhaps I am more cautious than some. If I am, it is not to my discredit."

"Nobody would say so, Erling," King Ingi assured him.

But Gregorius spoke up with increasing impatience.

"If we had not seen Erling in battle we would wonder at his caution, which is become a habit he can not shake off. He will do well to conquer it."

"I have my defects," responded Erling quietly; "but it might be said that my friends can depend upon me."

"Yes, yes," said Swain angrily. "What ails you two? Must you quarrel like bower maidens over a silk skein?"

And the king spoke to them too, advising that they should curb their tempers. No more came of it at that time, but in after days men remembered it as the beginning of the breach which opened between Gregorius and Erling. It was a breach that wrought ill for all concerned. But there is no occasion to discuss it here. The result of the ship *Thing* was that the chiefs decided it was best that King Ingi should bide on shipboard, while Swain, with Gregorius and Erling and many more chiefs and their men, should go ashore and pursue Eystein with intent to capture and slay him before he could gain the Uplands or fare east into Viken.

XI

AS SWAIN was ordering his company on the shore Simon Skalp came up to him with the house carl Eyjolf Gunnar's son.

"What do you require?" asked Swain briefly.

"Leave to go with you," answered Simon. "Eyjolf is well acquainted with this country and should be of assistance in tracking Eystein."

"Humph!" growled Swain. "And what is your object in seeking this service?"

"I wish two things," returned Simon boldly. "First to slay Eystein—for as you yourself have said, I and my family shall not be safe so long as Eystein lives; and second, to earn such gratitude from Ingi by doing this deed as to insure his giving me a rich reward."

Swain regarded him curiously.

"You are not disposed to be concerned over money that comes to you with blood on it?" remarked the Orkneyman.

"If there is blood on money, then will it be all the surer to stick to the fingers," retorted Simon.

"You may come with me," said Swain. "I shall not be sorry to have with me a man who seeks to slay a fugitive king."

Swain flung many thousand men into the pursuit of Eystein, dividing them into bands which were linked together by smaller detachments. The people of the countryside were wroth with the defeated king by reason of exactions which had been perpetrated by Olvir, and they did not hesitate to tell Swain's folk where Eystein had lodged or raided or the direction in which he was last seen marching. And because of this it was easy for Swain to press him very close.

The men who were with Eystein became uneasy, and decided that they would stand a better chance of escaping if they were not hindered by his company and the exceeding number of his attendants; and so they commenced to split up into smaller groups, which in turn disintegrated into parties of a dozen or a score, which were frequently run down and slain, for these men who had bided with Eystein so long were folk who had no hope of mercy from Ingi, either for deeds they had done or had suffered to be done.

In a couple of days the only folk remaining with Eystein were Olvir and his Lapps. Olvir stayed with the king because he feared to trust any chief on his own side, and also, because he considered the king a rich stake to hold in his hands.

"If I run now, another time I shall pursue," said Olvir.

But Swain's pursuit became more vigorous, and on the fourth day Olvir was driven to the adoption of the plan the others had followed. He divided his Lapps into little parties of three or four, spread them broadcast and then abandoned them and the king to seek his own flight.

"Let us see if we can not snare some of these hounds who follow us," he had said to them. "If we check them once they will not be so hardy."

And in the midst of the widespread fighting that resulted, he sped away into the east and was able to put so broad a distance betwixt himself and the pursuit that he eluded it, and almost alone, lived to reach the Vikenside.

The resistance he had suggested was hopeless. Swain brushed it aside, slaying most of the Lapps, and King Eystein was in such peril that he was seen as he fled up a bare hill with one man to attend him. But the night was at hand; and the fugitive king, footsore, weary and disheartened, contrived to pass between parties of the pursuers and gain the refuge of a thick copse in the midst of the forest.

Here he spent the night, having no food and not even water to drink. In the morning he sent the man with him, a common carl, to try to find somewhat to eat; but this man reckoned that he was safer away from the king, and fled without another thought for the master who had trusted him. By noon Eystein could no longer support his thirst, and he was compelled to abandon the protection of the copse and sought the hut of a wood cutter, who recognized him.

"You are Eystein," said the wood cutter.

"I am," admitted the king. "I might slay you, carl, for I carry a sword and you do not. But all I ask of you is a cup of water and whatever food you possess."

The wood cutter was fearful of him and hastened to supply what he asked; but when the king had passed on into the forest the wood cutter sped off to hunt the nearest of the pursuers, and as it chanced, the first of them he encountered was Eyjolf, Simon Skalp's house carl.

Eyjolf ran to Simon and communicated the news, and the two ordered the wood cutter to guide them to his hut. They had not gone far beyond it when they heard a crashing in the undergrowth.

"Stand, there!" shouted Simon.

The crashing grew louder; and Simon and Eyjolf ran toward it, the house carl notching an arrow to the bow he carried.

"Ho, stand, I say!" repeated Simon. "We know you are there, Eystein."

They were in a ride of the forest, and in front was an open clearing, at one side of which was a willow bush. As Simon spoke the second time the king came out from behind the bush.

"Put up your arrow," Eystein called to Eyjolf. "You will not need it."

"God save you, lord," answered Simon.

"I do not think we shall require the arrow after all."

"I do not know if you are not lord here," replied Eystein, walking toward them.

He had cast aside his mail to make easier his flight; his garments were brier-torn and dirty; his beard was ragged and matted; in his face were graven deep lines of fatigue.

"That is as may be," returned Simon sententiously.

And both he and Eyjolf drew their swords.

"You would never harm me, Simon!" exclaimed the king. "There was a long friendship between us, although now things have gone differently. Bethink you, I was once a good lord to you and your family. You had much from me, and never cause to regret that you served me."

"Concerning that last we two hold opposite opinions," answered Simon. "There is no use in arguing it."

"But you will not see me slain," protested the king. "After all no man need know what you have done. You can hide me until the hunt is over."

"It can not be," said Simon harshly.

And there came a look in his eye, cold and cruel, that made Eystein start.

"I see," said the king with sudden dignity. "Yes, yes; I might have known it. You and yours can not afford to allow Eystein to live to remember the betrayal you visited upon him, Simon. Well, it shall not be said that I asked mercy from such as you—albeit I could wish that I came to my end at the hands of a better man."

'Oh, I shall not slay you," retorted Simon. "That shall be Eyjolf's task. Afterward we will carry your head to Ingi."

"And seek your reward," jeered the king. "I understand now that a king who was served by you and those like you was certain to come to a sorry end."

"Make an end of talk," commanded Simon impatiently. "Where will you have the steel?"

Eystein's features hardened into a mask of hatred.

"I do not fear your steel, Simon," he snapped. "You may carve the blood-eagle in my back if you wish—and then tell Ingi's folk who bought you how Eystein died under torment. The disgrace of *that* will not be placed upon my shoulders."

"It is not my purpose to torture you," rejoined Simon. "Ingi wishes your death, and whoever took you must have slain you. So prepare."

"At the least suffer me to pray," answered the king, kneeling.

"All the time you require," said Simon callously. "You have many sins to ask forgiveness for—and not the most trifling was the stinginess that led you to amass gold which is now of no use to you, although once it might have attached to you those who wearied of ill-requited service."

"I am better off without them," said Eystein. "And for my gold, I wish as much ill luck to those who seize it as it has brought to me."

After he had prayed a while he stretched himself out upon his face on the grass.

"Hew off my head, carl," he said to Eyjolf. "You must have it for proof of your deed, for Ingi or Swain would never take Simon's word unbolstered."

"Let him have it," ordered Simon.

And Eyjolf stepped up beside the prostrate king, lifted his sword and heaved it down with a swishing cut. Through backbone, gristle and flesh it cut, and Eystein's head rolled three ells across the grass, sprinkling the ground as it passed.

"This has been a profitable day for us," said Simon Skalp. "Take up the head, Eyjolf. You will never want ale money again."

XII

SWAIN and a company of his Orkneyfolk heard Simon's story in silence.

"I am a king-slayer myself," said Swain when the Vikenman had concluded: "but I am glad it did not fall to my lot to slay a king as you did, Simon."

"I did not——"

"Oh, you can not shift the responsibility upon a house carl's shoulders! Men will say that you were the slayer of Eystein, and they will say so rightly. If Eyjolf's arm sped the blade that hewed through the king's neck nevertheless yours was the will that impelled the blow."

"I am content," answered Simon sullenly. "And now what is to be my reward?"

"That is for Ingi to reckon," replied Swain.

"Ingi will ask you what he should do," persisted Simon.

"If he asks my advice," said Swain coolly, "I will tell him to give you a farm or two, and never have aught to do with you again."

"And my family? And Brynjolf's?"

"Seeing they produced a king-slayer on our side of the fight, we must even release them from all penalties. "

"I ask no more than is just," cried Simon furiously, irritated by the contemptuous glances that fell upon him from all sides. "Without me you would have been in trouble at every turn of this last kings' bickering."

Swain's eyes smote his with the full impact of the Orkneyman's implacable ferocity, cold, blue sword blades of light.

"You meant little more to me than the youngest house carl in my company," said Swain. "You were a tool I found to my hand and fashioned to suit my purpose, a bowl I brewed a poison in for your friends. If you had not done my will I should have slain you—and found another in your place. You are less to me than dead Eystein, Simon. Go!"

And Simon left without attempting to reply. Men said afterward that he was the worst-hated man in Norway, for he was despised not only by those who held true to King Eystein's memory, but by most of the folk who followed Ingi.

"It is an ill carl will hew off the head of him that once protected him," the folk said.

And Armod made a song about his deed that began thus:

> Simon Skalp, the traitor bold,
> For deeds of murder known of old,
> His king betrayed; and ne'er will he
> God's blessed face hereafter see.

Simon's family caused it to be bruited about that he was not to blame for the manner of Eystein's death. They claimed that it was widely known that Ingi and all the chiefs of his faction had decided to slay the viking king whenever they took him, which was indeed the truth; but they said further that after Simon had taken Eystein he had sent word to Ingi, asking what he should do, and that Ingi had sent back word that he did not desire to see Eystein's face.

