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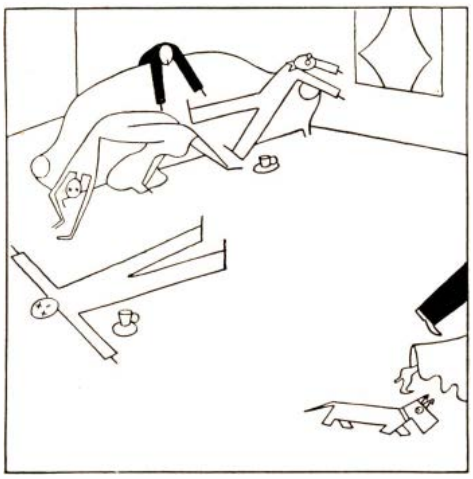

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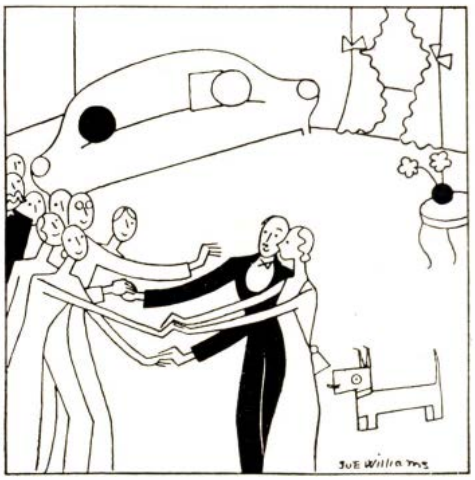

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Beginning

STRANGERS of the AMULET

By GORDON MacCREAGH

KING stood teetering slowly on his widespread legs, his thumbs hooked in his broad pythonskin belt. He frowned ruminatively down at the man who sat expectantly at the table with a heavy gold banded fountain pen poised over an open checkbook.

The difference between the two men equalled all the disparity between the tropics and the north pole. One was tall, angular, lean with the long drawn toughness of a strenuous life, burned to mahogany brown and dressed in the shirt, breeches and high boots of the African outdoors. The other was slight, anything but strong, gray at the temples, dressed even in Kisumu—less than one degree from the equator—in the meticulous City of London business garb of one to whom correct clothing was synonymous with ordinary decency.

The Londoner waited to sign away money. But King hesitated, looking, narrow eyed, through checkbook, table and floor into the deep hidden possibilities of something he did not know. The abstract frown focused upon a concrete annoyance, and deepened to a scowl. As he teetered thoughtfully on his long legs one of his new looking boots creaked ever so faintly. King threw his weight upon it and worked his ankle.

"Durned thing screeches like a Hottentot cartwheel. Anything in the whole wide veld could hear it a mile.

And those noises are the devil to locate and oil out."

The squeak of the shoe was of more immediate importance than the checkbook. King's attention came back to the suggestive weave of the fountain pen top. His frown was one of discontent.

"I don't like your proposition, Mr. Smythe. I hate to jump off into what I don't know."

Smythe tried out his pen point on the edge of a check stub, shrugged slightly and smiled as one who knew his ground, saying—

"I have been told different about Kingi Bwana—quite a lot different."

A faint gleam came into King's eyes, and the frown lightened almost to a grin.

Smythe pushed his argument with calculated persuasion:

"I am a business man, Mr. King. My proposition is quite definite. I want you to go to a certain place and fetch me a report of conditions in that place. All I insist upon is secrecy. If your report proves what I hope it will prove, there will be money enough involved for business rivals to go to any lengths in order to get that information. Secrecy is therefore imperative."

The grin that had been struggling against King's frown split his face like a crack in hard wood. He looked down at the other man in slow amusement.

"In Africa, Mr. Hamilton Smythe, there are no secrets."

"This one is." Mr. Hamilton Smythe snapped out his conviction, as if annoyed at the other's obvious innuendo against his lack of business acumen. He continued persuasively, "And I don't mind telling you that if you make good on this thing, your future with my firm is assured." The gold banded fountain pen executed preliminary curlicues over the checkbook. "Name your own figure, Mr. King."

King grunted. He had made his decision.

"I'm not looking for a future with anybody's firm, I don't care how assured it is—but I'm broke enough to deal with you. My terms are flat expenses and a fat bonus if I deliver the goods. Nothing if I fail. But I make one condition. I have a little obligation of my own to settle—a long standing promise to a friend. If your affair doesn't interfere with that, I'm your man."

This was a most cavalier manner of accepting a job in which so much money was involved that other people would go to any lengths to find out about it. But the financier was the more anxious of the two. He bit back his annoyance and shrugged agreement.

"All right. Your private affairs can not interfere with my project. I make a condition too—that you leave at once with my sealed instructions; and I take your promise that you will not open them until you are a week out on the Karamojo trail. Now—how soon, and how much?"

King made three long steps to the door.

"If I hustle I can get out of here by tomorrow night. And you don't want all Kisumu to know that I cashed a check of yours. I'll send you a boy, a Hottentot who looks like a dried monkey. His name is Kaffa. Give him a sealed bag containing cash. About five hundred sterling will be enough."

The door closed behind him and only the faint creak of that new boot advertised his every second stride down the passage.

Another door opened silently and a man entered. He and Smythe looked at each other questioningly. The newcomer was pleased.

"Well, you landed him."

The financier voiced exasperation.

"So it seems. But I'll tell you, Jim, if you hadn't been so insistent about recommending him as being about the only man in East Africa who could do it and who wouldn't doublecross us, I would have sent him packing. I never heard such independence; and what kind of arrangement is that! Nothing on paper, no contract; and I'm to give five hundred gold cash to some African boy. All on a loose say-so as he slid out of the door."

The other nodded.

"A square dealer is worth all of that, my business friend."

The financier snorted.

"Well, I suppose we've got to trust him. And in any case he couldn't de-

velop it without finances, and he might as well come to us as to anybody. There's a certain safeguard in that."

The other man nodded again.

"All you've got to worry about now is whether anybody else has got on to your secret."

"Never." The financier was positive. "Not a chance of that, I'm certain. This thing is a closed secret; the one man who found the key to it is dead."

The other laughed crookedly.

"There's a saying in Africa—" he began; but the financier cut him short, angrily.

"Yes, yes, I know it already. There are no secrets in Africa. But this one will prove the rule. I tell you nobody has ever been up into that country. It's unknown. The only surveys are aero maps."

The tall man nodded thoughtfully.

"I rather wish you had told him there was a chance of native trouble. Those people up there seem to be quite untrained to any knowledge of machine gun retribution for white man killing."

The financier was positive again.

"Not for a minute. He would have wanted to take a fighting party along; and that would immediately double or treble the chance of one of them selling out on us. If he is the man you say, he'll fight through. And why would I give him so much money if it isn't to pay for taking his chances? If he doesn't get through the secret will still be there, and we can try again with another party, being only five hundred pounds to the bad."

"He'll get through," the tall man said with assurance, "and you'll get your report, or your money back. He's a quixotic fool. He didn't even stipulate the size of his bonus, did he?"

And at that supreme lack of business acumen both men laughed.

THE following day for King had every right to be a considerably busy twelve hours. Just now his legs and his left arm formed a long tripod over the quite inadequate table in his stuffy hotel room, and he frowned over a map while he drew wandering, tentative lines upon its surface in a general northward direction.

The room was stuffy because Kisumu at that season on the equator was not the coolest place in Africa, and the Jew had insisted upon closing the window that opened on to the wide, screened veranda. King grumbled about the heat. But the Jew, who had been watching the progress of the wavering lines with the intentness of a discontented bird, shrugged his shoulders up to his ears while his heavy eyebrows disappeared into his tangle of hair.

"My good simple Kingi, I tell you again you are a child in matters of business. That Kingi Bwana should want to trek into the far middle of nowhere is nothing; all men know that he is loose footed and harebrained. But if a whisper should go abroad that Kingi Bwana and Yakoub ben Abrahm, the trader, were preparing a safari together —oho, that would be altogether another kind of a talk. Fifty people would prick up their ears; and ten of the worst of them would immediately get ready to trail behind."

"Well, it will be plenty trail," grunted King. "A good six weeks of hard going."

The Jew's ears and brows disappeared again.

"Six weeks, yes, if this new silly thing that you have tangled yourself up with doesn't take us another six out of our way."

King was immediately apologetic.

"Gosh, Yakoub, old friend, I know you've been patient. I'm ashamed to take on the job. I've been promising you this trip for a couple of years now. But be reasonable. I told him I'd take up his proposition only if it didn't interfere with my long standing promise to you: And he wants me to go by Karamojo; that's pretty near halfway in our direction. And this thing pays half our safari expenses; and when we're both so flat broke that's more than a little reason, it seems to me."

It was the last item that reconciled Yakoub, though he threw out his hands in querulous complaint.

"Reasons, reasons, you have always reasons for all the profitless things that you do. Even if it is no better than that your friend, the commissioner, asks you

to go and smooth over some silly native trouble for which the government pays you no money."

King was immediately serious.

"That's a long and a deep matter, friend Yakoub. It goes all the way into the white man's future in Africa; into the coming time when he can no longer hold the black millions by machine guns but only by the careful and consistent policy of the square deal. The white man's burden, my grouchy cynic. That's not a sentiment; it's a religion."

"Your religion, maybe; not mine." The Jew's brows disappeared and his nose came down over his lips in a smile of unalloyed satire. "My religion, my dear Kingi, is business. And now that we are at last partners in a business, you and I, I tell you you will not need to worry about the future of the white man in Africa. If those little ingots are any indication and if your witch doctor can show you how to find this so mysterious place, there will be money enough for you to go home and buy that ranch in your wild and woolly Yankeeland. Money, I tell you—"

A crisp knocking low at the base of the door interrupted. King knew it to be the battered silver toe ring of his Hottentot, and he called—

"Ai!"

The man came in, huddled even in that tropic temperature in a blanket of brilliant red and orange stripes. Swathed in all that cloth, he looked smaller than he really was, shrunken, a veritable ape with all the wisdom of the ages peering out of the bright black eyes in his wizened face.

"The talk was of much money," he said softly. "It could be heard without the door."

He made a simple statement, implying nothing, suggesting nothing. But King looked accusingly at the Jew, and the Jew amazedly at the little Hottentot. He combed sensitive fingers through his beard and nodded in thoughtful appreciation.

"Yes, I was talking too loud. But how did that little devil know that we didn't want to be heard?"

"Much money is here," said the Hottentot. He produced a strong canvas bag, like those used by banks, from under his blanket and laid it on the table. "Five hundred pieces of Inglesi gold."

King's only movement was that of his eyes, which flashed to the bag and its seal.

"And how, wickedest apeling, did you satisfy your curiosity so surely?" he asked quietly.

Under his master's accurate diagnosis of his motive, the Hottentot squirmed; but he twisted the myriad wrinkles of his face into an expression of sententious virtue.

"Bwana told me only to fetch a bag that would contain money. That other bwana who is rich made so much talk about giving the bag into my keeping that I knew it must be much money. How can a man take proper precaution about carrying much money if he does not know how much? So I took the bag to Abdul Huq, the Banyan money lender, who knows all things about all the moneys; and he, by the sound and feel, said it was gold, and by weighing the bag he knew the pieces would be five hundred."

The Jew nodded in Mephistophelian delight.

"A good lad, a smart lad. And I suppose there is no man in Africa but Kingi Bwana who has a servant who would not run away with all that money and become chief of his tribe. How is that miracle done, my Kingi? I, who handle money—alas, only sometimes—must know that recipe."

"The square deal," said King shortly; then to the Hottentot with severity, "And how, O most foolish apeling, did you think that the Banyan would not contrive to rob you of so much money?"

"Nay, bwana." The Hottentot was confident. "Barounggo stood beside me like the father of death anxious to strike, and the Banyan trembled so that he with difficulty weighed the bag."

A grim little smile played about King's mouth. He could visualize that money lender under the shadow of his great Masai spearman.

"It was well done, O wise apeling. There will be tobacco for both. Tell Barounggo that we go out this night—secretly. Let all be ready."

"Nidio, bwana. All will be ready."

King turned again to the Jew, his eyes twinkling.

"The recipe works, my friend, eh? Even in Africa—sometimes. Come along to Koomer Ali's to lay in some trade goods; I guess your just being along won't stir up ten bad men to follow us."

KING put on a heavy pith helmet and led the way to an oven-hot section of the town where the streets were narrow and dusty and the house fronts were whitewashed with lime. An odd mixture of half the races of the East moved listlessly in this African setting. Natives of India predominated; noisy, chattering Zanzibar Arabs, negroid of feature and truculent; Chinese, of course, and halfbreed brats who contrived somehow to survive, hatless, in the vertical sun rays.

The trade store of Koomer Ali the Banyan was a rambling half block of ground floor filled with a litter of all the gimcrackery that might delight any savage heart. For the discriminating buyer there were stocks of better goods. Like an old fashioned country store, it was a meeting place for half the upcountry outfitters of East Africa. Among the loungers a group of three were looking over trade goods with a carelessness so studious that King whispered to his companion:

"They quit talking the minute we passed under the window. It seems that Yakoub the trader can't go shopping without at least three of the worst men in British East sitting up and taking notice."

One of the men was an old-time Africander who had hunted and traded his way from the Cape to Cairo, doing anything and everything. A big, capable looking fellow he was; his name, Van Vliet, suggested Boer extraction. There was some story about his having skipped from the Rand on account of a shortage in the sluice box returns of one of the gold mines down there. But that story was whispered only when Van Vliet was somewhere else.

He had come up into East Africa and had disappeared after a time under suspicion of selling liquor to the natives. The local police had utterly failed to get any direct evidence, and the district commissioner had employed King to make the suspicion a certainty. It was then that the man had skipped. Now he was back again, cool and confident.

One of his companions was a refugee from Portuguese East Africa. King knew him too. Dago Lopez he was called, and he had a reputation for an ungovernable temper and a lightning skill at throwing a thin, heavy bladed knife—which was why he was not just now in Portuguese East. A fit companion for any desperate venture, if he could be controlled. And Van Vliet was quite competent to do that. The other man was a stranger—a thick, wide shouldered man with a battered face and the shapeless ears of a not very skilful pugilist.

The other loungers in the store conversed in low tones, pretending to be at ease. Not that Van Vliet was a brawler, a senseless trouble seeker; he was much too calm and collected for that. The condition was no more than a certain unease in the air, the sort of tension one might expect around some celebrated gang leader when any startling thing might happen at any moment.

But Van Vliet was in a good humor. His bold eyes roved over the room without any hostility; the corners of his mouth, just visible above a curly brown beard, worn untrimmed in Boer fashion, were turned up in a smile of mild contempt at the discomfort he knew he inspired.

King, immersed in a meticulous testing of trade cloths, paid no attention to the three who were the center of attention. To him it was more important to select a good grade of honest materials rather than the showy, shoddy kind for native trade.

Van Vliet laughed sardonically at a meticulousness so different from his own methods and raised his voice.

"Too much trouble, Yank. Altogether too much trouble. Take it from my experience; instead of so much fuss over quality like an old wife, give 'em lots of cheap color and a flask of square-

face to close the deal."

The remark in itself was not particularly offensive; but it drew more than the intended rise from King.

"You know damn well I don't sell liquor to natives," he snapped. The emphasis was all on the *I* and the inference might be taken as anybody wished.

Van Vliet only laughed and shrugged noncommittally. His good humor, as he conceived it, held good. But his thickset companion took up the innuendo with a heat even more surprising than King's.

"Oho, what is this? A blinkin' missionary, what? A long nose? Mebbe yer'd like ter preach us a bit about niggers an' whisky?"

King gave him no more than a glance. His eyes were directed coldly and narrowly at Van Vliet while he ostensibly answered the other man's challenge:

"I'll preach you this much, my bucko. It's a pretty poor sort of white man who'll swindle a naked African over a piece of cloth; and it's a worse one who'll sell him liquor. And both of those mean a whole lot more than you'll ever understand."

Van Vliet only laughed in easy amusement. But the other man took the whole insult upon himself. He ripped out a short epithet of just two staccato syllables, snarled a broken toothed grin of confident pugnacity and commenced to sidle in, soft footed. Thin flanked and heavy shouldered, his wary poise and the quick, shifting little eyes in his battered face were evidence that he was no amateur at argument.

King moved only his feet; spread them a little farther apart and shuffled them gently to feel the floor under his boot soles. That was all.

The whole altercation was so sudden, arising out of nothing, that the storekeeper and the other men stood appalled.

Van Vliet's voice rose in unhurried warning—

"Look out, Johan, you can't take chances with Yankee King."

The man hesitated. The name conveyed an impression which he misunderstood.

"Oh. Oh, indeed. A Yankee gunfighter, yes?"

King stood very still. Only the elbow that had been leaning on the counter lifted clear; the other hand still held the cloth he had been examining.

The man clung to his delusion. It seemed to him that King was in a most unfavorable position to reach for a weapon. His own advantage was clear.

"Well, crummy—" he grinned wolfishly—"if he fights a gun, I'll oblige 'im."

His hand tugged at his hip pocket. The slowest gun-fighter in the world could have drawn and fired while the man still fumbled. But King never carried a weapon within the purlieus of any law-abiding British colonial town. His eyes gaged the distance between them, his legs gathered under him for a dive at the man's feet. And then in the same moment Van Vliet became an astonishing tornado of action.

"You blasted fool!"

His voice roared its fury while he was still in the midst of his leap. His hand closed over his henchman's fumbling fist. With one great wrench he tore fist and pocket and gun out all together. The same movement carried that arm over his shoulder; he slipped his hip under the man's body and whirled him cartwheeling off his feet to crash on the floor. The impetus of the flying body slid it to the very threshold of the door.

The whole extraordinary episode was over as suddenly as it had begun. Van Vliet stood smiling sardonically at the awestruck onlookers. He slipped the confiscated gun into his pocket and his smile broadened to a grin of pure bravado. He nodded curtly to King.

"I'll be seein' you, Yank," he said and swung out to the door. "Come along, Lopez. Lug that fool out."

KING looked after the trio with amazement and a slow, dawning relief; but his expression was mostly of the former.

"Now what in thunder did all that mean?" he asked aloud. Then his astonishment culminated in a shout. For Yakoub, the peaceful trader, was quickly wrapping up a shiny little black automatic in a silk handkerchief and stowing it in an inside breast pocket.

"Shooting," said the Jew, "in these so lawful British towns is more dangerous than not shooting. Still, the need looked to be desperate."

King dropped a hand momentarily on his shoulder. Then he cackled a short laugh.

"For a would-be gunman, my good Yakoub, your holster arrangements are as bad as friend Johan's. I'll have to show you sometime." His mind went to the mystery of Van Vliet. "Why, do you think, didn't he want trouble? I mean, why didn't he want trouble just then?" King cogitated the matter, narrow eyed. "He's tried it himself before now. I wonder. He's nobody's fool, is Van Vliet. Used to work for the DeWet outfit down in the Rand. Three hard *hombres,* those. Wonder if they're peddling liquor back country again?" Eyes and mouth hardened. "That'll mean hell breaking loose somewhere. By golly, I ought to crab that beastly game."

But Yakoub threw his arms round King.

"No, you don't. Not this time. You don't push your nose into other people's trouble. You belong to me, my imbecile Kingi. I have your promise. We have a business together. Money is our object, not white man's burdens."

King stood irresolute. Then he grinned down at Yakoub.

"Damn my old promise. But it's been on my chest too long. And—" he laughed a hard little laugh—"me too, I'll do anything for money these lean days. I'll make my promise good to you as straight and as fast as the trails between the water holes will let me—if there are any trails up there, or any water holes. Nobody I've ever met could tell me. You're starting on considerable safari tonight, friend Yakoub. Come along; there's plenty to do before we melt out of this burg."

SUCH a plenty there was to do that it was going to be a miracle of swift organization if they could get away by nightfall; almost as great a miracle as "melting out" of a small frontier town where a dozen astute people were furtively watching for a safari start.

Kaffa the Hottentot came and stood on one leg while he scratched the inside of his knee with the toes of the other foot. King knew by that hesitant attitude that something more than direct statement was on his mind.

"Bwana, there is a boy," began the Hottentot, looking all round the room with the faraway disinterest of a monkey trained to do an act, "a Basuto boy from Pemba's kraal near the Witwaters Rand. He is a big boy and strong and his name is Umfoli."

King knew that this was circumlocution. There was something behind all that preamble; and he knew that it would come out sometime. He only grunted disinterestedly.

"He is a very clever boy, bwana. He understands the Inglesi tongue; and his master, who knows no other tongue, pays him very much money therefore. Twice as much as my pay. If I knew the Inglesi I would be worth—"

King fixed the crafty little imp with a steady stare; and the imp quickly glossed over that line of suggestion with something of real interest.

"That boy is the servant of the evil white man who would have fought with a pistol in the shop of Koomer Ali the Banyan."

King grunted again.

"Hmh, it didn't take that one long to get abroad."

Yakoub nodded sagely.

"No secrets in Africa, my Kingi. Except—" he smiled with smug satisfaction—"the secret of our little business together."

"That boy—" the Hottentot looked directly at King for the first time—"that Umfoli heard his master talking with the other more evil white man. The talk was that the more evil one would come tomorrow to bwana to make an *indaba* about sharing in the business that bwana has with Yakoub Bwana."

"*Adonai!*" Yakoub jerked galvanically straight in his chair, his eyes staring, clawing at his beard.

A straight vertical cleft in King's forehead formed a T-square with his brows. His eyes looked through the Hottentot and beyond. He muttered questions half to himself, half for Yakoub to hear.

"Just how much does he know, I wonder? He's got his nerve, all right. I'll bet he's working a bluff on his guess that we're together. Hell, he can't know anything. We're going on the barest hint ourselves."

"Yes, bwana," said the Hottentot innocently, "he can not know anything. Even I do not know bwana's business."

Both King and Yakoub were moved out of their concern at this disclosure to shout with laughter at the cunning little Hottentot's betrayal in one breath of his perfect understanding of English as well as of his inordinate curiosity. Kaffa writhed in abashment and quickly covered up again.

"That boy, bwana, that Umfoli wanted to leave his master who is evil and desired to take service with bwana. And a boy who understands the Inglesi, as has been shown, is very useful."

"Has he any more information?" King wanted to know.

"Nay, bwana." The Hottentot screwed his face into a maze of disdainful wrinkles and clucked a noise of derision. "He is but a Basuto. What knowledge he had is now mine. Only, since he knows the Inglesi—"

"Then chase him," snapped King.

"Yes, bwana." The Hottentot screwed his face into another pattern of wrinkles and chittered like a monkey that is being tickled. "It was known to me that bwana would so order about a Basuto; so I had Barounggo beat him and hunt him from the door this hour gone. But, as has been shown, bwana, a servant who understands the Inglesi is most useful and—"

So then King knew what had been the basic motive underlying all this long story. Very gravely he reached for a scrap of paper and fished a pencil stub from his pocket.

"Tell Barounggo," he said as he scribbled, "to make ready for immediate departure with his men. And to you I will give a letter of recommendation, a very good letter, to take to that white man who has need of servants who understand the Inglesi."

The Hottentot's eyes became saucer-like as those of a nocturnal lemur, and he wailed the lost-soul noise of one and fled.

King turned back to Yakoub.

"That man had his nerve all right." He meant Van Vliet. "We've surely got to melt out tonight."

So that night Kingi Bwana and Yakoub ben Abrahm the trader, the furtively watched pair, performed the miracle of melting out of Kisumu town on safari.

King's little ruse had the virtue of simplicity; and, since nobody had ever done it before, of novelty. No one had ever done it before because no one had ever had African servants who could be trusted to carry out a quite responsible job without the supervision of a white man. King and Yakoub alone, with only shotguns under their arms, strolled out with the sunset in the direction of the big western *donga* where guinea fowl might be found scratching in the slanting sun rays, or perhaps parrot pigeons in the umbrella acacia tops.

Nobody could go out on safari with shotguns and nothing else. So nobody followed the two pot hunters. King and Yakoub therefore trudged quietly on.

The slanting rays dropped horizontal, shooting mile-long sword blades of fire along the grass. They hung so for shimmering minutes, as if resting on the parched herbage, then they tilted suddenly, pale searchlight beams against the already graying East, and as suddenly were gone. Yellow grass, brown ant-hills and dusty green acacias absorbed the gray sky, drank it up and blended with it. They were all at once black shadows. Stars punched glittering holes in the black blanket above. The astonishing equatorial night was upon the two men.

They trudged quietly on. There would be no lions so close to Kisumu. Jackals and gaunt, striped hyenas were the largest beasts likely to be met. A leopard, possibly; but a leopard would probably be prowling closer to the hut fringe of the town, hoping to lure a frenzied dog just a little bit farther out than its more cautious fellows and snatch it before the rest could join the attack. The open veld was before the lone white men.

Fifteen miles farther on a ghostly tangle of orange glowed in the sky, re-

solving itself into the under side of acacia branches illumined by a fire as yet hidden in the tall grass.

King whistled the *phwee-ee piu-piu-piu* of the little banded plover. Immediately dark forms rose up in the glow. A tall shape strode toward them. Red light flickered on the outlines of a great naked figure and glinted from the blade of an immense spear.

"*Jambo, bwana,*" boomed the figure. "All is well?"

"Ha, Barounggo. It is well. And here? Everything all right? All the men?"

"Assuredly, bwana. How else would it be?"

The little Hottentot came running, querulous, complaining.

"*Awo, bwana,* it is late. We thought that a lion—that is to say, a leopard perhaps, or some ill spirit hunting by night had— All is ready, bwana. The tents are set and the coffee is waiting."

AFTER the toilsome night a lazy morning would have been excusable; and under his usual conditions of lone travel King might have been tempted to linger. For he had long ago reduced safari needs to the irreducible minimum. But on this trip he was tied down to the speed of his slowest man. He was up at an uncomfortably early hour to inspect by daylight his goods and gear and the men who had started out on safari without his personal supervision.

First the packs. Every one was opened and its contents laid out in a pile beside its canvas wrapping. Nothing was missing, and the mathematical nicety of the weight distribution was a tribute to the organizer. King only nodded, without saying a word. But Kaffa the Hottentot, who had been waiting for that nod like a dog watching for commendation of its trick, grinned all over his shrunken face.

Then the men. Barounggo marshaled them in line—ten of them. He himself stood, a great monument of ebony nakedness, not covered so much as ornamented with a short leopardskin loin-wrapping and with monkey hair garters at his knees and elbows and his single black ostrich plume nodding over his head. His long Masai spear stuck upright on its butt spike in front of him.

He dwarfed the other ten, though they were no collection of thin limbed porters. Shenzies they might have been by heredity and occupation, bearers of burdens upon their heads. But they stood forth now as spearmen—*askaris.*

They constituted King's careful precaution in jumping off into country he did not know; and in themselves they constituted a minor miracle of manipulation with native habit and tradition. Shenzies existed in plenty for safari portage; and *askaris* for the purpose of guarding those Shenzies; but it had been Barounggo's labor for weeks to select and train a little troop who, having been graduated to the dignity of shield and spear, would still condescend to carry burdens. The ten were Barounggo's pride and joy of achievement and he growled abuse at them accordingly.

"Baboon, is it thus that you hold spear with toes in place of fingers? And thou, Bushman. Shield in your jungle was doubtless a toy of woven grass; is oxhide too heavy for you? Hey, fellow, fourth in the line, roll not your eyes like the tree galago of the night. This is the *bwana sana* who inspects. His one word to me is death."

The troop shuffled their feet and tried not to look self-conscious. The big Masai watched King out of the corner of his eye. King nodded. The Masai swelled his great chest.

"It is well, fellows. Today you do not die." To King, with nonchalance, but loud enough for all to hear:

"Cattle they are, bwana. Spearmen all they claim to be from their youth up; yet the ghosts of my fathers have wept that I have the handling of such. Feet have they and no hands. Yet this alone may be said for them: They will not run away."

And at that excoriating analysis of them the ten men swelled their dark chests.

At his tent flap Yakoub stood, unkempt from his exhausted sleep, his hair twisted in horn-like spirals, his beard a tangle; a veritable satyr of the woods in benevolent mood.

"It is a miracle, my Kingi. This

recipe of the square deal works wonders. No other white man in Africa has such servants. I am converted to your application of the white man's burden. I shall make it a rule from now on."

King only grunted.

"A means to an end," he lied to cover any show of sentiment. "I'm working this way for money. Get a move on. We've got to cover ground today. The faster we get to Karamojo, the sooner we can get through with the Ham Smythe job and away to our own little secret out of which you promise me so much money. And the sooner we get to see the old Wizard of Elgon the better we'll know whether he can give us any dope about that unknown country up there."

Yakoub agreed.

Ground, accordingly, was covered. The porters, under Barounggo's driving and the shrewd implication that they were not merely beasts of burden but fighting men of strength and spirit, made marches that were astonishing for safari travel.

Yet King frowned when, during the second day, topping each low rise of ground, he brought his prism glasses to bear upon a haze of dust that persisted behind.

"There's a safari behind us," he told Yakoub shortly. "Forty or fifty men, I should judge."

He had taught Kaffa the—to a native—quite difficult feat of looking through binoculars. The Hottentot screwed his face into agonized contortions behind the eye pieces, looking above the dust and around it rather than at it, then lowered the glasses and scratched his head for a moment.

"Safari," was his verdict. "Middle big safari, for the dust is not great. White man safari, for the vultures are not many." He looked up to study King's expression.

King frowned and grunted dissatisfaction.

Another day went by, the miles fell behind; but still that persistent cloud of dust hung over the horizon, the safari just below vision, even from the low, rounded hilltops of the rolling country into which they were coming.

KING swore angrily.

"There's only one white man I know who can drive a safari of that size to keep up with the speed we're making."

He stopped and considered awhile. His face set like rough cement work. He told Yakoub:

"You go ahead as fast as you know how and make for the wizard's *boma*. Kaffa knows the way. Sit until I come. I'm going back to make sure about those people. I'm taking Barounggo. Kaffa, I expect the men to make as much distance as if Barounggo were behind them."

The Hottentot instantly threw out his chest in ape-like imitation of the great Masai and screamed frightful abuse at the porters. They grinned cavernously at him.

"Buffaloes," he screamed at them, "Cattle of the fields, move! Run with speed! Or, look, I borrow the spear from the Masai. In the spear is a magic. With it any man can drive cattle as does that great one."

At which Barounggo looked with the enormous indifference of a mastiff, and the men guffawed. But the Hottentot knew his own methods of handling porters.

"Listen, goat men, beetle eaters. The friend of bwana is the Old One, the Wise One of Elgon. Let me not have to tell him that bwana's cattle dawdled on the way, or he will make a witch-binding upon you that will be remembered by the grass monkeys who will be your descendants."

And at that the porters covered their mouths with their hands and took up their packs with alacrity.

King swung back on the trail to meet that persistent cloud of dust. He had determined on one very definite thing—this trip with Yakoub. He had promised it for more than a year. It was a secret between himself and the Jew, this thing Yakoub had found out—a hint, rather, of a venture that might develop into vast possibilities. And nobody was going to intrude into the secret for which his friend had lived in anxious and patient expectation for all the months during which King had been called to half a dozen profitless

deals.

The Masai strode grimly behind, muttering some rhythmic recitation deep in his throat with a reiterated chorus of *sghee, sszee,* which in the ideophone of his people represented the stabbing and swishing of flung spears.

"What foolish daydream do you chant, old blood-letter?" King wanted to know.

"I sing my ghost song, bwana. They are fifty and we are two. Yet it will be a good fight while it lasts. Though I think that with my ten whom I have been training we might have made some headway against those Shenzies."

"So talks Kifaru, the rhinoceros who charges blindly at each new scent. Do you think that I am a fool as well as you? There will be no fighting. We come only to look."

"If bwana so orders. Yet that but means that the fighting will be later. I will train my ten with the heavy stabbing spear."

King only grunted and strode on. As the dust of the safari began to come nearer he was careful not to top any skylines over the low hills. And when the confused clamor of African porters on the march began to be heard he looked about him to select a tall ant-hill well covered with scrub.

The safari came slowly on, three white men in the lead, the porters straggling out for a quarter-mile behind with some twenty spear armed *askaris* among them.

"See, bwana," the Masai whispered, "that is no honest hunting safari with so many *askaris*. There will be fighting, as I have said. I smell trouble. Lumbwa dog eaters are they all—twenty men. Yet with my ten who are Wa-Kuafi we could make a slaughter."

"Shut up," King told him, and he trained his glasses on the group.

His guess had been right, of course. The white men were Van Vliet and his two ill favored companions. How they had found out anything was a mystery to King and a blow to his conceit; for he had been desperately careful. Yet there was no room for doubt that they were following his trail. But it was not the knowledge that these men were obviously hoping, as the Hottentot had reported, to share in his secret business that infuriated King. He swore through set teeth and his hand closed hard on his rifle breech as he recognized among the porter loads some twenty very familiar wooden cases.

"Squareface," he gritted. "Damn 'em! Twenty cases of trouble for some poor naked fools!"

He would have liked to open fire at long range from his shelter and obliterate these three menaces to black men and white alike; and he cursed the inhibition that restrained him. He growled to Barounggo:

"We have seen enough. Come on. From now on we must travel with speed and secrecy."