"So what else could Simon do but slay Eystein?" they asked.

But it is not true that he sent this message or that Ingi sent a message to him. And as Ingi himself was accustomed to say when the matter was mentioned in his presence:

"I can not find fault that Eystein was slain. It was my intention to slay him, and all the great men at my court agree with me that this was necessary. But had I been Simon Skalp I would have left it to any other man to order Eystein's death. It was a black, niddering deed and savors bitter in the mouth."

Simon and Eyjolf, with those of their family and Brynjolf's who had gone over to King Ingi, returned to Viken, and with the gifts Ingi felt compelled to grant to Simon and the other sons of Halkel Huk and Brynjolf, they became more powerful in that country than they had been under Eystein's rule. So that however men despised them or disliked them they were feared and exerted a considerable influence in Norway, which was a source of trouble in later days. Eyjolf became Simon's steward, and was little less hated than his master.

Olvir Rosta escaped into Viken, and there he rallied Sigurd, a son of Halvard Hold of Reyr and a few other *lendermen* who dared not abide Ingi's justice; and these folk went to Hakon Herdabreid, the son of King Sigurd, whom Swain had slain, and declared him to be king in Eystein's place. But when Ingi and his people marched east against them they were constrained to flee into Gautland, and they dwelt precariously in the wilds wherever they might find shelter, sometimes in Sweden and again in the more inaccessible parts of the Uplands.

No man reckoned them of any account, for Hakon was but a youth; and of the men with him only Sigurd and the young king's foster brothers, Andreas and Onund, sons of Simon Thorberg's son, were of any real account in the land. And when Ingi entered Viken he seized upon and confiscated the estates of those who had gone with Hakon, as well as the property of the chiefs who had remained with Eystein or had not made submission before Eystein's death. And next the crippled king held a *Thing* at Bergen, at which he caused all those who were still in arms against him to be declared outlaws.

There was great joy after this in all parts of Norway, for the folk believed that at last the land might be at peace, seeing that there was but one acknowledged king.

Ingi dismissed his army and rendered back to the merchants of the towns the ships they had lent him, and sent away the chiefs who had attended him with rich gifts and rewards of land and captured ships. And every farm had hands sufficient for the harvest, which Ingi said freely would not have been the case if Swain had not contrived Eystein's overthrow so as to avoid a folks' hewing.

"We are a fortunate land," he declared at a great feast he gave at Bergen before the breaking up of his army. "For we have won unity, and yet there is no broad band of blood to bar family from family, district from district. Thanks to Swain, we have joined the land under one crown as successfully as did Harald Haardrada; but thanks also to Swain, we have not been obliged to wreak bloodshed and injustice to obtain this end."

Then he turned to Swain and asked the Orkneyman what reward he desired.

"If it is a Jarldom, if it is land, if it is money, if it is ships, you have only to ask for it," he cried.

"Why, as to that, king," answered Swain when the cheering had died away," I have no use for Jarls; therefore it would not become me to be one. I do not dwell in Norway——"

"I wish you would," interrupted the king.

"No, no," denied Swain. "My home is in the Orkneys, and there I have sufficient lands. I won three ships from Olvir this summer, and that is more than I require. Money? Give me what you choose. I will use it to buy arms and train house carls, for perhaps you will have need of such again."

"Need again?" repeated the king, puzzled. "How so? Are we not at peace? The land is united now."

"Yes, we are at peace, and the land is united," growled Swain; "but I have observed that the Norsefolk grow restless at peace—and they are too well accustomed to having more than one king to quarrel over or rebel against to settle down quietly under one, without a broil here and there. So let us wait and see what happens before we make up our minds that we shall have to try the viking path in order to wet our swords."

More he would not say; nor would he accept the invitations the king, Erling and Gregorius thrust upon him to spend the winter in Norway.

"I am an Orkneyman," he said. "My folk and I have fields of our own to harvest. Here we should only drink more ale than was good for us and brawl and earn ourselves a bad name. If you need us, you know how to fetch us oversea, and I will take it kindly of you if you pass on to me any tidings you receive of Olvir.

The king and his *lendermen* promised that they would do so, and they all went down to the strand to witness Swain's departure, and a great company of folk besides.

"It was a wise deed Ingi did when he inlawed Swain," the folk said.

And in every *skalli* in the land that winter the scalds sang that no man in the past, not Harald Haardrada, not Olaf the Glorious, had wrought more for Norway than Swain Olaf's son, who was only a *bondi* in the Orkneyar. But great as was the land's debt to Swain it was to grow greater, for the womb of destiny was already swelling with a sinister prodigy that was to overset all that had gone before.

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

A PAN-AMERICAN railroad, connecting the two continents. There should be one. I've been told that a chief obstacle is the bitter opposition of European governments, notably England. If so, that opposition is a clear index to the immense value of such a railroad to this country.

Los Angeles.

I have read with interest a letter by Mr. Test in the September 10th number of "Camp-Fire" relative to the Pan-American Railroad.

AS FAR back as 1888 I met a gentlemen in Buenos Aires who was there representing the Pan American Railway—in fact they had an office in that city before that date. It is interesting to note how much, or better still how little, has been done toward the completion of the project during that long period of time, 36 years. While I am not very well posted as to the latest mileage of the lines scattered through Central America which might be utilized for the connecting lines, still I believe I might state without exaggeration that as much or more line remains to be constructed to fill the gaps than has been completed in the last 36 years. As a matter of fact after leaving Guatemala City there is little construction that could be utilized as far south as Panama, and from there on the problem would appear to increase in difficulty the farther south one goes, more especially if, after reaching Colombia, a route east of the Andes were chosen.

I DO not know if Mr. Test is acquainted with the country in the interior of Venezuela and Brazil which an eastern route would have to traverse to reach any existing lines in Brazil. If he is, he must realize the stupendous difficulties to be encountered in building a railway through it, the dense and fever stricken forest, the innumerable rivers, large and small, that would require bridging, etc. Having spent several years in that country I can at least speak, if not with a railroad constructor's knowledge, from the view of an observant layman. If a route

west of the Andes were chosen I believe the difficulties as well as the cost both in lives and money would be greatly minimized. There is a line nearly completed to Cuzco from Buenos Aires, which would constitute a very considerable part of the purely South American section.

The mere building of a line from any point on the Panama Railway south to Colombia would be considered quite a feat in railroad building, for more reasons than one, as that country is almost unknown and is very heavily timbered. Few of the Central American roads would be of much value as connecting links, as most of them run from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It might be possible to utilize part of the San Salvador road which ends at La Union. From any point on that road there is nothing till one arrives in Nicaragua, and again it might be possible to utilize part of the road from Corinto to Lake Nicaragua. Again there is a large gap into Costa Rica. The main Costa Rica railroad runs from east to west. So little of that could be utilized and from there to the Panama Railway there is little or nothing.—T. B. COLVILLE.

IN APRIL, 1923, one of us sent in an Associated Press dispatch on the death of "Lone Star" Fred Hans, old-timer of the West. As stated in his letter, Mr. Ward felt "Camp-Fire" was the place for facts of this kind. It is, and I haven't been sufficently awake to that fact. Records of the past, yes, but the records of the present will soon be those of the past and now is always the time to make sure they're preserved. The letter and article follow. E. E. Peabody, of San Francisco, also sent in this dispatch.

Lincoln, Nebraska.

Enclosed you will find a clipping telling of the death of one Fred Hans, known as "Lone Star," on the night of Tuesday, April 17, by being crushed by an elevator. Perhaps you have already seen it in the papers before this but I am taking no chances on that, for I knew that it marked the passing of another of the old-timers, and in time to come it would be a question as to where he died and how, and I am sending it to you for the only place for it is in the filing-case in your office.—JOSEPH EVERETT WARD.

Fighting, smiling, gray-haired old "Lone Star" Fred M. Hans, Indian fighter, frontier scout and the last of the real two-gun "cross-arm draw" experts, met death here last night with his "boots on," as he had often desired.

But death did not come to him on the field of battle, where he had so often faced it, nor on the wings of a bullet. He was crushed to death in an elevator shaft at the Omaha *World-Herald* plant, where he was night watchman.

"Lone Star" was caught by the elevator when he attempted to move the control lever from the outside and the lift suddenly shot upward. The old veteran tried to leap into it, but his feet that so often had leaped on the backs of mustangs had lost their old spring and so "Lone Star" died with his boots on.

HANS began his career as plainsman at the age of 16, when he left home to search for a brother kidnaped by Sioux Indians. He developed the "cross-arm draw" until he was without a peer and this skill he retained even in his old age. He never touched a trigger, but used his thumb to raise the hammer of his Colt single-action revolver, in a fan-like action. He often declared that he could fire his single-action Colt six times before any one armed with a modern automatic pistol could fire half that many shots.

"Lone Star" first broke into fame in 1876 in the "Hole in Wall" country on Powder River, Wyoming, when, single-handed, he shot and killed "Shacknasty Jim" and two fellow bandits. It was "Lone Star's" hammer-fanning that won the unequal fight.

THE Indians dubbed him We-Chach-Pe-Wan-Ge-La, which, translated, means Lone Star. Other high spots of Hans' life are:

Shot and killed two stage coach bandits, April 12, 1877, near Valentine, Neb.

Shot five Indians in the battle of the Little Missouri, near Black Hills, August 21, 1877, saving the lives of twenty prospectors.

Killed eleven Indians with 12 shots, using both guns hammer-fanning, in the battle of Wounded Knee, S. D., in 1892.

Killed a bandit at Ainsworth, Neb., in 1878.

Shot and killed a bandit at Fremont, Neb., in 1897.

Was official War Department investigator of the Custer massacre and followed Sitting Bull 600 miles on horseback, inducing him and his band to return to the reservation.

Was present at Sitting Bull's death.

Was chief scoutmaster for General Phil Sheridan for six years.

SOMETHING from Georges Surdez in connection with his complete novelette in this issue:

The placing of *Samba*, a *griot*, among Tirailleurs may seem wrong to those familiar with the Sudan and the French Colonial Army. I am aware that the *griots*, who form, with the blacksmiths, the lowest rung of the native social ladder, were usually rejected as soldiers.

This exclusion, however, was never as strictly enforced by the infantry units as by the *spahis*. Even in case *Samba* had not been a *griot* when he enlisted, the negroes' need for song would very soon have brought him out as official poet.

THE songs in "Sudanese Trails" were obtained from genuine Tirailleurs' songs, modified somewhat to fit the occasion. The "I have said," which comes in the native dialect at the end of each line, I have cut out. I have always thought, perhaps wrongly, that this final phrase originally was intended to allow the composer to think his next verse, without seeming to hesitate, for all the songs are improvised before an audience.

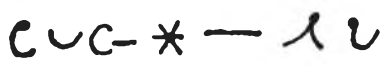
The use of Arab characters to form Bambara phrases was never very common. The men having sufficient education to read usually could understand, and to some extent speak, Arabic. But *Bilali's* scribe very likely wished to impress the Tirailleurs by using their tongue in the inscription.

The fetish-trees were not scarce in the region of the Niger during the Samory Wars, and usually were "dedicated" by a placard. The words: "In the Name of Allah, etc." composed the usual formula.—GEORGES SURDEZ.

WHO can tell the meaning of these marks found by a comrade in the top of an old sextant case?

Rome, Georgia

Several years ago, while fooling around the coast of Maine, I picked up an old sextant. Having no special use for it, I left it in the cabin there and only



recently had it shipped down to my office. In the top of the case in which this instrument has been kept I found some peculiar characters, a copy of which I am enclosing, as it has been suggested to me that you could probably interpret their meaning.

This old instrument, which shows signs of considerable service, is apparently in first class working condition. In the lid of this case I find autographed in pencil, "Captain Rich, 1861," and under this, "Thomas H. Jarvis," and in another place, "Senator Weber, 1865." Also "Captain Enoch Fain, 1856."

Any information that you may be able to give me regarding the above will be appreciated.—G. L. HIGHT.

WHAT Gordon MacCreagh has to say in connection with the "*caapi*" that figures in his complete novelette in this issue is not only interesting to the general run of us but should have particular interest to various scientists. For Mr. MacCreagh is perhaps the only white man who has actually tested the effect of this drug on his own person and gone through even part of the ceremony in which the drug plays so important a part.

Caapi, the mysterious drug that has been reported from time to time as being used by certain hidden tribes of the Amazon tributaries for the purpose of inspiring them with abnormal courage. What can I say about it that will be of interest to the brothers of Camp-Fire? I seem to have said it all in my story. In fact the story, I'm afraid, must suffer from the stigma of being too much per cent. true.

EXCEPT that I never started out with the idea of finding any such myth. I had heard the usual stories of *caapi* that other travelers had noted, and I was quite content to let it stay wherever it might be. What I was aiming at was to work up the Rio Uaupes into the foot-hills of Colombia and find a way over the mountains to Bogota; and all the way up from Manaos I kept meeting the warning that the thing to do when I reached the Tiquié River was to scoot by in a hurry and keep going, for they were "*maus homems*."

But the destitute rubber ruffian of my yarn pulled just that trick on me. His canoe men dumped me ashore with about half my gear and then suddenly jumped into their boat and beat it; and presently it dawned upon my unhappy assistant and myself that we were sitting on the private dock front of the bad men of Tiquié.

Months later when I got back to the rubber man's *sitio* I was too sick to argue with him. A sick, sick man was I; for somebody in a Desana village had poisoned my grub with oil of the *botu* fish—the tale was brought down after me by an Indian plume-hunter; so that's how I know what it was. What the chemical action of the thing might be, I have no idea; but it is so foul that even buzzards won't eat it.

Anyway, I was too sick to do more than groan at the rubber robber, who was slimily solicitous and faked a delight at seeing me as great as his surprise. He made all the usual protestations of innocence which similar scamps make in similar circumstances and swore that he was not to blame—that his Indians had suddenly become frightened of the Tiquié folk and had run away. But since my goods and gear had in the meanwhile disappeared, he made restitution—one block, sixty pounds, of a first grade balata.

DON'T mistake the youth of the story for my assistant. That man had guts. He stuck by right to the end. But at that, we had a —— of an argument about who was to take my carved stick up to the council house. I said that, as my assistant, he ought to represent me. He said that was fine in principle, but that since I could stagger along in the *geral* talk I had better deliver my own card. He won.

For the rest, it went pretty well according to the story—except that I gave away his cot and I got the hammock. The Tiquié folk turned out, upon acquaintance, to be as pleasant Indians as I have ever dealt with. Their ferocity was just the old story. They had been exploited and swindled during the old rubber days, and so they had just retreated into their own jungles and developed an ingrowing hostility toward all strangers, which was kept alive by the occasional theft by some passing trader of a woman or two of the tribe. But as soon as they got it into their heads that *Americanos* were a different kind of *blanco* from the half-breed traders they had known their hospitality and friendliness went beyond the limit.

BUT all this is a long time getting to *caapi*. What can I say about the courage medicine? Except that this is the first time the ceremony has been described by any one anywhere, and that the thing was weirder than I have been able to get into words. But I've been as accurate as I know how. Even though in my description of *caapi* and its effects I rise to the temerity of differing from so great an authority as Dr. Emil Koch, the German explorer who twenty years ago wrote that he had heard of a queer drink called "*kapi*" which had the power of exciting the Indians to a state of murderous frenzy in which they would tackle anything or any enemy. And with Dr. Hamilton Rice, the more recent and most justly famous explorer of the northern tributaries, who, in a paper read before the American Geographical Society records a report of *caapi* as being a drug which produces "mental sensations varying from the glorious and magnificent to the repulsive and horrible, analogous to those produced by opium or hashish." Incidentally it is

good to know that I have just received gratifying information to the effect that Dr. Rice, who is out there again and was reported to be lost, has turned up in the Rio Branco.

MY "NERVE" to differ from these eminent scientists comes from the fact, that to the best of my knowledge, my assistant and myself are the only two white men who have ever witnessed a *caapi* ceremony, and that I am possibly the only one who has drunk the stuff and gone through the ceremony—or rather, let me swiftly add, through part of it, for I quit shamelessly when the beating-up time came.

I admit, freely and without any sort of humility at all, that the noble white man, displaying himself for the first time before those untutored savages, ought to have stuck out the test for the sake of the prestige of the race. But the courage medicine didn't work. I was careful to note my own reactions, and the most that I can ascribe to the dope is a certain exhilaration, a sort of a don't-give-a-darn feeling. Sufficient to urge me to don paint and feathers and hop right in with the gang; but no more. I must have drunk a good two quarts of the stuff during the afternoon and evening, but at no time did I feel whooped up to the extent of rushing forth to face a sturdy savage with a long whip who thought he was the devil.

ON THE other hand there can be no doubt that the Indians were inspired by the stuff away beyond their normal high pitch of courage, for their Juruparí is to them a very immediate and sinister personality. My conviction is that their reaction was full seventy-five per cent. psychological. Twenty-five per cent. perhaps was due to the exhilaration of the drug; and the rest to the attendant hereditary beliefs and the ceremonies of the dance and the dark and the incessant rhythm.

An interesting side light is that after it is all over not one of the young bucks who has gone through the ordeal can tell which particular one of the witch-doctor neophytes he chose to swap wallops with.

"How should I know?" is the invariable answer. "He looked to me like the Juruparí devil himself."

And another interesting illumination of savage character is that I was able later to persuade the head witch-doctor to *stage* a ceremony for me for a motion picture record. And those lads beat each other up most ferociously with whips for the cheerful stipend of one ten-cent store knife apiece. But that was a fake devil; so of course there was nothing to fear—and what sturdy youth wouldn't take a beating in return for a pricelss knife?

STOP immigration. I've said that a good many times, but it still needs all the saying—and doing—it can get. The present law holds the legal number down to a few thousand a year. That is, holds it down on the books. Meanwhile they flood in across our Canadian and Mexican borders and sift through our coast-lines. If a quarter the money spent in the effort to enforce prohibition were used to stop immigration, there would be results. But the evils of immigration are not so immediate and visible that the type of mind aroused by the evils of drink can see them. Those immigrants who make their very entrance into America by violating her laws bring with them many evils besides and including drink.

IN PRINTING this letter I violate two rules. First, I leave in it some praise for the magazine, but once every year or two I ought to be allowed to print something about the mistakes it does *not* make, since it's always ready to own up and set things right when it does slip. Second, I'm printing a letter whose writer asks to have only his initials given, but that rule is a new one and I think J. D. R. never heard of it.

Royal Oak, Michigan.

I have at last bubbled over. Have sat simmering at the edge of the Camp-Fire for some years—not really regularly, to be sure, for a wanderer like myself finds it difficult to have a permanent address, and book-stores in Jericho, Port Swettenham and similar "cities" are few and far between.

I FIRST want to express my great appreciation of the splendid and true-to-life stories you give us. I must confess that I am rather a critic, and perhaps the best fun I get from your magazine is searching for errors. And to be quite truthful, I *have* found *some*, but so few and such small details as to be almost negligible. In this respect you lead me a dog's life.

I have been lucky enough to get around this old world of ours quite a bit, having covered Europe pretty thoroughly, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Aden, Ceylon, Malay States, China from Hongkong to Hankow and Tientsin, Japan, Hawaii, a bit of Canada, and am now "doing" the U. S. Starting from Frisco, I have already hit most of the high spots.

Perhaps I should explain that I am English, (Londoner), twenty-six years of age, served four years with the British cavalry on active service, had two-and-a-half years with the Chinese Customs, mostly in Shanghai; have done lots of other queer things, and hope to do more. Started wandering about 1913 and have kept diaries ever since, and these together with a bunch of photos I hope will someday lay the foundation for a few yarns.