The Masai's eyes were eager, and he spoke softly through pinched lips:

"A throwing spear, bwana; a light throwing spear balanced close to the blade will be a good weapon. I will make me such a spear. And those ten, I will train them also to the throwing spear. Only twenty *askaris,* and Lumbwa men at that; the rest are cattle. Look, bwana, thus shall the battle go."

"Peace, murderer," King told him. "Here is not even cause for a fight."

But to Yakoub, when he caught up with him later, he said:

"You were right. Yakoub the trader and Kingi Bwana can't go out together without at least three of the hardest cases in Africa following on their trail. They mean to crash in on our secret, and they've come prepared to fight for it. That's what comes of having a reputation as a shrewd business man."

The Jew's eyebrows disappeared in his tangle of hair; his hands outflung, he nodded sour, smiling agreement almost as if more pleased at the implied tribute to his astuteness than troubled at the complication.

"And," he appended, "of Kingi Bwana's having a reputation for knowing how to discover the secrets of the land—even if he doesn't know how to profit by them. Never mind, let them follow. Who are they? Three bad characters. It is nothing. But Yakoub and Kingi together—the Jew and the Yankee—that is a combination. We shall outwit them."

"By golly, if we don't outwit them," said King, "we'll have to kill them off like the rats they are. Come ahead, let's go. Move. Speed. Get distance."

A THIN haze far away to the left began to assume wavering outlines that came and went as the mists drifted. Later in the day a pale gray cone hung in the sky, ghostly, standing upon a chill purple fog of nothing. A cool wind drifted down from it.

King broke away from the Karamojo trail and headed toward the mountain flank. In a sheltered valley at the foot of a long blue ridge nestled a thorn *boma*. Like the nucleus of a spider web, this isolated huddle of huts was the center of countless faint paths that came to it from all directions. But the most extraordinary feature of it that immediately arrested attention was its condition of dilapidation. Thorn *bomas* in the more accessible regions of East Africa are nowadays not intended for defense; their purpose is protection from wild animals. But it seemed here as if even the lions and hyenas knew that the home of Batete the Wise One was something to be treated with awe.

Fat cattle grazed around it. Naked herd boys gazed owlishly. The porter men clustered, wide eyed, at the gate. Barounggo, with immense disdain, but with spear gripped tight, prepared to follow his master within. But King knew the courtesies of calling upon wizards. He told his men to wait, and went in with Yakoub.

Inside the *boma* were several round, thatched huts; and in the center stood another decrepit thorn fence, hung all round with cattle skulls and colored rags and snake skins—all the regular appurtenances of sorcery.

Three low stools, each carved out of a single trunk, stood in front of the central hut in a patch of sun. Upon one of them sat a shrunken ancient. He might have been sixty years old, or eighty, or a hundred. His face had reached that condition of desiccation in which age could mark it no further. His limbs were wrapped in a monkey-skin cloak.

But he was no senile antique. He was alert, and waiting.

"*Hau, jambo, Bwana Kingi,*" he called in a voice astonishingly strong for his appearance. "*Jambo sana.* It is a long time since my eyes have been glad. See, the stools wait. And let your Shenzies enter. *Potio* is ready for them in the outer huts."

King had long ago given up wondering just how the old sorcerer gained his apparent foreknowledge of events. It might have been the blackest kind of magic, or it might have been no more than a system of native runners. Bush telegraph was a mystery recognized even by the government.

"*Jambo,* father of wisdom," King greeted the old man. "My good fate has fallen on this day. You are well? Your house is well? Look, I bring a gift. In the nighttime the wind that comes from the ghost mountain is cold. This is a blanket from my own country. It is woven by hand and it will shed rain."

It was no cheap trade goods that King presented to the old man, but a gorgeous, lightning striped, genuine Indian blanket that he had long set aside for just this purpose.

The wizard's face remained an immobile net of furrows. Only the keen old eyes glowed. He dropped his ingrained habit of preternatural knowledge.

"There is no white man in the land but the *bwana m'kubwa* who would think of that. Sit, bwana; and this man, your friend, let him sit too. It is enough that he is your friend. The women shall bring maize beer and we shall talk."

THE talk wandered throughout all the little unimportances that are of import to the dwellers in the wilderness. Gossip of the road and of the town: of people's comings and goings and dyings, of the movements of game and of the mealie crop and of the next rain. King knew it was necessary and he went through with it. It was hours before he could bring in his inquiry about the country up north where he wanted to go.

The wizard became silent and

thoughtful. Automatically, as if from habit, he drew an odd assortment of cowry shells and colored pebbles and bones from a pouch and threw them fanwise in the dust. With a lean finger he sorted them and traced lines between. Hesitantly he began to talk.

"So? It is up to the People of the Amulet that bwana would go? So indeed? That is bad. They are a far people and a hidden people. Few people are left hidden in this land. It is a pity that bwana knows about them."

The old man nodded his head stiffly many times, moving his pebbles and bones almost like chessmen as he cogitated. Decision was difficult. He looked up squarely into King's eyes.

"It is a pity. Yet—if it were any other white man in all the land I would weave a net of lies for his feet. But if Kingi Bwana wants to go, who am I to plant the weeds of difficulty in his path? He will rend a way through many mats of weeds and in the end he will get there. I will, therefore, tell him truth and bwana will see those people and will do the thing that he will know to be right."

The old man was talking no mumbo-jumbo of his craft now. This was a confusion of words with a meaning behind them. King sat silent, waiting. Yakoub clawed nervous fingers through his beard.

"This is the truth, bwana. Even I, Batete, whom men call wise, do not know that country. I know only that the people are the People of the Ancient Amulet. This is the magic of that amulet: That whosoever shall see it, it shall tear his heart in twain that he can not take it away with him. This too I know: The people beyond the Toposa, between them and the hidden people, are an evil people, strong and war-like. And this last thing I know. The road to the hidden people goes by the mountain country of the black Christians, very steep and difficult. He who does not know that the mountain is the road goes to the left, which looks as if it should be the road; and at the end of many days he loses himself in the swamps that guard the country on that side. That is all that I know."

The old man relapsed into silence.

In a low tone Yakoub addressed King:

"The black Christians. He must mean Abyssinia. And the Hidden People—that must be the strip of unclaimed territory along the Sudan-Abyssinian border that we hear about. But what is this amulet thing? Have you ever heard any so queer story?"

King shrugged first a dubious negative and then nodded in slow reminiscence, reluctant to break the spell of hidden romance that had settled on them. He whispered only to Yakoub:

"Something once long ago; a fairy tale that might connect. But the place sounds like where I figured it would be. Those rivers must rise somewhere in that mountain country."

Suddenly the wizard spoke out of his muffling robe:

"Blood is on the trail of bwana. Much blood."

"So said Barounggo," murmured King. "Tell me of that blood, wise one. What do you see for me?"

The wizard remained hunched under his blanket and moaned. His voice came painfully:

"I see only blood. White men will die." He twisted his body and appeared to strain himself to effort; then he relaxed. "But my snake does not show me the faces of those men. Many black men will also die. There will be much blood."

He relapsed into stertorous breathing. King muttered to Yakoub:

"Cheerful, isn't he?" Then his teeth set hard and his jaw stuck out at an ugly angle and he grunted, "Well, if one of them is going to be me, there's going to be others too."

The wizard spoke again:

"Let bwana now go and let him send his men to me. Because bwana is my friend of old I will make a magic for those men that their hearts may not melt in that blood—the strong magic of the lion dance. Let bwana go and send his men to me."

King knew that this was dismissal; and he knew better than to try to stay and witness the spellbinding that the wizard would make over his men.

"This is a great thing that you do for me, wise one," he said in genuine appreciation; for he knew that such a

witchcraft would be infinitely more efficacious than any exhortation or leadership or promise of reward. "Wise one, I go. But make speed with the magic; for there is great need."

ANOTHER two days passed. No cloud of dust followed behind. But King was by no means satisfied. It didn't mean a thing, he grumbled. Van Vliet was nobody's fool; he was just hanging back a bit; he wasn't so easily scared off. And the old wizard with his gloomy talk about blood. . . King didn't believe any of this pretense at prophecy—or, at least, he said he didn't. But this was Africa. He had seen things and had heard things that required a lot better explaining away than just laughing them off as native hokum.

King shrugged savagely at his own gloominess. He could positively feel that something was about to happen after listening to that old man. But there to the left was the trail to Karamojo, and in his pocket the sealed letter which had become such an incubus. He told Yakoub to supervise the making of the *boma* and chose himself a flat rock where, with an expression of martyrdom, he sat down to break the seal.

And in that same place and position Yakoub found him when he came an hour later to call King into the finished *boma* for supper. King sat very still, gazing into distant nothingness through the dusk haze, whistling, as was his habit, thin disharmonies through his teeth.

Yakoub knew that sign. His face lost its customary expression of genial cynicism and he came quickly closer.

"Trouble?" he asked.

"Plenty," was King's answer.

"Well—" Yakoub shrugged—"fifty per cent of a partnership is for the purpose of sharing the profits; the other fifty is for sharing the worries. Tell me this so unpleasing secret."

King grinned wryly up at him.

"Yakoub, old friend, I'll tell you a truth that we both know; and we've both been so cocksure of our smartness that we've forgotten it. Listen to it again: There are no secrets in Africa!"

"You mean—our business? It is the same? This Mr. Smythe knows too?"

King nodded.

"All I wonder is how he got on to it. Gosh, I thought I had stumbled on to something new. I thought that this was really a dark one. Consider it again and tell me if I was a fool.

"I came out of Beni Shangul in Abyssinia—and that's full of gold; only old Shogh Ali won't let anybody work it without an army. I worked south amongst a lot of crawling little Atbara tributaries that haven't even got names. I fished a man half dead out of a mountain stream and, stripping him for first aid, I found those little ingots. And all hell and a bluff at torture wouldn't scare a peep out of him about who or where or what. And he had the guts to laugh when my bluff fell through.

"I tried to prospect it up. But that river ended in a hole in the ground; subterranean from somewhere higher up. I tried other streams; but the mountains were fierce, just about perpendicular. And where they fell away into the plain miles away west there was peat bog, morass and, lower down, swamp in the flat, empty desert, just like the witch doctor said. Hellish country. So I pretty near died getting across to the White Nile at Mongalla and I figured there must be a way in from the south."

"My friend," said Yakoub with serious conviction, "I will tell you this about gold. You were not overconfident; you had every right to think this was a new thing. But gold is a queer material. It is devilish and magnetic—but only in large quantities. A few gold pieces can not talk to one another. But where a man has a large accumulation of gold, other gold tells it telepathically: 'Look, I am here, in such and such a place.' But usually the message comes only to my people. What right has this Mr. Smythe to know?"

King was able to muster a crooked laugh at this queer whimsy that had so much of cynical truth in it.

"Well, he knows all right. Only he doesn't know any more than general location; no more than I did till the old wizard gave us the straight dope."

The Jew quickly reviewed this new

angle from his viewpoint of a business man. He grimaced sourly.

"I will tell you this also about gold, my Kingi. When you have none of it, a very little of it makes you its slave. You have taken this Mr. Smythe's money, five hundred paltry pounds of it, and now you are tied with a chain. But—" his alert mind considered the thing from the viewpoint of business; and, like the financier, he quoted the inexorable law of business—"after all, we can not develop our finds without capital; and if this Mr. Smythe has felt that the thing is so great, there will be enough money for us not to worry.

"Only this time, my simple friend, you will let *me* talk to the capital. You are a child, I think I must have told you, in matters of business. From now on I, who am your partner, look after your negotiations. You have nothing to worry; I will yet make you rich in spite of your foolishness. Your Mr. Financier Smythe knows no more than general location, hunh? Very well, we have a starting place from which to begin the discussion that we shall have, this Mr. Smythe the financier and Yakoub the Jew."

King got up from his dejected position and stretched his big shoulders till the sinews cracked.

"Friend Yakoub," he replied wholeheartedly, "you take a load off my chest. Let you do the negotiating and me do the easy work of just getting there. That's a good partnership. Let's go eat."

AN HOUR passed. The meal had been finished, the pipes lighted, and King laughed in carefree enjoyment of nothing at all. The night was warm; the food had been sufficient. They had reached the water hole before the evening-drinking game had polluted it. It had been a good day. King leaned his head back in his folded hands, stretched his legs to the top of a pile of duffle and blew smoke rings.

Behind in the shadows, their masters having eaten, the natives chattered over their *potio* of parched corn and fresh antelope meat and with African carelessness stole dry thorn sticks out of the *boma* for their crackling fire, leaving gaps that a leopard could easily crawl through. Everybody was contented.

Suddenly came the Hottentot's voice:

"Bwana! Men approach!"

King dropped his feet from the duffle pile and reached for his rifle which always stood ready to hand against the tent pole. But these men had approached very carefully indeed; and they knew how to approach—as they had to know—very thoroughly, taking the risk of the outside darkness.

"Just as you were, Yank. Take it easy and make no mistake."

Van Vliet stood framed in the opening of the *boma,* watching over his rifle. He had timed his arrival exactly, counting on the general relaxation after dinner and knowing that the last thorn bush would not be dragged into the *boma* gate until bedtime.

The man Johan and Dago Lopez sidled in past him. They were well rehearsed. Johan helped to cover the party with his rifle, and Lopez stepped forward and removed King's rifle out of reach. Then with business-like deliberation he searched both white men for guns.

"Alla right," he reported.

King had no inkling as to what might be the move. So he put a match to his pipe and waited.

Van Vliet came forward.

"We're goin' to talk, Yank," he said with a determination which showed he understood to the full that any talk between them would have to be forced.

King was uninterestedly resigned.

"Well, since you insist on being social, I'm listening. But why all the armed escort?"

Van Vliet grinned at him in enjoyment.

"I know you, don't I? All East Africa knows that your business is *your* business. An' d'you think I didn't spot those two klipspringer that winded you an' acted up that way? I sent a man over immediate, an' he picked up your trail exact where you'd been watchin' us."

"Oh, pshaw!" King laughed as if caught out in a game.

He put his feet up on the duffle pile before him and put another match to

his pipe.

"I'll hand it to you, Van. I'd hoped you wouldn't notice them, or that you'd put it down to hyenas or something. But I might have known you'd be taking no chances. I always told Yakoub you were nobody's fool. What's on your mind?"

Van Vliet nodded in acknowledgment of what he knew to be his own worth.

"We're goin' to talk, Yank. An' you're jolly well goin' to listen."

"All right," said King, as if it were he who condescended. "Make it snappy 'cause I don't like your friends."

"Damn your hide—" Johan lurched forward.

At the same time a sharp hiss of intaken breath came from Lopez. But Van Vliet's growl stopped both of them short.

"Easy there, you two. I'm runnin' this. An' you, Yank, you're not winnin' anythin' with insults. We haven't come for trouble; we want to arrange this thing nice an' friendly. So you just sit tight an' listen."

"I'm always friendly on the front side of a rifle," said King, blowing huge puffs of smoke into the night and watching all three men warily from behind its screen. "Go ahead and say your piece."

Except for Van Vliet's careful watchfulness, the scene might have been a friendly visit of passing safaris. King at ease in a canvas chair tilted back, throat, nostrils, and cheekbones thrown into yellow relief by the lamp. Yakoub in another chair, passive, humped up like a brooding bird, only his bright black eyes taking in every move. Across the table in the paler outer circle of light, three men framed against the warm velvet blackness.

Only one unusual thing indicated tension. Just as insect noises, warned by a mysterious telepathy, fall silent when there is a jungle killing, the chatter of the natives out of the dark behind the tents had ceased.

Van Vliet put his proposition with commendable brevity.

"Fightin' won't pay any of us. We make you an offer to join up with your outfit an' split even."

"Split what?"

"Ah-h-rgh!" Van Vliet's patience did not hold out well. "We know what you're out for. An' you know I'm workin' for the DeWet company."

"Yeah, I know." King was exasperatingly supercilious. He knew that in any argument the one who lost temper first lost opportunity with it. "But what interest have the DeWet people with us? They hired you and your two gangsters to peddle gin to the natives."

"Damn you, Yank! Easy there, you two. I'm boss here. Come off actin' innocent, you. I tell you we *know*. DeWets have been watchin' your boss, Ham Smythe, for weeks. Their London agents have reported every time he breathed an' batted an eye. They've been in this game long enough to know when somethin's movin' on the quiet."

King suddenly threw himself back in his camp chair and astounded everybody by shouting with laughter.

"DeWets! Oh, of course, the DeWet crowd would know. Do you hear that, Yakoub? DeWets have been watching him for weeks. Ho-ho-ho! He thought he had a secret—a secret in Africa, the poor fool. Land sakes, this is funny. And we thought you were interested in us; Yakoub and Kingi together. This is good for our conceit. So DeWet sniffed a rat in all the elaborate precaution and put a watch on Smythe. Ha-ha-ha, what a secret!"

And at that Yakoub, too, saw the irony of the situation and he crowed aloud with acrid laughter.

VAN VLIET regarded them both with dubious anger. Here was something that he did not understand, and the tension was beginning to wear on his nerves. Even more so on the others.

"Aw, he's makin' a monkey outer you," snarled Johan.

Lopez shifted suddenly like a black leopard in the dim outer fringe of the lamplight. His hand stole down to his boot top.

"What the hell you got to laugh at?" growled Van Vliet.

"Ho-ho," King chuckled exasperatingly. "The joke, my dear Van—but I know you won't believe it—the joke is that Yakoub and I started out on this trip on a deal of our own. We've only

just learned that Ham Smythe is in on it."

Van Vliet stood angrily suspicious. He could see no joke in that situation without understanding a great deal more about it. But Dago Lopez was quicker to attribute a foul explanation.

"Ha, you don' work for heem no more. You don' foola me. You double-cross heem an' you go for yourself."

"Why, you filthy—" King pushed his chair away and rose to his feet. It was an interpretation that had never entered his mind as possible, and the insidious foulness of it enraged him.

"Easy there!" Van Vliet's rifle pointed squarely at his chest. "An' you drop that, Lopez. I told you there'd be no knife play, you fool."

Lopez glowered till Van Vliet's will dominated him. Then he shrugged and his teeth glinted white out of the darkness. He offered the olive branch to King on a basis of give and take among equals.

"Alla right. Then we onderstan' one the other. We doublacross DeWets an' we go weeth you. So we alla mek planty moch more. Hunh, Van? Joost lika we talk before. Ees good."

King was master of his indignation again. He was very deliberate. His move had brought him closer to his rifle. His words were chosen and distinct.

"Well, I'll tell you, Van Vliet, I might make a dicker with you—if I was drunk or doped. I'm not proud. I'm not ashamed of anything that creeps or crawls or stinks. But your partner, Lopez, there—"

"*Morte de Deus!*" Lopez screamed in ungovernable rage at the sudden twist of insult. The light glinted on a venomous arc as his hand flung back over his shoulder.

"Drop it!" shouted Van Vliet.

The agony of apprehension in his voice was astonishing. He jumped blindly for Lopez. But he was too late. Lopez's arm was already in the swing of his throw.

"*Sszee!*" shouted the voice of Barounggo the Masai from the farther darkness.

A thin shaft of yellow light swished past King's shoulder. Lopez's arm twisted spasmodically in its down swing; his knife spun high, turning glittering somersaults in the air and fell somewhere out of the light circle.

In that instant of confusion King made one enormous bound and snatched his rifle; and when in the next instant Van Vliet and Johan recovered their wits King had them covered.

"Ve-ery careful, you two," he warned them. "In this bad light I'm apt to be jumpy. Take their guns, Yakoub. So. Now you can look to Lopez, you two."

Lopez's dim form was writhing in the shadow. He was snarling in furious pain and rage.

"There was no order to slay," said the voice of Barounggo, "so I but transfixed his arm. *Hau*, it was a good cast. A good spear, a light spear; swift as the snake of the night—"

His voice began to break into a rhythmic chant.

"Shut up," snapped King. "Still, it was well done. Guard now those two white men. Here, Kaffa, bring the light and let's see how much damage was done to his arm."

Lopez was sitting up, gritting his teeth, his arm awkwardly stiff with a thin shaft protruding from his biceps, the narrow blade ten inches through on the other side.

"Hm, a nice clean hole," commented King coldly. "Better than you deserve. A knife, Kaffa." He ripped the shirt sleeve.

"Now clench your teeth, Dago. This is going to hurt you more than it does me."

With a quick jerk he pulled the blade clear. Lopez yelped once. Then King said calmly—

"Water, Kaffa."

The Hottentot was well experienced in the requirements of camp surgery; already he was there with a bowl and the iodine bottle and bandage.

The little operation was completed with methodical dispatch. Lopez stood sullenly muttering and holding his arm. King motioned him over to join the other two. Then very carefully and meticulously he lighted his pipe, making time to think. A half minute was sufficient.

HE TURNED to the three prisoners. He knew exactly what to do. His eyes smiling narrowly over the lantern were belied by the hard, incisive voice:

"The other way round again, eh? Now I'll tell you three crooks what you'll do. You knew enough to come here after dark. So you'll know enough to go. But I'm holding your guns—no sniping out of the night— No, don't yelp yet. I know well enough that taking a white man's gun from him in the African bush is murdering him.

"You'll find them in this place tomorrow, if nothing eats you up tonight. But that's your funeral that you brought on yourselves. My advice is that you climb a tree right quick—a good thorny one—and I hope to holy Pete it hurts you plenty. Or you can make a thorn *boma,* and that's another sweet job by firelight. Got matches? All right. Git."

He motioned with his rifle. The three men, looking at that thin smile shadowed in hard hewn lines by the lamp, knew that King would not relent, although they were receiving a vastly more generous deal than they would have given. But Van Vliet was a man not often thwarted. He held too hard a grip upon himself to fly into any sort of ungovernable rage; but there was cold venom in his voice as he pointed his last threat at King:

"It's you or me, Yank, from now on, and so I'm tellin' you. You can't leave me out of this deal, whatever it pans out. An' I'm not talking partners any more. You've had your chance. There's just one of us two is goin' to win."

The man was courageous enough, standing there covered by the rifle of the man whom he threatened. But he knew King as well as King knew him. He was perfectly assured that that rifle would not go off unless he were to make a direct physical attack. And he knew King much too well to make any such attempt as that.

King's face in the flickering lamplight was a mask of hard corners and thin slits. A bitterness soured the set grin; a bitterness caused by the knowledge of his own inhibitions which prevented him from removing with one clean shot what he knew to be a menace of treachery and trouble and bloodshed.

"All right, old-timer. You or me. There'll be a whole lot of people, black and white, a whole lot better off when you're through. And that goes for Dago Lopez and your gunman too. And let me tell you this again like I told you before: Yakoub and I, we're going on our deal alone. Now skip. Footsack. And I hope the lions get you before I do."

Sullenly the three men went from the *boma.* Their footsteps sounded awhile. Then the night swallowed them.

King was full of an exhilaration that was extraordinary in the face of a threat of death left by a man whom he knew to be infinitely cunning and dangerous and whose capabilities he was grudgingly forced to admit. He bustled about the final preparations for the night and his voice glowed with an astonishing satisfaction.

"All right. Get a move on there, everybody. Get that thorn tree pulled into the opening there. See that it's good and high. All fast for the night. Barounggo, let two men watch together by turns."

Yakoub stood thoughtful, troubled, while King went about, whistling in the greatest good humor, attending to the last little precautions and inspections for night in an open *boma.*

The muffled clatter of the delayed tin plates of supper died down. Uncouth yawning noises came from the natives behind the tents. The snap and crackle of sticks added to the all-night fire. A soft clapping of hands and a rhythmic stamp of feet betokened the Masai getting ready to chant the delayed song of his deed before his troop:

"*Hau,* it was a good cast.
A fair cast, a clean cast.
In the dark stood that one.
Where is he?
Ow, he is gone.
A light spear, a swift spear.
Whence did it come?
Out of the dark it flew.
True and straight.
As a snake it stung."

King knew that that would go on for an hour. All the details, all the action, even the impelling thought, would be given poetic expansion. He

grunted to himself.

"Probably keep us all awake. But he deserves it. It was good."

Yakoub still stood thoughtful and troubled. King in his high spirits rallied him on his depression.

"I'm afraid," said Yakoub, "that those are three poisonous snakes allowed to go loose. Yet what could one do?"

"They are," said King cheerfully. "And one can't do a thing. That's a rule of the outer places. The poor fool who has inhibitions always loses out against the other fellow who has none. We can't cut their throats, but they'd cut ours the first minute it suited them; and that's all to their advantage. But do you know what advantage we have gained out of this night?"

Yakoub shook his head dolefully.

"I see no advantage that makes you so cheerful. Only that your religion of the square deal applies to three clever and quite unprincipled enemies."

King laughed happily.

"Not so, my mournful friend. Consider. Twice now Van Vliet has interfered to save me from harm; both times to save my life. Is it because he loves me do you think? Or is it—tell me if I'm not right—is it because he doesn't have any hint of where this gold is. The DeWet people who hired him knew only that Smythe was on to some big secret. So they hired a hard, bad gang who knew safari work to follow whoever Smythe might hire, to wipe them out of competition and steal the secret. So that's all to our advantage."

"I see," said Yakoub. "Our advantage is that we are followed by three ruffians who have no inhibitions and who have come prepared to steal the secret at any cost."

But King's cheerfulness was proof against misgivings.

"Not so, my doleful Yakoub. Our advantage is that none of them—not the three hard guys nor Smythe nor the DeWet company—know anything about the location of that secret. Only we. And that's a real secret this time. And that is to our very great advantage. You said yourself that we'd outwit them, or we'd have to—" King's face made three hard horizontal lines—"outfight them."

WITH the morning not a sign was to be seen of the night's visitors. Kaffa the Hottentot was already up and had made a circle of stones and oddments of lion claw ornaments and bits of skin that he had taken from the Shenzies. Inside of it he danced and genuflected and chattered with an intense solemnity.

"What, can you tell me, is that completely mad devil doing?" Yakoub asked of King.

But this was a new manifestation of his servant's many queernesses, even to King.

The Hottentot finished his incantation and stepped out of his witches' circle.

"I make invocation to Atto Happa, who in my country is the lord of all lions and leopards and beasts that slay," he explained.

"And what for?" King wanted to know.

"But that is plain, bwana," the Hottentot told him. "Surely in order that the beasts, if they have not already slain those three, may yet do so before the sun becomes too hot for hunting."

"H'm, I hope your Atto Happa delivers the goods," King grunted. "It would surely save a heap of trouble for a lot of people. Did you hide the rifles as I told you?"

The Hottentot screwed up his shoulders and leered like a distorted black gnome.

"Assuredly, bwana, did I hide them. First having stuffed all oily places with sand, I shoved them down an ant-bear hole as far as Barounggo's spear would reach. A father of the mission told me that the gods help men who help themselves; and thus have I done my share toward earning the favor of Atto Happa."

King considered the matter, frowning.

"Pretty drastic," he muttered. "But Van Vliet won't overlook anything so likely as an ant-bear hole. I only hope there are plenty of them and that he'll dig them all before he comes to the right one. It'll win time for us; and time is what we'll need if we're going to shake him."

KING scoured the horizon for dust as the days passed. Dust there was, lots of it, rising slowly behind or eddying away to one side. But it was intermittent and traveled this way and that in slow, low-hanging drifts or in tumultuous spurts—animals grazing peacefully upwind or dashing in wild stampedes as some taint in the air alarmed them.

Dust there was, too, before them; once a quite heavy cloud. King inspected it anxiously through the glass; they were getting beyond the confines of the Toposa tribes where the natives were, as the witch doctor had said, strong and war-like.

"Wildebeeste," King announced with relief. "I can see the tick birds. Probably zebra with them. It'll be good trail smudge."

He hurried the little safari along on a long slant to get in front of that grazing herd, and for half a day he held that position, letting the countless hoofs obliterate all other tracks.

Twice he was able to do that. In spite of grumbling among the porters he insisted upon making the nightly *bomas* far from water holes, carrying the minimum supply requisite for camp. Cooking fires were screened. No smoke was made by day.

These were days of hard and uncomfortable going. Not for a moment did King relax vigilance or permit himself to underestimate the ability and the persistence of the man who followed. But Yakoub, observing all these precautions that seemed to him sufficient to baffle a bloodhound, found it in himself to be more optimistic. The farther they went, the nearer must be their goal. To him it was irresistible to speculate upon that mysterious country of the Hidden People.

Who might they be? Why did the witch doctor so darkly insist that it was a pity that anybody should know about them?

King, with a certain hardness in his voice, was able to elucidate.

"Huh, that's an easy one. There's never been a savage race in the history of the world which hasn't claimed it was better off before the white man came. Which I'm not defending one way or the other. But that crowd behind us with twenty cases of trade gin is a pretty big argument."

The Jew, with his keen mind trained to balance the hazy profits of future prospects, could no more refrain from the fascinating game of computing from the eagerness of others the possibilities of vast fortune lying waiting for them, than could King from computing, by the movements of birds and game, the location and distance of the next water hole.

But King's guessing was concluded with each successive evening. Yakoub's was interminable. That mysterious amulet which would tear at one's heart strings—what could that queer thing be? What could so rend a heart because it could not be taken away, but some wonderful jewel? Surely a jewel. Sacred, of course, and its origin wrapped in legend and folk lore. That, too, would be fascinating. Yakoub had a hereditary veneration of ancient tradition.

And about doing the thing that was right—what could the old wizard have meant by that? What mysterious power could an amulet, however ancient, have to make practical men of the modern world—a Jew trader and a Yankee adventurer—do some enigmatic right thing?

Again King was able to elucidate. A little self-consciously he explained—

"That's really one of the biggest compliments I've ever had handed to me; and it's a direct intimation that the old principle of the square deal sometimes pays a dividend."

The Jew's eyebrows made an inquiry; his two hands were busy attending to the rifle that he had learned from King's example to carry himself. King elaborated on the details of his African diplomacy.

"The old witch doctor of Elgon earns his name of wise one. He knows that the square deal as the white man, or as the white man's well meaning government, may see it is not always the way the African sees it. My pull with him is that I've often consulted him about the queer native angle. So he didn't attempt to hold me up on information, but said that he'd lie to any other white man, only he'd tell me because he knew

I'd do the right thing for those people; and, putting it that way, don't you see, the wise old bird knew he'd have me tied up under an obligation."

Yakoub nodded. He trudged a long distance, nodding in silence. At last he said, as if musing in understanding, oblivious of King's presence:

"Yes, it is so. We too, we know it. A few governments have from time to time tried to do the square deal for my people; but, alas, it has not been as we have seen it."

Those were exciting days, days—since all things are relative—of good going.

A pale purple haze began to show across the horizon to the northeast. King inspected it at long range with interest. Yakoub was immediately full of excitement; but King only shrugged with exasperating apathy.

"May be only mirage. We'll know more by tonight's camp."

With that night's camp the haze was no nearer. It remained a pale discoloration in the immeasurable distance. King got out his maps and, after a brief survey, announced:

"Yep, that's our mountain of wealth all right; look, there's nothing at all marked on the map, and I see that there's swamp country away to the left of the haze."

This was all quite enigmatic; for the map was truly a blank, marked across a large expanse in thin, wide spaced type. The haze was no more than a smudge of pale color, and as far as the eye could see to the west was nothing but parched brown grass and patches of mimosa scrub. Yakoub's shaggy eyebrows and his shoulders together put the question.

King pointed again, high up to the evening sky.

"Water birds going home to roost; look like ibis or spoonbills. And see, here's the Abyssinian plateau marked all along the East. The thing that isn't marked must be some sort of unexpected outcrop. That'll be the 'unclaimed territory' that so exercises the diplomats up in Adis Abbeba; and there will be our Hidden People. That'll put some extra pep into all our shoeleather, eh?"

KING grunted with disgust as a tall, nude figure stood suddenly in hard silhouette against the sky over a low rise. He had hoped—almost—to get through to the now visible goal without running into any of these people to whom the old wizard had given the reputation of being evil and war-like.

He knew better than to display any sign of hesitation. Ostentatiously he lighted his pipe.

"There'll be more somewhere," he muttered to Yakoub. "Probably lying down in the grass. This one is only to distract our attention; he's too durned unsuspicious looking without even a spear in hand. Hold your ten men here, Barounggo. I'm going ahead to make *indaba*."

Barounggo, his nostrils wide and twitching, eyes rolling white, head bent forward eagerly, dared to demur.

"They will not run, bwana. It is not fitting that a white lord speak with naked savages through his own mouth."

King nodded and signed to Kaffa to stay back. With the Masai he went forward. The tall, nude figure saw no more than a pitifully small safari of two white men with a couple of servants and ten porters. Therefore, as King approached, a score of spearmen sprang from the grass and stood barring the way, looking quite pleased with themselves over their unintelligent trick.

All of them were tall and quite naked. Straight limbs and mops of hair marked them as a tribe distinct from the pot-bellied and broad nosed Nilotic peoples. More of a Sudanese type, these. The Sudanese had ever been aggressive and troublesome. In itself their move was not hostile; but King knew well enough that natives so unafraid as to stop a white man meant no mere peaceable conversation.

With no people more than with Africans does "front" carry so much weight. King spent a deliberate minute looking them over; then he greeted—

"*Jambo.*"

Barounggo took the word from his mouth and relayed it.

"The *bwana sana* says *jambo* to you naked people."

A hesitant chorus of "*jambo*" came

from the group.

"Tell them," said King, "that we desire to pass through this land."

The Masai relayed, not as asking a favor but as stating a fact. The men laughed. One of them, distinguished by an ivory ring above his left elbow, said boldly:

"The men of the village of Nabu of the Orugniro people own this land. They do not let strangers pass."

So there it was at last. Unfriendly and boldly unequivocal. King was torn between the two policies of front and the square deal. His ingrained principle won.

"Tell them I will give a gift for the meat we take in passing through the land. But we pass."

Barounggo passed on the word in his own way.

"Listen, naked monkeys of the grass. It is I, an Elmoran of the Masai, who speak. We give a gift, a small gift, to show that we make no war in passing through your empty land."

Throughout all East Africa the name of the Masai was synonymous with ferocity and slaughter. The Elmorani, the trained lion slayers, especially, were known as a super-fighting breed. And Barounggo, as he stood and offered his lordly insult, enormous, threatening, hair garters and ostrich plume flying in the wind, great spear flashing in the sun, looked fiercely belligerent enough to give anybody pause. The bold front was not without its effect. But the Masai was only one, and they twenty. The Nabu village headman, as he seemed to be, muttered with his fellows. Then insolently he compromised.

"The strangers' safari may pass. But the gift that we take will be a proper gift."

King did not like the word take. He nodded to Barounggo but said nothing. Barounggo flung up his hand as a signal to the waiting porters and said no word. The headman of Nabu village of the Orugniro people instantly accepted their silence for weakness, to which his African response was immediate belligerence.

"We will take," he enumerated, "for each man a piece of cloth to divide among his women, and for each man a gourd of salt and an iron cup to drink *pombe* spirit and five spearheads." And as King stood marveling at the man's rapacious insolence he added to the list, "And for each an iron spoon and his own length in red wire and—"

He hesitated for sheer lack of other things to imagine. What he had listed was already half a safari load. King put an abrupt end to his vain hopes by saying:

"So? Then we go through without any gift."

He stepped resolutely forward. The Nabu men yelped rage at their sudden disillusionment. Barounggo whistled a shrill siren note through his teeth. The Nabu headman shouted his fury and flung his arms around King, as being the less dangerous looking of the two, to hold him.

King hesitated not an instant. For all his principle of the square deal and his acceptance of the white man's burden theory, he knew that no white man could submit to manhandling by a native and continue to live in Africa. He jerked his right arm free—his left clung to his rifle—and hit his assailant with all the force of a short jolt full in the face.

The man dropped, half stunned. Blood in frightening quantity gushed from his smashed nose. Barounggo shouted his throaty fighting roar and whirled up his spear.

King swung his rifle to cover the rest of the men.

To the black man, trained to the idea of fighting only with weapons, there is always something awe-inspiring about the white man's unarmed fist; the force of a blow that can knock a man down and cover him with blood conveys suggestion of superhuman strength.

The Nabu men bunched together, startled, gaping at the one who howled on the ground. Some lifted their spears. The Masai's great weapon was already poised at ear level, full arm length, quivering, eager to hurl itself forward. They knew spearmen, these people. It was certain that the first man who moved would go down with that terrible blade sticking out a foot through his back.

They hesitated—just long enough.

AT THE Masai's first signal the ten porters had dropped their loads and had quickly unrolled a long bundle of canvas. At his whistle they rushed forward, each man with shield and spear, shouting his best imitation of the Masai *sghee sszee*. Closer, they made an irregular half circle, crouching, dancing in on high-stepping toes, like the Elmorani lion killers. Behind them screamed the Hottentot, hurling abuse, and Yakoub with nervous rifle.

The defenseless little safari had suddenly transformed itself into a war party of armed *askaris*. The Nabu men stood inactive. One by one their raised spears sank. The stricken leader mumbled inarticulate agony through his fingers while blood ran appallingly over his hands.

King slung his rifle over his shoulder and put a match slowly to his pipe.

"So," he said, "we pass. Tell them that the gift we give them is a proper gift. We give them their lives. They do not die. They may take this man who thought he was a warrior and may go to their village, swiftly."

Barounggo planted his spear in the ground and swelled his chest. A speech was necessary to convey this message with the proper measure of obloquy and insult.

Sullenly the Nabu men helped their headman to his feet and withdrew. The last sign of them was a silhouette, as before, of the leader on the skyline, a tall figure who shook his spear and screamed.

Sheer front had won again. The porter-*askaris* strutted and bragged to one another how each one in detail had held his spear, how he had shouted, how ferociously scowled. It had been their first test as fighting men and they were confident and jubilant.

To Barounggo King said:

"It was well done. Their drilling was good. They shall receive, each man, a blanket."

But to Yakoub:

"I don't like that. That spear waving and screaming over the hill isn't healthy. Let's get out of here as fast as we can move; and let's hope their village is far."

Yakoub was full of the exhilaration of victory over what had been a bad and dangerous obstacle. He had a cheering thought to offer.

"At all events, if those other white men—if we have not outwitted our murderous friends—when they come they will find an angry enemy holding the road behind us."

To which King repeated his pessimistic formula:

"I don't know. Van Vliet is nobody's fool. Come along there. Let's go. Trek!"

THE next two days were the hardest going that Yakoub had ever conceived in a bad dream. Or, for that matter, quite the worst that those luckless porters had known. King drove them mercilessly. There were no revivifying little rest periods under the shade of a spreading acacia; no comforting lounges at an easy pace while the bwana stalked meat.

Meals were a meatless menu of parched corn as many times a day as any hurrying individual felt inclined to stuff a handful of it into his mouth.

Travel continued till well into the night, King and Barounggo deploying ahead, more for the purpose of giving confidence than with any real hope of spotting any crouching beast. *Bomas*, when finally scratched together, remained fireless, men in couples sitting awake with orders to report to King instantly every scuffling, snuffling noise from without—which they did every ten minutes, or each time that an insect stirred.

When Yakoub was exhausted, King, who was tireless steel, and Barounggo, who was cast iron, took him on either side and marched him along, stirred to effort by the cheering fact that the purple haze was changing to a closer blue and the blue to a patchy brown and green.

The porters grumbled, as is the prerogative and inalienable right of African porters. What was the need for all this fearful running away? Were they not fighting men as well as porters? They had chased away the people of this country once; would they not do it

again? They could reason no further than that. This haste was without reason, they grumbled to one another. They required a rest; they were men, not cattle. They would rest, they exhorted each other. They would put their packs down and eat a meal. They would go no farther.

But they did none of these things. Kaffa the Hottentot, pattering in their rear, told them grim stories out of his imagination of the things that the Masai had done to other porters who had proven unworthy of their salt; and with infinite craft he added—

"But those were just Shenzi porters, not fighting men."

So the fighting men complained in bitter chorus, but they plodded on.

The patchy brown and green resolved itself into an enormous spur that jutted out from the main mountain wall and fell away in broad, steep terraces to the plain. There were no foothills; no gradual breaking up of the plain into hillocks and gullies that led to steeper hills beyond. Abrupt and solid the mass towered till the haze of its upper blue lost itself in the blue of the sky.

A wide ravine of gray terraces cut a gash into this formidable barrier and disappeared into black shadows high above. To the far right was the haze of the Abyssinian plateau. To the left the level plain that stretched on in the direction where the water birds flew.

"Looks like our road to the promised land all laid out sweet and pretty for us," said King. "Once we get well into that gully I'll feel better. It's a safe rule that plains people won't go into the mountains at night."

So camp was made that night on a broad terrace where a little trickle of water flowed from the rock and was a nectar that could be appreciated only by people who had strained out through a cloth the countless crawling things of turbid water holes that thirsty game herds had never permitted to settle and clear up since the beginning of all time.

The great ravine continued interminably up the mountain flank, alternately easy and difficult going, as one scrambled up the rise of the ragged limestone terraces or walked along the flat. Green bushes began to appear in clumps in gladsome relief from the dusty thorn scrub of the plain. Euphorbia trees and wild figs, of course, meant monkeys.

A cooler air current began to drift down. Ferns clustered in moist places; presently orchids. Brilliant butterflies and startlingly brilliant birds flashed amid the greenery—all the joyous, teeming life of mountain country rising out of a burnt-up tropical plain.

To offset the country that improved so cheerfully with each hour, the going grew frightfully worse with each step. The sides of the ravine began to pinch in—craggy walls of sliding shale. The ascent was laborious—not scrambling any more, but climbing. Each V-shaped gash on the skyline, promising relief from high above, led only to more craggy ridges and other V-shaped gashes.

"How much farther?" Yakoub panted. "Hours, will it be; or perhaps days? Does this lead some day to some place, or does it go on into the heart of a lost forever? If your little ingots did not promise so much in our promised land, I would just as soon die here."

King stopped to wipe the perspiration from his heavy pith hatband. The best that he could offer was:

"The main Abyssinian plateau is eight thousand feet up. This may be a part of it. Still, I'd say it was the road to nowhere, and I'd quit, except that the witch doctor told us. And look there! Evidently it was the road to someplace once upon a time."

Kaffa was behaving in a surprising manner. Like an inquisitive monkey he had been scrambling in the lead, poking into every hole and corner, turning over stones to flush shiny brown lizards, after which he darted with simian agility. These, split open and broiled on little sticks, were as great a delicacy to the Hottentot as are snails to a Frenchman.

Suddenly that impudent, godless little ape had thrown himself flat upon his face, knees doubled under him, head in the moist dirt, beating the ground with his hands and chattering a monosyllabic stream of prayer.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Double Squeeze

By STEPHEN ALLEN REYNOLDS

BIG Oscar was snoring in his bunk when I pulled off my mukluks and got ready for bed. A look at the dying fire, a vigorous puff down the lamp chimney, and I crawled in and drew the robes up under my chin. It was bitterly cold outside the cabin. All evening the wind had been rising, shortening the pink thread of alcohol in the thermometer, whisking the dry snow around and aloft, eventually powdering the northern shoulder of our long heap of frozen muck.

The back of the Alaskan Winter was broken; but even so the March wind was showing what it could do. Now it came howling down from the frozen tundra, to rush across the Yukon Flats slashed by an invisible Arctic circle, to sweep almost with a musical note up the timbered tributaries of the mighty river.

Such a tributary was Squaw Creek, a shallow and winding canyon remarkable only for the unequal distribution of its mineral wealth. In the path of the wind, between us and Whiskyville, lay a twelve-mile string of mostly deserted and roofless cabins. It was of this trail I fell to thinking as I waited for sleep to come. At its far end, on the left bank of the Yukon, were diversions for men tired of stoking boilers and driving perforated steam pipes into frozen clay, men tired of windlass twisting and bucket dumping—men with souls shriveled over the coals of solitude, their stomachs denied, their beings saturated with unwholesome but natural cravings.

Yes, even I, formerly a decent schoolteacher from a decent town in Indiana, looked forward to the moment when I could mush into Whiskyville and hook a foot over the brass rail of Meloche's Palace Bar. A shot or two of hootch, a whirl around the dance floor with the dark and fiery Sweet Pea Girl, and most likely I'd settle down to buck the arrow of fortune.

It was strange—that arrow of fortune! Nobody had beaten it yet, save for a few hours when a fellow might be a couple of hundred ahead. And yet the game was square; no question about that. It was Frank Meloche's custom, several times an evening, to lift the heavy arrow from its oiled and glistening spindle and hand it to one of the players standing in a semicircle before the layout.

"Examine it closely, gents," he'd say in his singsong voice, a smirk on his face. "You'll find no wires or gadgets; no tricks of any kind. Get your bets down. Put the arrow back on the spindle and twirl it yourselves. It's fair and square as love and war."

Invariably one of the players would reset the arrow and give it a spin. And invariably Frank Meloche's hands were both in full sight, toying with chips or twirling one of his valuable rings, while the circling arrow slowed, creeping toward the last, to come to rest over the winning number.

"Fair and square as love and war!" The crooning of Frank Meloche blended with the sough of the wind under the eaves, the rhythmic snore of my big partner. A nickel plated arrow spun around and around, never slowing, never stopping. I slept.

Even before I opened my eyes I sensed that Oscar was up and stirring around. There was a tempo to his quick steps that betokened the unusual; and when, with an effort, I roused myself to look about, it was to find that he had lighted the lamp and was taking our Winchester down from its pegs.

"What's up?" I asked, and scrambled out of my bunk.

"I dunno; I find out," the Swede answered.

As he manipulated the lever of the repeater I heard a loud and insistent scratching at the door. A sizable animal, I thought. The claws which raked the planking could belong to nothing short of a wolverene. A blast of cold air cut short my wondering, for Oscar had unbarred the door and opened it a bit. I caught up the heavy poker and joined him.

AT FIRST I could see little or nothing; but as my partner flung the door wide open and the snow whirled around my bare ankles, I perceived an enormous malamute harnessed to some bulky object dimly visible in the shadows. That he had been plunging along on an unbroken trail was evident from the loose snow which clung to his heaving sides.

"By golly!" Oscar exclaimed, and rushed outside.

This was the big Swede's strongest expression, but as he had left the rifle behind I knew there was no immediate menace to our lives or larder. So I flung a robe around me and stepped into my fur lined slippers. When I joined Oscar it was in time to give him a lift with the queer looking bundle we found draped across the handlebars of a small and practically empty sled.

It was a man—an undersized one. The hood of his parka had fallen back. His eyes were closed. And when we bore him inside the cabin and laid him where we could look him over, we found two crisp ears and a nose that loomed up white and grotesque above a stubble of reddish gray beard.

Up under the skirt of the cheap rabbitskin parka went Oscar's exploring fingers to a point above the heart. I waited for an assuring nod, then closed the door and looked to the fire.

"Not too hot," Oscar cautioned. "One foot got it pretty bad."

As the warmth increased and the temperature grew bearable we moved the guest into a cool corner. I made coffee and stripped the small sled of its meager roll of bedding. Mindful of the dog, I looked around for him, a frozen salmon in hand. Not a sign of him did I see, until in the faint light streaming through the cabin window I glimpsed what appeared to be two green parking lights. A leap, a hot breath on my wrist, and the savage animal wrenched the fish from my hand and bounded away with it.

Back in the cabin I found Oscar massaging the frozen foot and ankle of our patient. There was a flicker of life about the eyelids and nostrils of the sufferer; and while I was telling of the dog's manner of taking his supper, his master opened his eyes, then closed them wearily.

"I know dis feller," Oscar said suddenly. "I know him eight year ago in Dawson. I see him too in Eagle and Ruby. He's Tin Horn Brown—a one-dog bum."

The last words were spoken softly. But, judging by the contempt I read in them, not to mention a significant narrowing of the Swede's blue eyes, Tin Horn Brown was the sort of fellow scarcely worth saving.

He was a human being, however; so we nursed him that night and through several days and nights to follow. Had he been King of Sweden, Oscar could have done little more for him. His story, told to us while the sad music of the

north wind filtered in through the moss chinking, was told haltingly; and, after the manner of his kind, he glossed over his failings—his love of idleness and hootch.

The breaks of life, he claimed, had always been against him. He had no friends, no money, no clothes. He'd been short-cutting from the Tanana Hills to Whiskyville and had gone astray before he hit the headwaters of Squaw Creek. Soon the storm had set in, and for hour after hour he mushed along through the deepening snow. He had no recollection of crumpling over the handlebars of the sled, or of the arrival at our door.

He was glad he wasn't going to lose his foot or one of his ears. We were good guys. If he could land some kind of job in Whiskyville he'd pay us back. He'd even condescend to wash dishes.

"Just now," he complained, "I ain't got nothin' to pay you with, not even a white chip." His eyes, filling with the tears of self-pity, gazed beseechingly, first at Oscar, then at me.

Deep in his throat my partner murmured an unintelligible something, then turned away.

"You don't owe us a cent," I supplemented, uncomfortable myself despite Oscar's warning. For Tin Horn Brown was by no means young; and his physique, like mine when I first came to Alaska, left much to be desired.

Later, beyond earshot of our guest, Oscar gave me more particulars. Brown had once been a gambler in good standing, but liquor had got the best of him. When he couldn't be trusted even to occupy the lookout stool of a faro game and keep his eyes open, he'd been let out. He'd fallen, season by season, until at last he'd become a piker, a tin horn, a moocher of meals and drinks.

With his one-dog sled he was quite apt to show up in any town or camp between Fairbanks and Nome; in any mission or settlement between St. Michaels and Rampart.

"He don't steal, as I know of," Oscar wound up, "but he bane so lazy he wouldn't yump out of a warm bunk unless it catch afire."

After that first night Tin Horn gave us little trouble. It was about as easy to boil beans and coffee for three as it was for two; and immediately he was able to get up and stir around, Oscar insisted on his doing the dishes. This distasteful task may have had some bearing on his quitting our roof as quickly as he did.

Brown came to us, unconscious in the storm. He left us on a sunny and windless morning, smiling and with a full belly, two extra pairs of stockings stuffed into the new mukluks the Swede had given him. It was a nippy day. The trail was hard and firm and the big wolf dog had easy going from the start. Fainter and fainter the thin squeal of the sled runners came to us until, on the little rise marked by the deserted and roofless cabin of "8 Below," the one-dog bum pulled up briefly and waved an arm.

For a few moments my partner and I stood looking at each other. I felt like scolding Oscar for giving away footgear he really needed himself. He, I daresay, felt like scolding me for replacing Tin Horn's inadequate rabbitskin parka with a fairly decent garment of fawn.

We were both fools, perhaps, for contributing to the existence of such a parasite. But before we could exchange words on the subject, the banging and clattering of our steam line warned us that pressure was mounting in the boiler and that it was time to turn to. A shrug of his mighty shoulders, a faint grin, and the Swede turned away and made for the shaft ladder.

A few minutes passed, and from the horizontal drift beneath the false bedrock, the ring of steel on steel came up to me. Big Oscar was hammering the points into the frozen muck atop true bedrock. Presently would come the scrape of a shovel and the signal for me to start the windlass.

FAT MARY, a copper colored squaw, had been taught at one of the missions how to combine granulated sugar with the native cranberry; and, barring an occasional imprisoned mosquito, her product was good, particularly for hibernating miners threatened with scurvy. What is more to the point, the rubber-ringed quart glass jars, when emptied,

made ideal receptacles for dust and coarse gold.

Pending the warm months, when the water would run merrily down our sluice and do the work of an army of rockers or hand-panners, we had, by dint of much melting of ice and many hours of patient labor, washed some selected dirt and filled two of Mary's jars. This gold represented our fund for current expenses, the wherewithal to pay for monthly jollifications.

It must have been fully ten days after the departure of Tin Horn when we took one of the jars down from its shelf and weighed out and divided between us what we thought we could afford to blow in.

It was noon when we started. We visited along the way, picking up a mate here, another companion there, waiting for fires to be drawn and pokes to be filled, which accounts for the fact that Whiskyville's earliest lights were twinkling when, nine strong, we blew into the Palace and lined up at the bar. Two rounds of hootch, a raucous exchange of greetings with other patrons, and the gang separated for awhile. Some lingered to drink and chat; others had business over at the A. C. Company's warehouse. At least three of us had designs on Mrs. Mooney's T-Bone Restaurant across the way.

Mrs. Mooney had been out of beef for five months, as we well knew; but she could be depended upon for caribou steaks and wedges of open faced cranberry pie. We ate heartily and almost in silence until our red faced hostess joined us with the coffee. We had no need to ask for news of the town—of what had happened to Tin Horn Brown. Meals were a dollar at the T-Bone. News and gossip were gratis.

Directly after she had placed the thick cups before us the lady settled herself upon the rawhide lacings of a vacant stool.

"That Tin Horn Brown you gents looked after—he's workin' for Frank Meloche. He cleans up after business is over. Then he's night watchman till the day bartender comes on."

"Who watches Tin Horn while he cleans der bar?" Oscar asked over the rim of his cup.

Mrs. Mooney laughed, displaying in the process sundry bridges and crowns of gold.

"Meloche knows him well," she explained. "The hootch is all locked up before Tin Horn takes charge. He gets a snifter from the day man, if the place is clean."

"Maybe Meloche thinks he can wean him," I ventured.

We lighted two of her dried-out cigars; then Mrs. Mooney gave us another morsel of news.

"There's a new girl over at the Palace: Birdie Arlington. She's quite a singer. Meloche has fallen for her good and hard."

"What about Sweet Pea?" I put in, mindful of the percentage dancer who was thought to be Meloche's girl.

Mrs. Mooney's chin went up. Respectable widow that she was, it wasn't fitting that she should dwell at great length on the doings across the way.

"She's in the discard," she vouchsafed, and left us to attend to another customer.

We paid our score and picked our way across the icy ruts of what passed for a street. Yellow rectangles of light marked the grim façade of the Palace; and significant were the sounds which came floating from it. We heard the tinkle of glasses, the shuffle of feet, the undertone of human voices. As we entered the rambling structure of logs the mechanical piano began its nightly grind.

It was early, but Whiskyville in its renascence was an early town. Had it not been for the double bedrock found here and there along Squaw Creek, and for some dredging crews wintering just above, the once thriving camp would have been abandoned to wolf and owl. Men drank and gambled lightly, some dancing not at all; and in this stagnant season before the "coming of the water," they took their amusement in smaller doses and found their beds long before dawn.

A FEW men were at the bar, among them Scoop Nelson, fellow-countryman and friend of Oscar's since the era of dredges. Shoulder to shoulder the two big Scandinavians stood drinking and

reminiscing, while I turned to survey the prospects of a dance and a fling at the arrow.

Directly across from the rude bar Frank Meloche was twirling the big arrow and daring one of the onlookers to get a bet down.

"Come one, come all," he crooned monotonously. "The sky's the limit and you can spin the lucky arrow with your own hand."

A slim and sinewy fellow was Frank Meloche, middle aged, dark, with slicked-down hair. Beneath drooping lids his restless eyes moved here and there, taking in the players, the drinkers at the bar, the opening at his right. It was this opening that interested me just now, for through it I glimpsed three couples circling around to the metallic notes of the piano.

The music stopped. Then came the obligatory promenade to the bar. Apples, a dumpling of a girl, had Foolish Miller, a wood contractor, in tow. The Sweet Pea Girl came next. On the arm of Kid Whitehead, Lothario and dog puncher, she shot a poisonous look in the general direction of Meloche, then hooked a high heel over the footrail.

The blond stranger with one of our neighbors could be none other than Birdie Arlington, the singer. Youth rather than talent seemed to be the qual-quality which had appealed to Meloche, for her singing proved crude, her dancing clumsy.

They drank, the men paid; and, after the girls had taken their percentage checks, two of them looked around for fresh victims. I was a willing one; and to the mechanical rendering of "My Wild Irish Rose," the Sweet Pea Girl and I flew around and around. This was one of the moments I'd been waiting for, and yet I took but little delight in it; for my partner was listless and unresponsive. Fires of hatred and jealousy were apparently consuming her, seeming to have wilted the artificial blooms she wore in her dark hair and at her breast.

"You're not feeling so good," I ventured as we moved sluggishly over the well worn planks.

"I'm thinkin'," she said through set teeth, "thinkin' that a certain person imagines she's the Dawson Nightingale come back to life. She can't sing. She can't dance. What's she doin' here?"

"She's quite young," I teased.

The Sweet Pea Girl grew rigid in my arms.

"You said it," she pronounced grimly.

The dance ended, and I can't say I was sorry. We promenaded to the bar where, after the customary drink at my expense, she tossed down an extra one. Kid Whitehead was waiting for her, and together they strolled into the little dance hall and stood talking for some moments at the piano. Whatever their conversation could have been about, it must have been private and important; for, as I two-stepped near them with the heavy footed Arlington girl, I sensed that Sweet Pea was pleading earnestly for some particular favor.

I danced no more that night but stood idly at the bar for awhile, looking over the small crowd. Big Oscar and two cronies were playing seven-up at a table behind the stove. The crap layout was deserted. But the arrow of fortune was getting quite a little action. Fully a dozen players were grouped around it; and when the piano stopped I could hear the monotonous drone of Frank Meloche.

INITIALED chips of special design served for currency at the Palace. In the practical absence of banknotes, gold or silver coins, the purchase of a stack of chips obviated the necessity of weighing dust from a fellow's poke each time he danced or drank. Over at the A. C. gold fetched seventeen dollars an ounce. Meloche allowed but sixteen for it. With white chips representing a dollar each, the purchase of two stacks lightened my poke fully a half.

I turned from the bartender's scales and was approaching the group at the wheel when, for the first time since the morning he'd left us, I saw Tin Horn Brown.

I'd been wondering why he hadn't shown up, but had practically forgotten him until this moment. Abject in manner, much like a timid child begging a favor from a crusty schoolteacher, he drew near Meloche and mumbled some-

thing. His words were inaudible to me, but not so the gambler's reply.

"No," he snarled. "Not a drop till twelve."

Tin Horn's jaw sagged, then he swallowed hard and laid trembling fingers on Meloche's sleeve.

"Boss," he pleaded, "if you'll—"

It was as far as he got. A back handed blow from the gambler arrested his words. It was a slap rather than a punch, a sort of contemptuous dismissal which brought a laugh from some of those standing around. The incident was quickly forgotten, for the arrow was slowing and each of the players was intent on his bet. As for Tin Horn, he slouched off, a fleck of blood on his lip where one of Meloche's rings had cut him.

"Forty-four wins," the gambler announced as the arrow came to rest, its delicate and flexible point stopping between two of the circle of upright pegs. "The gent from downriver almost hit it," he added consolingly for the benefit of a wood contractor with a bet on 43.

There were fifty numbers on the circle swept by the nickel plated arrow, half of them red, half of them black. Corresponding numbers in color appeared on the betting layout beside the device, and on this I made my first wager—a single white chip.

I lost. Again and again I played and lost. I tried odd numbers; I tried even ones. I tried in turn both red and black. There being neither zero nor double zero on this device, I had what was apparently a fair break for even money. On a single number Meloche paid fifty for one. Often we of Squaw Creek and Whiskyville had wondered why a banking game of this kind could be run with no percentage in its favor; and now, as one of my two stacks diminished steadily, I thought of Meloche's stock explanation.

"It's human nature," I'd heard him say more than once, a faint grin on his face. "Most fellers guess wrong sixty times out of a hundred. A bankin' game never guesses."

I decided to stop guessing, to play black steadily—win or lose. Six times the arrow stopped on a red number, but on its seventh spin I won. Thereafter, but for a turn or two, my losing streak continued and my white chips went to elevate the stacks at Meloche's elbow. It was humiliating to win only four or five bets out of forty. But then came one consoling thought: Red has had its inning. The law of averages is inexorable and not to be influenced by mortal guessing. Black therefore must be in for a long run, and soon at that. I crossed to the bar, approached the end nearest the gold scales, and was fishing for my poke when I felt a stealthy tug at my sleeve. I turned. It was Tin Horn Brown.

"Don't play that arrow," he muttered in low, husky tones. "It's crooked."

THE warning puzzled me. For a few moments I stood wondering what Tin Horn's motive could be. I knew—the world knew—that the device was square. Times almost beyond number I'd seen the simply made arrow lifted from its spindle and passed around for any one to examine and spin himself if he chose. Meloche's hands were always in sight while the arrow turned. Electric or magnetic control was out of the question, for beneath the layout table all was open.

"Trying to work me for a drink?" I asked, nettled at what I thought an impertinence.

"Shh! Not so loud. Don't let Meloche see us talkin' together. Just you keep away from that game. You can't win a bet 'less Meloche wants you to. That spindle's got a squeeze on it."

Tin Horn's words came from lips which scarcely moved. His eyes were everywhere but on me as he spoke, and I began to sense that hatred of the man who had struck him was the motive for his warning.

I thought rapidly. What was a squeeze? I knew little or nothing about unfair gambling—indeed, gambling of any kind. But if it were true that Frank Meloche had been robbing me all these months along with these hard-working miners and dredgers and woodcutters—I stiffened at the thought, then controlled myself and leaned carelessly against the bar.

"Nothing for me just now," I told the

bartender as he came up.

He moved off. And just then the piano stopped and a noisy bunch drifted in on the promenade. My eyes sought Meloche. He glanced briefly up at the chatterers, then back at the spinning arrow. Evidently his thoughts were elsewhere than on Tin Horn and me.

"Wait five minutes," I breathed for Brown's ears alone. "Then slip across to the T-Bone where we can talk."

A slight nod of his gray head told me that I'd been understood. Unhurriedly I slipped into my parka and made my way across the street. I ordered coffee and, in a corner far removed from the door, waited for Brown.

He came shortly. Fortunately for my purpose, Mrs. Mooney had business in her kitchen and left us alone. Almost immediately after she'd fetched his coffee, Tin Horn began the opening of my eyes.

"I'm goin' to put you wise," he said, " 'cause the dirty rat hit me. You saw him swipe me across the mouth?"

I nodded. Tin Horn gulped, touched his cut lip, then swallowed hard again.

"For the first time in my life," he resumed, "I'm goin' to bust the Gamblers' Code. D'you know what that is?"

I shook my head.

" 'Never educate a sucker'," he quoted.

Patiently I awaited my education.

"Frank Meloche never dealt square in his life," Tin Horn went on after a look around the room. "His cards are all cut 'humps' or 'wedges'. His transparent dice are 'shapes'. The faro he dealt when there was real money in the country was out of a 'sand tell' box. I'm not sayin' I haven't sinned myself; but mostly I've been satisfied with the house percentage that wears the sucker down."

"About this spindle?" I prompted as Tin Horn paused for a sip of coffee.

"It's got a squeeze. Meloche can stop that arrow anywhere he likes."

My knitted brows must have attested my innocence, for Brown proceeded in plainer language to give me a mental image of the fraud.

"Where Meloche stands there's what appears to be a nail head stickin' up like some o' the other nail heads in the floor. This one is different though, 'cause it's connected with a lever that runs along under the floor to a point below the spindle. This lever's about three feet long. It's fixed so when that nail head goes down the sixteenth part of an inch, the other end moves up half an inch. That's enough. It does the trick, 'cause it's hooked to a rod that runs up through the center standard; and on the end o' that rod there's a wedge shaped plunger that fits inside the hollow spindle and squeezes it just a little apart when the nail head's stepped on. The arrow, movin' slow, feels the squeeze and stops."

I saw it all, now: the lever, the fulcrum, the simple principles involved. Meloche had but to wait until the arrow slowed to a crawl. Then, after its feather-like point had wiped along pegs where bets had been placed, an empty number would be reached, and down would go his foot.

No wonder he could pay fifty to one! No wonder he needed neither zero nor double zero, and that there was no limit!

The more I thought it over the madder I grew. Meloche was just an out and out robber. None of us had ever had a ghost of a chance when we bucked his game. And just to think of it: We suckers could spin our own arrows!

Humiliation dulled the edge of my anger, and in the midst of vivid recollections charged and surcharged with chagrin Tin Horn's voice came hollowly to me—

"You won't gimme away?"

I shook my head slowly. Relieved a bit, Tin Horn proceeded to give additional reasons for putting me wise to the squeeze. I had saved his life. I had fed him; had given him a fawnskin parka that I could have used myself. Effusive, loquacious, he rambled on and on.

I scarcely listened. Intent on the problem of how to make use of the information, I grew deaf and practically oblivious to what was going on around me. If I exposed Meloche publicly, ran through my mind, the boys would tear him apart. If I told him in private of what I'd discovered, he might refund what I'd lost through the months. This would do the other losers no good. And, rather than close the crooked game, Meloche might choose to contrive an accident for me.

It was a tough proposition, any way a fellow viewed it. My algebra and geometry were no help. Then, with the speed of light, physics leaped into the breach.

"Brown," I asked suddenly, "can you smuggle me inside the Palace after everything's closed? While you're cleaning up?"

Tin Horn, both surprised and interrupted, thought for awhile, then voiced the opinion that he might slip me in between five and six in the morning.

"Mebbe I better come for you when all's quiet," he suggested. "Where you stoppin' at?"

"The A. C. bunkhouse. I'll turn in now and grab the bunk nearest the door."

IT WAS a busy day both for me and the runners I sent up Squaw Creek and to the wintering dredgers. By early afternoon the first arrivals sought me out at the A. C. warehouse, and to each in turn I put the question—

"What do you figure you've lost at Meloche's arrow?"

It was difficult to dodge the questions shot back at me; but as six o'clock came and the last name on my list was checked off, I felt reasonably certain that no damaging news had leaked across the street.

"Keep your mouths shut," had been my advice to one and all. "Be at the Palace at eight o'clock sharp," was all the most persistent could drag from me.

It had been necessary, however, to take Oscar into my confidence; and never shall I forget the big Swede's anger when I told him what I'd seen with my own eyes and done with my own foot. My partner was for crossing the street and manhandling Meloche, or for calling a Miners' Meeting where, in the absence of duly constituted authorities, justice as legalized by custom might be dispensed. I argued against both these procedures, however; and perhaps because of his sense of humor and his faith in me, Oscar gave in and promised silence until I should give him the word.