TO THOSE fellows who are unsuccessful in their search for adventure I would like to give a few words of advice. "Don't look *too* hard." You know how it is when, after searching diligently for a name on a map, some one butts in and says "There it is in great big letters. How could you miss it?" Well, that's just like adventure. You look so hard for something exciting that you can't see it when it's right under your nose. You think you have to cross the world or go into the wilderness in your search for adventure, and thinking thus, you brush past it in the corner drug-store. "Nothing exciting ever happens here." I've heard that cry in London and Shanghai, New York and Cairo, Paris and Aden. What about the Japanese earthquake? I missed that little affair by

a few days. To revert to the above simile, adventure is a great big word written in huge letters across the face of the globe; it covers everywhere, city or desert, town or hamlet, jungle or lawn; it's *there* if you can only see it. My chief moan is that there's such a lot of it one never has enough time to follow up a half.

I am considering a trip up the Amazon which I have always longed to see. My chief growl as a wanderer is that the more one sees of the world, the more there appears to be left to see.—J. D. R.

A SHORT paragraph from the history of the Blue Grass State:

'Emmitsburg, Maryland.

There is a creek in Kentucky called "Hell-for-Certain" and it is related it got its name in this manner.

A few settlers followed Daniel Boone through Cumberland Gap and came to the creek now known as "Hell-for-Certain." The large rocks and the many falls produced by the rush of water caused one of the settlers to remark: "This is hell for certain," and the creek has gone by this name ever since.—D. E. CALLAHAN.

OUT of our cache comes this very interesting letter written in 1923. It's one of the disadvantages of our free and easy system that letters like this are so long in reaching us as we sit around the blaze.

Honolulu, T. H., May 15, 1923.

While looking through a book in which I kept a diary of my voyage of 2500 miles in a tiny sampan in the North Pacific, I found a letter which I wrote to Camp-Fire during a severe gale. I am tearing it out of the book and sending it to you herewith because it reflects my feelings at the time. For a while I seriously thought of enclosing it in a sealed bottle and throwing it overboard. The enclosed photograph was taken on the day of our departure from Honolulu.

AS YOU are doubtless aware, the month of March is an exceptionally stormy one at sea, especially on the North Pacific. As soon as we left Honolulu well behind we began to encounter heavy seas, and as we progressed farther into the region to the northwest we met heavy gales and exceedingly rough waters. The crew consisted of Captain Kashiwabara and five men—all Japanese, none of whom could speak or understand the English language. I was the only *haole* (white man) aboard, hence conversation was anything but animated.

The monotony of the voyage was dreadful—it was appalling. It would have been infinitely worse had I not brought along a good supply of *Adventure* magazines. In fact it was reading some of the very interesting letters in "Camp-Fire" which prompted me to write the enclosed letter. It helped to divert my mind from the hardships we were forced to undergo immediately following our harrowing experience on the night of March 29th when we narrowly escaped being swept into the sea.

INSTEAD of turning about and returning home after we reached French Frigate Shoals, we continued our course for over five hundred additional miles on account of rough weather. We killed over forty sharks, saw eight whales and brought back 6500 pounds of fish. We were gone three weeks, during which time I did not walk over 200 feet, and did not see a boat or human, neither did we touch land. When we reached Honolulu at last and I set foot on Fishermen's Wharf I could scarcely walk.—FRED L. GODDARD.

P.S.—Am also sending a shark picture just to prove that we did kill sharks.

THIS is the letter written to us on that stormy and dangerous voyage:

March 29, 1923.
Somewhere in the North Pacific Ocean.

May I warm my chilled fingers by the grateful warmth of your Camp-Fire, for I am cold—dreadfully cold.

I AM writing this letter to you under great difficulty from the deck of a tiny, wildly tossing Japanese fishing sampan far out in the North Pacific Ocean. A heavy southeast gale is blowing and we are being tossed about like a wisp of paper. We have not seen land or human or ship for two weeks now, and during that time we have encountered gale after gale.

At 1.30 o'clock this morning we were very, very close to death. We were all asleep with the exception of the man at the tiller—we were utterly worn out, having been kept awake the night before by the shriek and whine of the wind and ceaseless hammering of mountainous seas which broke over us incessantly. Suddenly I was struck a crushing blow on the head by a wooden tub which had loosened as the sampan climbed a mighty hillock of water. The sampan poised on the crest for a moment and then dove with a sickening plunge to the hollow below. Instead of recovering, she dove under and brought up a mass of water which caught us all up and swept us the length of the boat and jammed us in a heap against the tiller while the water swirled about us up to our necks. Loose clothing, bedding and part of our stores and equipment were swept overboard. The little stove which we kept in a hatch on the after deck was submerged and we had no means of warming ourselves or drying our clothing, which was dripping wet. The wind howled and flung the rain and spray across our decks in stinging sheets. The air was icy cold and the slate-colored seas were covered with great patches of yeasty foam.

My book is so wet and my fingers are so cold I can scarcely write—or think. There is not a dry rag or object on the boat.

WE LEFT Honolulu on March 12th with the intention of cruising to French Frigate Shoals for fish. Instead, we kept on going for five hundred more miles around on account of the exceedingly rough weather we encountered. We have seen eight whales thus far and killed over forty sharks. The sharks were so numerous we were obliged to kill them before we could fish. Sometimes we would haul in our lines and nothing would remain but the fish's head. Our crew consists of Captain Kashiwabara and five men—all Japanese, none of whom can speak English. I am the only white man aboard and am unable to converse with any of them. That is what makes my

voyage so monotonous. If I only had some one to talk to.

The only land we have seen so far is Bird Island, Neikar Island, Gardner Island, French Frigate Shoals, Layson Island and Lisiensky Island—all desolate rocks or sand bars uninhabited by man—only birds, thousands of them.

Dear friends, I'm afraid you will be unable to read my writing, for my fingers are stiff and big seas break over me continuously. I am partially sheltered by the engine-house, but this paper is so wet it is like writing on sheet rubber.

We hope to reach Honolulu in another week. I fervently hope so.

Thanking you for your kind hospitality, I remain.—FRED L. GODDARD.

FROM a woman reader, the mother of children, came a letter objecting to our use of the word "whore" in the following passage from Gordon Young's serial, "Pearl Hunger:"

"I'll show 'em. I'm a whore, a —— beach whore, but I never pretended to be nothin' else."

Since *Adventure* makes sincere effort to keep its pages clean, any reasonable questioning of the cleanness of anything in its stories deserves full and extra careful consideration. Because it has always been this magazine's custom to lay before its readers questions concerning its editorial policies and because there may be among you others who found offense in our use of this word, I am passing on to you both her letter and my reply. Naturally neither her name or address is given.

To the Ridgway Company,
C. H. Holmes, Secretary.

Dear Sir: I am not going to write at length concerning the enclosed page of your recent magazine, but will put this question. Do you not think a dash would have sufficed instead of the printed word? You can not realize how such a thing offends and surely, if continued, will effect your sale of the *Adventure*.

We have had the magazine in our home as long back as I can remember. The men folks have passed on its praises and others were interested, but can not have it in our home if you permit such thoughts in print. Our growing children's minds are too precious, nor do the grown-ups around us delight in reading the like.

Perhaps I could just have written nothing and no doubt some will just not have the magazine come again and lose interest in its pages; but I felt sure you would understand our attitude in what I have written.—MRS. —— ——.

My dear Mrs. —: Your letter of June 9 to Mr. Holmes, secretary and treasurer of the Ridgway Company, has been referred to me by him. I am sorry that you did not see fit to address me direct in this matter, since I am the one directly responsible for what appears in the magazine.

I CAN the more readily understand and sympathize with your anxious care to guard the morals of your children because I have a fourteen-year-old boy of my own whose morals I strive to guard with care as anxious as your own.

With me, as with you, the questions to be answered are what kind of guarding, based on what kind of standard, will best ensure the child's growing into a clean-minded and clean-bodied man or woman.

All of us, I fear, even with best intent, make mistakes that our children will pay for in after life. The best we can do is to teach the highest standards we are given light to see, meanwhile testing those standards on every occasion and, on every sincere questioning of them, weighing them anew in the light of other points of view. If we fail to keep ourselves thus open-minded we are likely to find ourselves teaching our children standards that will betray them to their destruction.

I CONFESS that when you challenged the magazine's use of that word you jolted me so that suddenly I seemed to see the eyes and minds of many children meeting that word in our pages and tried to imagine their reactions to it. It is an ugly word for an ugly thing. Children are given to us as clean slates for us to write upon. Are we to write that ugly word upon those slates?

I do not mean that I had never considered that question before, for there is only one unchanging rule in this office and that is to keep our magazine clean and, as I have said, I have a child of my own. But your questioning of my standards, your sharp attack upon what after much previous consideration had seemed a sound and clean rule for us to follow, made me weigh and test and consider all over again.

First, I went back into my own childhood, to myself and to children I knew. Then to the college mates and the grown men to whom I had talked of childhood's and boyhood's experience of sex matters and sex teaching. That means the consideration of a great many cases in many circumstances of life. Gradually four things stood out clear and strong:

FIRST, however pure our home atmosphere, by the time most of us were six we had accumulated more knowledge of the dirty side of sex than you or the mothers of most of us would accumulate in a lifetime. By the time we were sixteen—well, we were ten years, ten formative years, older in knowledge and, too often, practise. No, we were not any rottener than other boys. Remember, I'm talking about the boys not of my own boyhood experience alone but of the boys remembered by scores of men. Just typical American boys. The mothers of most of us would have been paralyzed with horror if they could have seen inside us. But they didn't know.

Second, our knowledge, since it did not come to us from our parents or any other decent grown-ups, came to us from indecent grown-ups and from other boys no better, or worse, than we. As a consequence it was not knowledge just of sex but almost exclusively of the dirty side of sex. It was even worse than that, for it was often hideously distorted, even grotesquely so. I find on inquiry that the boys of today are at least equally sophisticated and that their sophistication is, on the whole, equally distorted.