The Palace held a fairly big crowd when, about quarter to eight, Oscar and I sauntered in and shouldered our way to the bar. Most of those present were represented by names on my list; for at some time or other nearly every one around Whiskyville had tried his luck with the arrow. I ordered a drink and looked around.

Meloche was already spinning his arrow and making a bid for opening play. A little puzzled by the lack of response, he was looking over the semicircle of potential players when suddenly he stiffened as a burst of raucous laughter arrested his attention.

It was the Sweet Pea Girl, just off the dance floor on the arm of Kid Whitehead. It seemed to me her forced laugh was aimed at Meloche, for the two of them now stared hard at each other. It was a visual exchange of hatred, more marked on the part of the woman. For, while the gambler's training served him well, her red lips twisted in scorn. She turned away. Fire died from the eyes of Meloche as, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, he resumed his spinning.

"Come one, come all," he crooned evenly. "It's as fair as love and war."

It was eight o'clock—time for me to begin operations. Many pairs of eyes were on me as, with what I hoped was a nonchalant air, I sauntered to the table and took up a position at Meloche's right elbow. I was no actor. Meloche was shrewd. He sensed right away that I was up to something unusual.

"I'm tired of being a piker," I said, and flipped down a bit of paper on the layout. It was an A. C. certificate of deposit for an even five thousand dollars, properly indorsed and payable to bearer.

Meloche picked it up and examined it. His drooping eyelids lifted a trifle when he noted the sum represented, but otherwise he betrayed no emotion.

"How d'you want to play it?" he asked coolly.

"Even odds. I'll take numbers 1 to 25 inclusive. The rest are yours. The whole amount goes."

"You're on. Spin it yourself."

I took the heavy arrow from the gambler's hands and placed its socket on the polished spindle. As the little crowd pressed in, I twirled it, and the bright shaft of metal began its almost noiseless circuit. Around and around it

flew, and a hush fell over the Palace. The mechanical piano ceased to function. Dancers and drinkers, apprised that heavy play was on, tiptoed up and stood peering over the shoulders of those nearer the layout.

Gradually the arrow slowed, its head creeping around and around with lessening momentum. So still was the room that we could hear the faint clicking of the bit of watchspring as it wiped its way along the dividing pegs. So closely had I been crowded against Meloche that we were pressed together. The arrow crawled now—crawled over 25 and drifted along for a few numbers. I knew what was coming. I felt the slight flexing of muscles in the leg nearest me, and Meloche's foot went down.

"39 wins!" the gambler called. "The gent from Squaw Creek loses a big bet. Tough luck! But at even odds. Come on, boys; the sky's the limit!"

Not a man stirred. Almost every eye in the house was fixed on me as I cleared my throat and edged a bit closer.

"How about spinning for this?" I asked, and produced a second bit of paper.

It was a note for exactly eighty-six thousand dollars, signed jointly by Oscar and myself, payable to bearer on demand, and indorsed by the Alaska Commercial Company's agent. It represented fully a half of our approaching cleanup.

STRAINED though he was, Meloche's insouciance deserted him as he glimpsed the amount. He paled slightly. With fingers that trembled visibly he turned the note over and stared at its blank side until composure settled down on him. One long questioning look at me, and then his eyes swept the crowd.

"How about this, McGregor?" he asked presently.

The grizzled A. C. man addressed shouldered his way to the layout and glanced briefly at the proffered note.

"Good as the gold it stands for," he pronounced and stood waiting, his forefinger hooked around the straight bit of his pipe.

"If the house wins, you'll pay in full?"

McGregor nodded.

"Figurin' gold at seventeen the ounce," he stipulated.

Meloche whipped around on me.

"How d'you want to play it?" he asked.

He was cool now, whereas I was a bit on edge. A greedy gleam in his eye, a contemptuous flavor in his question, stung me to sharp retort.

"It all goes on the one spin—if you've got the guts."

"The sky's the limit, Teacher. What numbers d'you fancy?"

Men had called me Teacher before, but always in a kindly way. That I had once taught school was a fact needing no apology. But Meloche had spoken sneeringly. I felt a quickening of my heartbeat, but controlled myself and made my choice.

"Same as before: 1 to 25, inclusive."

"You're on. Spin it yourself, Teacher?"

I declined the heavy arrow and turned my burning eyes on the spindle. Even at that distance I thought I could distinguish the almost invisible seam in its polished head—the scarf which, at the application of the squeeze, would gape perhaps the hundredth part of an inch.

The arrow was whirling now. The crowd pressed in. I glimpsed Big Oscar close at hand, his face set sternly, his blue eyes fixed on the glittering metal. There was a minute yet to put in. I transferred my attention to Meloche. He was quite himself again.

Coatless, his green eyeshade cocked rakishly a bit to one side, he watched the arrow, a smirk on his lips, the thumb of his left hand hooked into the armhole of his vest. With the long fingers of his right hand, and with a skill almost uncanny, he was shuffling two half stacks of chips. As if by magic each chip lifted to the upward caress of his forefinger, found its niche, and the half stacks melted into a single column.

There was something bordering on the hypnotic about the movements of the long fingers. I watched the rhythmic shuffling, fascinated, until the crackle of a burning log broke the silence. Its effect might well have been that of a rifle shot. Meloche's fingers hovered motionless over the stack of chips as tense and bearded faces were jerked toward the big stove. My nerves re-

laxed somewhat, and I looked down at the arrow.

It was still circling, though far more slowly than at first. Again Meloche began his chip shuffling, but the arrow now claimed my full attention. As a boxer beats the other fellow to the punch, so had I to beat the gambler to the squeeze. Slowly, inch by inch, my left foot hitched behind and around Meloche's set heel.

Never had a spin lasted so long. The arrow floated around—a finger of Time leisurely telling off the months. Some one spat hurriedly on the sawdust covered floor. A woman giggled inanely. The arrow slowed, circled twice, thrice, and began its nerve-wracking crawl. It passed 50, crept over 1, and probably had momentum enough for another complete round.

But I dared wait no longer. My left foot slid along the few remaining inches. It lifted, then clamped down hard on Meloche's. And as I staggered like a fellow thrown off balance, my murmured, "Pardon me," was drowned by the roar from the crowd.

"The teacher wins on 5!" were the first intelligible words to reach my ears.

Meloche was not the speaker. His face drained of blood, his nostrils working not unlike the gills of a landed fish, he faced me. His dry lips moved, but no sound came from them.

"Pardon me for stepping on your foot," I managed to utter.

Meloche sensed the intended sarcasm, and except for the presence of witnesses would, I daresay, have shot me on the spot. Instead he forced his features into the semblance of a smile. The smile lingered even as he saw Oscar reach for our note and tear it into shreds; but the smile vanished as peal after peal of laughter came from the Sweet Pea Girl.

"Hope you lose your shirt!" all the room heard her shout at Meloche before the dog puncher dragged her off to the bar.

THE long and tedious job of gold-weighing and dividing was over, and the last loser had been reimbursed. In the process we had all but stripped Meloche's big iron box of its contents. With the exception of McGregor and Oscar, none of the boys knew exactly what had happened. I was satisfied for the present to leave it that way; and as the crowd thinned out I stood near the end of the bar, refusing drinks and taking cigars instead. I wanted to be sober enough to find my bunk unaided.

In an argument over the best way to drive steam points, Oscar was winding up what had been a profitable and exciting evening for us. But mildly interested, I was standing a little apart from the others, waiting for Oscar, when Meloche came up to me.

For a moment or two he preserved his professional smirk and stood apparently carefree while twirling a key ring on his finger. Then suddenly his expression changed. A quick side glance assuring him that we were virtually alone, he whipped around on me and put a low voiced question—

"Was it Sweet Pea put you wise to the squeeze?"

"No," I answered truthfully, and gave him look for look.

I could see that I wasn't believed; but instead of proceeding along that line, the gambler took up a new one.

"This country isn't big enough for the two of us!" he grated.

I bristled at that.

"Get out, then," I shot back at him.

For ten long seconds he studied me, then the drooping eyelids fell lower still.

"You've ruined me," he whispered huskily. "I'm goin' to get you for it."

"Look here," I said heatedly, "I haven't published the facts of your squeeze, but there are two good men who know all about it. So if I'm found shot in the back, you can guess what'll happen to you."

The words sank in. He thought them over briefly, and then the gambler part of his nature took charge.

"You asked me if I had guts," came from between his set teeth, and then he thrust his face so close to mine that I could feel his breath on my cheek. "How about *you?*" he finished.

The eyes so close to mine were wide open now and burning with a hatred so intense that I realized nothing on earth would please him more than to stand over my dead body.

"I believe I have guts—an average

amount," I tried to say coolly. "Explain yourself."

"Good! We'll shoot it out, man to man. I've got twelve to fifteen thousand in bar profits left. You cover that, even money. And tomorrow noon we'll settle it out on the river ice. Winner take all."

Truly I'd let myself in for something serious. But how could a man back down?

"The weapons?" I heard my lips ask, as if the decision rested with them instead of my mental processes.

"Winchesters with full magazines," Meloche specified. "Firing to begin at a hundred yards. Referee drops handkerchief. Then each of us advances, go as you please."

Oscar would never permit it! The thought flashed through my mind. Meloche watched me, his half closed eyes seeking to read my every thought, perhaps to glimpse the earliest symptoms of the common fear of death. But I had gone too far to turn back. I'd had my fun—my dramatics. Now I had to pay.

"There'll be no seconds," I stipulated. "McGregor will suit me for referee and executor for the loser."

I fished for a cigar.

"You're on," the gambler declared, and obsequiously scratched a match and held it to my cigar.

My mind in a whirl, I walked with Oscar to the bunkhouse. Our pockets were heavy, as were those of the three or four neighbors who stumbled along with us. Snatches of drunken song echoed through the deserted street and went out over the frozen Yukon. Every heart was light but mine. When the men had entered, I lingered outside and blew cigar smoke up at the stars.

Probably I'd never live to see these stars again! The thought stung me. Meloche was known to be an excellent shot. I was an indifferent one. There could be but one ending to the situation I'd brought on myself. I'd been a fool, for the refunding could have been effected in a different way. A committee might have waited on Meloche and, after ripping up the squeeze lever, could have brought about the wholesale reimbursement.

In a distant kennel a wolf dog howled. Other dogs took up the dismal wail, and at the eery chorus a shiver crept up my spine. A wave of shame succeeded it. I was a coward! I was afraid of death—afraid to meet a man and exchange slugs of metal. Then suddenly I stiffened, for Van Dyke's words occurred to me:

> True courage is not incompatible with nervousness; and heroism does not mean the absence of fear, but the conquest of it.

Nervous I was, I admitted, but during the few short hours to come I'd purge myself of the slightest touch of fear. Death would find me smiling and unafraid. Far out on the icy ruts of the street I flung the butt of my cigar, then sought my bunk.

For awhile I lay listening to the snorers around me, thankful at least that I'd done them a service. Then I fell to musing on the immediate future, which promised to be short indeed for me. Over and over again I repeated Van Dyke's words. They helped me to banish all fear. Sleep stole over me.

The thumping of mukluks, the growling of inquiries from men freshly awakened, penetrated my slumber. I sat up, to find men dressing hastily.

"Come on, Teacher," some one called. "There's been a shootin' at the Palace."

Mechanically I struggled into my parka and drew on my trousers and footgear. The plank door opened and banged shut intermittently, giving me glimpses of a sun perhaps an hour high. Lack of sleep and a bit too much liquor were responsible for my logy feeling, my failure to grasp what had happened. But as I stumbled into the keen air and followed the others up the rutted street I began to revive.

IT WAS but a few steps to the Palace. A loaded sled stood near a side entrance to the honkatonk, and I recognized the ten fine dogs hitched to it as belonging to Kid Whitehead. The dog puncher himself was nowhere visible; but as I passed inside the bitter-smelling main room I saw him standing near the end of the bar, one arm flung protectingly around the Sweet Pea Girl. A pseudo-calm was on her even features as she stared down at McGregor, who was bending over an object lying in the saw-

dust.

The A. C. man rose and shook his head.

"Meloche is all through," he said gravely, and turned to inspect a revolver he took from the bar.

The little circle of onlookers pressed closer.

Meloche was dead! There'd be no fight at high noon! Was it a wave of relief that swept over me as I looked down on the handkerchief covering the face of the dead man? But I had no time to analyze my sensation, for McGregor was speaking. We had faith and trust in him; and wherever men were gathered he usually dominated.

"It'll be all right for you to go away," he was telling Sweet Pea, "but more'n likely a deputy marshal will come up from Fairbanks. We want to know what to say to him. Suppose you tell us just what happened."

The girl's eyes widened; her red lips quivered. Her fingers plucked nervously at the ornamental fringe of her backflung parka hood.

"There isn't much to tell," she said presently in low tones. "The Kid agreed to take me downriver to St. Michael's, starting at sunup. I was dressed and ready and waiting to hear the sled pull up. It was cold in my room. I came in here to keep warm at the big stove. I thought Frank was in bed, but he was over at that table cleaning his Winchester."

We looked where she pointed, and on the soiled green cloth of a table near the stove I saw oily rags and an unassembled rifle.

"I didn't back out when I saw him," the girl went on. "And when he jumped up and made a dirty crack I told him I was white and free and over twenty-one. 'I don't care where the hell you go,' he yelled at me, 'but I'm going to fix you for puttin' the Teacher wise to the squeeze!' With that he rushed me and twisted my arm and bent me back over a table. He was choking me. I was about all in, when Tin Horn showed up. He pulled Frank back and stuck a gun under his nose.

" 'Let that girl alone,' he said. 'I'm the one that wised the sucker.'

"Frank stood like a rock for a minute; then he pulled one of his clever tricks. He turned his back on Tin Horn and told me he was sorry. But all the time his fingers were working toward his vest pocket. I knew he always carried a flat two-shot derringer there, but before I could figure out what he was doing he wheeled around and let Tin Horn have it. Tin Horn got in one shot, I believe, and 'twas enough."

McGregor nodded.

"One empty shell in his gun," he mused aloud.

I felt a touch on my arm. It was Oscar.

"Tin Horn wants to see you," he said gently, and led the way to one of the inner rooms.

Foolish Miller, our best man on fractures and gunshot wounds, had done his best, but to no avail.

"He's bleedin' inside," he whispered to me as I leaned over the one-dog man who had unknowingly substituted for me.

Covered to the chin, white of face and lips, he smiled up at me and tried to speak. I placed my ear close to his lips. A pause; then, after a little air had found its way to the lungs of the dying man, he tried it again.

"I want—t-to ask—a favor," he gasped weakly.

"Anything in the world I can do for you," I said.

Again that faint smile, and he continued:

"That b-big—dog o' mine. He's out—in the kennel. You—you—"

I understood.

"I'll take care of him and feed him, as long as he lives," I said.

Tin Horn heard me for, although unable to speak or even move his lips, he could still smile with his eyes.

For a long five seconds I stared into the depths of his faded blue eyes. Then, as a curtain falls, the weary eyelids lowered and death took charge.

SNOW *in the* PASS

By

WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES

MR. Edward Ingram Conroy was a young man with a large and completely suppressed desire. He ached to use his fists—just once. But at the moment he was in the middle of the decidedly ticklish job of converting himself from all that thirty-odd years of life had bestowed upon him to the new order of the day in Idaho division railroad circles.

Eddie was tall and loose coupled in the joints. His shoulders were wide and muscular. If he'd been born the son of a railroad official instead of the offspring of a section foreman, his name might have been mentioned as All-American on some football squad. But his only training had been on a hard bitten streak of rust in a mountain country where brawn and fists had long been mixed with a certain amount of railroad sense; where trains were moved Summer and Winter against all the odds of frowning nature.

Eddie had started with a spike maul in his hands at the age of sixteen, had become a brakeman at twenty and had won promotion to freight conductor at twenty-three. Along with his fists, which were always ready, his smile which was good to look upon, and his brain which worked like light speed, he possessed what the old-timers called a natural railroad ability.

No one had been surprised when, at twenty-six, Eddie had been made yardmaster on a branch line terminal. The old heads predicted great things for him. They said:

"That kid's got it. He'll be a division super, or I miss my guess. He'll go a long way unless he lets things go to his

head."

In the course of his climb Eddie had made many friends. Being two-fisted, he had also made a few enemies. One of them sat in the next room. And that's where the suppressed desire comes in. Eddie wanted nothing more in this life, next to continued promotion, than to sock Mike Donovan on the jaw. But he knew that such a sock could spell only disaster; and he knew that Mike knew it. And all because, since Superintendent Walsh had come to the division, the old order was undergoing a certain change.

"Listen to me, Conroy," the new super had said six months ago. "I've had a talk with the switchman whom you so unceremoniously hurled through the yard office window at Ludlow the other night. This switchman has told me the whole case. I'm an understanding man, Conroy. The switchman rebelled against your authority. In a way, you are justified; but what I want to get over to you is the fact that we don't railroad like that any more. Get me? Not any more. Keep your eyes open, Conroy. Watch the new trainmaster I'm giving to you men. Watch me. You've got the ability, man, but you've got a lot to learn about how to handle men. There're other ways besides fists."

For six months Eddie had been watching and learning. He had been taken from the branch line terminal job and given the main line post at Cloud—a dismal mountain town, a subdivision point where helpers were put on freight trains to get the tonnage over the two per cent grade up through Thief River Pass. His hours, normally, were from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Mike Donovan took over the night work with the title of assistant yardmaster. But, day or night, the Cloud responsibility was fully upon Eddie's shoulders. Mike Donovan reported to him, and Eddie reported to Superintendent Walsh.

Eddie had to make a report now, and his suppressed desire was just about too much for him. He sat behind his battered desk and toyed with the ringlet of dark brown hair which always dropped down over his right eye. His dark eyes were somber and contemplative. Not twenty minutes ago he had chanced to hear Mike Donovan make a slurring remark to a switchman on the other side of a boxcar in the lee of a snowstorm sweeping down over the mountain fastness.

"Let 'im make a crack at me," Mike Donovan had boasted. "I'm runnin' this yard after 6 P.M, an' you guys railroad like I tell you, too. Just let 'im make a crack!"

Eddie's impulse had been to go around that car and make a couple of cracks with his fists. He'd have done it six months ago, and gotten away with it. But Walsh had new ideas—Walsh and his college trained staff. They were executives whose trained minds enabled them to deal with men thoroughly and capably without benefit of skinned knuckles. Another factor was that, about the first of the month, there would be a trainmaster's job open on the east end. Eddie had his eye on it. More promotion, more pay. Eddie tapped his desk softly with his lean fingers and took up a letter lying open before him. Then he straightened, resolutely rose to his feet and strode to the connecting door. He heard the wind rattling the glass of the windows which were now opaque with snow.

"Donovan," Eddie said quietly, "come in here, please."

Mike Donovan, a towering hulk of a man with reddish hair and a dark red complexion, turned at his desk and squinted up at Eddie with his small blue eyes. Eddie Conroy saying "please". Eddie thought he saw something taunting in Mike's twisted lips.

"Oh, sure," Mike said and came toward him. "Maybe I oughtta say 'Mr. Conroy.'"

Eddie ignored the remark, turned about and went back to his swivel chair. He waved Donovan to a seat. Then he took up the letter.

"This is from Walsh," Eddie said, fighting to keep his voice in hand.

"Yeah?"

"Yes. And it asks me for a full explanation of certain delays to the movement of tonnage that's been set out in this yard at night for the past five days. Some of them costly delays. How about it?"

"Delays?" Mike Donovan's little eyes

widened. "There ain't been any delays I know about. Of course, there's been some cars I couldn't move an' left over for you guys on the day side. But—"

"Don't stall, Mike," Eddie commanded, his hard fist clenching. "We're on this job to cooperate. We have a certain responsibility."

He paused. His words sounded like those of some college trained man—one of the new order of the Idaho Division officers. Eddie Conroy speaking of cooperation! Eddie Conroy who used to make 'em cooperate by swinging two fists when the need arose. He cleared his throat, trying to keep hold of his temper. He wasn't dumb. He knew what Mike Donovan was trying to do. Mike was trying to bait him, to cause him to have it out bare handed. That would be a good chance for Mike. Mike was ambitious too.

"Then what?" Mike prompted when the pause grew tense.

"Mike, if you're short handed and can't handle the business, I want to know about it. I'll get authority to put on another engine and crew. But this tonnage through here has to move. There're no alibis. You understand that? It has to move!"

"Well, it ain't that I'm short of help," Mike said, his funny smirk never leaving his lips. "It's just that—well, hell! You know how it is in a night yard. You plan your work, then somethin' goes wrong. An engine gets tied up an hour, or there's a derailment, or one thing or another."

"Mike, has it occurred to you that I never had any difficulty with this night yard until you came here?"

There were red spots on Eddie's lean cheeks.

"What the hell you drivin' at?"

"You don't have to ask. Just listen to me. I'm responsible to Mr. Walsh. He's going to have this night yard function if he has to clean us all out. You'll railroad from now on, Mike, or—"

Eddie was going to say something about knocking Mr. Donovan into the next week, but checked himself in time.

"Or what?" Mike Donovan bantered.

Eddie didn't answer. Mike had risen and was towering over him. Eddie glared up at him from narrowed eyes, dismissed the matter with a slap of his broad hand on his desk. Mike Donovan cast him a leering, superior look and passed through the door.

NO. 5, the westbound passenger train, made its regular station stop at 5:55. Eddie went to the door and watched the lighted windows of the line of coaches smash over the switch points. The pilot of the engine was piled high with snow, the headlight sending its broad silver beam from the center of the drift. The exhaust thundered under a wide open throttle. The engineer was making all the run he could for the hill. Back of the rear coach snorted another engine, a giant helper, belching sparks high through the snowy blackness as it boosted the human cargo out of town.

Eddie resumed his seat at the desk. Laboriously he composed an answer to Mr. Walsh's letter. There would be an immediate improvement in the handling of cars. There would be no more delays. Eddie burned as he wrote, but he had to be cautious. He had never stood for alibis. He had never given any. He wouldn't give any now.

It was almost seven when he sealed the letter and put it in the box on his desk for the eastbound mail pickup.

Eddie struck across the yards, head down, on his way to supper. He shuddered from the biting cold and found it hard to keep his footing in the gale. A little distance away stood the squat shanty where the switchmen gathered for supper. He was opposite the door when, in a lull of the wind, a coarse laugh reached his ears. He hesitated without knowing why.

"So Mr. Conroy," he heard Mike Donovan's ugly bass boom out with a slight attempt at falsetto, "he says, 'Mr. Donovan, we got to have improvement.' Nice an' lady-like, just like that. He says, 'Now, Mr. Donovan, you get those young gentlemen who switch cars for you at night, an' you tell 'em that Mr. Conroy desires service.' "

The bellows that followed made Eddie forget the biting cold, the howling blast, the snow that stung his face like buckshot. He set his legs wide

apart. He could go in there and clean that mob out now. But that wouldn't be Mr. Walsh's way. He cursed under his breath.

"Ol' battlin' Eddie Conroy," a switchman bellowed. "Him as threw a switchman through a yard office winder. Gettin' soft like that. Soft an' soapy. Gol durn! If his paw ain't turnin' over in his grave, I'm cockeyed."

Soft and soapy!

Eddie, with clenched fists, gritted his teeth. How would one of Mr. Walsh's new order of executives handle this?

Swinging about, Eddie walked back to his office. He wasn't kidding himself. That gang, under Mike Donovan, had to be handled, and handled at once. But how? Couldn't Mr. Walsh understand that they were tough, cinder bitten yardhands of the old school, who respected no authority but the authority of two fast-smashing fists? But the other men under Walsh—they were getting results, and you didn't hear of anybody being socked in the process.

Baffled, humiliated, burning with indignation, Eddie Conroy slammed his door behind him and went across the yards to his room.

EDDIE ate no supper. He couldn't. He was too thoroughly angry. He paid no attention to the storm that seemed to get worse with each passing minute. He didn't hear the rattle of his windows, the whistle of the wind beneath the eaves. He didn't know that, at times, it fairly rocked the house, so terrific was its onslaught. He walked up and down, lighting one cigaret after another. He looked at his fists and almost cried.

He didn't look at his watch when, after a long time, he had reached his decision. He only knew that he was going back and call Mike Donovan squarely in front of him. He was going to give Mike Donovan a quiet lecture; and then tell him that he would ask for a new night yardmaster on the following morning. He didn't know where Mike stood with the upper officers, but he knew where Mike stood with him.

The gale blew the door of the house out of his hands, and he had to fight to pull that door shut. At the corner the snow drifts were deep and the wind bowled him into them, head over heels, which didn't serve to cool him any. He struggled to his feet and leaned hard against the howling sweep. Foot by foot he worked his way over to the yards, found shelter behind a row of box cars and looked for the night engine. His vision was too restricted. He saw nothing of it. After almost twenty minutes of battling the blizzard, he finally reached his office and went inside.

The stove was cold. He was bending over it with a poker when the connecting door to the other office banged open. He raised his eyes to meet the face of the night telegraph operator. It was worn and pale, eyes bulging.

"What the hell's eating you?" Eddie growled as the operator seemed to stare and gulp.

"You," the operator shouted. "You. I been tryin' to find you."

"You didn't try hard. What's wrong?"

"I sent a switchman an hour ago. I ain't heard from him yet. It's—it's the pass."

Eddie, forgetting the stove, strode over and gripped the thin man's wrist.

"The pass. What about the pass?" he demanded.

"No. 5," the operator barked. "No. 5's in the pass, buried in drifts."

"No. 5!" Eddie tensed. He looked at the wall clock. It was 11:25. "Shoot it. Tell me, quick."

"No. 5's in the pass," the operator repeated, shivering. "Left here at 5:55 P.M, a-snortin'—as you know. Should 'a' been at Thief River at 7:05 an' through the pass. The wires went out at 7:15 with No. 5 unreported. Too much storm on the wires. They went down somewhere. An' then this office was lost. I tried to get through on other wires, but—but I couldn't. Dead as hell! I told Mr. Donovan about it, an' he said keep in touch with him. Finally I got a connection on an old block wire. Got through to Thief River at 10:30, an'—an' No. 5 never got to Thief River. She's somewhere between here an' there in the drifts."

"But the plows," Eddie bellowed. "Listen! Haven't they got a rotary plow working east from Thief River keeping

the pass open? Quick, man!"

The operator winced from the ruthless pressure of Eddie's lean fingers on his wrist.

"That's the hell of it," the operator cried. "They had a rotary plow workin' through, but the blades smashed into a drift twenty feet high an' hit a slide of rocks that'd come down the mountain in the snow. Smashed 'em. Shot the plow all to hell an' turned it over. Made kindlin' wood of it. An' Thief River was yellin' for us to get a rotary plow up from this end. Go in them drifts an' get that train out. Haul it back!"

Eddie stared at the opaque windows. He spoke to himself.

"A whole damned passenger train snowed in! Coal and water enough to last only a couple hours at least!"

He shuddered. He knew from long experience what that meant. A dead engine. People in the coaches feeling the slow white death beneath the snow blanket creep up on them.

"Where's Donovan now?" Eddie bawled. "Where's Donovan?"

"I don't know. I ain't seen him. I sent the switchman that came in here for you. I told him to find Donovan an' tell him too."

"An' hour ago!" Eddie's lean frame stiffened. "Nobody came near me. Are your wires all right now?"

"Totally lost. Gone to hell. We're as dead as if we was at the North Pole. Everything's out. But I got a chance to tell Thief River we was gonna send the rotary from here."

Eddie flung himself against the storm. His brain was racing. Was this another one of Donovan's tricks? Had Donovan gotten the information that a passenger train, with perhaps two hundred people aboard, was lost up there and failed to allow the message to get to Eddie? He didn't want to believe it. And yet—

DONOVAN, in the switch shanty, looked up over the rim of a pail of coffee.

"Oh, you come down, did you?" his voice was bantering.

"With no thanks to you, I did," Eddie hurled at him. "I've just been talking to the operator. What's been done about getting the rotary plow started from this end?"

"What could be done when we couldn't find the yardmaster to get the necessary authority?" Donovan held the steaming pail to one side.

Eddie reached out, jerked the can from the man's hands and crashed it against the shanty wall. He shouted:

"Nobody made any effort to get in touch with me, and you know it! Don't lie. I can stand for a bully, Donovan, but I won't stand for a liar. You get to the roundhouse now and get the two engines we've got over there called. Get the plow operator called. We got no time to lose."

"Since when am I a call boy?" Donovan retorted, his lips curling.

The air became electric. The group of switchmen, clustered about, were tense.

"Right now!" Eddie said. "Listen to me, you! An hour's been lost already. That's an hour too much. You look after the crews. I'll look after getting the plow and the engines hooked up. And you move or I'll damned well see that you do! Do you get that, Donovan?"

Donovan apparently didn't. He made a grimace that was intended to be derisive. Immediately he had it wiped from his features. Eddie Conroy forgot everything except that scores of people, stranded passengers, were perhaps even now suffering in the upper wilderness, and the rotary had to get moving.

Obviously this was what Donovan had been aching for. Donovan was big. His arms were powerful. He outweighed Eddie by fifteen pounds. He uttered one startled curse, and then he waded in.

The fight might have lasted longer were it not for the fact that Eddie Conroy was waging a battle of desperation. Twice Donovan knocked him to his knees. But each time he came back. He was trying to keep his head. Strange, what thoughts went through it. He socked, and had visions. Donovan was asking for it. Donovan wanted it. *Socko!* Donovan's failure to tell him and get that plow started at once was Donovan's way of putting a nice black mark against Eddie's record. *Socko!* Eddie was railroading in his old way

now. Somebody would tell Walsh. *Socko!* Walsh would say, "Mr. Conroy, we're mighty sorry." That's how it would be. But Eddie Conroy would railroad in his own way tonight.

Eddie's swinging left, coming up from his knees, might have been an accident; but those who knew Eddie would not believe such to be the case. The left connected. Donovan staggered backward while Eddie's right followed on the same spot. Donovan collapsed against the side of the shanty and fell, a bleeding hulk, behind the stove.

Nor were Eddie's features so pretty as he turned to glare at the startled switchmen. His left eye was completely closed. His nose was bleeding profusely. His right cheek was cut almost to the bone from the emblem on Mike Donovan's ring of brotherhood.

"Let's go!" Eddie bawled. "The first guy that says no gets what Donovan got."

Eddie cracked the whip. He didn't stop to wonder how one of the better trained gentlemen on Mr. Walsh's staff would have handled the situation. He knew that a job had to be done, and it was going to be done with all dispatch. There would be an investigation to determine the delay in getting that plow started, and Eddie Conroy would give no excuse. He'd never believed in excuses, and he wouldn't start with them now. Mr. Walsh wouldn't like the mess, and he'd say so in his quiet way. Mr. Walsh would shake his head, look at his paperknife and then shake his head again. There'd be somebody else in the trainmaster job on the east end when it was vacant. Eddie probably would be back on the main line swinging a lantern.

AT FIFTEEN minutes past midnight a ghostly looking contraption, which resembled a cross between a boxcar and a caboose, stood at the head end of three snorting engines. On the front of the thing were the great rotary blades, a plow above the wheels, and a flanger gadget beneath to cut the ice from the rails.

Behind the three engines were a caboose and a boxcar. Mike Donovan's yard crew was in the crummy; and Mike himself, dragged there by Eddie's none too gentle hands, was sprawled on one of the cushions to get his wind. All available section hands, armed with shovels and other tools, were clustered about the glowing stove. In the boxcar were jacks, chains and a general assortment of emergency equipment.

Eddie, bleeding and bruised, the snow smarting in his wounds, mounted the cupola on the plow and sat beside the operator who would govern the speed of the blades and the fan. At a signal from Eddie's lantern the three engines whistled off. The blades began to whirl under the pressure of steam that was admitted through hose and pipes from the leading engine.

Tensely crouched, Eddie watched with his one good eye the slow progress beyond the western yard limit board. Where the country was open, the drifts resembled whipped cream. The rails were bare for long stretches; then they were lost completely by a mountain of white looming up in the headlight.

The rotating knives bit into the pile, broke it up, sucked it into the whirling fan behind them. The snow blew out of the fan on either side of the advancing train like clouds of dust in a hurricane.

Eddie, watching, wondered about those passengers. He hoped that one of the crew would have sense enough to keep 'em awake. Do anything. Make 'em sing. Make 'em walk up and down the aisles. Keep 'em on their feet at all costs. That is, provided the coal was gone and the engines were dead. No. 5, he knew, would have little fuel. Passenger trains never stopped at Cloud for coal because, once they were through the pass, twenty miles away, they had only ten miles more to drop down the other side of the mountain to the end of the run.

If the helper engine which had been hooked on at Cloud had much coal on board at six o'clock in the evening it was by a miracle. Eddie knew how those helper engines worked. They completed the tour of duty when they had No. 5 over the mountain, and usually drifted back down to Cloud with about a scoopful in the tank.

The rails began to curve into the gorges, and from now on the nose of the plow would be pointing upward. Eddie swore. Their pace was slow—painfully slow. At 12:50, more than a half hour out, they had covered but three miles, and the easiest part was behind them. If only the drifts wouldn't be too deep in the gorges and on the curves. If only—

The engines died in their vain attempt to bite into the first of the heavy ones. Eddie heard the exhaust fail in the three stacks. They were up against it for certain now. He thought of the other plow that the operator had told him about. What if their plow should find rocks in that white mountain?

He leaned out his window and gave the signal for the engines to back. The plow operator was tense over his controls. When he thought he had enough distance he gave the forward sign—come ahead fast.

Bellowing mightily, the three engines smashed at the drifts, the blades whirling full speed. The roar was terrific, the snow blinding. They couldn't tell whether they were on the rails.

Every inch of progress that was made might mean that Eddie and the grim operator at his side were just one inch closer to death. There's no more dangerous job in all railroading than that of the man who guides the blades into the white unknown. Any unseen obstacle there in front of them might mean that the plow would be reduced to matchwood with the big engines shoving behind it.

That's why they sat with every nerve tense, saying nothing. They sat thus until a false motion of the wheels beneath them struck, for a moment, a dart of terror through Eddie's heart. Without a word or a glance from Eddie, the plow operator shut off, and Eddie's head was again in the snow filled night. He waved a signal to stop.

Eddie sank in drifts to his waist when he dropped from the side door and sought for what he feared. He set down his lantern, grabbed a shovel and began to dig. After a furious minute he straightened up with drawn features. The flanger had become clogged. The snow plow was off the rails.

"You guys!" Eddie bawled into the caboose, after having struggled back there. "Out! Lug a couple of jacks. Make it fast!"

He didn't look for Mike Donovan. He'd even forgotten about his red faced adversary of an hour before.

The gang worked as swiftly as possible, but it was a long, tedious job. The ice had to be cleaned from the flanger, melted off with a hot torch. A footing had to be gotten for the jack to help rerail the plow which, had it gone a dozen feet farther, would have been hopelessly wrecked. But at 2:00 A.M. the parade was ready to start again. Eddie climbed back to the lookout's seat, stiff from the cold, chilled to the bone.

By three o'clock another four miles had been covered with much stopping and bucking. Eddie tried to guess at what point they might plow into the hind end of the lost passenger train. They were thirteen miles along the way. The passenger train could be anywhere in the next seven miles. It would be impossible to see a flagman. It was impossible for a flagman to be out.

Then there was another matter. When they did find the train would it be possible to back down to Cloud with it? At the rate of intensity with which the storm was slashing at the mountains such a move seemed quite out of the question. They'd have to go ahead. He would have to figure out a way.

They stopped at 4:00 A.M. to clean out the flanger again. Eddie went to the cab of the leading engine and told the engineer to sound his whistle.

"Blow her regularly," he said. "Every thirty seconds or so."

"You go to bed, Eddie," the engineer drawled. "I'll toot 'er."

INCH by inch they battered away at the drifts. On a vicious curve, with the lead engine's tooting getting on his nerves, Eddie saw the blades bite into a drift that was high above their heads. They were instantly buried in snow. They were buried so deeply that presently the blades refused to budge the mass, and then they had to back again

and buck.

Buck, buck, buck!

They couldn't bore a tunnel in the drift. They had to hurl it aside. A tunnel wouldn't hold, for the roof of it would cave in on them as they went. So that's what they did. They hurled it. The backing and bucking did the job, and slowly they edged up near the little cabin that once had been the telegraph office of Eagle Rock. The headlight picked out the cabin roof, or rather one corner of it, and that was the only landmark Eddie had had. It told him exactly where he was.

The plow fans, whirling the snow away from the tracks, completely obliterated the shack—buried it deep. The engine behind, howling against the storm, kept up its attempt to tell the passenger train, if any one on that lost train could hear, that help was at hand.

"That'll do!" Eddie's shout filled the tower on the plow.

The grim operator looked at him for an instant before he shut off his whirling machinery.

But Eddie wasn't watching the operator. His eyes were on a flare of red that showed through and above the snow ahead, and he was swinging his engines down to a halt.

"No. 5," he bellowed in explanation. "Her rear end's trying to give us a signal. No. 5."

Then he was in the drifts, fighting his way to the rear of his own train. After what seemed a breathless age, he gained the caboose and yelled for all hands to get on the ground. Donovan came toward him, his bruised face glowering.

"No. 5," Eddie shot. "And you, Donovan, you're working with a pick and shovel crew. You refused to be a call boy tonight. Maybe you won't care to turn your back on this job."

Donovan said nothing. His head was up and his chin was out—a badly battered chin.

"Take one half of this gang, back that rear engine down to the east switch and clean it out. Clean it out so we can throw it over when we need to."

He waited for no comeback. Eddie assembled some of the men, including part of Donovan's yard crew. He piled them into the plow and then gave the other two engines the sign to come ahead.

The rear of No. 5 wasn't a quarter of a mile away; but it was fully ten minutes before the knives of the whirling machinery had sucked the snow back into the fan and had hurled enough of it to the ditch to allow Eddie to reach the passenger train's rear end. Even at that, his pick and shovel gang had to do some heart-breaking labor before they got the vestibule uncovered enough to enter. Eddie then found the flagman.

"For—for—G-g-g-god's s-s-sake—" he was chattering.

He was exhausted from a long watch in the cold, and from beating his arms across his chest to keep his blood in circulation. He was about to collapse when Eddie caught him. He banged open the door of the rear coach and planted the flagman inside. People swarmed up to him. Horror was in their eyes.

"Be quiet," Eddie yelled. "Where's your conductor? Where's some of your crew? Easy now. It won't be long."

"The conductor," the flagman mumbled. "H-h-h-e w-w-w-went back t-t-to t-t-try to get help."

"You mean to the cabin?"

"He—w-w-w-was g-g-gonna t-t-try to phone—"

Eddie paled. The conductor would probably be frozen to death in there by this time.

Eddie got the sterner men to help stop the panic. Then he investigated the helper engine on the rear of the coaches and found it frozen up and deserted.

What a job it would be to get those wheels thawed out enough to move. He put two men with torches on the engine's under frame, organized his pick and shovel forces and presently got into a position to hook his two engines on to the passenger train.

A shout of relief went up from inside the coaches as the wheels finally crunched into motion. Eddie had the train pulled back until it was just clear of the east switch. Then he cut off his plow and pusher engines; by that time he found that Mike Donovan had the switch in working order. The lever was

thrown over, and the plow, with its third engine coupled again, smashed into the drifts that buried the siding.

Eddie didn't have time to wonder whether the passengers, seeing this giant thing whirl fresh snow over their coaches, would go into a new panic. The idea was to get enough of the siding clear so that his gangs could let the passenger train roll back on gravity below the switch. Then he'd back his engines on to it, couple up the steam hose, get the cars warm and finally dig out the conductor and any one else in the buried cabin.

"Donovan," Eddie yelled when he was in position to make the movement, "you get the train hooked up. You get what I mean— Let the passenger cars roll back to clear, couple into the boxcar and caboose we left down the main track, then hang these three engines and the plow on the head end. We can't go back to Cloud. We've got to go on through the pass."

"Why the hell can't we go back to Cloud?" Donovan wanted to know. "We've cleared the alley up this far. That's damned nonsense!" The red face glowed, the small eyes smoldered. "If you think you're gonna whip these men through the rest of this pass, Mr. Smart Guy—"

"Who's running this show?" Eddie took two steps forward. His face was close to Donovan's. "You do what I say, or else—"

"I'm gonna take this train back to Cloud. You can't get it through unless the crew'll take it through. And when I tell the crew to back up, I'll—"

Eddie's hard fingers wrapped around Donovan's coat lapel. He jerked viciously.

"If it has to be to the finish this time, Donovan, that's what it'll be."

Donovan struck first. Eddie stumbled in the snow, but came up with fists flying. He aimed for that cut and bruised chin. He connected. The blow was solid enough to send the big Irishman sprawling.

Eddie turned to the men who had already gathered about.

"You men heard my order. Get this train all coupled, or I'll let any one else have it who says he won't. We'll railroad my way, tonight!"

He turned half around. Three men with shovels were close. He shouted:

"You! You fellows start tunneling into that shack. The conductor's in there, and maybe part of an engine crew. They may be dead. We can't go until we dig through. Get moving."

"Just a second, Conroy!"

Eddie whirled full about in his tracks. He stared, wide eyed, into the face of Superintendent Walsh. The super's quiet eyes narrowed coldly.

"You don't need to tunnel in," the superintendent said, his thin lips moving slowly. "We tunneled out. We heard your engines whistling and we started working our way through. When you get this train ready to move, get in the coaches. I've got a word or two. And get somebody to look after this man right now."

Eddie, with panic at his heart, looked at Donovan, still sprawled in the snow. He stooped over the battered figure and dropped to one knee. There was a sinking sensation at the pit of his stomach. Oh, well, it would have to come sooner or later. Even if he had known that Walsh would be on No. 5 that night, he could have taken no other course.

WALSH fingered his watch chain and stared through the window at the whirling snow. Daylight was full upon this white upper world. Thief River was a mile away. The plow, ahead of the three snorting engines, was whipping the snow from the path of the train as it thundered through the pass.

For a long moment there was silence. Eddie watched his superior narrowly. A deep frown was on his bruised face. He was waiting—waiting for the ax to fall. He had been honest. He had held nothing back. He had never believed in making excuses, and he wouldn't start with trying to frame one now. He had, through the bitter night, railroaded the best he knew how. He wasn't college trained. He didn't know how Mr. Walsh or one of his educated staff would have handled the situation. He had given all that was in him. He was ready for the result.

Why didn't Walsh say something?

Why did he just sit and look and fumble that watch chain?

Presently Walsh spoke.

"You had a tough night. You—you had to go back a long way in your training." Then he paused. "You had to use your fists."

His eyes were on Eddie now, contemplatively. Eddie's heart was near to choking him. He felt weak and sick.

"Yes, sir," Eddie said, trying to keep emotion from his voice.

"From the looks of you and Donovan it must 've been a swell fight."

"Yes. I mean I'm sorry, sir. I guess I just failed—"

"Under the circumstances, I doubt your statement, Mr. Conroy. I haven't found you a liar yet. Don't tell me you've failed about anything. You've railroaded. Isn't that enough? And—Well, let's put this thing behind. Let's talk about that face of yours. Lord, what a face! Do something about it, Conroy. Get it straightened up, because I can't send a man up to a trainmastership with a face like that. I really can't."

Eddie leaned forward, the tenseness in his muscles snapping. Impulsively his hands reached outward. His countenance brightened.

"Mr. Walsh, you—you—"

"And here's something else to remember, Conroy. Trainmasters don't stutter. No, forget it. Go clean yourself up."

Lambing Time

By JOHN C. FROHLICHER

THIN-FLANKED, the she-bear left her Winter den
While Winter scarce admitted its race done,
But smell of anthills steaming in the sun
Was certain sign of spring as nesting wren.
She had two hungry cubs. A bit below
The climbing snowline was a drift of white
That moved and blatted. In the early night
The she-bear watched Basque herders come and go.

Lambing time. Men moved all through the dark
Among the flock. The smell of hot live meat
Came to the crouching bear. And men must eat
At midnight. She slipped along the park.

Next day an owner frowned long at the news:
"A bear ate udders off of seven ewes."

Ananias

by R. V. GERY

"SPEAKIN' of liars—"

Mr. Challis of the *Levuka* regarded the door with a meditative eye. It was in process of closing on the blue clad back of a venerable trifler with the truth who had regaled us for forty minutes with Munchausen-like tales of derring-do by land and sea. Challis had listened to him with no comment other than an occasional grunt; but now he drew out his pipe, settled his huge shoulders well back in the red plush of the bar settee and began again—

"Speakin' of liars—"

He thrust the dottle down in his pipe with the ball of a mighty thumb and paused in the delicately suggestive manner I had come to know. I caused his glass to be replenished, a proceeding which he regarded with a well contrived start of surprise.

"Continue," said I. "Speaking of liars—"

He broke into his great rumbling laugh.

"D'jever think," said he, "that there's just two kinds of 'em? One you want to punch in the nose, an' the other you want to shake by the 'and, as you might say. No? Well, it is so. That old coot's just gone out there's one o' the first lot. 'E ain't got no call to be tellin' whoppers; no talent, like, an' 'e's a nuisance. One day some one 'll get tired of 'im an' give 'im one for 'imself. Now there's the other sort—artists, you might call 'em—it's a fair pleasure to listen to."

"Yes," I said amiably. "I've met one or two like that."

He admonished me with a roll of one eye.

"There's a feller I'm thinkin' of this minute," he said, "an' if you'll kindly pipe down with them personal 'ints o' yours, I'll tell you about 'im."

"Proceed," I said. "I'll believe you."

BUCKLEY was 'is name [Challis began] Thomas Emanuel Buckley, and 'e was second officer on the *Baltimore,* couple o' years after the War. Little buggins of a feller, five foot up an' six foot round, with a cocksparrer nose an' the swank of—of Judas Iscariot.

First time I see 'im 'e was payin' off a taxi on the dock. Me an' Jennings, our first officer—I was Third then—was in the wing o' the bridge, waitin' for the skipper to come down from the 'otel where 'e'd been feedin' 'is silly old face with three or four other masters. Jennings spots the taxi first.

"'Ullo!" says 'e. "An' what 'ave we 'ere? 'Oo's this young party that's arrivin' so gay? Uniform, I see. Second officer. An' since when 'ave second

officers in the marine taken to ridin' in taxis, I might arsk, Mr. Challis?"

'E blows out 'is cheeks an' squints down 'is nose.

"Why, good 'evins!" 'e says, lettin' on to be astonished. "It can't be our new colleague, surely? No, no. Say not so, Mr. Challis! Not in a taxi!"

'E was a sourcastic devil, like that, Jennings was. One o' them chaps with a liver 'e didn't know 'ow to 'andle. Difficult cove, an' death on any uppity stuff from 'is juniors.

"I do believe," 'e goes on, while Buckley pays the taxi man very lordly an' comes across the road with a big suitcase in 'is 'and, "I do believe, Mr. Challis, that I'm correk an' we 'ave before us the *Baltimore's* latest pride an' joy. An' from a preliminary judgment," says 'e, very bitter, "I'd say there was plenty o' pride about 'im. Yes," 'e says, "an' I'll supply the joy, before 'e's very much older. Snff! Look at 'im, will you?"

Buckley'd come to the gangway, an' was marchin' up it like 'e'd bought the ship for 'alf a dollar an' didn't want 'er. At the top 'e looks round, sees us on the bridge an' comes up the ladder two steps at a time.

"Good evenin', gentlemen!" says 'e, touchin' 'is cap to Jennings. "Come aboard, sir!"

Jennings looks 'im up an' down.

"Yes," 'e says, "I see. An' you'll be Mr. Snugly—Ugly—what was it?"

"Buckley," says our friend. "Thomas Emanuel Buckley, sir."

"Ho!" says the mate. "Well, Mr. Thomas Emanuel Buckley, pleased to see ye, I'm sure. Trust you'll be favorably impressed with the *Baltimore,* Mr. Buckley. An' was that your private limousine I see you gettin' out of on the quay there just now?"

'E was in a bad mood that evenin', Jennings was, 'avin' 'ad words with the skipper over a little matter o' cargo stowin'. Buckley 'ad the right to call 'im down prompt for that kind o' stuff, but 'e didn't. 'E just grins all over 'is face.

"Limousine, sir?" 'e says. "Why, no. Common or garden taxi, that's all. Me own car ain't 'ere. Me cousin's usin' it for the time. One o' these days I'll 'ave 'im meet us an' take you for a nice quiet spin. The Dook of Harringay, 'e is."

Well, you might 'ave knocked me down with a feather; an' as for Jennings, I thought 'e was goin' to burst.

"Wot?" 'e gobbles. "Wot was that you said?"

"The Dook of Harringay," says Buckley. "Me first cousin, sir. Been stayin' with 'im a week or so. Nice feller—very nice, George is."

Now if there was one thing our Mr. Jennings 'ated, it was the aristocracy. Couldn't exactly call 'im a red, o' course; but when 'is liver was ticklin' 'im up, 'e was kind o' pink about the edges. 'E glares at Buckley as if 'e'd like to eat 'im raw.

"Dear me!" says 'e. "So we 'ave with us a member o' the peerage, eh? 'Ow nice, 'ow very nice! 'Ow perfeckly charmin', in fact! Honored, I'm sure, Mr. Buckley. Allow me—Mr. Challis, Mr. Buckley! Or maybe it ought to be the Hon'rable Mr. Buckley? I can't 'ardly keep tally o' these titles."

" 'Ow do, Mr. Challis?" Buckley says. "Glad t'know you. Let's see, now. It wasn't your brother, was it, was with me in Jutland? Time I got me decoration—the D.S.O, I mean. You must 'a' read about it. There was an Admiral Challis present on that 'istoric occasion."

I was just goin' to tell 'im that me brother was cook on a minesweeper, when Jennings went off with a loud pop.

"My goodness gracious me!" says 'e. "An' a D.S.O. at that? Well, well, well, you do s'prise me. But 'ow does it 'appen," 'e says, lookin' at Buckley's jacket, "that you ain't sportin' the ribbon, Mr. Buckley? Odd, ain't it, in uniform?"

"Oh, that?" says Buckley. "Why, I never wear it, excep' on ceremonious occasions, sir. Only makes others jealous, if you understand me. I 'ave to be a bit careful about things like that. There's one or two little decorations and honors an' so forth I've got, an' don't mount 'em. Looks like shoutin' too much; an' I'm a modest man, sir. They're all on the mantelpiece," 'e says, "in me Summer bungalow up the river."

'E stares at Jennings, bold as brass, and anything like the mate's face I'll trouble you to imagine. Looked like 'e was goin' to chuck a fit right there on

the bridge, 'e was so filled with sentiments he couldn't seem to express for lack of breath. I feared 'e would burst.

"Wh-why, damnation an' blue fire—" 'e was beginnin', when 'ere comes the skipper, waggin' 'is old goatee and 'is stomach in front of 'im.

Name o' Mandeville, 'e was—fifteen year in sail before 'e come to steam, an' a proper old jeremydiddler at that. 'E stamps up on the bridge in a very pompous style.

"Now, Mr. Jennings," 'e says, very fulsome after 'is dinner, "you still o' the same opinion about that cargo? Why, 'oo's this?" he suddenly said, seeing Buckley.

"Mr. Buckley, new second officer, sir." says Jennings, sour. "Quite an asset to the ship 'e is. D.S.O, sir, an' second cousin to the Earl of Hell, it seems."

Mandeville stares.

"Wot's that?" 'e says. "You been 'avin' your leg pulled, Mr. Jennings? What's all this, Mr. Buckley? Ain't bein' funny, are ye?"

"Funny, sir?" asks Buckley. "Why, no, sir. Just introducin' meself to these two gentlemen."

"Yes, yes," says the skipper. "I've no doubt. But p'raps we'll postpone any further interchange o' courtesies an' get to business. We sail on the mornin' tide, Mr. Buckley, so maybe you'll stow your traps below an' take hold. I'd be obliged if you would. Now, Mr. Jennings, this way, please."

'E turns and goes off with the mate. Buckley looks at me.

"Why, damme," 'e says, " 'e don't believe me."

"That's odd," I says.

"Wodjer mean, odd?" says 'e, very old-fashioned. "Look 'ere, don't you believe me?"

"O' course," says I. "Think I'm so rude as to question a feller's word?"

"I should 'ope not," 'e says. "I should 'ope not, indeed, Mr. Challis. I don't look for a great deal," says 'e, "but common politeness is a jewel, after all, ain't it? Like truth itself, Mr. Challis, an' that's a thing I value beyond any other, I do assure you!"

And with that 'e picks up 'is suitcase —mighty nice one it was, I noticed—an' down with 'im to 'is quarters.

NEXT mornin' at breakfast—we was well downchannel by this time—'ere comes the skipper, flyin' storm signals, an' with Jennings at 'is 'eels, lookin' like the devil on toast. They sits down to eat, but after awhile Mandeville shoves 'is cup away from 'im an' glares round at us.

"Gentlemen," 'e says, "I've a communication to make to you."

When skippers gets to talkin' like that, I don't need to tell you, 'eavy weather may be anticipated, with squalls an' frequent thunder. We looks up, expectant-like, an' Mandeville goes on, slappin' a paper on the table before 'im.

"You may be aware," says 'e, "that we're owned by a set o' so-an'-sos callin' themselves Meyer, Aaronson. I won't describe 'em further," 'e says, "for fear o' saying' somethin' unkind. But the situation is that our beloved owners 'ave made a statement for our benefit."

'E flaps the paper open on the table.

"Yes," 'e says, "a statement, gentlemen, an' the point's just this: These lights o' the shippin' world of ours wants blood out of a stone always—o' course we know that, but this time they want gravy. You'll be familiar," 'e says. "with the present condition o' trade in the ports o' South America where we're 'eaded. Paralytic's a p'lite expression for 'em, an' they've been so for months. Well, Meyer, Aaronson ain't 'appy about it. They've got to 'ave their cargoes. they say, or out we go, *Baltimore* an' all, an' there's an end to it!"

"Damn 'em!" says Jennings.

"Damn 'em as much as you please, Mr. Jennings," Mandeville says, "but if we don't come back from this trip with a full manifest, gentlemen all, they're takin' the *Baltimore* out o' commission, an' they don't mean perhaps neither. An' from what I c'n see, there's about as much chance of fillin' up satisfactory as there is o' findin' new berths when we're all on the dock."

'E scowls very galopshus at Buckley, 'oo's smilin' to 'imself gentle.

"An' when you've quite done grinnin' like an organ-grinder's monkey, Mr. Second," 'e says, "maybe you'll enlighten us what it's all about. I don't see nothin' to laugh at."

Buckley straightens out 'is face.

"Beg pardon, sir, I'm sure," 'e says, "but it's odd you should 'ave mentioned freight me first trip with you."

"Indeed," says the skipper. "An' what's so perishin' odd about that?"

"Why," says Tuppence, leanin' back in 'is chair, "if you'll let me 'ave the 'andlin' of any little difficulty o' that sort I'll fix it for you."

You might 'ave 'eard a pin drop for a minute. Then Jennings makes a kind of a stranglin' sound, but the Old Man's in front of 'im.

"Well, of all the—" 'e begins. "Thirty years at sea—thirty years—an' that's the limit so far. 'Oo the so-on-an'-so-forth d'ye think you are, Mr. Buckley, shovin' your oar in, eh? What d'you know about cargo chasin'?"

Buckley don't move.

"It just 'appens, sir," says 'e, "that cargo chasin's a subjeck I'm very long on. What I don't know, Cap'n Mandeville, in that line you could put in your eye an' forget about."

Mandeville says—

"You——you——"

But Buckley goes on, with 'is Cheshire cat grin.

"I'm not in the 'abit o' prevaricatin', sir," says 'e, "an' boastin's far from me nature. But if you'll inquire o' me last owners I think you'll find I'd a surprisin' record with them—surprisin'! Doubled their profits, I did, in a twelvemonth, an' I've got a letter from them to prove it."

"Where is it?" Mandeville croaks.

"'Angin' framed on me study wall at 'ome, sir," says Buckley. "Along o' me life-savin' certificates, an' the auty-graphed photo of the Queen o' Spain."

By this time nobody was eatin'. We was all starin' at Buckley like 'e was somethin' out of a menagerie. Mandeville rubs 'is eyes, dazed-like, an' Jennings speaks up in a 'ushed voice—

"'E's mad," says 'e.

"Mad, Mr. Jennings?" Buckley says. "Why, whatever are you thinkin' about? I'm just makin' Cap'n Mandeville an' the ship an offer o' my very considerable experience to 'elp 'em out of a difficulty. One'd almost think," 'e goes on, vexed, "you was doubtin' my word. You'll let me 'andle this little matter for you, sir?" 'e says to Mandeville.

The skipper was scratchin' 'is 'ead by now.

"Mr. Buckley," 'e says, with 'is eyes stickin' out like a lobster's, "are you perfeckly sure you're feelin' quite well? Wouldn't care to go an' lie down a bit, I mean to say?"

"Lie down, sir?" says Buckley. "Why, no. Never better in me life, sir. An' by the way," 'e goes on as if 'e's just thought of somethin', "if there does 'appen to be any little medical attentions required aboard 'ere, if any one's sick, just call on me. I've me medical papers."

"On the pianner at 'ome, I s'pose," says Jennings.

"Why, no, sir," Buckley says. "They're in the third bottom drawer o' me Looie Quinsy bureau, matter o' fact. I don't carry 'em with me for fear they'd get lost."

Mandeville loses 'is temper.

"Now you look 'ere, me joker!" says 'e. "I don't know what the devil your little game is, but whatever it is that's enough! You stop it, d'ye hear? I won't 'ave it!"

There was somethin' about 'im Buckley didn't fancy, seemin'ly, for 'e shuts up for once an' goes on with 'is breakfast. After awhile the skipper an' Jennings goes off for one o' their talkee-talks in the chartroom, an' Buckley looks up at me an' the second engineer, that's watchin' 'im 'orrorstruck, as you might say.

"Mortifyin'," 'e says. "Very mortifyin'. 'Ere am I, tryin' to do the ship a good turn, an' what do I get for it? Nothin'," saye 'e, "excep' as good as bein' called a liar!"

"Well, ain't you?"

It slips out before I could stop it. Buckley pulls 'imself up.

"Me?" 'e asks. "Me a liar? I'd 'ave you know, Mr. Third, that untruth never soils me lips. An' what's more," 'e says, "for about two pins I'd write to me pal, the chairman o' Lloyds, an 'ave this stinkin' 'ooker put off the seas. 'E'd do it, too, for me. An' moreover," 'e says, gettin' 'ot, "you just be a bit careful about 'oo you're callin' a liar too. Maybe I'll show you a thing or two I was teachin' Carpentier last year, see?"

"Very good," says I. "Now you just

listen to me. I dunno 'oo you are—great-uncle o' Lord Tomnoddy, or Mary Pickford's uncle—but I know what you will be unless you stow that kind o' talk—an' that's cat meat. So shove a sock in it, Mr. Buckley, an' don't let's 'ave no more o' these playful little exaggerations."

'E gets up.

"Very good, Mr. Challis," says 'e. "You think I'm a liar, eh? Well, you just wait an' see, that's all!"

An' with that 'e struts out, 'is nose in the air.

NEXT couple o' weeks, goin' down across the Line, some of us 'eard plenty o' Mr. Buckley. 'E didn't do no more talkin' in the s'loon, 'e'd that much sense; an' 'e kept away from the Old Man an' Jennings. But 'e was like what I was sayin', an artist, an' 'e 'ad to get 'imself off 'is chest, or bust. So after a bit, some'ow or other, me an' the second engineer got to goin' round to 'is room, nights, just to 'ear 'im lettin' off steam.

'E was worth listenin' to, too. I've struck some liars in me time, but Buckley was the first prize chrysanthemum o' the lot. Just a gift it was with 'im—a gift; an' 'e was a nice feller with it all, at that. Good seaman, too; no complaints there. An' it's a funny thing, first few times you listened to 'is ravin', while 'e was layin' on about discoverin' the North Pole with Peary or takin' a quiet an' gentlemanly scotch an' soda with King George, you didn't know whether to laugh or cry. An' then you took to wonderin' whether there might be somethin' in these stretchers of 'is, after all. An' if one was true, why not the lot? There ain't nothin' impossible, o' course. Very queer it was.

'Course, it got round. You can't keep that sort o' thing quiet aboard ship. By the time we was drawin' in to our first port every one aboard 'ad a name for 'im—Ananias. Not a bit of 'arm in it, neither, for there's ways an' ways o' callin' names. 'Owever, Mandeville got to 'ear of it an' sent for 'im. I was on the bridge an' couldn't well 'elp over'earin' the conversation in the chartroom.

"Mr. Buckley," says Mandeville, severe, "what's all this I 'ear about the men 'avin' got a pretty name for you?"

"For me, sir?" says Buckley. "That's news, sir. What is it, might I ask?"

"Ananias," says the Old Man. "I don't believe I need explain what it 'ints at. Nice thing for a ship's officer to be called, ain't it, Mr. Buckley?"

Buckley's voice alters.

"Ananias, eh?" 'e says. "Meanin' to say, Captain Mandeville, you think I'm a liar?"

"I don't think about it," snaps the skipper. "Nor any one else, either. You better curb that enthoosiasm o' yours a bit," says 'e, "or we'll be 'avin a new second officer 'ere. I'll not 'ave discipline sugared up this way."

"When I was with Jellicoe—" Buckley begins, but Mandeville flies out at 'im like a lunatic.

"That'll do!" 'e says. "Don't you come tellin' me any more o' your crazy tales! I've 'ad enough. You watch yourself, see? I'm warnin' you now."

"Oh, very good, sir, very good," says Buckley in a huff. "It ain't the kind o' treatment I've been accustomed to; but if you say so, sir, I s'pose it's all right. After all, there isn't much more to be expected."

"Wot's that?" says Mandeville. "Why, you—"

But Buckley's walked out, slammin' the door. 'E passes me, an' 'e's blue about the gills an' mutterin' to 'imself.

"All right," I 'ears 'im say. "All right, you just wait a bit, that's all!"

That evenin' in the s'loon there's another prayer meetin' on the subjeck o' cargo, conducted by Mandeville, with Jennings in support.

"Gentlemen," says the skipper, "we're now approachin' our 'appy 'untin' grounds. I don't need to remind you what's liable to 'appen if the *Baltimore* don't swing for 'ome with 'er Plimsolls well under. I'd just observe," 'e says, "that berths with Meyer, Aaronson may be all we've said they are, but they're a damn sight better than bein' on the dock. So any one," 'e says, "that's got a scheme for drummin' up extry cargo, let 'im come out with it," 'e says, "an' earn the undyin' gratitude an' blessin' of all 'ands an' the ship's cat."

'E looks down the table under 'is eyebrows.

"There's one exception," 'e states. "We 'ave with us 'ere a certain party, and I'll mention no names. I'd be wishful to convey to 'im," 'e says, "me own strong recommendation to keep out o' this. Lies," 'e says, "is one thing, an' there's nobody appreciates a good copper bottomed bit of 'umbug more than me, in its place. But this ain't the time for such pastimes," 'e says. "It's too serious. So will the gentleman referred to make a note o' that in 'is little memorandum book? On this occasion 'is services will not be required."

Buckley's examinin' 'is fingernails very careful. 'E turns pink a bit, but that's all there is to it. An' the skipper changes the subject.

Well, that was that. Two days later we makes our first port—stinkin' little 'ole it is, too; but there was times when there was a goodish trickle o' stuff comin' out of it—produce, minerals an' the like. We drops anchor, an' the skipper gets 'imself up regardless, ready to go ashore, when 'ere comes the agent off in a launch. 'E'd got a face on 'im about two foot long.

"Wot's up, Mr. Slade?" says Mandeville.

"Up!" says the bird. "Everything's up, Captain. You better sling your 'ook out o' this *muy pronto*. I've nothin' for you 'ere," 'e says.

"Wot?" says the skipper. "Why, wot the devil—"

"Embargo," says the agent. "That's what. You ever 'eard of a lousy spig called Garcia in these parts?"

"Garcia?" says Mandeville. "No."

"Well, you will," says Slade. "'E's just been elected president 'ere, on the stick-'em-up-an'-shoot-'em ticket. 'E 'ates the British worse than sin. First thing 'e's done is to clap an embargo on all exports to the U.K. You won't get a ton o' freight 'ere." 'E looks over 'is shoulder. "Yes," 'e says, "an' 'ere's the port authorities comin' out to notify you, all correck an' proper."

Couple o' little yellerskins in swords an' peaked caps comes over the side and 'ands Mandeville a paper. 'E peruses it, an' it's in English, judgin' by 'is expression.

"But—but—" says 'e to Slade, 'elpless. "I don't understand this. Stuff's there, ain't it? Mean to say we can't load?"

"Just that," says the agent. "Too bad, but there you are."

"Why, damme!" says Mandeville. "An' d'ye mean to tell me we'll 'ave the same bobbery all down the coast?"

"O' course," says Slade. "Not a doubt of it!"

"But, good Lord," the skipper says, "this is almost war!"

The agent laughs.

"Oh, no," 'e says, "just Garcia, that's all. You don't know these spiggotys. 'E'll get over it in a month or so."

"A month?" howls the skipper. "An' what am I goin' to do in the meantime, Mister? Fish for sprats, eh? I'm runnin' to schedule. An' wot's more, cargo I've got to 'ave or lose me job, see?" And 'e tells 'im all about Aaronson's.

The agent clucks 'is teeth.

"Pity," says 'e, "but there ain't nothin' to be done about it."

"Pity!" Mandeville fair dances. "Man, you don't know the 'alf of it! If I'd this Garcia 'ere I'd pull 'im to bits an' feed 'im to the sharks. Where is 'e now, anyway?"

"San Miguel," says the agent. "But there's no good your goin' down there. There's lots o' stuff, I b'lieve, but the Swedes an' the dagoes are gettin' it all. No British need apply. Besides," 'e says, "Garcia's as like as not to make up some excuse to clap you in the hoosgow—the jug, I mean. 'E's like that, the little biter."

Mandeville crams 'is cap down on 'is 'ead.