THIRD, the fascination such things had for boys was due chiefly to mystery, at least during the earlier and more formative years. The plain, full facts would not have interested us half so much. The mystery, of course, was due to there having been no clean, well-balanced grown-up to give us the plain, full facts. Having no right teacher, we taught ourselves—naturally, very badly. The mystery was made still more attractive and still more mysterious by the fact that our elders made it a forbidden mystery, not even mentioning it themselves and teaching us not to mention it to them.

Fourth, it happened in my own case that I had lived about twenty-five years before I got my first decent, sane instruction in sex matters. A friend was engaged to a girl who appealed to all that was best in him. He, like the rest of us, had been taught only the dirty side of sex. Being inherently decent, he could not reconcile what he had been taught with the relationship of marriage to this or any other pure-minded woman. He reasoned that there must be a clean as well as an unclean side to sex, that neither he nor I nor any of our chums knew the clean side except vaguely and by inference and that he must know it. So he went to the minister of another faith, a married man, whom both of us knew and respected—who was human and a gentleman as well. I, too, wanted to know the clean side and what the minister told him he told me.

Pitiful, isn't it, and tragic? Two men of twenty-five neither of whom was able, unaided, to disassociate sex and foulness, and who were merely typical of nearly all of the other young men of that age. The full tragedy of it didn't come to me until later years had impressed upon me more and more the many fatal results of letting children grow to manhood and womanhood with either ignorance or distorted knowledge of sex.

PERHAPS all this seems to have little bearing, but I beg you to believe it has a great deal to do with the point at issue. For the heart of the whole matter is just this:

Whatever a child's sex education, or lack of it, at home, sooner or later that child will have to face sex problems, at marriage or before. Whatever the theories and points of view absorbed at home or elsewhere, sooner or later the child will inevitably be jammed up against the actual facts of the world. If the child has already been taught the actual facts, he or she has a fair chance. If the child has not been taught the actual facts, then at the crisis he not only has to meet them for the first time, but is handicapped by a life-long accumulation of false facts and false attitude that prove of no value in the actual living of life.

I think you will grant that much, recognizing that actual facts not only can and should be taught by parents but that they can be taught while at the same time ideals and standards are being instilled that will fortify the child against them, giving him adequate knowledge of their existence in the world he must live in yet at the same time showing him their proper place in the world and his own proper place in relation to them. For if a mother fondly believes that she is keeping her child's mind spotless by letting no mention of sex reach his ears, the odds are a thousand to one that the child, being denied clean instruction at home, has been steadily absorbing unclean and distorted instruction from those not fit to give it.

But the point to which I've been leading up is the particular glamour and mystery that must necessarily attach itself to anything kept so pointedly secret as is the sex subject in so many well-intentioned homes. Add the fact that it is also a forbidden subject, and the lure and appeal to the child become tremendously intensified and dangerous.

AND so, shaken by your complaint into a very thorough reconsideration of the whole serious matter, I rest my case there. So far as I am given light to see, the one safe path out of this parents' problem is the path of truth and frankness, leaving the parents free to build up in their children ideals and standards that will help them meet successfully the actual social conditions they must some day meet, instead of wasting their energies in a fruitless and ill-advised attempt to keep out all knowledge of sex. From your letter I judge that you agree with me in this general point of view.

NOW as to the magazine. As you know, we follow the custom of using dashes instead of swear-words, though many of the magazines admitted to the best homes do not. Our reasons are in general the same that prompt your objection to the word in question. But the two cases are different. The swearing can be sufficiently indicated by the dash, the other can not—without being either unclean or ridiculous. In short, when, for example, the word in question occurs, with warrant, in a story we leave it in for the same reason it is left in the text of the Bible. The same reason that any specific word is left in a story—to make clear what is being talked about.

You may argue that a less ugly word or phrase should have been used. Why? To make an ugly thing seem less ugly than it is? That would be neither honesty nor good policy toward the child. I have tried above to make it plain that I can not conscientiously believe in any course but honesty to the child, on the ground of either ethics or policy.

I AM glad that in your letter you have not complained against our letting a woman of that kind appear at all in one of our stories. If you had, I should have known that it was useless to present my side of the case. But you were sufficiently broad-minded and sufficiently familiar with this magazine in general to realize that

(1) Never do we allow any phase of the sex question in our stories if put there for its own sake and not solely because it is a necessary and integral part of a story.

(2) If it is a necessary part but too big a part, we do not use the story.

(3) If it is a necessary and not too prominent part, it must be handled merely *as* a necessary part, without one single touch of salaciousness, without one single word more than is required for adequate presentation. There is none of the "lure" of sex in our pages.

And if you read *Adventure* as carefully and thoughtfully as you seem to do, you will have noticed that the whole intent of the magazine is clean and wholesome, not only in sex matters but as to ethics in general. Villainy is not held up for admiration; meanness and foulness are painted in their true colors, not glossed; the wrong-doer does not "get away with it." Yet at the same time it has been our intent to foster broadness of view, to build up

the tolerance of charity, and to encourage independence of judgment in assaying our fellows.

YOU do, as I understand it, give us a clean bill of health in general and you are too intelligent to question the wisdom or ethics of allowing a woman of that kind to appear in one of our stories. If you had raised that question, I should, again, have felt it useless to present my side of the case, knowing I could meet only intolerance without reason. There are, unfortunately, many people who believe that such subjects as the women of "the oldest profession in the world" should not be even mentioned in fiction, utterly ignoring the cold facts that sooner or later their children must first learn of their existence and then, without proper guidance from those fit to give guidance, make what adjustment of attitude and action they can toward these new-found factors of actual life. It is not ignorance of evil, but the open-eyed conquering of it, that builds character and erects bulwarks of safety.

YOUR objection, then, is merely to the word used in the story to designate one of these women. There are two answers. One is that it is a perfectly good English word that occurs over and over again in the Bible. Perhaps there have been fanatics who urged changing the text of the Bible to avoid its use, but I have not chanced to hear of them.

It may be urged that the Bible should not be put into the hands of children until—well, until when? And in any case it seems a sorry argument, necessarily fallacious on the face of it, to claim that the book on which the Christian religion is founded is morally unfit for a child to read. If there is any unfitness it lies in the parents' training of the child. The Bible applies spiritual truths to the facts of life; these women are facts of life; any general truth must apply and be applied to all the facts of life.

THE second answer is more particular to the case. In that story the woman was not only pictured without any lure but was made despicable, abhorent, repulsive. To my mind her characterization was a masterly and tremendously dramatic presentation of all the wreck and ruin, moral, mental and physical, that can mark the usual path of that profession. There could be no much more vivid, forceful preaching of the text "The wages of sin is death." She was what Mr. Young called her; therefore he called her that. No softer synonym could have defined her with accuracy, no other could have finished to perfection the picture of utter misery and degradation.

And in the perfection of that picture of utter misery and degradation lies its power and value as a moral lesson.

PERHAPS I can make my point very simply if you will let me ask you this:

Madame de Maintenon, Du Barry and others have come down to us through history with an aura of magnificence, splendor and super-romance. Very brilliant, exquisite figures these, marching down across the pages of history from the admiration and envy of their times to a rather awed and sometimes secretly envious regard in our own day. Certainly most of us think of them first in their power and splendor and, as tourists, go dutifully to inspect such of their former abodes as still exist. Undoubtedly the aroma of romance clothes them still. But I ask you, my dear madame, would it not beyond any shadow of doubt have been far better for our moral standards and point of view if Madame de Maintenon had come down to us flatly, honestly and mercilessly labeled as a whore?

That one plain and very truthful word would have ripped away her vestments of romance and allurement as nothing else could do.

But a dash or other avoidance was used instead.

The woman in our story was no Maintenon, but the difference in the cases is only one of degree.

IF YOU have not already done so, will you not do as I did on receipt of your letter, weigh and test and consider your point all over again? Perhaps I am wrong and you are right, but at least I have weighed the matter with a sincerity and good intent equal to your own. My conclusion, though it may be unsound, is the best and most honest I am as yet able to reach and I think you will justify my abiding by it.

Since the word in question may sometime occur again in a story in *Adventure*, you, in turn, if you still hold to your objections, are fully justified—though your conclusions, like mine, may not be sound—in not permitting your children to look at the magazine. I can only call your attention to the fact that in the future, as in the past, such occurrence is probable only at long intervals, since we do not use that or any other similar word except in cases where it and no other seems demanded.

With best wishes, very truly yours.

P.S.—Since there may be other readers who share your point of view and since *Adventure's* reputation for cleanness is of prime care to us, I am taking the opportunity of stating to all readers our position in this matter by publishing in "Camp-Fire" both your letter and my reply. Neither your name nor address will be mentioned.

"PORTO Bello Gold," by Arthur D. Howden Smith, which ran serially in *Adventure* has been issued in book form by Brentano's, New York, at $2. Besides this regular edition there is also a de luxe edition illustrated by H. C. Murphy, one of our artists' brigade, whose covers have been favorites of yours.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

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Caapi

HERE'S a man who's been quite hither and yon—India, Burma backwoods, Andamans—and in the Amazonian depths he finds a ceremonial to shake him up; with a new drug to shake up the ceremonialists. Mr. MacCreagh discusses the matter from another angle in "Camp-Fire:"

Question:—"Having been referred to you by Mr. E. Young of the 'Ask Adventure' staff of writers, am turning to you for the following information. The

subject is, a certain brew made by the natives or Indians of the Amazon Basin in Brazil. It is called *caapi*, is concocted of *caapi* leaves and is supposed to have a narcotic effect, although it is not supposed to be injurious. Its effect on the natives is supposed to be immunity to fear, stimulation of mental powers, etc. It is a liquid of amber color, and was brought here by Dr. Rusby of the New York College of Pharmacy, which expedition you accompanied." —J. BARRY, Torrance, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. MacCreagh:—*Caapi*. Hm; quite a subject. I am glad to be able to give you some first-hand information, since it was my good fortune to be able to go through the whole ceremony with the Indians who used the stuff.

To begin with, though, I leap up in indignation to correct your impression that Dr. Rusby brought it out with him. That was but a little scientific license. Dr. Rusby was the leader of the Mulford Expedition. But he had come back to this country, owing to his ill health, long before I got into the upper reaches of the Rio Waupes, a tributary of the Rio Negro, where the *caapi* was discovered. I brought the first samples of the drug that had ever come to this country. Since then a further small quantity has been obtained, and the whole is being experimented with by the Mulford chemists. No report from them has yet been forthcoming.

Caapi has been reported by other explorers. Dr. Hamilton Rice, whose work on the northern tributaries of the Amazon is a standard, speaks of having heard of the drug, but says that its use seemed to be an extinct custom.

I was fortunate enough to discover a tribe of Indians at the headwaters of the Tiquié River (tributary, river bank of Waupes) who used the drug with elaborate ceremonial.

I had established myself as quite some witch doctor in my own country through a crafty exploitation of such simple magics as a flash-light and a burning-glass. So I was permitted to go through the whole ceremony with the warriors of the tribe.

The ceremony, which is for the purpose of devil-chasing, lasts three nights and two days and consists of intermittent dancing and partaking of the *caapi*, which, as you say, is supposed to stimulate courage. That, and no more. It is by no means a narcotic; for, of course, the braves have to keep very much awake.

There is no doubt in my mind that the effect of the drug is very largely psychological, as there is no doubt that the Indians are most certainly stimulated to the pitch of undergoing an ordeal of scourging without wincing.

I drank the concoction, gourd for gourd, with the warriors, and watched myself carefully to note my own symptoms. I was almost disappointed in finding that the only effect I could discover was a certain exhilaration. A don't-give-a—— sort of feeling. Sufficient to induce me to get the women—old ones, who are initiated into the craft—to paint me all up and trade in a pile of beads for a feather costume and tuck right in with the crowd.

About the same effect as a few good drinks—mentally. There was no intoxication of the motor nerves. I felt no dizziness or unsteadiness of the feet. Nor was my thinking-power fuddled at all—though, on the other hand, neither was it stimulated. I was normal in every way except that I just didn't care much what I did.

But there was a very definite and shameful limit to my courage. For when it came to the flagellation ceremony, and when I saw those long, curling whips with which the devil-devil men lashed the naked bodies of the warriors, I hadn't any illusions. I quit cold.

The Indians, however, went through as gory a beating as I ever care to see; and of some eighty warriors never a one winced. There is no doubt that they were under the influence of some form of auto-hypnosis induced by their own imaginations coupled with the firm conviction that the *caapi* would actually render them fearless, though not immune to pain. They felt the full force of the lashes and just stuck it out.

The whole thing was the most amazing ceremony that I have ever witnessed. To describe the thing in detail, going into origin and prevailing superstitions and reasons, would entail a monograph of several pages.

I have written such an account for the museum authorities, and they propose—when they have the time and money; and when they get round to it—to print a few hundred copies. I shall be glad to send you one—when it comes out. But that may not be for a couple of years.

I shall be publishing a book which will include this detailed account with illustrations. I shall see that you receive notice of publication.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Lockmasters of the Ohio

HERE'S a canoeing trip "as is:"

Question.—"I would like to know about the prospects of canoeing from Cleveland, O., to New Orleans, La. My power would be paddles and a sail when the conditions were favorable.

The Ohio and Erie Canal runs from Cleveland to Portsmouth on the Ohio River, and I think it is practical to pass through at least from a canoeing standpoint. Are there dams or rapids anywhere on the Ohio River going into the Mississippi, or any on the down leg of the Mississippi River? This is something I would like to know in advance.

In April the river might be running high and have a swift current; also in September. What advantage of current could be expected?

How far up the river is the tide effective?

Any advice you care to mention will be appreciated."—GEORGE E. REID, Cleveland, O.

Answer, by Mr. Zerr:—I have no recent information on the Ohio and Erie Canal, but would try to be certain whether that canal has sufficient water before starting. From Portsmouth you will have a series of fourteen locks to go through. Be sure not to argue with the lockmasters; they're good fellows, but must obey rules as laid down by the War Department.

The distance from Portsmouth to Cairo is 613 miles. The current in the Ohio River generally

averages about four miles per hour. Two good paddlers ought to make from forty to fifty miles per day without working hard.

I would not start in April; too cold, river too high, etc. Say about the latter part of May or June.

Keep a sharp lookout for locks and dams; you might go over. This is no joke. Again, when you get into a lock, look out to make sure you are not crushed between the walls and the boats or barges. The Mississippi River is an open river and there are no dams. If you are inexperienced on big rivers, keep close to shore. I think September is too late in the season to start on such a long trip.

Remember even going down-stream it's hard work paddling; winds also must be considered.

If I can be of further assistance let me know.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Hiking in Peru

ALL kinds of climates and conditions to meet:

Question:—"As I contemplate a trip to South America in the near future and am not thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the country, I am writing to you for information that will enable me intelligently to plan a trip so that it will be as inexpensive and as thoroughly enjoyable as possible. Although I have done considerable camping out in the woods alone and understand the requirements of really roughing it in the northern woods, nevertheless I am inclined to believe that travel in jungle country would vary from northern country even in some of the main essentials.

For your information I will say that I intend roughing it alone in the jungles if after I arrive I find that conditions are not too unusual. The main information that I desire is concerning the kind of clothing most desirable. Also what would be considered the minimum essential equipment complete? Also what would be the sources of food supply?

The country I intend traveling in is that part of Peru lying between the rivers Ucayli and Huallaga in the Province of Loreto, as I understand that this jungle country presents fewer difficulties of travel than most other sections of South America. I also would like to know what would be the approximate cost of a pack-horse in that section of the country? Naturally I have much to learn from experience; but with my knowledge of northern woodcraft I am trying to foresee what will be my main difficulties in South America.

I would be further pleased if you could inform me of a good book on tropical botany."—HOWARD C. SNYDER, Casper, Wyo.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—As you have surmised, tropical traveling and trail-hitting present many peculiar difficulties not found in any portion of North America, and, to be entirely frank, each and every country down there presents its own peculiar difficulties; for instance, hitting trails and roughing it in Mexico are different to those in Guatemala, while Costa Rica is an entirely different matter and Panama is a problem of its own.

South America varies also in each and every country. In Colombia one uses mules for packing; in Venezuela it is quite the proper thing to load four hundred pounds upon a pack-ox and hit the slow and weary trail. In Ecuador back-packing Indians from the eastern slopes do considerable of the packing on trails, while llamas are much used in the high country on the western slopes. In Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina ponies are much used in the plains, while canoes and rafts are used for making distance on the rivers. Chile is also noted for long trips made upon wiry ponies which travel at top speed at a gallop in very rough country. Bolivia is a country of mules and llamas in the highlands, while canoes and Indians are the burden-bearers on the eastern slopes.

This preliminary sketching will bring us around to trail-hitting in the republic of Peru. Be it remembered that Peru is no small country but is a country one-fourth as large as the United States, and almost every sort of topography and climate found upon the face of the earth can be duplicated there with a few extras peculiar to the country thrown in for good measure. For example, in the north along the Pacific we have the densely jungled coast along the border of Ecuador which is very humid. Proceeding south, a long coastal desert is encountered, extending from the sea back to the foot-hills of the Andes. Parts of this are absolutely rainless so far back as the memory of the inhabitants extends.

Rivers that rise high in the snow-clad peaks of the Andes dry up while passing through this zone, or reach the Pacific as mere trickles. The Rimac, upon which Lima is situated, is an exception to this rule. Lima is almost rainless, as is attested by the fact that many of the buildings of the city are covered with poles covered with reeds or boards and earth thrown over the top.

Back at varying distances from the coast rise the mighty Andes, jutting upward and piercing the sky at stupendous heights. Range piled on range, blue-black and hazy, far upward with their jagged peaks frosted with ice, are the highest peaks. The distance between the foot-hills and the peaks is, as may be supposed, a world of cañons, valleys, buttressed walls, table-lands, crater lakes, fertile valleys peopled by descendants of the ancient Incas living as they did ten thousand years ago in the very same stone houses their forefathers dwelt in.

Here and there are herds of tame llamas, and here and there a tilled field. A sad, bleak, desolate country where Indians talk in mournful whines and the very country itself seems forbidding. This sort of country extends on the western side of the Andes, in the highlands, all the way from Colombia to northern Chile.

So much for that. Once having crossed the Andes, an entirely different sort of country is encountered. The mountain slopes are at first precipitous and then more gradual, bringing about a condition that produces an ideal climate over a stretch of many thousand square miles. At rare intervals are to be found native planters, mainly of Spanish descent, surrounded by Indian retainers and servants and living in what might be called feudal splendor, albeit minus many of the comforts of modern civilization. Below this temperate belt is the hot, humid, torrid, deadly low country of the Amazon Basin with its fevers, bugs, insects, rains, floods, jungles, swamps and Indians ranging from tame and friendly to head-hunters and cannibals.

The country you mention is for the most part in good climate, with an altitude of some 2,500 feet,

well watered—too well at times—and does very well under cultivation; producing alligator pears, bananas, oranges and other citrus fruits, cacao, coconuts, breadfruit, papayas, cotton and other crops. Some fifty different sorts of hardwoods are found in the forests; game is plentiful; monkeys are on all sides; fishes swim the streams; and gold is to be found in the sands of almost all the streams.

The best sort of clothing after one is over into this country, for roughing it, is khaki suits, shoes with leggings, felt hat, light underwear. This sort of clothing is also appropriate in Lima or other coast cities. For the trip over the Andes one should carry along heavy suits, sweaters, ponchos, etc., for the climate is cold in the highlands.

Incidentally, the best way to get up over the Andes is *via* the Peru Central Railroad, which leaves the coast at Callao, passing through Lima a few miles away, and follows the Rimac up through the valleys until it is a mere trickle. This passes through some of the roughest country in the whole world and is one of the most difficult pieces of railroad construction in existence, passing through numerous tunnels, up jagged cliffs by means of switch-backs, and over steel bridges spanning enormous cañons.