"Ho!" 'e says. "'E is, is 'e? Well, I'm a British skipper, an' I ain't takin' no such spit-in-the-eye stuff from any 'alfcaste spawn o' Satan 'ereabouts. I'll go to San Miguel," 'e says, very determined, "an I'll interview this Garcia, an' we'll see what we shall see!"

An' with that 'e puts the agent over the side, still shakin' 'is 'ead. Buckley's been leanin' on the rail lookin' at the shore. Now 'e turns to the skipper.

"'Ave I your permission to go ashore for an hour, sir?" 'e asks, respectful.

"Ashore?" says Mandeville. "Wot for?"

"Urgent private affairs, sir," says

Buckley, with about a quarter of a wink at me.

"Oh, go on, go on!" says Mandeville, in a passion. "Get out o' my sight. An' don't come back unless you want to, see?"

"Very good, sir," says Buckley. "I'll be back in an hour, sir."

An' 'e drops into a shore boat and away with 'im. In an hour 'e's back, as 'e says, an' Mandeville ups anchor an' out of it, down the coast.

'E tries another port before San Miguel, but there's the same tale from the agent there; an' what's more, a cable from Aaronson's, askin' extry special, pretty-damn-quick for a report on what progress is bein' made with the cargo business. The skipper come off blue about the nose an' sweatin' big drops.

"It's night or Blucher, gentlemen," 'e says to us. "Let's get along an' see this perishin' president o' theirs. 'E can't eat me, anyway."

Buckley speaks up, very subdued.

"You wouldn't care for to 'ave me 'andle the situation, sir?" 'e asks. "I remember when I was—"

Mandeville takes two steps toward 'im, with 'is fists clenched.

"Get out o' my sight!" 'e says, vicious. "Damn lyin', boastin', conceited, jumped up young pup! Out o' my sight with you, or maybe I'll do you a mischief!"

"Yes," says Jennings. "An' when you've done with 'im, sir, you might 'and what's left over to me. I'd relish a little personal conversation with 'im meself!"

An' 'e glowers at Buckley very lovin'; but the Second goes off to 'is quarters, so there's no more o' that.

SAN MIGUEL'S a dump like most o' these South American ports, part of it trees an' white 'ouses, an' the rest—what you see when you're dockin' there—mostly bars an' dirt. It's late evenin' when the *Baltimore* stops in the road; but there's the San Miguel agent waitin' for us, an' 'e's got the consul with 'im, a long gloomy cove with a face like a cab 'orse.

"You better clear out o' this, Captain," 'e says to Mandeville right away. "This ain't no place for you just now."

"See you in 'ell first!" says the skipper. "I want to confer with this 'ere Garcia o' yours."

"What?" says the consul. "You're crazy, Captain. 'E'll arrest you if 'e's got 'alf a chance. I know 'im."

"All right," says Mandeville. "Let 'im arrest me; an' then you c'n bail me out an' we'll raise merry 'ell about it, that's all. But I'm goin' to find out why for 'e's playin' this embargo business. I've got to. It's life or death."

"Yes, an' I know which it'll be," says the consul. " 'E's been stickin' chaps up against walls for a couple o' weeks now, an' got 'is 'and in very nicely. I couldn't save you. No, you up anchor and out o' this. Maybe 'e'll be all right in awhile. Any'ow," 'e says, "Garcia's entertainin' a visitor t'morrow, I 'appen to know, an' 'e'd be shirtier than ever if 'e was interrupted."

"Visitor?" says Mandeville. " 'Oo's 'e entertainin'? Thought 'e wasn't that sort of a sociable feller."

The consul pulls somethin' like a grin.

" 'E ain't, as a rule," 'e says. "But this time 'e's got a real celebrity payin' 'im a call, out o' respect for 'im an' 'is sterling qualities. It's all over town tonight, an' there'll be quite a doin's t'morrow."

" 'Oo is it?" the skipper asks.

"J. Warrington Phelps," says the consul. "An' in case you don't 'appen to be any the wiser, 'e's one o' the biggest financial noises in the States. Travelin' incog, 'e is, an' Garcia's rupturin' 'imself with excitement over 'im already, since 'e 'ad 'is wire couple o' days ago. Thinks 'e's goin' to float a 'ell of a bond issue, Garcia does, an' get this Phelps to underwrite it. That's about the lay, I think. Odd thing, too, for Phelps is a naturalized American. British, 'e was, one time. You've 'eard of 'im, maybe."

Well, there'd been 'eadlines about this cove in the papers all right, as I'd seen now an' again. But Mandeville's much too excited over 'is cargo to worry.

"I don't care if it's John the Baptist 'e's got visitin' 'im," 'e says, " 'e's goin' to see me!"

"Don't you be a fool," says the consul. "I can't 'elp you if you get into a stink. Not with Garcia, I can't."

"Then what in 'ell's the use of you?" Mandeville asks. "You ain't ornamental, neither. Better let me run my own

show, 'adn't you?"

Well, that finished the consul, o' course, an' 'e stalked off to the boat. Mandeville turns to the agent.

"Now then," 'e says, "what freight is there 'ere?"

"None for you," says the man. "Didn't you 'ear what the consul said? But there's the loveliest consignment o' mixed 'igh grade ores waitin' on the quay now, ready bagged, for the first buyer. Won't be a vessel in for four days, neither. Damn shame, I calls it!"

Mandeville sets 'is jaw.

"Ah," says 'e. "All right, Mister. You better get the papers ready. I'm goin' to 'ave them ores tomorrow, consul or no consul. So don't you come any more nursery maid talk with me. See you in the mornin'."

An' with that 'e stumps off, leavin' the agent starin' after 'im. I went down to me cabin an' passed Buckley sittin' readin' in 'is.

"Ho!" I says. "So you ain't takin' any int'rest in goin's-on, eh? What about lendin' a 'and to get some freight?"

"After what 'e said to me?" Buckley grins. "What d'you think?" An' 'e goes on readin'.

NEXT thing was somewhere about three in the mornin'. I'd come off watch at midnight an' was caulked down nicely, when 'ere comes a scratch at the door. Thought it was a mouse at first, but it's repeated.

" 'Oo's that?" I says, sittin' up.

"Me," says a whisper outside. "Lemme in, Challis."

I opened the door. It was Buckley, in shore-goin' togs an' rubber shoes, carryin' 'is suitcase.

"Wot's all this?" I says.

"I want you," says 'e to me, winkin' an' whisperin'. "Get into civilian clothes an' come on."

"Wot in 'ell's name for?" says I. "You goin' weekendin'?"

"Come on an' don't talk. It'll be worth it," 'e says. "That is, if you ain't afraid. I s'pose you wouldn't offend old Highty-Tighty, not for worlds, is that it?"

Well, nobody can talk much o' that stuff to me, an' there was a twinkle in Buckley's eye that meant business. I slipped into me clothes—a blue suit an' rubber shoes—an' went down the alleyway on deck. There was a boat close alongside, an' Buckley pushes me at a ladder without a word. In about two minutes we're slippin' along over the 'arbor.

"Now," I says, "put me out o' me misery. What kind of a shenanigan's all this?"

"Wait an' see." 'E chuckles. "Called me a liar, 'e did!"

There wasn't any more to be got out of 'im, an' in a bit we're ashore. Blimey if there isn't a big tourin' car drawn up before a 'ouse on the quay! Buckley taps me on the shoulder.

"Get inside," 'e says, "an' wait a minute!"

An' 'e dives into the 'ouse.

I sat there for a bit, wonderin' wot in 'ell or out of it was comin' next, when there's a 'and on the door, an' a man in a soft 'at, smart business suit an' glasses on 'is nose looks in.

" 'Ere," I says, "this car's reserved!"

"It is," says Mr. Buckley. "Very much so. Drive on, driver—you know where."

"My sainted Aunt Jemima!" I says, when I could catch me breath. "An' 'oo in the name o' creation d'you think you're s'posed to be in that rig?"

"J. Warrington Phelps!" 'e says, grinnin' in the dark. "D'jever 'ear of 'im before? An' you're me *valet de chambre* an' personal assistant—kind o' thing I've got to 'ave callin' on presidents," 'e says.

"Callin' on—" I gulps, beginnin' to catch up with this feller. "Good godfathers, whatcher playin' at? You ain't goin' to walk in on Garcia?"

"I am," says 'e. "So are you."

"But we'll be spotted an' shot at dawn. What about the other chap, the real Phelps?"

"Oh, 'im?" says Ananias. " 'E's in the States someplace, I s'pose. Anyway, 'e won't worry us. We're 'im for the time bein'."

"But what about 'is wire the consul was talkin' about?"

"Well, 'oo d'you s'pose sent that?" says Buckley, lightin' a cigaret. "What-

cher think I went ashore for that time a couple o' days ago? Wake up, Challis, an' don't be an ass!"

"Oh, lor' love a duck!" says I. "Lor' love a duck!"

I'd got a glint at Buckley by the light o' that match, an' b'lieve me 'e'd dressed the part. Gray clothes, soft 'at, four-in-'and tie an' flannel collar, an' the rubber shoes—'e looked just like a bloomin' millionaire out on a 'oliday would. An' come to think of it I was got up just right, too; might 'ave been a kind of a cross between a flunky in plainclothes an' a private secretary.

"But look 'ere," I says, "where are we goin' now?"

"Meet the train I'm s'posed to be comin' by, o' course," says Buckley. "She stops about twenty miles out, an' we'll slip aboard 'er there. Garcia'll be waitin' for us at San Miguel, I've no doubt."

"But what's the idea?" I says. "What in 'eaven's name's the meanin' of it all?"

"Meanin' of it?" asks Buckley. "Why, you don't suppose I'm goin' to let the *Baltimore* go back empty 'anded, do you? Not while a little stratagem an' tact an' so on's goin' to get 'er a freight. Besides," 'e says, "I ain't been appreciated on board, I ain't, an' I just want to show old Nasty a thing or two. Called me a liar, 'e did!"

" 'E's goin' to see Garcia 'imself this mornin'," I says.

"Indeed?" says Ananias, very sarcastic. "I wonder, now. D'ye know, Challis, some'ow I don't think this is Captain Mandeville's lucky day. No, not 'is lucky day."

Well, it was ours all right. The thing was crazy. We met the train all serene, an' 'opped aboard it into a first class compartment, just as it was gettin' light.

THE sun was risin' when we trickles in to San Miguel station, an' there, sure enough, is a fine big car waitin' for us, with a little feller in uniform an' gold lace on the platform.

"Señor Phelps?" 'e says, advancin' to Buckley with a salute. 'E spoke English.

" 'Imself," says Ananias. "President Garcia's expectin' me, I believe."

"If you'll come this way," says the officer, an' conducts us very formal to the car.

We rolls through the streets an' up to the Presidio. There's a couple o' sentries at the door, an' Buckley winks at me.

We're led into a large room, all silks an' satins an' embroidery, an' after a minute Garcia 'imself comes in. 'E's a fat roly-poly chap, with a shoestring mustache an' an eye like a six-weeks' codfish. 'E greets Ananias very affable, 'owever.

"Señor Phelps," says 'e, "I make you welcome. For you and your great nation," 'e says, "I 'ave the warm 'eart. Now you will take a breakfast, no?"

Ananias assents pretty gracious, introduces me, an' after we'd cleaned up a bit we goes out on the patio to eat. Things was very magnificent, but I did notice there were a lot o' fellers round about with pistols on their 'ips, an' Garcia 'imself carried a gun strapped to 'is knee, all ready.

'Owever, Buckley didn't take no notice o' such things, an' talks away about the U.S.A, an' various coves 'e's familiar with there—Rockefeller was one of 'em—an' millions come tumblin' out of 'is mouth like sixpences would. Garcia gets more an' more cordial, an' 'is old eye gets brighter an' brighter, partic'lar when Ananias compliments 'im on the state 'e's president of.

"Ah, señor, but yes!" 'e says, sighin' like a steam engine. "But the money, she are lacking. A loan, a little loan—"

'E 'ands Ananias a cigar, an' our friend lights it slow an' thoughtful.

"Why," says 'e, "I don't see why not, Mr. President."

I thought Garcia was goin' to kiss 'im then an' there.

"Señor, señor," 'e warbles, but Ananias puts up 'is 'and.

"There's just one thing," 'e says.

I could see 'e was comin' round to that embargo business, when there's the devil's own 'ubbub at the door, stampin' an' shoutin' and cussin', in Spanish and English both. Garcia jumps up an' draws 'is gun. But Buckley winks at me, for both of us 'ad 'eard that English voice before. Sure enough, in a minute

'ere comes six soldiers, draggin' Mandeville an' Jennings between 'em, an' a pretty couple they looked. Garcia sits down again an' shoves 'is pistol away. 'E says somethin' in Spanish an' then turns to us.

"Señores," 'e says, "I am desolate that you should be interrupt by these pigs of *Inglese.* I give orders, an' they are shot in an hour. You were saying, Señor Phelps—"

Mandeville an' Jennings 'ave seen us, an' they're gibberin' like a pair o' baboons. The skipper begins to gurgle somethin', but Garcia wiggles 'is finger.

"Remove them!" 'e says to the troops, an' they're both carted off, yellin' an' foamin' at the mouth somethin' tremenjus.

Garcia smiles, crooked enough to make you seasick.

"An' now, Señor Phelps, *amigo,*" 'e says, layin' 'is 'and on Buckley's knee, "there is the loan, the little, little loan. You wish to say something, no?"

Buckley pulls on 'is cigar.

"Yes, Mr. President," 'e says, "there's this. 'Ow about your foreign trade? I'd 'eard—it can't be true, surely—you'd severed business relations with Great Britain."

Garcia goes purple.

"*Sí, sí, sí!*" 'e says, for all the world like a soda water bottle. "I do not trade with the pig-dogs. I 'ave embargo the goods; and for their men, poof, you see how it is! They protest, and they are arrest and shot, so!" 'E snaps 'is fingers.

Buckley looks grave.

"Then I fear, Mr. President," says 'e, "there's no prospect of your loan. No, no," 'e goes on very majestical, "out of the question entirely. Unless, o' course," 'e says slowly, "you 'appened to alter your mind."

"An' if so, Señor Phelps?" asks Garcia, anxious.

"Why, that's another thing, Mr. President," says Buckley. "You take the embargo off—an' while you're about it maybe you'd better release those officers there—and I think, yes, I think I can promise you—"

'E don't need to go no further. Garcia's jumped up, an' is callin' to every one in sight for pens, ink, paper an' all the rest of it. 'E scribbles a couple of orders, signs 'em an' 'ands 'em to Buckley with a bow.

"Señor," says 'e, "I am too 'appy."

Buckley takes 'em an' looks 'em over.

"Why, so am I, Mr. President," says 'e. "An' now, if you'll just see that they're released an' informed that the embargo is off, why, I'm sure you'll find 'em very grateful. An' I'll do what I can to get your loan for you!"

CHALLIS paused and looked at his empty glass.

"Dry work, talkin'," he observed.

"But, look here," I said, when he had been duly primed, "how did the two of you get out of it?"

"Oh, that," said Challis negligently. "That was easy. We put in a very int'restin' day with Garcia, smokin' an' swappin' yarns. Then in the evenin' 'e wanted us to stay in the Presidio the night. But, no, Mr. Phelps couldn't dream o' troublin' 'im. We'd go to the 'otel. An' to the 'otel we went, in Garcia's posh car. We sent the aide-de-camp down to the station to see if our baggage 'ad turned up, an' ten minutes after we was on board the *Baltimore,* watchin' the last o' the ore bags bein' lightered out to 'er."

"And then?" I said. "What about Buckley?"

"Oh, 'im?" said Challis dreamily. "Well, o' course, Mandeville never did 'ear the last of it; an' I don't think 'e ever quite forgave 'im. At any rate, Ananias come into a little fortune a bit after an' left the sea; an' the last thing I 'eard of 'im, 'e was writin' a book about 'imself."

He paused and regarded me out of the corner of one eye.

" 'E was callin' it, 'True Tales of an Adventurous Life.' Good title, don't ye think?"

I met his gaze squarely.

"Excellent," I said. "Did he dedicate it to you?"

"Me?" Challis asked in mock indignation. "Why me? Are you pullin' my leg?"

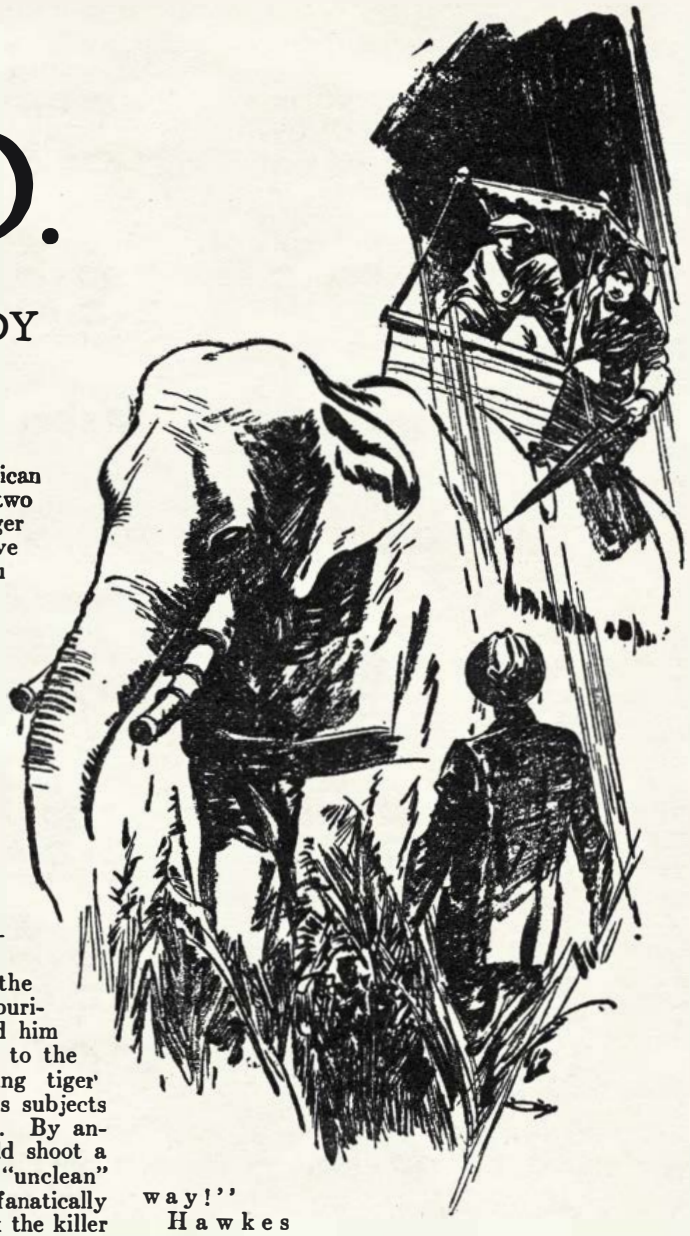
I rose.

"Far from it," I said. "It was a nice tale, Mr. Challis, and thank you very much for it."

Concluding

C. I. D.

By TALBOT MUNDY



The Story Thus Far:

STANLEY COPELAND, an American doctor in India, was interested in two things: diseases of the eye and tiger shooting. On the train to the native state of Kutchdullub he met a fat babu named Chullunder Ghose, who smiled in a most mysterious way and said that a chance to bag a tiger might be forthcoming. Copeland did not know that his chance acquaintance was one of the star operatives of the British Criminal Investigation Department, on his way to Kutchdullub to try to settle the enmity between the rajah and the priests that was making itself seriously felt by general rioting.

While Copeland busied himself with an epidemic of eye cases, Chullunder Ghose investigated the Kutchdullub trouble. It proved to be quite simple—and nigh unsolvable.

The rajah had refused to enrich the priests by undergoing expensive rites of purification; and the priests had pronounced him unclean. This would have meant little to the arrogant prince had not a man-eating tiger appeared about this time to prey on his subjects from its lair in a ruined jungle temple. By ancient unwritten law only the rajah could shoot a tiger in Kutchdullub; but now the "unclean" rajah, unless he wanted to challenge his fanatically religious people to revolt, could not stalk the killer—because it was on holy ground. The priests utilized the rajah's dilemma to urge the natives to demand that his cousin supplant their ruler on the throne.

Chullunder Ghose went to Major Smith, the British Resident, and bullied him into issuing an illegal permit to Stanley Copeland to shoot a tiger. The babu knew the American had little respect for local custom, and would not hesitate to put a bullet into a tiger, sacred or otherwise. Then he sent for Hawkes, an ex-soldier in the employ of the rajah, and ordered him to the ruined temple as if he were going to shoot the man-eater.

"But don't you dare do it!" the babu warned. "If an Englishman shot one of those sacred tigers, goodby British influence in this state. All I want is to focus the rajah's and that fool Smith's eyes on you—while I take my American in by a back way!"

Hawkes was met at the ruined temple by an old woman who said she was Soonya, a priestess in charge of the tiger. Off his guard for the moment, the ex-Tommy was suddenly seized and bound.

Soonya then curtly said—

"You have a few minutes to prepare yourself for the tiger!"

At a sign from the woman two yellow-robed priests came out of the shadows and lifted Hawkes. Then one of them whispered:

"Have no fear. We are the babu's men—F-11 and F-15. He sent us here to meet you!"

F-11 unfastened Hawkesy's arms and chafed the places where the thongs had bitten, then handed him back his rifle. There was not a hint of his being a prisoner now.

"What now, then?" demanded Hawkes. "How do I get out o' here?"

"YOU don't!" said F-11. "Did not C-3 tell you to obey us?"

"Chullunder Ghose wants information," Hawkes answered. "I'll wait outside for him. If you've any message for him, get it off your chests now."

Both men shook their heads.

"Our orders are to stay," said F-11. "We have done our work well. Soonya believes we are a pair of Kali worshipers seeking this death." Even F-11 shuddered. "Our turn is the last—us two together—after all the others have been torn and fanged into eternity. We are to keep you here until the babu comes. He said so."

Hawkes asked—

"Did he mention me by name?"

"He did not. What does C-3 care about a man's name? Nay, a man's name or his place are nothing. But if No. 1 says, 'This one is a traitor; ruin him!' or, 'That one is a true man in a tight place; clear a way for him a little!' C-3 does it. And he told us he would send a man to help us if it comes to grave need. You are that one."

"Am I? I'm in a predicament," Hawkes answered. "That's what I'm in. First of all, the rajah's Dirty Dick says I'm to come and shoot the tiger. I tell C-3 and he urges me to come, but says I'm not to shoot the tiger; I'm to find out for him what's what. But he did say I'm to dress by any one I find here who appears to have credentials; and you blokes have 'em. And you tell me I'm to stay along o' you until he comes. But I'm paid by the State o' Kutchdullub, out o' taxes, and supposed to obey the rajah—barring that I mayn't take part in politics or buck the local prejudices, one of which is that a white man shouldn't enter temples. It's a mix-up. Damned if I know what to do now. I've a mind to go and shoot both tigers to begin with."

"Nay, nay, sahib! C-3 needs them."

"What for? Is he crazy? Ever since I've known him he was just a good old fatty with a sense o' fun and twice his share of honest guts. Has he gone off his onion? Does he know about the goings on in this place? Has it made him balmy? Dammit, I'll go balmy if I don't get out o' here!"

"But in the darkness, sahib? Through a jungle such as this one? In the monsoon?"

"What do you suggest?" Hawkes asked.

"Sahib, we are pieces in the game he plays, so let him move us."

"But he has told you one thing, and me another."

"Sahib, nothing is more certain than that C-3 meant to do that, if he did it."

"Damn his eyes!" Hawkes spat in perplexity. Then he reached for his pipe and swore again when he remembered he was naked to the waist and that his pipe was in his jacket pocket, in a cell at the end of a maze of winding passages. "You two come and sit by my fire," he suggested. "It'll go out if I don't get back and heap some wood on. We can sit there until daylight. Fresh air and no skeeters. How about it?"

Both men nodded.

"All right. Up the hole," said Hawkes. "I'll go nutty if I stay here, that's a safe bet."

Unimaginative, he had not the remotest notion of the meaning of that temple, or of the fact that Moloch worship, the fires of the Inquisition, and a hundred other horrors are only new names for a basic madness that is older than history. All Hawkes cared to know just then was that stars and moon were shining somewhere outside, up above a murky wilderness of clouds that would be blown away by clean air. And he yearned for that air in his lungs—good, washed air.

"Get a move on!"

F-15 led, carrying the lantern. F-11 followed with a cat-like tread that suggested his own nerves were nothing to boast of just then.

Crowding on the man ahead, Hawkes stumbled frequently, because there were steps in unexpected places and the rising ramps between them were encumbered by the litter of fallen carvings off the passage walls. But at last they reached the sloping hole down which Hawkes had come at the invitation of the woman.

Then F-11 went up first with his rawhide looped around his waist, and when he reached the top he lowered it for Hawkes to clamber by. But it was too short. F-11, with bare feet, had a better grip on time-smoothed masonry; so

Hawkes, encumbered by his rifle, had to tread on the lampbearer's shoulders, and the two of them slid twice to the ground again before Hawkes caught the noose at last. It tightened on his hand, and F-11 felt the strain. He pulled hard. Hawkes went upward like a fish hooked foul and landed, cursing, with his chest and face in bat dirt and the stench of that rather than the fresh night wind.

He examined his rifle carefully before he found his pipe. When he had filled and lighted that he felt less nervous, but a military instinct urged him.

"Take that rock, you two, and plug that hole," he ordered.

WHEN they had done that they came and squatted on their heels beside him, and for a long time there was silence, only broken by the storm sounds or when one of them poked the fire. But at last Hawkes got into his clothes, and that broke F-11's reverie.

"Until the earthquake," he said, "and that was in the time of Akbar, or earlier, this temple was known as a place where either death or life was for the asking. There is still the healing water here, but there was fire, too, in those days. Men—aye, and women—were thrown in, at their own wish, after being taught the meaning of it by the priests of Kali. But it always was a secret, told in whispers. Men said that the earthquake ended it. But our trade teaches this, if nothing else: Evil has no end and no beginning. Vigilance reduces it, as day does night, but even day has shadows. None knows how to stay night from returning. And an evil springs up from its own roots in the very shadow of the scythe that just now mowed its stalks."

"Hell, you talk like a funeral," Hawkes objected. "What do you draw pay for? Half the world'd starve if the other half weren't in need of policing, one way or another. Clean up! Rout this place out! What's that?" he asked.

Suddenly he gripped his rifle. Wind was blowing, but the rain had spent itself and myriads of night sounds were as audible as Hawkes's own breathing.

"It was probably a jackal or a rat," said F-11.

"Shut up. Let me listen."

Water trickled, and the frogs made a floor of din on which all other sounds marched. It was impossible to see beyond the firelight, even if smoke had not watered their eyes. Hawkes whispered:

"There's some one out there who has seen our fire. He's afraid to come close before he knows who's in here."

"Surely a hyena, sahib."

"Sit still."

Hawkes took his rifle and crawled out, cursing the mosquitos. For awhile he sat in total darkness, listening, but at last he put himself directly in the zone of firelight and stood upright so that he could not help but be seen if there were eyes in that outer darkness. He could hear no outcry, no footstep. He had decided he was mistaken and had faced about to crawl back through the hole when something touched him on the instep and he almost yelled, it felt so like a snake. It gripped his ankle. He raised his rifle to smash at whatever it was with the butt, when a voice said, "Sahib!" and he checked the blow in mid-swing.

Hawkes sat. He knew his knees had given way from panic. He pretended to himself that he had sat in order not to have to raise his voice. Training and natural doggedness served him; he recovered swiftly, and the moment he could trust his voice he answered, hardly above a whisper:

"Well? What?"

"I am F-9."

"What do you want?"

"I look for F-11."

"Where are you from, and who sent you?"

"Nay, I will not answer that until I know who you are."

"Come on in then."

"I will follow, sahib."

"Watch your step, then. Any funny business and you'll wish you hadn't."

Hawkes did not catch even a glimpse of the owner of the voice until he himself had crawled back to the fireside. Even then he saw only a momentary naked shadow, because a bundle of wet clothing struck him in the face, and by the time he recovered from that surprise the newcomer's wet fingers had gripped him by the throat, from behind. It was

an iron grip, one-handed, forcing his face in jerks toward the fire while another hand twisted his arm from behind. Then his pipe fell from his teeth into the embers. F-11's hand recovered it. There was a little talk in undertones, and then the grip relaxed as it had seized hold, suddenly. Hawkes struck at random, but his fist hit nothing; and a man laughed.

"Better give a number next time, sahib. I was taught to take no chances."

"Who the devil are you?"

"A playmate of the devil! I act No. 2 to C-3. These men spoke for you, or you would now lie smothered in those ashes."

NAKED, the color of coppery bronze a little reddened by the firelight, with a chin like Gandhi's and incredible steel-rimmed spectacles above a thin nose that was almost like the beak of a falcon; sinewy, grinning, with the tip of a red tongue thrust through a gap in his front teeth, F-9 met Hawkes's stare and mocked his indignation.

"One of these days I'll teach you manners," Hawkes retorted.

"It is hard to teach an old ape new tricks, sahib. I was learning in Chicago how to keep a thumb out of my eye before your Honor knew a rubber teat from dry dugs. I have word for C-3. Do you take it?"

F-11 leaned into a cloud of smoke and touched Hawkes's knee.

"Said I not that C-3 has the key to any puzzle that he sets up? All we have to do is to obey him, and the plan unfolds. Not you—this man was the one we waited for; you obey him!"

"How do I get back to C-3?" Hawkes asked.

"Do you think there is a subway?" F-9 asked him. "I came by elephant."

"'Can he swim the river?"

"Easily, but can you hang on when the river ducks him?"

"Say, I'd hold fast to a submarine if it'd take me to Kutchdullub! Where's your elephant?"

"Down yonder in the jungle."

"What's your message?"

"It is for C-3's and no other ears. The elephant's mahout knows nothing."

"O. K. I'll deliver it to C-3—if I get through. And I'll get through, if it snows ink."

"Tell him this then, sahib: 'F-9 saw the leopard and reports that many shots have missed because the marker uses tricks that turn the arrows. But the marker is not suspected.' Please repeat that."

He made Hawkes repeat it three times, then resumed dictation.

"Add this: 'But the archer, becoming impatient for his money, took advice from F-9. He drives the leopard into greater danger, thinking that perhaps an accident may serve his purpose.' Repeat that also to me three times, sahib."

Hawkes repeated it. F-9 made him say it all from the beginning, interrupting him to test his memory. But army signaling had made Hawkes good at that game.

"Then add these words: 'The tale of the temple water worked well and the leopard comes in haste to drink it.'"

Hawkes stuck his pipe in his pocket and tied a shoelace. Then he buttoned his jacket.

"Say what it means," he demanded.

"Oh, yes, I forgot that." F-9 grinned at him again and leaned into the firelight. "Probably it means that C-3 trusted you to come and get the message, and that F-9 trusted you to take it. Are you hungry? Are you thirsty? There are bread and meat and whisky in Kutchdullub. I will show you to your elephant."

Setting his rifle at safety, Hawkes crawled out into the darkness. F-9 followed, took him by the hand and led him at a half-run, laughing at him when he stumbled. Hawkes saw almost nothing, having stared too long at firelight. He could smell an elephant before he saw it; and before he knew how near he was or guessed the meaning of F-9's shout he was caught by an elephant's trunk and hoisted, kicking, to a lightweight howdah such as sporting princes use for speed and distance.

Before Hawkes had his breath the elephant was crashing through the jungle like a landslide; he had to lie low and cling to the howdah to save himself from being brained against low

branches. Twice he almost lost his rifle. Half a dozen times he threatened the mahout with mayhem to persuade him to go slower. He could guess neither time nor distance. It was pitch-dark, and the crashing of the elephant through undergrowth silenced all other sounds—until the roar of the river greeted them.

The great brute did not hesitate. There was a sickening slide, then a splash and they were swimming in an unseen maelstrom.

The mahout climbed in and hung on to the howdah rail. They seemed to spin around in tunnels of bewildering spate, in a deafening roar, on a slippery perch that ducked them twenty times a minute. And then earthquakes, as the elephant stuck toes into the far bank and heaved himself up on rotten earth that gave way under him.

Panic in the blue mud—the mahout in place again—a blind crash in tents and overturning carts—a chorus of blasphemous cursing from awakened campers—and they were off again, toward Kutchdullub, splashing through the mud at top speed, five full tons of dark anachronism, hungry for a hot meal.

CHAPTER XVIII

"The rajah's cousin will be here at daybreak."

COPELAND sat up in the howdah, smoking, studying the way the rain ran from the roof of the enormous barn. The smell of corn and peas was not bad. Dr. Copeland hardly realized how tired he was, after so many days of incessant and exacting work, until he sat in that swaying howdah while the elephant pumped restlessly at an imaginary crank. And there was lots to think about—the Sikh's enthusiasm; Major Eustace Smith's boils and abominable manners; the riots in front of the palace; this astonishing elephant—and the babu. Most of all, the babu. It was like a dream directed by a humorous, fat showman.

He was almost asleep when a clod of earth fell in his lap and the babu called up from beside the elephant—

"Come down."