This road can be left at either Oroya, or, which is possibly better, one can retrain on the railroad of the Cerro de Pasco Copper Co., and proceed to Fundicion or Cerro de Pasco and hobnob for a while with Americans and Englishmen who work there. Supplies can also be purchased at the commissary of the company, and much useful information can be gathered for the trip down into the country you contemplate. There is a Government post-road from Cerro to the Ucayali.

Much freight is handled on the rivers of the section you mention by means of canoes. Native products are shipped down the rivers in this fashion, and merchandise is brought up. Many men usually accompany the cargoes, and the trips sometimes take months to complete. Away from the riverbanks is much wild country which is unexplored.

By observing the native boatmen who travel the rivers you will notice that they either do their cooking in small charcoal pots set upon a mat of sand in the bottom of the canoes or build fires at camping-places along the banks, usually at the beginning or ending of a portage point around a rapid. Beans, dried beef, corn cakes and game killed *en route* comprise the food. There are places along the rivers where enough game is killed while *en route* to feed the parties; and now and then when the food supply fails they have recourse to roasted alligator tails.

Everybody drinks cane-juice brandy all the time. Much drunkenness is prevalent among the half-breeds and Spaniards. The Indians slink far back in the jungles unseen by the parties traveling the rivers.

Guns needed for this section are 30-30 rifle with plenty of ammunition and reloading-tools—powder and supplies of this nature sealed in air-tight and water-proof containers—.38 S. & W. or Colts revolver, . 22 rifle; single-barreled shotgun for birds.

The Encyclopedia Britannica gives about the best information concerning the plant life of the various South American countries. Mozans' "Along the Andes and down the Amazon," published by Appleton and Co., New York, might prove interesting. Roosevelt's book concerning Brazil is also useful, as the country he covered is quite similar to that you contemplate entering.

I would also suggest writing to the Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C., for additional information.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Ketchikan

THE "A. A." man who answered this question ought to know what he's talking about, for he makes this town his headquarters, from which he does his own prospecting:

Question:—"For quite some time I have been planning to go to Alaska when I receive my discharge from the Navy.

What I want to do is to go prospecting in Alaska and perhaps trapping in the winter. At any rate I figured on going North in the late spring and trying my luck at prospecting.

I have a Krag carbine, caliber .30 U. S. A. What do you think of it for Alaska? Is ammunition for this caliber easily obtained there?

Please don't let me give you the impression that I think all one has to do is to go there and pick up gold readily. I know that there are lots of hard work and most likely a good deal of disappointment in the prospecting game. Those old timers I saw in Larsen County, Calif., were lucky if they made good day's wages.

I have placer-mining in my mind because I figured that would probably be the best chance for one who knows very little about geology.

Please recommend a good prospector's guide or manual or handbook."—CHARLES POPE, Bremerton, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—I am enclosing a leaflet giving hints on prospecting and trapping, with outfit and approximate costs. You can trap on the islands anywhere with fair success; but the best locality is on the mainland, and preferably back in the lake and stream country up some of the larger rivers such as the Nass, Iskut, Unuk, or Chickamin. The last two are but eighty miles from Ketchikan, or about two days' trip.

You've got to have a boat of some sort to take you around up here. You can buy a dory here for fifteen dollars. They are good sea boats and about eighteen feet long. You can either fit her out with mast and sail with oars on the side, or cut a well in her stern, put on a "skag" and ship a two-horse-power Caille or Evinrude that will drive you anywhere in these waters at six miles an hour. The latter is best. Everything up here is motorized, and there are lots of autos in town, though you can't drive ten miles straight in any direction. Aviation gas is thirty-eight cents—ordinary gas about thirty cents—and distillate is eighteen cents. If you had the motor dory and tow a small skiff or, better, a canoe, you can go to the Chickamin, say, with your outfit and work it up the river with the canoe, which you may later use on river or lake.

Build a log shack, salt down venison, fish, can berries, lay out a trapline and get fixed for the

winter's trapping by November. All that region is well mineralized, and you can be examining ledges and rocks for gold-bearing quartz as you work there.

The Indians do not hunt or trap very far inland—not much over eight to ten miles from tidewater—so if you strike inland for say twenty miles you'll be in good fur region. You will find plenty of bear, deer, grouse, goat, and all sorts of fur. The sea beaches have clams; and by sinking a meat-baited net at low slack water out from the beach you'll catch all the crabs you need.

Prices here are not much above what you'll find where you are, and you can get everything you need right here. Rents are high; so is coal; but that needn't bother you any. You can camp on Pennock Island, five minutes' row opposite town, while getting your outfit and so save hotel expenses and restaurants. You can get a fine meal in town for fifty cents, and rooms are one dollar a day and up, mostly up. All rooms are taken much of the time now anyway. The accommodations, however, in hotels and boarding-houses are A-1 and just as good as in Seattle. In fact, this is an up-to-date little burg of five thousand with a newspaper (daily) and well-stocked stores, as fine a bank as there is in a big city, sawmill, machine shops, garages, steam laundries, etc., etc. But men trap a bit right from town back a few miles behind and get fair catches.

Folks here haven't prospected very much since this town started being engaged in the surer business of canning, logging, salmon-trolling, seining, halibut-fishing and trapping winters. Two chaps were up the Chickamin last fall and came out at Xmas with ninety pelts. Local dealer offered them $2,250, which they turned down and went to Seattle. You can trap enough to run you prospecting all next season.

Other industries here requiring a bit of capital ($1,000 to $2,500) can be taken up later and make you independent. Salmon-trollers earn $1,000 to $3,000 a season; fox farmers are making anything above $5,000 a year after getting a start. Salmon seiners make more than the trollers. King salmon are now bringing twenty-three cents; whites are ten cents and cohoes and sockeyes get five cents a pound.

An investment in town real estate will pay, I believe, for the town is growing fast from natural resources and is not a boom town. A boarding-house would coin money and be full all the time. Good luck.

Read Rule 1 and the other rules.

Rains of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan

THE subjoined monograph has been printed in leaflet form on hard paper. The leaflet may be obtained free from the "Ask Adventure" expert responsible for it: namely W. T. Moffat, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Don't expect any response unless you enclose addressed envelop and return postage:

AT CAIRO there are about 20 rainy days per annum (mean rainfall 1.4 inch) between October and May only. Between Assuan and Dongola there are a few rainy days in Winter and very exceptionally, some torrential rains in the summer. In the Red Sea Province heavy rain occurs at intervals from August to January inclusive particularly in the hills, with occasional rainfalls during spring. The first of the Khor Baraka flood reaches Tokar by the middle of July, and the number of later floods varies greatly from year to year.

The rainy season proper, on the upper Blue Nile, Atbara and in Abyssinia, commences within a fortnight (one way or the other)of the second week in June, the rains lasting till the middle of September; light rains in January and February; heavy rains sometimes in October and November.

The rainy season in the northern Bahr-el-Ghazal is from 1st April to 31st October and in the southern Bahr-el-Ghazal from the 15th March to 30th November. In Lado light rains occur between April and August, the heavy rains not usually coming on until October.

The rainy season in Khartum and in the Bayuda Desert lasts from the middle of June to September. In southern Kordofan the rains commence in May and last until October. In central Kordofan the usual rainy season is from June to September, while northern Kordofan approximates to the climate of (say) Khartum. In Darfur the rains occur in July and August.

Heavy rains occur, in addition, in the valley of the Upper White Nile from September to November; also numerous thunderstorms, especially in the hilly regions round Rejaf and the Sudd district to the north of it.

On the Sobat, rains last from June to the end of September.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

The Wreck of the *General Grant*

IT HAPPENED in 1866, and the ship purported to be carrying treasure:

Question:—"Will you please tell me of the sinking and attempted raising of the *General Grant* or of any ship sunk between fifty and sixty years ago at the Auckland Islands carrying Australian gold to England?

Do you know of the expedition organized by Eugene C. May of San Francisco, Calif., to raise a ship at the Aucklands about 1912?"—M. D. HAYNES, Seattle, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—Delay in answering is due to difficulty in getting the information desired. Had to write away for it.

Don't know anything about the May expedition—excepting that if there was such it was not successful. The specie has not been lifted. My own opinion is that, like most coinage, it is in circulation, but this time on the bed of the ocean. However, here is the story for you to con for yourself and draw your own conclusions:

The Auckland Islands, discovered in 1806 and named after Lord Auckland, lie nearly 300 miles south of the farthest south of New Zealand. The largest of the group is 27 miles long by 15 across, and it has a very rugged coast.

Port Ross, at the north end, was described by the eminent French *voyageur*, d'Urville, as one of the best harbors of refuge in the known world. The

New Zealand Government maintains on the island a depot of provisions and clothing for the use of shipwrecked mariners.

The port is named for Sir James Clark Ross, who visited the island in 1840 with his Antarctic expedition. It was used as a whaling-station with great profit these many years.

There have been some awful wrecks at the Aucklands, and little wonder. The western side in particular appears to be an uninterrupted wall of adamant, with overhanging cliffs forming casements and caverns, in which the waters lash themselves into fury until the entire coast becomes outlined in broken masses of froth and foam.

It was under one of these cliffs that the *General Grant*, a ship of 1,200 tons burden, *en voyage* from Melbourne, Australia, to London, was wrecked in 1866. The conditions were appalling, as the night was stormy and pitch black. After ripping herself working along the coast the ship was driven straight on to the land, and finally pitched headlong into a cave with 250 yards depth of water in it. In that situation, the tops of her masts struck against the roof of the cave, bringing down huge lumps of rock, which dealt death and destruction on the ship.

Since that time, as it was published that the ship carried $150,000 in bullion alone, besides a valuable general cargo, several attempts have been made to locate the *General Grant's* hull. But the rough weather and water conditions played havoc with the wreck within a very short time, so that there was no vestige left by which to locate the treasure. Conjecture fixed upon one cave as the likely spot. Dragging and dredging operations were tried. Not a coin or nugget resulted. These operations also led to the conjecture that the rock thereabouts shelves, and that the *General Grant* might well have slithered into greater depths still.

A romance of the imagination has it that the specie was looted off the ship previously—hence the wrecking episode. But if that was so, the elements certainly held the balances of justice against the looters, who went down with the ship—unless it was a plot within a plot, and the booty stayed with the other fellows in Melbourne. However, there's the story of the *General Grant* and the locale of the yarn.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Morocco

AN UNFORTUNATE country tangled in the web of international intrigue:

Question:—"Here are a few questions that I would like to ask you about Morocco:

1. What nation owns Morocco? Press reports here indicate that both French and Spanish troops are fighting the tribesmen.

2. Is Fez still the capital of Morocco?

3. Are the conditions in Morocco as bad as the press reports indicate?"—JOSEPH EVERETT WARD, Lincoln, Neb.

P. S.—Please find enclosed self-addressed envelop with postage.

Answer, by Mr. Holt:—Sorry not to have been able to answer your letter at an earlier date, but have just returned from a month's trip into Baja California.

1. Morocco is now a French protectorate with a Spanish "zone of influence"—actually of attempted Spanish control, under the "supervision" of the French Governor-General—in the northern part. Tangier is an "international" city, governed by representatives of the Powers.

2. Fez is still the capital.

3. You may be assured that conditions are almost always worse than admitted; that neither France nor Spain permits any adverse news to go out of the country if it can be helped. They can not always do so; hence we occasionally—very occasionally—get news of a French or Spanish defeat. I did some war correspondence for a great news agency during some now ancient warfare—and quit when I found my dispatches (which had to pass through Paris) actually reversed as to fact. That was *before* France and Spain grabbed Morocco, so you may be quite certain that the news today is even less dependable—except perhaps for the small amount which is sent direct by correspondents who are neither French nor Spanish propagandists.

From a working knowledge of Spanish military efficiency I don't hesitate to state that I would bet a hundred to one against the truth of any report of a great Spanish "victory," or the "heavy losses of the natives." Spaniards don't know what victory is in Morocco, never having had any, and the Moors don't fight in a manner which occasions heavy losses; they fight "light," as did the Boers against the slow-moving armies of England in South Africa. "He who fights and runs away—" etc.

Finally, I may offer for your consideration—it may throw light on the Moroccan question—the suggestion that France is deliberately stirring up trouble in the "Spanish zone" in order that she may take it away from Spain in due course on the ground that Spain can not control it. (You may be assured that France does not intend to have, for very long, a Spanish zone in her "North African Empire.")

And I foresee that when this is accomplished, France will then renew the activities which enabled her to seize Morocco as a protectorate—that is, she will create trouble throughout the country, pour in troops to "control" it, point out to the Powers that a protectorate doesn't function properly, convert Morocco into a colony—and then embark upon half a century of desultory warfare with the mountain people, whom no doubt they will eventually conquer by the "civilized" process of extermination and exploitation—a procedure which will probably be lengthy, because when Spain *is* kicked out of Morocco, she will very naturally retaliate against France by aiding the natives in every way possible in the continuation of rebellion against France.

Morocco—let me point out in conclusion: one is apt to get a wrong idea from maps, owing to the vast size of the African continent—is as big as Texas, and potentially vastly richer; a prize worth fighting for.

If you want an answer, read the rules.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory now not covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address F. K. NOYES, *Adventure*, New York.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

IT NOT infrequently happens that a given song is found both in a recognizable "author" version and also in a form showing partial composition by the folk. In some cases it can easily be seen in which direction the influence has gone; either that the work of an individual author has been adopted and made over by the folk, or that an author has used as his basis a genuine folk song which he has dressed up to suit his purpose.

Many of the minstrel songs—for example, songs sung on the stage by groups of white men made up to imitate negroes—were based upon or included folk material. And even before the period of the minstrel troups "Jump Jim Crow" was built up by "Daddy" Rice upon fragments that he heard sung by a wandering negro. The process still goes on; "Casey Jones" by Newton and Siebert, "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo' " by Wendell Hall, and the modern stage version of "Frankie and Johnny" are all readaptations of older material popular among the folk.

Still further complications are possible. Sometimes such made-over material gets back to the folk again and exerts an influence on true folk song. This has happened in the case of "Casey Jones," mentioned above. Or a modern folk text and a modern "author" text while having no direct relationship one with the other may both be derived from a common original. It is never safe to be dogmatic in any given case unless all the evidence is in.

I want more evidence in the case of the following parallelism, which seems to have escaped the notice of other investigators. I print first a song often used by sailors as a capstan chantey and second a poem written by Charles Mackay. The song is undoubtedly too "literary" to be a folk production, but whether it was "made over" from Mackay, or Mackay's poem from it, I am not sure. Mackay wrote his song *on board ship* in 1858, and may have utilized portions of a song he heard sung at the capstan. In this case there must be an undiscovered "author" source for parts of the chantey. Does any one know definitely how old the sailor version is? Is there any mention of it in books prior to 1858?

Rolling Home

(*Text from a sailor's note-book*)

Pipe all hands to man the capstan,
See your cable is all clear,
For today we'll weigh our anchor
And for old England's shore we'll steer.
And we'll all heave with a will, boys,
And our anchor we'll soon trip;
Then across the deep blue ocean
We will steer our gallant ship.

Chorus: Rolling home, rolling home,
Rolling home across the sea,
Rolling home to merry England—
Rolling home, dear land, to thee!

Man your bars and swift them well, boys,
Let every hand that can clap on,
And as we heave around the capstan
You will hear some well-known song
Which will bring back to our memory
Of some parting place or tryst;
We shall hear sweet strains of music
Softly wafted o'er the deep.

Up aloft among the rigging
Sounds the wild and rushing gale,
Strong and fair to bear us homewards
Filling out each flowing sail,
And the waves we leave behind us
Seem to murmur as they roll:
"We are bound to merry England
Sailing onwards to our goal."

I have traded with the Indians,
With the negroes and Chinee;
I have traded with the Spaniards
In the dark and southern sea;
Many countries have I traveled,
Many strange sights have I seen,
But give to me the English maiden
Softly tripping o'er the green.

To Australia's lovely daughters
We will bid a fond adieu,
But we'll not forget the happy moments
We have spent along with you.
We will leave you our best wishes
As we leave your rock-bound shore,
For we're bound to merry England
To return to you no more.

Cheer up, Jack! Bright times await you.
Fond caresses from the fair;
Loving hands and hearts await you,
And a welcome everywhere.
And the lass you love the dearest—
Has she not chanced to prove untrue—
You will press her to your bosom
And each tender vow renew.

Eastward still, and ever eastward,
Ever eastward we will steer,
Eastward still to dear old England,
To the lass you love so dear.
Thrice two thousand miles behind us,
Thrice two thousand miles before,
And we'll sight the shores of England,
Which we'll leave again no more.

Rolling Home

(*Written by Charles Mackay in* 1858.)

Up aloft amid the rigging sings the fresh exulting gale,
Strong as spring-time in the blossoms filling out each blooming sail;
And the wild waves, cleft behind us, seem to murmur as they flow:
"There are kindly hearts that wait you in the land to which ye go."

Rolling home, rolling home, rolling home, dear land, to thee—
Rolling home to merry England, rolling home across the sea.

Twice a thousand miles behind us, and a thousand miles before,
Ancient Ocean heaves to bear us to the well-remembered shore;
New-born breezes swell to waft us to our childhood's balmy skies,
To the glow of friendly faces, to the light of loving eyes.

Every motion of the vessel, every dip of mast or spar,
Is a dance and a rejoicing, and a promise from afar;
And we love the light above us, as it tips the waves around,
All the more because, ere coming, it has beam'd on English ground.

And 'tis nearer, ever nearer, to the rising of the morn,
And 'tis eastward, ever eastward, to the land where we were born.
And we'll sing in joyous chorus through the watches of the night:
We shall see the shores of England at the dawning of the light.

Rolling home to little England—though so little yet so great—
With her face of sunny beauty, and her heart as strong as Fate,
With her men of honest nature, with her women good and fair,
With her courage and her virtue that can do as well as bear.

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions about them, direct to R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JANUARY 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue the next *Adventure* will bring you the following:

THE KAID OF EL-SIBBA *An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali* — ***George E. Holt***
Sid Hamed Mortadi drained the cup.

THE SILVER LINING — ***H. C. Montee***
Skinner didn't think much of *Tang Tsing-lo's* ancestors.

THE HONOR OF THE SIOUX — ***Alanson Skinner***
"Old age is a thing of evil—charge, and die!"

TO BEAT THE BAND — ***Fairfax Downey***
There's no getting pickled on a piccolo.

THE PASSING OF PETE DAVILA — ***Romaine H. Lowdermilk***
Old Jimmie knew a good man when he met one.

THE ALTAR OF THE LEGION **A Three-Part Story Part II** — ***Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur***
Drusus goes out against the Saxons.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will bring you *long* stories by Leonard H. Nason, L. Patrick Greene, J. Allan Dunn, Talbot Mundy, Georges Surdez, Douglas Oliver, Arthur O. Friel, George E. Holt and Thomson Burtis; and short stories by Thomas Topham, Edward Speyer, Alanson Skinner, H. C. Montee, Charles Victor Fischer, Clyde B. Hough, G. W. Barrington, Don Waters, David Thibault, James Parker Long, Obe Robertson, William Byron Mowery and others; stories of explorers on the Amazon, mounted police in Africa, pirates in Caribbean, Canadians on the Western Front, desert riders in Morocco, still hunters in the Southwest, French colonial troopers in the Sudan, adventurers the world around.

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*JOSEPH JASTROW, *who is writing for The Designer now, is the author of many important books on psychology: "Fact and Fable in Psychology," "The Subconscious," "The Qualities of Men," "Character and Temperament," "The Psychology of Conviction."*

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