"What for?"

"Fuel! No. 1 Welsh for the non-stop special. Elephants are engines with the firebox at the wrong end."

Between them they dragged out four bags of the best unhulled rice, and the elephant hoisted them into the howdah. Then he lifted Copeland and the babu, who addressed the mahout with savage vehemence:

"You son of evil, filthy drunkard, I demand speed! Take the road toward the river."

An elephant, corn-fed and in good condition with his feet well tended, is the fastest thing on four legs. He is incomparable in squelchy going, if it does not bog his great weight. But his head bobs, and his body sways; he is as comfortless, at high speed, as a racing motorboat in the teeth of a wind-crossed tide. So Copeland presently bestowed his breakfast on the blue-black mud that smick-smacked to the suck-and-plug of four enormous feet.

Chullunder Ghose appropriated all the sandwiches. It is impossible to vomit and be vain; so Copeland began to live on obstinacy. At the end of ten miles he would have welcomed a tiger, if the brute would only guarantee to kill him.

Sunset found him sprawling on his back with his eyes shut, unable to endure the sight of a revolving universe. One hour after sunset he was sitting up and following the babu's gaze across the trees in the direction of Kutchdullub.

They had stopped on high ground, he supposed to breathe the elephant. Except for the great brute's heaving lungs there was no motion now; Copeland's senses came back to resume work almost as swiftly as they had deserted him. He saw a column of flame in the distance, a hell-red splurge below the belly of a black cloud. It looked as if a city was burning.

"Is the palace on fire?"

"No, no. Just a signal," said the babu. "It means that things are going much too much like clockwork. I shall begin to expect disaster unless something goes wrong. In important matters there are always errors. It is essential to get them cleaned up and out of the way, or else climax catches us with so much to attend to that we act like politicians chas-

ing broken pledges with a fish net. I am worried."

"Talk sense, can't you? What does the signal mean?"

"It means that the rajah has left his palace."

"Didn't you want that?"

"I insisted on it. I have used all my ingenuity to get him to do so. He has done it. Now I am afraid."

"Of what?"

"I can imagine only one way by which he might upset my calculations. I imagine that, however; and it makes me feel like being raised the limit by a fool who drew one card and may have filled a royal flush."

"I don't know what you're calculating. What could he do to upset you? Do you suppose he is out after our tiger?"

"If he isn't, we are flummoxed, sahib, if you know what that means."

"For the love of Pete, talk sense, and then I'll try to understand you."

"Sahib, if he has not had enough to drink to inflame his ego—which is to say, if he has the wind up too badly—some stray fluffy little shred of common sense still floating in the water on his brain may tempt him to disgrace his ancestors and save himself by hurrying across the border into British India. If he should do that, and claim protection against his cousin and the priests, accusing them of having caused the riots, my work would be wasted and the British would have to send for Jack the Ripper to invent a reason for not coming to his rescue—since a treaty is a treaty, even among statesmen."

"Are you framing him, for heaven's sake?"

"Sahib, he is framed in barbed wire by his own besotted conduct! It is inconvenient to abdicate him, so he must be buried. And he can't be executed, so he must be made into a hero."

"Bumped off?"

"Much more diplomatic."

"Eh? Suicide?"

"No, no. But allowed to follow causes to their natural conclusion, sahib."

Copeland shied off vigorously.

"Dammit, count me out of this. I—"

"You shall keep your moral feet dry," said the babu. *"Cheloh!"* he commanded, and the elephant resumed its squelching down the pitch-dark lane between the jungle and a wilderness of flooded fields.

COPELAND yielded again to vertigo. It made speech impossible. He lay watching the crimson cloud grow dull red as the rain descended on the fire beneath it. For another hour they swayed amid a sea of forest noises into black night. Then a shout, unmistakably English, stopped them, and Copeland sat up. An electric torch stabbed at the darkness, and the elephant was bathed in milky white light, striped with parallel lines of rain.

"Oh, Hawkesy—is it Hawkesy?" asked the babu, his voice sonorous with emotion.

The answer was equally sonorous, the emotion different.

"Who the hell did you suppose it was? Get down off there—or let me up. I'm scuppered!"

"What has happened, Hawkesy?"

"I've a message for you. Lost my elephant! He went into a panic when a buffalo got up and startled him. He crashed into the jungle and brained the mahout on a branch; he brained him deader than a doormat. Then he bogged himself in a mudhole. I jumped. He couldn't climb out. Last I saw of him was bubbles, where his trunk blew Last Post through a foot o' stuff like blue soup. He'd a bullet in him. Soon as I saw he was there for keeps I shot him; then he sank in half a jiffy. That was midday. I've been walking ever since."

"I thank you, Hawkesy!" said the babu.

"What for, dammit?"

"Oh, for getting in the way of trouble! You are a very dependable person, Hawkesy. Now I am an optimist. I think that all is well from now on!"

"Cheese it! Hoist me up there. Any liquor?"

"Catch!"

Copeland summoned strength enough to throw his whisky flask. Hawkes recovered it out of the mud, up-ended it and drained it empty. Then the elephant knelt in the mud and Hawkes stared at Copeland by the aid of the flashlight while he leaned against the

big beast's heaving flank.

"I hope that whisky wasn't all you had," he said politely. " 'Struth, but I needed it."

"I've another bottle," said Copeland.

"What is the message, Hawkesy?" asked the babu.

"F-9—scarecrow in his birthday trousseau and a pair o' specs. You know him?"

"I have known him when he wore a top hat, Hawkesy. I have seen him ride a bicycle in plus-fours. He is a very important liar. What did F-9 tell you?"

Hawkes delivered the message.

"It's as Greek to me," he said, "as algebra. He sassed me when I asked him to explain it. Does it mean much?"

"Hawkesy, yours will be the winning uppercut at Armageddon. Did you shoot that tiger?"

"No chance, dammit. Wish I had. I saw him kill and eat a bloke who asked him to! I never saw the like of it. If I'd been drinking I'd have known I had the D.T's. And I didn't shoot that woman, either; but I will, so help me!"

"F-11 and F-15?"

"On the job. F-9 is with them. It was they who tied me so I couldn't shoot the tiger."

"God reward them for it! Hawkesy—"

"What now?"

"Are you all in?"

"You're a Pharaoh, that's what you are! Do you think I'm a blinking Israelite to go on making blinking bricks for you without no blinking straw? I want supper and sleep."

"That message, Hawkesy, means that your employer has been paying a physician from Madras to poison his cousin. But because Prince Jihangupta has a loyal bodyservant, something else was substituted for the poison. And because F-9 is a persuasive liar, and the prince appears to have the stomach of an ostrich, the physician from Madras has suddenly decided on an accident. The prince is to be taken to the temple to drink healing water."

"Taking him to that place? If he's ill the mere stench'll kill him!"

"No, I have brought the smelling salts," said the babu. "But the rajah, Hawkesy, is behind us."

"He'll follow slow," said Hawkes. "Elephants give him the bellyache. When he rides 'em you'd think he was going to his funeral."

"He may be going to it, Hawkesy."

"Hey? What? Some one set an ambush for him? Maybe I'd better wait right here and warn him as he goes by."

"Wait, yes. But there isn't any ambush, Hawkesy. Don't say that you know he ordered you to shoot the tiger, with intent to sack you afterward for having committed sacrilege by entering a sacred and forbidden place."

"The hell he did! Are you lying?"

"It is as true as that I sit here," said the babu.

"Then he's a worse swine than I took him for."

"Lots worse, Hawkesy."

"And he'll sack me anyhow, if I admit I've been into the temple. Sacred places are expressly mentioned in the contract; I mayn't touch 'em."

"So we understand each other. Tell him you have heard his cousin will be there at daybreak."

"What for?"

"To destroy the tiger and to get the credit for it. You may say I told it to you. You may say I am encouraging his cousin to get up out of bed and to steal a march on him and kill that tiger for the sake of gaining popularity, and at the same time putting hooks into the priests of Kali, who will have to behave after that, or else be shown up. You may tell the rajah I am very angry with him for his several attempts to have me murdered."

"How can I speak civil to him?" Hawkes asked.

The babu leaned out of the howdah, thrusting his face into the rays from the flashlight.

"Be a good sport, Hawkesy. You have done so perfectly that I am prouder of you than a cuckoo that has laid a fresh egg in a foul nest. Don't go now and spoil it. Swallow anger for the sake of—"

"Damn you, I'll do anything for you," said Hawkes, "so cut the Sunday sermon. I'll wait here and—"

"Offer to go with him to the temple and to help him kill the tiger."

"Did you hear me say I'm all in?"

"Play the little gentleman, and—"

"What else?"

"Dogged does it, Hawkesy! Here are seven sandwiches. But drink rain—no more whisky! And expect me when you see me. I depend on you to be a true-blue British bulldog of the sort whose ignorance is priceless, and whose errors are so honest that the gods convert them into pitfalls for the enemy."

"Oh, go to hell!"

"*Auf Wiedersehen, Hawkesy.*"

"Bong swoir. And the same to you, sir. Thank you for the snifter."

Then the elephant rose to its feet like something rocked up by an earthquake and resumed the sucking, plugging sway into the darkness.

"It's a hell of a night to leave a good guy sitting in the rain," said Copeland.

"What are good guys for?" the babu answered. "To be put in paper wrappers in a glass case?"

CHAPTER XIX

"A tiger comes quick as a punch in the eye!"

HAWKES, with his head on a tree stump and his rifle on his knees, fast asleep on a fallen monument beside the temple pool, snored louder than the bullfrogs. Sun was rising very dimly through a gray mist. Two elephants swayed amid trees at the edge of the jungle. Out of sight of those, but visible from where Hawkes lay, three other elephants were almost hidden by limestone boulders. They were on the opposite side of the temple —away from the river.

"How long have you been sleeping, Hawkesy?"

Hawkes sat up, gripping his rifle. Seconds passed before he recognized Chullunder Ghose.

"Thought you'd gone and lost yourself," he answered. "The rajah's drunk. Damned if I think he'd ha' crossed the river if he weren't so bent on shooting you."

"Where is he?"

"Yonder by the elephants. There's seven servants with him, not including the mahouts. It takes two of 'em to keep the champagne iced. At that he never offered me a drink, the stinker—not even after I took an elephant and three men, crossed the river to the village, stole a rope and made a raft o' goatskins, sent that over on the elephant, and towed him across. In the dark, mind! He's killing drunk. I came over here to be out of harm's way. I don't want to have to shoot him—even in self-defense. I'd sooner hook it."

"Stand by, Hawkesy," said the babu. "I am needing all the courage I can beg or borrow."

"What's up?"

"Can you see those other elephants? Beside them is the rajah's cousin and the doctor from Madras—the poisoner. We knew about him, Hawkesy, and suspected what was up when Syed-Suraj engaged him. Why should Syed-Suraj do it? So we made sure that the prince had a faithful bodyservant, and we warned the prince what to be on guard against. Most murderers are damn fools, Hawkesy. That one actually thought that F-9 was his fellow-conspirator! Until an hour ago he actually thought that for a hundred rupees F-9 intended to push the prince over the gallery within that temple. Shortly before daylight he proposed to give the prince some little pills, to give him vertigo. Dr. Copeland has those pills now—"

"Who's Copeland?"

"U.S.A. You drank his whisky last night. He is pukka. He and I tied that doctor from Madras, and Copeland found several sorts of poison in his pockets."

"Feed 'em to him," Hawkes suggested.

"Not so. I have other uses for him."

"Use him quick," said Hawkes. "It's getting daylight. Rajah's up to dirt o' some sort. Give him about one more quart o' champagne, then watch him."

"F-9 has seen us," said the babu. "He has set a signal." He pointed to a red rag hanging from the limb of a tree amid the temple ruins. "That means he has seen us, and the tiger is in there."

"The tigers," Hawkes corrected. "One's a female. She's behind bars."

"No, she isn't," said the babu. "F-9 had his orders. If there was a way of letting out that tigress, he has done it."

"How did you know about a tigress?"

Hawkes asked sulkily. "You sent me to discover how they—"

"I could not imagine any way of getting a loose tiger to return home after killing some one, Hawkesy. So I told F-9 to look for one and, if she happened to be caged, to loose her."

"Are you drunk or off your nut, you fat fool? What's the program?" Hawkes asked.

"Evolution, Hawkesy. Causes shall create effects as usual. Are you a politician, Hawkesy?"

"Politics? I hate 'em."

"I, too! We will bring to pass a change politely, not politically. That's all."

"Don't you kid yourself," said Hawkes. "There's Major blooming Eustace Smith across the river, boils and all. There's him and Ram Dass. Ram Dass hired an elephant and brought him. They're afraid of the flood. They're setting there, top o' the elephant, afraid to wet their feet, and Smith's as mad as corns in tight boots."

SUDDENLY the babu beat his head and breast and struck clenched fists together.

"Dammit, why did I upsnoot Ganesha? Hawkesy, bear me witness: I will give the god Ganesha, for his temple in Benares, fifty rupees to convert this into good luck! Has the rajah seen Smith?"

"Not he. You remember a villager you wanted me to bring here on the elephant? He returned to Kutchdullub, on the same elephant, after its damned mahout rode off and left me. The police arrested him and gave him hell, but he escaped 'em somehow. He ran to the Residency, found Ram Dass and told him a long yarn about you being gone on an elephant to look for me and dig for treasure in this here temple. Can you beat that? Ram Dass told Smith, and Smith was furious. He fetched the villager along, so's to be able to prove to the rajah that you and I are behaving without any orders from him. And Ram Dass came along to make sure Smith pays for the elephant."

"Who told you, Hawkesy?"

"He—the villager himself. He swam the river—found me. He's as proud of being such a liar as a dog with two tails. Now he's in the temple."

"Did he say why?"

"Yes. He's looking for you—said he'd saved your life a time or two, and if he saves it again perhaps you'll hire him permanent."

Chullunder Ghose sighed.

"Oh, well, I should have known that village pig would get under the wheels and ditch the train."

"Tiger may kill him," said Hawkes.

"I hope so. Oh, I hope so! Hawkesy, the rajah is not so very drunk. I see him."

"He is so drunk that he's icy sober," Hawkes insisted. "See him? He walks like a man in a dream. And he's alone; he's left his servants. Know what? I believe he thinks the prince is in there, and he wants no witnesses! He's killing-crazy, that's what he is!"

"And he has no rifle with him," said the babu.

"Automatics—two of 'em—in holsters," Hawkes answered. "He's no good with a rifle, and he knows it."

"How does he know the way in, Hawkesy?"

"Hell, I told him. I got sick of lying, so I told him good and plain I'd been inside there. He made me tell him ten times how to find the hole that I went in by. You can see it from here; you can see where my smoke blackened up the stonework. Can he see your elephants?"

"He isn't looking," said the babu. "Hawkesy, do you know another entrance? Which way does the tiger take?"

"Do you mistake me for a blinking lunatic?" Hawkes asked. "Do you suppose I asked the tiger? There's a tunnel that he uses; F-9 maybe took a chance and—"

"Blocked it!" said a thin voice, so near in the knee-high grass that Hawkes turned two shades paler.

He looked haggard anyhow, unshaven and with dark rings under his eyes. But the babu sat unmoved. He did not even turn his head when F-9's spectacles appeared through parted grass.

"I have been waiting for you," he said. "You are almost too late."

"Time enough," said F-9. "I have blocked the tunnel to keep that tiger in. And I have loosed the tigress; it was possible to raise a stone bar from above by climbing carefully along a cornice. Now they are both in the pit in the middle, and they are raging thirsty. The tunnel mouth is only blocked with stones and branches, so they may escape unless you set a gun there."

"Any other way in?" asked the babu.

"Yes; the way that I came."

Then the babu looked wisely at F-9 and asked—

"Where are F-15 and F-11?"

"Shadowing the rajah. Acting holy. Waiting to betray to him the passages—in silence. They are supposed to be under a vow of silence."

"Let us hope he doesn't shoot them," said the babu. "There he goes now. He has gone in. Quick, come with me! Come on, Hawkesy."

Several minutes later Hawkes and the babu posted Copeland on a big rock that commanded, at a range of less than fifty yards, a tunnel entrance, on the far side of the temple from the hole that Hawkes knew. It was partly choked by fallen masonry, and the remaining space was jammed with branches.

"It's a bad light," Hawkes said, "and a tiger comes quick as a punch in the eye. So plug him if you see a tuft o' hair between those sticks. He'll bust through there as sure as Christmas. Five shots to your magazine? Good. Give him all of 'em, and reload quick—as if you were in Chicago seeing a girl home, and the bandits asking for your small change."

The babu grinned at Copeland, then he said:

"I have kept my promise, Doctor. I have given you a chance at the tiger. It is up to you to kill him. Come on, Hawkesy; let us put our prince into a hat and see what comes out. Too bad there is not an audience. I love an audience when tricks click."

"Cheese it! Take me for a clown like you are?" Hawkes retorted. "Me, I'm out o' bounds and acting foolish. What's more, I can't keep my eyes open, let alone shoot. If we come out o' this alive— Oh, hell—come on; let's get it over with!"

CHAPTER XX

"Would it not save trouble to shoot me?"

F-9 LED. Hawkes followed. Next came the prince with a repeating rifle that he fingered with an air of knowing how to use it. He was smiling, darkly handsome, fragile looking, delicate; but not so sickly looking as the doctor from Madras, whose gills were gray with dread. His hands were tied behind him, and he walked beside Chullunder Ghose. The Madrassi spoke to the babu—

"If I were shot running away, would that not save trouble?"

"I am not your executioner," the babu answered. "I am neither judge nor jury. I arrange the pieces for the gods to play with. I have set them quite a puzzle, and I think I know the answer. But it may end by your being Rajah of Kutchdullub! Who knows?"

"Bargain with me. I will give you evidence against the rajah."

"Bargain with the gods," the babu answered. "Priests will tell you the price."

The prince kept silence. He showed no nervousness when F-9 led them into what had formerly been cloistered passages and now were trash encumbered channels leading between broken walls. There was a practicable footpath, winding amid roots and débris—only room for single file, and the babu made the Madrassi walk ahead of him.

There began to be broken arches—sections of unfallen roof—until at last F-9 pulled out a lighted lantern from behind a fallen statue. Then he scrambled, almost like a hairless monkey, up a pile of fallen masonry into a dark hole in a thick wall. Prince Jihangupta went up like a front rank man into a breached fort.

Then there were interminable passages, and no one spoke because the echo of their footsteps was a solemn, horrifying noise that made the blood run cold. It sounded like the voices of the shadows put to flight by F-9's lantern. And the bats were like dead men's memories of evil, wakened for a moment's panic by a light that broke on peaceless dreams. But at last they saw

clean cells, doorless, in a carved wall representing Kali's orgies of annihilation; and another lantern; and the saffron smocks of F-15 and F-11 dimly looming in a broken archway at the far end of the passage.

F-9 spoke to them in whispers that went murmuring away into the silence like the rumble of muffled wheels. Then he beckoned. Chullunder Ghose shoved the Madrassi in front of him, pushed past the other three and joined the conference. The sweat of fear was dripping from him, but he governed his voice. The Madrassi, too, was either proof against hysteria or else beyond it, numb-brave as a gallows passenger to unknown regions, on his last march.

"Soonya?" asked the babu, making almost no sound; but the echo of it multiplied in hollow darkness.

"Soonya saw him, and she ran and summoned all her holy candidates for death. We hid the rajah in the chamber where we hid Hawkes. He is *hokee mut;* the liquor crazes him and he is not afraid. He seeks his cousin. He will slay his cousin. He will throw him to the tigers."

Chullunder Ghose lost patience.

"Never mind that. What has happened?"

"Came the noises you made, and they echo like tramping of armies all converging on a center. There is no guessing whence a sound comes. Soonya cried out that the rajah's men are here to stop the sacrifice and make an end of Kali's mercy, and she summoned them to bring their little lamps while there is yet time. Then the rajah threatened us with pistols, so we let him go forth. He is wandering in darkness."

"Lead on!" said the babu.

Then the noise of their feet became tumult as loud as the quarreling roar of a torrent that vanishes into a mountain. Shadows fled before them in enormous frog leaps, until red on masonry a torch flare lighted the darkness as they turned an angle. In a moment they were pressing on one another's heels into a stinging tiger stench and stood grouped on a platform whence the broken gallery projected over one-third of the circumference of Soonya's dreadful pit.

There was a row of little lamps along the gallery. A row of ghosts—ghouls—vultures sat between them. Perched on her pillar of marble, Soonya stood brandishing a flaring torch and shaking sparks into the pit, where four eyes glittered, opal colored in the coal-hole darkness. Soonya screamed. The row of little lamps went out as suddenly as if her scream had switched them, and she flung her torch into the pit. It spiraled, blazing red and yellow, and she followed it, spread like a homecoming harpy embracing a spirit of hell in her shadowy arms.

Then one by one, as frogs seek water when a footstep startles them, the owners of the clay lamps sprang into the dark pit. There was one scream—then a sound of struggle amid dry bones and the snarl of tigers. The Madrassi said the first word.

"Simple! Since they wished it, why not?"

Hawkes clicked his pocket flashlight, swearing.

"Just my cursed luck! It's played out, dammit!"

Suddenly F-15 and F-9 raised their lanterns and a pale light framed the broken entrance gap. It shone on an English shooting jacket, a pair of nickel plated automatics held in lean hands—and on the dark eyes and the self-admiring, sly smile of the Rajah of Kutchdullub.

"Caught you!" he remarked. His eyes were on the babu and he aimed both pistols at him. "Dog of a meddlesome Bengal rice rat!"

"My turn!" said the babu. "Oh, well—"

F-15 AND F-11 drew away their lanterns. But there was light enough still. The rajah lingered on his aim, enjoying the amazement on the babu's face, not guessing why the babu stood so still and breathless. Suddenly a slim black shadow flicked out from the darkness at the rajah's back. It bunted him off-balance, snatched both pistols from his hands and sent them spinning down into the pit. Naked, grinning, confident, the villager—a broken handcuff on his right wrist—stepped up and saluted the babu

like impudence addressing dignity.

"So now I am your Honor's friend again!"

Chullunder Ghose thrust him aside. The rajah's cousin was in shadow behind Hawkes and F-9; now the villager's black body added one more to the protecting screen. The rajah tried to step back through the opening, but F-15 and F-11 stepped behind him and prevented. He made rather a brave figure of a man, at bay, with folded arms. The babu pushed the doctor from Madras toward him.

"Your turn!"

He cut the thong, set his hands free.

"Well, well!" said the rajah. "Treason?"

The Madrassi seemed as unemotional as ice. His attitude was almost casual, his voice as calm as if he passed a good check through a banker's window.

"We are found out."

"Are we?"

"I am! And I don't choose you should get off free. So I accuse you of having promised me money to poison your cousin."

"You yelp like the *pi*-dog you are," said the rajah. "Where is he?" There were death-sounds in the darkness—groans now, and a noise of struggle. "Is he down there?"

The Madrassi went nearer a step.

"You deny it?"

"Damn you, yes, you liar!" said the rajah; and he struck him.

The Madrassi clutched the rajah's wrists and forced him backward along the broken gallery. The rajah's cousin forced himself out between Hawkes and F-9, pushed past Chullunder Ghose and ran toward them.

"Stop that!" he commanded.

But he paused and let an enigmatically lean smile linger on his lips as F-11, lantern held high, ran, too late, along the gallery. The lantern lighted the rajah's face. He saw his cousin. The Madrassi tripped him and leaned on him, bending him backward, but agony changed to stark hatred on the rajah's face as his eyes blazed at his cousin and he fell, with the Madrassi clinging to him, somersaulting down into the stinking darkness. They were striking at each other as they fell.

"Long live the new king!" said the babu.

Madness was loose. The pit became a pool of frightful tumult. Lanterns swinging from the gallery suggested unseen horrors hidden amid shadows heavier than waves of dark oil. There were yells and the guttural snarls of brutes made frantic by thirst and the fury of slaying. Hawkes's voice shouted:

"Get a rope and let me down there! Maybe he's alive yet. I can't see a damn thing."

Then the rajah's cousin began shooting at random, at nothing, each flash showing fragments of a scene like Dante's vision of the pits of the Inferno.

Hawkes snatched F-9's turban—then Chullunder Ghose's—then the smocks of F-11 and F-9; tore and knotted them into a rope and gave the babu one end.

"You and them others hang on. Let me down there—not too slow, though. I'll be done for if a tiger sees me. Maybe I can see when I get down there. Stop that fool shooting!"

But the prince refilled his magazine and had his own way. Blinding flash and echo-cannonading crack continued, even after Hawkes was swinging by a string of turbans, turning as the babu lowered him. He was clinging by one hand, with his rifle in the other.

"Can't see a thing!" he called up when his feet touched bottom.

Then the babu:

"Wait there, Hawkesy. I will bring a lantern."

F-15 and F-11 laid their weight and strength against the rope, and F-9 hurried to their aid as Chullunder Ghose grabbed at a lantern and swung himself over. He went down hand over hand, with his naked toes against the masonry, the lantern clattering against the wall. Then they were both visible, like divers under water—small, foreshortened.

Hawkes's voice:

"Steady, now. I see one."

His express spat blue-white. Stripes, fangs, a black-and-yellow phantom, with a sound like snapped wires, leaped into the zone of lamplight, fell short, clawing at a rotted skeleton, and lay still.

"Tigress!" said the babu.

His voice boomed. He sounded steady, like a big gun.

Hawkes's voice, several notes higher—

"Can you see the other?"

"He is down that tunnel, Hawkesy. I saw his shadow as he stole in."

There came the sound of an empty brass shell falling and the snap of the closing breech as Hawkes reloaded. Then again Hawkes's voice—

"Where's the rajah?"

The pool of lanternlight turned sidewise, slowly, while the babu hunted amid shadows. Then it moved back.

"I have found him. He is stone dead. I believe his neck was broken."

"The Madrassi?"

"Dead, too."

"Can you climb back? Blinking maneaters in blinking tunnels ain't a picnic."

"I can hear him, Hawkesy. He is clawing at the branches at the far end. We could see him against the daylight if we should go in after him."

"You're crazy. If he didn't kill us we'd be shot by that American."

"If we pursue him with the lantern, Hawkesy, he will break through that way. He is thirsty. He has had enough of this place. It is never wise to think the enemy is less afraid than you are."

"Have it your own way. Come on."

"And I like to let the gods have equal opportunity to swat me like the others. We are all flies on a cosmic windowpane. I am a coward, but I won't admit it."

So they vanished down a dark hole, and a tunnel rumbled to their footsteps, until two shots, muffled by distance, cracked as faintly as whips in a blustery wind. Three minutes later came Hawkes's voice, tunnel-hollow:

"Copeland got him! He had broken through. We're going out at that end. So long."

CHAPTER XXI

"He can't deny it. He is stone dead."

"THAT'S a splendid tiger. Did you get permission?"

Copeland turned and stared at Major Eustace Smith, wet, bleary eyed from lack of his accustomed sleep, and pompous as an offset to a dirty collar and a two-day growth of whiskers.

"How are the boils?" he retorted.

Before Smith could answer that, Chullunder Ghose—unturbaned, bloody from thorn scratches where he had scrambled out of a hole, abominably filthy and so weary that he rolled like a drunkard, came toward him.

"Salaam, sir," said the babu. "Did you swim the river?"

"No, I got wet, dammit, hurrying to stop your mischief! What have you been up to?"

"Earning you a ribbon!"

"What the devil do you mean, you mischief maker?"

"Listen," said the babu. "I am going over there—" he pointed— "to appropriate the champagne that his late lamented Highness of Kutchdullub does not any longer have an opportunity to drink. I am taking with me Hawkesy and Dr. Copeland. Let us hope there is enough champagne to make us all drunk. We deserve it. You will get a ribbon, and you don't deserve it; but it will look very nice on your dress suit lapel."

Hawkes strolled up, wearier if anything than the babu.

"'Morning, sir."

"You are both arrested," said the major.

"No, no," said the babu. "You are much too diplomatic. You have saved a very nasty situation, I assure you."

Ram Dass, glancing at the tiger, came and stood as close to Major Smith as tact permitted.

"Had you shot the tiger—had Hawkes shot it—had the rajah shot it," said the babu, "diplomatic priests would have immediately stirred a revolution in a teacup, and it might have been another Sarajevo. Who knows? And if you, or I, or Hawkesy, or the rajah's cousin, or a common murderer had shot the rajah, there would certainly have been a bad mess. As it is, the rajah took advantage of an opportunity to die in manly battle with the poisoner who tried to take his cousin's life; and I have no doubt that you recommended to the rajah he should look into the dirty rumors that were flying. It is certain that he acted as a consequence of what you said to him in private conversation.

"He is stone dead, so he can't deny it. And by giving your authority to Dr. Copeland, in a letter that I witnessed, to go tiger shooting, you have cleverly re-

moved a menace from the countryside without affording opportunity to priests and such-like people to accuse the British of the sacrilege. As an American, does Dr. Copeland give a damn for local prejudices? Not he! And what can be done to him? Nothing! He is diplomatically no one, and a very useful scapegoat.

"You invited him to shoot the tiger, in my presence. You requested me, in fact, to bring him to relieve your boils with just that purpose, and no other, in your mind before you sent for him. I know it. I shall say that in my confidential report."

Smith glanced at Copeland. Copeland grinned and nodded to him.

"I'm mum."

"There were a tiger and a tigress," said the babu. "The death of one is not accounted for. But I admire immensely your particularly brilliant intention to congratulate the rajah's heir immediately and to tell him, if he does not burn this temple, you will take steps—diplomatic steps, as serious as may be. It is statesman-like of you to think of telling him that if his elephants should draw some fifty or a hundred tons of fuel, such a quantity, if burned beneath the dangerously broken roof, would cause it to collapse completely and to bury evidence! I think it noble of you to insist on Hawkesy's contract being recognized and properly extended, at an increase, by the new régime. Accept my humble praises, sahib. Now, if you permit me, I will lead away my boon companions and get as drunk as quantity permits. I have my leave to go."

But am Dass interrupted him—

"About that contract for the corn—"

"Oh, to the devil with you!"

Then the villager came running.

"Am I numbered on a payroll, sahib? What next? Am I—"

"Oh, my *karma*!" said the babu. "C. I. D. is not a bed of roses, is it? Come on, Hawkesy—come on, Dr. Copeland—let us drink annihilation to the C. I. D, and politics, and tigers and to every other damn thing!"

THE END

Facing Death in a Submarine

By SAMUEL TAYLOR MOORE

RECURRING tragedies in submarine boats in recent years have struck horror to the hearts of all who read the grim accounts. The thought of being sealed alive in one's tomb—the helplessness and hopelessness of many men awaiting inevitable death in the prime of their youth and strength—sickened the imagination. How do men act under such an awful and undeserved death penalty from on high? Do they curse, do they pray, do they go stark, staring mad in the compartments of their eggshell coffin while awaiting the end?

In the black bordered history of submarine disasters only one record has ever reached the world. That was the diary of a young Japanese submarine officer, recovered in the salvaged wreck. It recited the sensations of himself and crew until an indecipherable scrawl marked the end. The calm simplicity of the entries in that diary indicate that all died without hysteria, in perfect resignation. Some say that that was because all Orientals are fatalists. Perhaps.

How have our American undersea sailors died? If records exist, the Navy Department has never made them public. But I can tell you, in the words of a survivor, how forty men on the S-5 behaved as they faced grisly death for thirty-six hours, imprisoned in a shell on the floor of Delaware Bay.

Lieutenant C. F. Grisham, a husky young salt with reddish hair and rollicking blue eyes, once told me the story of that experience. He was the executive

officer aboard the submarine.

He related the yarn with less animation than the average dub golfer recounting an afternoon's play on the links.

"A greenhorn left a valve open when we went under in a running dive," he explained. "Before we could close it sixty tons of ocean spouted inside the hull. Naturally it flowed to the lowest point in the boat which, being tilted at diving angle, was the torpedo compartment. The weight up-ended the sub.

"There we were with our propeller for a pennant and our keel perpendicular. Well, we finally juggled our ballast tanks, so we got down on the bottom all right. Then the chief discomfort was the lake that swished around our feet. We sent out some distress signals that nobody heard. All attempts to start for the surface had failed. Then the skipper decided that we weren't helping ourselves at all by lying there on the bottom of Delaware Bay. We studied our hydrographic chart. If it was accurate we were in two hundred feet of water. S-boats, you know, are two hundred and ten feet long, and we figured that by getting back to our perpendicular position our stern would just be out of water. So again we juggled ballast and finally were up-ended like a candle again.

"Up to that point every one was too busy to get scared, although I must say disappointment was general when we couldn't get started back to the surface. Then we got another bad break. The sea water sloshing around the bottom seeped into the batteries. A dozen men started sneezing at the same time. We knew what that meant. Chlorine gas! We looked in the lockers—and there weren't enough gas masks to go around. Hastily all forty of us crawled into the aft compartment and closed the airtight door. In so doing we shut off the control compartment and signaling apparatus. We were definitely committed to our upright position.

"Our only method of communication would have to be—you guessed it—pounding in code on the steel sides of the boat. As near as we could figure, five feet of our stern were above the waterline. We had some tools, and the skipper detailed the men in relays to try to punch a hole through. I don't think he really had any hope of penetrating that heavy plate, but he figured it would keep the men busy. And while they were busy they wouldn't think too much. On the other hand, if the stern wasn't above the waterline, or the tide rose over it in the meantime and we did punch through, it wouldn't be a long and lingering death.

"To make a long story short, in twenty-four hours we pounded out a hole big enough for a man to stick his arm through. It seemed good to see the sky and breathe fresh air again. The air had been getting bad. We rigged a distress signal on a piece of brass tubing, using a shirt for a pennant. You can imagine our disappointment when three ships sailed past without noticing us. The fourth ship lowered a boat.

"The Swedish skipper was off his course. He had mistaken our stern and distress pennant for a buoy and came over to identify the buoy to determine his position. However, he didn't have any tools aboard to enlarge the opening and get us out. So again we had to wait while he chased a merchantman down the coast and brought a rescue crew with an acetylene torch. It was thirty-seven hours from the time we started our dive before the skipper was taken out through the enlarged hole in the stern with all dangers past. We had flirted with death in four forms—chlorine gas, starvation, suffocation and drowning.

"Yet there was not a moment in those thirty-seven hours when any one gave outward sign of hopeless despair. Some may have felt that way, but all acted quiet and contained, working in perfect discipline even when we were all huddled in the aft compartment. No one even abused the greenhorn who left the valve open. As for myself, I'm no more nervy than the next man. It wasn't until I got back to the base and had a chance to consider all the things that might have happened that I got a little wobbly in the knees."

By HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

RUNAWAY

WITH his top woods-hand, Jeff—a gangly, weatherbeaten man with a lean, tanned face and a drooping mustache—Tolliver Radd strolled among the cattle gathered in the big pen below the barn. He regarded the animals with an appreciative eye.

Oat hay, cut in the milk stage and cured with the heads on, was spread lavishly. For two weeks several crews had been working with horses and dogs, driving in the numerous herds from their open feeding grounds in the late Summer woods to the thousand-acre fenced pasture.

Under the eye of Tolliver Radd the herds had been sifted until four hundred of the finest—the cream of all the herds—were now confined in the pen, while the others had been turned out again to their ranges. Later, when the grass began to die and the cattle became thin, a bunch would be driven in for Winter feeding. These would be sold in February, when the market was usually highest. But he liked to boast that the proceeds from these sleek cattle, gathered from the Summer ranges, were almost pure velvet.

Pausing, he drew his great body erect and contemplatively stroked the long white beard that flowed over his chest. Beneath the wide brim of his black hat wavy white locks fell to his collar. Rawhide boots reached to his knees. A mighty figure of a man, his eighty years sat lightly upon him.

"Pretty, Jeff," he said to the man beside him. "Plum' pretty is what I calls 'em. Ef the market was what it oughter be, they'd bring forty dollars a head. That there whiteface strain is beginnin' to show prominent. They've got the heft. But twenty-five dollars is the best we kin hope for, an' that's top. But that's what it's goin' to take to git this here bunch—ten thousand round, hard dollars."

P. J. Slocum, of the packing house of Slocum & Hall, was expected at almost any time now to look over the cattle. Several other bunches had been gathered by cattlemen in adjoining territories, and he had been engaged during the previous day in inspecting them; but his telegram had stated that he would meet Tolliver Radd here this morning.

"Tolliver! Tolliver, come here!" piped a thin, reedy voice.

At the barred gate a small figure sat perched on a big sorrel mare, like a wart on a fat man's nose. A straggling, sandy mustache covered the lower part of his face. His thin neck seemed almost inadequate to support his shaggy head. A battered old felt hat, frayed around the edges, was pulled tightly down on his unkempt hair.

"Light an' come in, Nate," Tolliver Radd boomed in his deep voice. "Come feast yo' eyes on a bunch of prime critters."

"Can't stop, Tolliver. Got to speak a word with you."

Hands resting on the topmost bar of the gate, the big, bearded man stood looking up at Nate.

"Tolliver, I don't know nothin' 'cept what folks tells me; but they say that there nigger of yourn, George Tenny, they got up for hog stealin', has broke loose from the road gang an' has took to the woods. They've sont after the dogs."

"The damn, thievery burrhead! Got less than a week mo' to serve, too."

"Broke loose from that there bunch of cornvicts they got clayin' the stretch on the Beckly road," Nate informed him. "They'll tack on some mo' time for runnin' away, an' them guards will sho beat him when they git him back to camp."

"Beat him to a frazzle. An' less than a week to serve. The durned, blasted fool!" As wrath kindled in Tolliver Radd, the red blood mounted into his face above the white beard. "Ef I could git my hands on him right now I'd beat him myself. I'd stomp his damn triflin' carcass out of shape."

"Ain't no use in railin'. An' when them guards gits through with him he won't need no 'tention from you."

"Don't b'lieve they kin catch that there nigger with no dogs, Nate. He'll dodge in the swamps like a rabbit or a bobcat. Git clean away. Then he'll hide in the woods till they starve him out. In course they'll git him in the long run. Now ef it was you an' me—"

"We'd know his habits."

"An' the way he'd most likely run."

"An' could head him off—"

"Nate, I ain't been on a man hunt in many a day." Tolliver Radd's keen blue eyes were alight with excitement. "We'll catch that there nigger ahead of them deppities."

"That's what I figgered, Tolliver."

TOLLIVER RADD called his woodsman to him.

"Jeff, there's some important business I must go 'tend to."

"You ain't got no mo' importanter business than this here ten thousand dollar cattle deal. You ain't a-goin' off, Tolliver."

"Got to go, Jeff. Very pressin'."

"But Mr. Slocum?"

"You handle him. Ain't nothin' complicated. The cattle's here for him to see. Jest tell him to leave his check for ten thousand. We'll drive 'em over to the chute an' begin loadin' 'em in the mornin'."

"You know Slocum, Tolliver. He's cantankerous. He won't deal with me. He'll fly off the handle. You know how fiery an' tetcheous he was when we went down to see him. He'll sho fly off the handle when you ain't here."

"Let him fly, an' be damned to him!"

"Where you goin'? What must I tell him?"

"I got to go see that there nigger, George Tenny."

"Hell, Tolliver, you know George was took up for hog stealin'."

"He's run off from the road gang. Me an' Nate are goin' to catch him."

"Tolliver Radd, you come back here!"

But already outside the fence, Tolliver had untied his big black stallion, Tempest, and was swinging into the saddle. At a mad gallop, with Nate Dingby pounding behind on the sorrel, he led the way out across the woods.

Galloping through the woods, dipping now and again to cross a marshy flat, heading swampy branches, with a stretch now and then along a woods road, they finally came to Juniper swamp. Turning to the right, with the swamp on their left, they followed a ridge thickly grown with blackjack oaks.

At last, turning to face the swamp, Tolliver reined Tempest in, and Nate on the sorrel ranged up beside him.

"Unless I've misjedged, he struck the swamp on the other side 'bout opposite here," Tolliver said in an excited whisper.

After half an hour's wait, sitting silently on their horses, they faintly heard the deep bay of hounds.

"What'd I tell you?" Tolliver said triumphantly.

"You ain't tellin' me nothin'," Nate piped. "Didn't I know that there nigger would come this way, headed for his home range?"

The dogs turned down the swamp. Their baying suddenly ceased. It was a

full five minutes before it was taken up by a single dog, who was speedily joined by the others; but they had trouble in following the trail. Again and again they lost it. Sometimes they trailed slowly, then in full cry raced down the swamp, suddenly to lose the trail again.

"That there nigger's makin' use of the creek," Nate remarked. "He ain't been raised on the edge of a swamp for nothin'. Them dogs is performin' like they was chasin' a bobcat."

"An' George is some piece ahead," Tolliver added. "More'n apt crossed out 'fo' now. Come on."

Heads bent, arms crooked to fend the branches of the scrub oaks from their faces, they swept in a zigzag course at a gallop along the ridge. Near its point, where the swamp turned to the right and lay in an elbow below them, Tolliver Radd suddenly swung back on his reins with such force that Tempest came to a sliding stop, then reared, forefeet pawing the air. Nate, stopping the sorrel just in time, all but crashed into him.

"What in the name o' hell?" he demanded.

"She-e-e!"

Raising an arm, Tolliver pointed down to the swamp. Near its edge sat two horsemen.

"Waal, they've seed us," Nate remarked as heads were turned in their direction. "Heerd us a-gallopin'."

"That there's Walt Pitts. I don't know the young feller. Walt's been a deppity in these parts so long he knows the swamps an' the folks, niggers an' all. There's a cattle trail crosses the swamp here. Walt come over this side, expectin' George to break kiver 'bout here an' take a short cut. It'd be hell now, wouldn't it, ef he was to put one over on us an' catch that there nigger 'fo' we did?"

Cupping his hands, he suddenly bellowed—

"Hey, Walt, what're you huntin'?"

The deputy raised a hand and shook his head.

LOPING slowly down the point of the ridge, Tolliver called again:

"Ef that's a bobcat you're chasin', you'll have to git in the run of the swamp to git a shot. Don't you know no better? There's a tree across the creek jest below here. Squat down by that an' you'll more'n apt git to see it.

"Howdy! How's the time o' day?" he boomed, still in a loud voice, as he drew up beside the deputy.

Walt Pitts, a tall, stoop shouldered, clean shaven man past middle age, turned on Tolliver Radd with a string of invectives.

"You damn fuzzle headed fool," he ended, "I'm chasin' a nigger, an' I taken my stand here, expectin' him to come out by me. But ef he's in five mile of here yo' whoopin' an' hollerin' has turned him back."

"Now, now, that's too bad," Tolliver said soothingly. "You will have to make a 'lowance for my takin' it for a bobcat you are chasin'."

"That there runs mo' like a bobcat than a nigger," Nate piped. "Maybe you started after a nigger an' the trails crossed."

"That's yo' nigger, George Tenny, Tolliver," Pitts said. "He broke loose this mornin'. He's been raised in the swamps an' knows all the tricks in foolin' dogs. This here is Ted Shaw, one of the guards," he added, turning to the young man with him.

"Waal, Nate," Tolliver said after acknowledging the introduction, "seein' as we done blundered into somethin' where we didn't have no business, we better be amblin' on. Where'll you try to head him next, Walt?"

"He's makin' it over to the neighborhood of his home, that place of yours on the edge of the big reedbrake. I'll go over there an' git down in the woods back of his cabin. How 'bout jinin' in with me? You know that nigger's ha'nts better than I do."

"Sorry, Walt, but me an' Nate got pressin' matters to 'tend to."

Galloping along the swamp's edge, they were soon out of sight. As Nate came up beside him, Tolliver asked—

"What's yo' idee now, Nate?"

"Titi runs into Juniper two, three mile below here. I b'lieve that where the ridge between 'em is narrowest, an' the two swamps ain't mo' than a few hundred yards apart he'll cross out of Juniper an' git into Titi. Then he'll follow

Titi down to the old corduroy crossin'. He'll turn there an' make it over the ridge todes his home."

"That's prezactly the run I was thinkin' he'll make; but he'll cross over into Titi 'fo' we kin git to that there narrow pint on the ridge, kase we've got to ride round the head of this here next branch, an' that's some piece out the way."

"He'll git into Titi 'fo' we kin head him off," Nate agreed. "But we kin ride alongside the swamp an' listen out for him. Titi ain't so very wide. When we hear him, one of us kin go in an' try to stop him, while the other rides on down to the old road."

When they had passed the point where Juniper and Titi were divided by only a narrow ridge, they rode down near the edge of Titi. Drawing in their horses, they listened attentively. Then, leaving the swamp, they galloped on a piece farther and repeated their strategy. And at last, after the third stop, they heard underbrush crashing in the swamp above them.

"That'll be him," Tolliver whispered tensely. "He's sho makin' time. You ride on to the old crossin'. I'll go in here an' try to catch him. He must be 'most wore down."

After tying Tempest, he plunged into the swamp, moving with all possible caution. Though along the edge of Titi creek the swamp would be more open, here at its outer edge it was thickly grown with bay, gum and willow shoots, interlaced with bamboo. The thorny vines tore his clothes, entangled his feet, snatched off his hat.

Sweating, mumbling curses, he smashed through to a place where the ground was marshy but the swamp more open. Here were thickly growing laurel bushes. The gums and bay trees and swamp pines rose higher, their branches spreading overhead. Stopping to listen, he heard the fugitive following the run of the creek, now splashing in the water, now crashing through the bushes. Knowing that he would have to hurry if he was to be in time to intercept the runaway, he started forward again, head up, moving more briskly.

His foot struck a small log, almost hidden beneath fallen leaves, and he fell heavily forward. It was not the first time he had fallen since entering the swamp; but now, as he lay prone, something wriggled beneath his broad chest. A piercing shriek all but split his eardrums. Small objects were scurrying in all directions, and he found that he had fallen on a bed of young pigs that had lain burrowed among leaves and straw.

An old razorback sow, gaunt from her suckling, came grunting angrily, followed by several half grown shoats and two other sows, all in a chorus of disapproval. Conscious of his danger, Tolliver scrambled hastily to his feet. The sow was arrested from charging only because the pigs went racing up to her, and she gave her attention to them.

At a deeper, more ominous note, he turned his head. An enormous sandy colored boar, grunting raucously, was trotting toward him. Along his back the boar's bristles stood up like wire. He was clashing his teeth until foam dripped from his jowls. Knowing that the boar would charge, Tolliver looked around for a tree to climb.

There was none near that would not have bent beneath his weight. The most promising was a gum some distance away, from which a horizontal limb projected just higher than his head. No sooner did his eye catch sight of this possible refuge than he set off at full speed, knowing that he would be hard pressed to make it, but planning to catch the limb as he ran under and, without slackening his speed, swing himself up.

The hog was after him in hot pursuit. Though Tolliver was doing his best and was making good time over the soft ground, he knew the boar was gaining. It had stopped grunting, but was giving vent to fierce woofs, and its teeth were clashing in a manner that made his blood turn cold. He knew that it was gaining rapidly, and he could now hear it leaping behind him with the jerky, stiff-legged run of a hog.

Almost at the tree, he was stretching his arms above his head to catch the limb, when suddenly his legs were knocked from under him as if he had been sideswiped with a pole. He felt the point of a tusk rasp the full length of one of his heavy rawhide boots.

He came down half on the hog, which was rushing under him. Before he could possibly get up, the beast would have time to turn and rip him open. Desperately flinging out an arm, he managed to grasp a hind leg just above the hoof.

Though the big hog could not now turn on him, it was so powerful that for several feet it dragged him, wallowing in the mud. Then he managed to grasp the other leg. Struggling to his knees, he held on, while the hog jerked and kicked with the strength of a young steer. At last Tolliver regained his feet.

Following their leader, the other hogs had now gathered around, and the din they were keeping up with their fierce grunting was deafening. He knew that when one of them found courage to charge, the others would follow. But he couldn't turn that boar loose, yet.

With his heavy boot he kicked the boar in the ribs, and it at once let out a terrified squeal. Twice more he belabored it, then let it go galloping off in mad flight, the drove following.

TOLLIVER found his hat, half buried in the muck, straightened it out and put it on. Then he thought of what had brought him into the swamp. George would have passed long since. Caution no longer necessary, he crashed hastily out to the hill, mounted Tempest and galloped off to join Nate at the old road.

Though the crossing was still good, the roads leading there had long been abandoned. Bushes had encroached from either side until only a narrow path was left in the middle. Halfway to the crossing Nate had dismounted and stood holding his horse.

As Tolliver dismounted beside him, Nate first stared, then doubled over in silent mirth.

"Did George stomp you in the mud," he whispered, "or did you bury yo'self like a alligator to wait for him?"

"Shet up!" Tolliver growled at him as he tried to comb the mud from his long white beard.

Presently they heard a distant crash in the brush, then another, then the slow, steady padding of running feet. Tensing themselves, they waited.

"Ef he don't come out clost enough to grab him, let him git out on the hill 'fo' we give chase," Tolliver said.

Nate nodded in agreement.

And now they could hear the breathing of the running man—asthmatic gasps, labored, sobbing, terrible to hear. Near the causeway he paused, changed his direction and came out on the old road several yards from them. Following its course, he headed for the hill beyond.

Waiting until he had started up the ridge, they swung on their horses and, boot to boot, thundered out along the old causeway.

George heard them before they reached the edge of the swamp, turned, for a moment looked dully, then started back down the hill, headed again for the swamp.

But Tempest shot ahead, breasted the hill's slope and barred his way. Again he turned up the hill; but Nate had now circled, and all but ran over him. Once more the negro turned.

"George, stop!" Tolliver Radd shouted. He had reined in Tempest and sat quietly in the saddle. "Stop, I say!"

But the negro ran by Tempest, on his way to the swamp. Tolliver whirled, swept by him, again swung the big stallion around on his haunches. George tried to change his course again; but his knees buckled beneath him and he fell on his face, gasping and sobbing.

In a moment Tolliver Radd was off his horse, bending above him. Grasping him by the shoulder, he jerked him to his feet and held him, half supporting the exhausted man.

George had lost his cap, and his striped suit had been torn by the thorny creepers in the swamp so that in places the ebony flesh came through. His face bore the marks of many scratches, on some of which the blood had dried, others still bleeding freely.

"Git up on that there hoss behind the saddle," Tolliver commanded.

"Oh, Mist' Tolliver," the negro sobbed, "doan tek me back. My wife an' baby is dyin'."

"Ain't nothin' the matter with them, you thievery rogue. Git up!"

"But they—they'll beat me an'—an' 'long my sentence fo' runnin' off."

"Waal, what else do you expec'? Git up, I say."

The negro only writhed in his grasp.

"Mist' Tolliver, fo' Gawd's sake, lemme go. Dey'll beat me to def. Please, suh, lemme go."

"An' cheat the law out of a damn hog thief?"

Suddenly catching George by the scruff of the neck and the seat of the trousers, he flung him up on Tempest behind the saddle. The stallion crouched and trembled, but at a soothing word from Tolliver stood still while he mounted.

"I knowed we could beat 'em to it, Nate," he said triumphantly. "Git holt of Walt an' rub it into him. The dogs will go to him when this here trail ends, an' he'll have to give up the chase. Rub it in good an' hard."

"I'll 'tend to that, Tolliver. You go an' git that there nigger back to the 'thorities."

WITH George holding on behind him, Tolliver set off at a gallop across the woods.

From a hilltop he could see the convict crew strung out along the road, claying the highway to prepare for gravel. From a clay pit half a mile distant dump trucks were plying back and forth. At the pit was another crew of men clad in stripes. Guards armed with sawed-off shotguns were supervising the work. Behind him George began to snivel.

"Oh, Lawdy!" he mourned. "Oh, Lawdy!"

A mile beyond, by the roadside, was an old clay pit that had been worked out. To this Tolliver rode at a gallop.

"Git down an' stay here till I git back," he ordered. "An' don't try to sneak off. Ef I have to catch you again, I'll—I'll—"

"I ain' gwine nowhar, Mist' Tolliver."

Galloping down the road to the active pit, he borrowed a pick and galloped back again.

"Take this an' go to work," he commanded as he dismounted from Tempest and tied him to a scrub oak. Then, while George aimlessly picked at the clay, he seated himself.

"What'd you run off for, with less'n a week to serve?" he demanded.

"T'ree days, Mist' Tolliver. Only t'ree days."

"Waal, that makes you mo' of a fool than ever. What'd you do it for?"

"Sam Boen brung me word my wife an' baby is dyin' wid de cramps."

"Ain't nothin' wrong with 'em. Et too big a bait of collards 'thout bilin' 'em with sody. Mandy oughter knowed collard greens ain't rally fitten to eat till the frost has fell on 'em. My wife, Sary, went over an' seen 'bout 'em. She dosed 'em up, an' they're all right."

"Thank de Lawd fo' dat," the young negro said. "Blessed Gawd!"

"What'd you steal that there hog for?"

"I ain't steal no hawg, Mist' Tolliver."

"Don't lie to me, nigger!"

"Yassuh, I stole dat shoat; but I ain't think dey gwine cotch me at it. Dat nigger I stole it from got mo' hawgs dan is good fo' him."

"Thought I'd git you out of it, ef you was caught up with," Tolliver accused. "An' I reckin I'd 'a' been jest fool enough to do it, ef I hadn't been over on the river lookin' after that there raft of logs."

"Dat's what I know, Mist' Tolliver. You done gone, an' de jedge say thirty dollars or thirty days; an' Gawd knows I ain't got no thirty dollars."

"Did you eat that there hog?"

"In course I et 'im."

"Then you'll have to pay for it."

"Pay fo' it! After thirty days' hard labor on de road, an' er beatin', an' Lawd knows how much mo' time fo' runnin' off. Uh! Blessed Lawd! Dat's de most expensivest hawg meat I ever did eat!"

"Maybe it'll learn you somethin'."

"Dat hawg ain' what dey got me doin' time fo', Mist' Tolliver. Hit's fo' havin' er pet larsum."

"A pet larsum?"

"Dat's what I hear 'em say. An' I ain't had no pet larsum, or no oder kine of larsum. Naw, suh, I sho ain'."

"Petit larceny, fool."

"I ain' had no larcemy, neither. Dis ole nigger sho got his bizniz in er jam. My cotton's already in de grass. Time I git 'way from here I won't have no cotton."

For more than an hour Tolliver sat there on the grass beside the pit. Then,

looking up, he said:

"Git to swingin' that there pick, George. An' keep yo' mouth shet."

TWO horsemen were riding slowly down the road toward them. About them trotted a pack of hounds. Suddenly the younger of the two spurred his horse forward.

"Here he is, Mr. Pitts. Here's the nigger that ran off."

Pitts reigned in his horse. He looked at Tolliver. He looked at George, now industriously delving into the clay.

"Hello, Walt," Tolliver said to the deputy. "Been settin' here talkin' to my nigger, George. His cotton's in the grass. Glad he ain't got but three mo' days to serve 'fo' he kin git back on that there farm."

"Three days!" said Ted Shaw, the young guard, scornfully. "I don't know what will be tacked on to his time for runnin' off; but it'll be a-plenty."

"What's the young fool talkin' 'bout?" Tolliver inquired of Walt Pitts. "Why, I been settin' here talkin' to George for I don't know how long. What's he mean 'bout George runnin' off?"

"I reckon we got so hot in behind him he slipped back here to this old pit," Shaw said. "But he can't put nothin' like that over on me. 'Fraid they'll beat him up pretty bad when we git him back to camp."

"That's what you'd enjoy, wouldn't you?" Tolliver said, eyeing the young man sternly.

"Not worth a damn! But it's one of the rules. Drape 'em over a barrel an' lay on with a big leather strap. Always makes my blood run cold to hear them licks an' hear 'em holler."

"Oh, Lawdy!" groaned George who, sweat running down his black face, was swinging the pick as he had never swung it before.

"An' they'd have done my nigger that way, too, I reckin, ef he had runned off," Tolliver said, the sweat suddenly breaking out on his broad forehead. His hand was trembling.

"*Ef* he had runned off!" young Shaw exclaimed, gaping at him.

Walt Pitts's eyes swept the big bearded figure, noting the torn clothing and the mud, dry flakes of which still adhered to the white beard. He looked at the scratched face of the negro, at the striped uniform which was now little better than rags. Then he turned his head and gazed off across the woods. After a space, he said soberly to the young guard:

"Ted, you know Nate insisted them dogs runned jest like they was trailin' a bobcat. He says he was right there when they come out the swamp on Titi an' quit, an' he says they acted jest like they had runned over a cat trail."

"But, Mr. Pitts, what's that got to do—"

"An' ef we come back here an' found George at work on the road, they ain't none could say he ever left it, is there? Ain't none could say the damn fool wasn't up here in this old pit all the time, is there?"

"None but me. He was in my crew an'—"

"An' I don't reckin you'll be sayin' nothin', son."

Slowly, Pitts lowered one eyelid.

At first stupefaction, then a grin, overspread the young man's face.

"Looks like we been on a wild goose chase, Mr. Pitts; an' ef we *was* runnin' a bobcat, we had a fine race."

"A good time was enjoyed by all," Tolliver said unctuously.

"I ain' had no good time," George declared as he swung his pick.

"Nigger," said Tolliver Radd sternly, "shet yo' mouth."

"Take charge of him," Pitts said to the young guard.

"Look here, son, ain't no chance of a slip-up 'bout rectifyin' this here mistaken repo't 'bout George havin' run off, is there?" Tolliver asked.

"I may seem sorter dumb, Mr. Radd; but I'm slicker'n you think. Jest leave it to me."

"An' George," Tolliver said, "you're still my nigger; but you're in the keepin' of this here young man. I want a good repo't from him 'bout you. An' ef I don't get it, you'll answer to me!"

"Yas, suh, Mist' Tolliver. Yas, suh, 'fo' Gawd!"

George at once ceased his rather fruitless efforts with the pick. He and young Shaw drew to one side. Presently his

carefree guffaw rang out.

"Ain' it de truf," he was saying. "Yas, suh, he's my white folks."

Reaching into a hip pocket, Tolliver drew out, instead of the plug he was seeking, a handful of sticky black mud.

"Walt, gimme some chewin'. When I got mixed up with a passel of hogs—I mean—oh, hell, gimme a chew."

As he bit off half the plug, he remarked—

"This here corporal punishment they hands out in cornvict camps always did go agin the grain with me."

"Me, too, Tolliver; but they say it's necessary for discipline."

"Me an' Nate has talked it over frequent. Hit would upsot me terrible to have one of my folks beat that way."

"Don't look like you aimin' for it to happen," Walt Pitts said, smiling.

"Look out! Move back!" Tolliver said suddenly, as they stood talking. "That there fool is comin' like hell after a yearlin'!"

A LOW-SWUNG roadster was coming toward them at sixty miles an hour, sucking a cloud of dust from the newly clayed roadbed. As it neared them its brakes shrieked. It ran past, but backed up, and a small, nervous man leaped out on the roadside.

"Mr. Radd," he demanded, "what sort of treatment do you call this?"

"Waal, now, Mr. Slocum, them cattle—"

"Never mind the cattle."

"Didn't Jeff tell you what—"

"He told me that you had gone off on some trivial matter, when I had telegraphed that I would meet you this morning. I just want to tell you, Mr. Radd, that you may be a big man in your county, like Jeff seems to think; but you don't amount to *that* with me—" and he snapped his slender fingers. "Out of courtesy to you, because I said I would do so, I came up here to look at your stock, and I did so. But there are more cattle than I need, ready penned elsewhere, awaiting my decision. You can just take your cattle and—and go to hell with them!"

With a last flirt of his narrow shoulders, Mr. Slocum turned and reentered his car.

"I'm goin' yo' way," Walt Pitts called after him. "How 'bout a lift? George, ride my hoss into camp an' tell Mr. Brown to have somebody take him into town."

Tolliver Radd rode slowly along the road. He hated not making that cattle trade. It was the first time Mr. Slocum had been up in this country, and he had come because Tolliver had called on him and asked him to do so. Well, it couldn't be helped. There were some things that meant more to him than a cattle trade—even more than the ten thousand dollars which the cattle represented.

"When my folks falls into trouble, they looks to me to git 'em out," he rumbled through his beard. "An' ef I falls down on 'em 'count of a damn cattle trade, mought as well go crawl in a hole an' pull the hole in after me."

An automobile honked insistently behind him, and he turned entirely off the road. A big roadster drew up beside him, and Mr. Slocum, leaving Walt Pitts seated in the car, bounced out in the road. In his hand he held a slip of paper which he gave to Tolliver.

"Here, here, what's all this?" Tolliver demanded.

"It's Slocum & Hall's check for ten thousand dollars for those cattle, Mr. Radd. Jeff said you could begin loading them in the morning. And I want another bunch this time next year. Can you have them for me?"

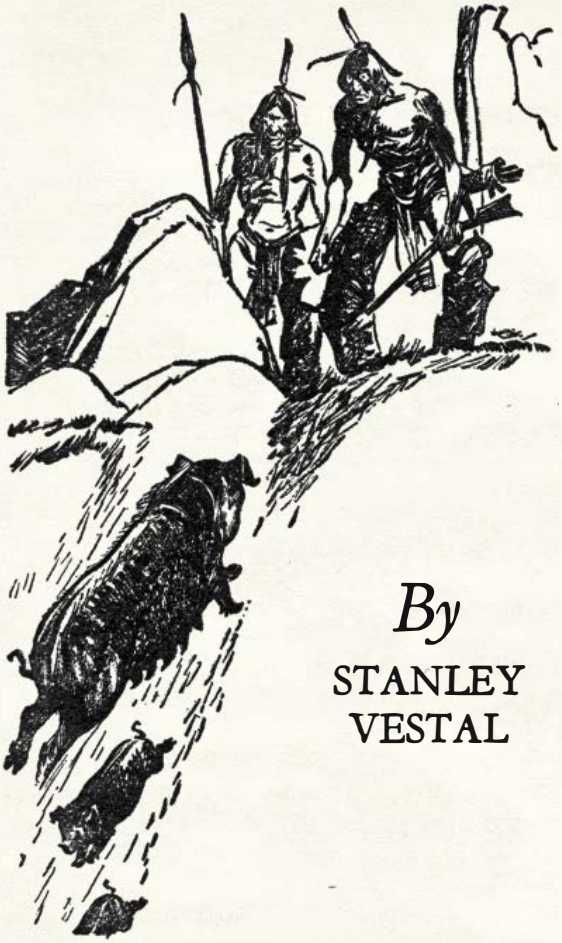
"All of six hundred head. But what—"

"And if I've said anything that I ought not, I want to apologize. Good-by."

He held out his hand, which Tolliver Radd leaned from his horse to grip.

"But how come all this here sudden change of constitution?" Tolliver demanded. "What happened, Walt?" he called to the deputy seated in the car.

But Walt Pitts, with a guilty look on his face, was gazing in the other direction.



SQUAW PIG

By STANLEY VESTAL

BLACK-ALL-OVER loved pork. And that Spring morning he was standing beside the Indian agent's new pigsty, in which was confined a well grown red sow. From time to time his eyes rested upon the animal with pride and affection. Then he turned his glance toward the potato patch, where the agent was busy planting, and his serious face grew stern again. So he stood, silent and erect, for fifteen minutes, until the agent, with a shake of the head, left his planting and came over to listen. He knew that something was up.

Black-All-Over was a strapping warrior, with all the dignity of a brave. But when he spoke, it was with visible emotion.

"My friend," he began, "we shook hands for the first time last Summer, when I and my people, the Southern Cheyennes, first left the warpath and came here to live with you. We have been friends for nearly a year now. You know, my friend, how I love to eat pork; you taught me to like it. You advised me to eat the strange foods of the white man, and I have tried to do so. More especially, I have been eating pork. Every day I came to your table at mealtime, and showed you how much I could eat, trying to walk in the white man's road as you told me to do. I never missed a meal."

That was true enough. Black-All-Over had never failed to be on hand; he came three times a day—for bacon at breakfast, for pork chops at dinner, for roast pork at supper, until the agent's wife had rebelled against the constant presence of this ravenous savage eating them out of house and home.

Black-All-Over went on earnestly:

"I not only ate all you put on my plate, but if there was any pig's flesh left on the platter, I carried it home with me and ate it during the night. This I did every day, all through the time of falling leaves. But still I was hungry for pig's flesh. And then, my friend, you said to me, 'Black-All-Over, why don't you raise pigs for yourself? Then you could soon have all the pork you wanted, right in your own teepee, without having to come all the way from your camp to my house three times a day.' I said that was good, but how could I? And then you told me that you would give me a squaw pig, and that next Summer she would have a family of little ones, and after that I could eat pig's flesh to my heart's content.

"That was good. You gave me this pig-person. I took her home to my lodge, and I have taken good care of her. All Winter she slept beside the fire in my teepee, and when I called her Sui-Sui, the way you taught me, she would come and eat from my hand. Then I would scratch her back with a stick, and she would lie down and talk to me pleasantly.

"I fed her well; I treated your pig-person like a member of my family. Now it is Spring, and she is well grown and able to look out for herself. She was always happy and running around through the timber and over the prairie, rooting and finding things good to eat until she got fat as you see her today. I was happy.

"But today I had bad news. Some one told me you had shut my pig up here. My friend, why have you done this? My pig is a good pig; she does no harm. Why have you put my pig in the guardhouse?"

The agent smothered a wry smile and pointed to his freshly made garden.

"I will tell you. I have planted potatoes over there, and every day your pig comes and roots them up. I can not stay there all day to keep your pig away. I have to leave them in the ground, and your pig roots them up. And so I have put her into this pen with my own pigs."

Black-All-Over laughed at the white man's folly.

"But, my friend, it is the nature of pigs to root in the ground. I have watched them, and I know. You must not blame the pig for that; pigs are made that way. When I have anything I wish to keep from my pig or my dogs, I put it up high, in the fork of a tree, or tie it to a pole. Then they can not get it. You put your potatoes up a tree and turn my pig loose."

The agent sighed. He knew this wild buffalo hunter could never be made to understand the arts of planting. And his words made no impression upon Black-All-Over.

"What you say sounds foolish to me," he went on. "I do not think you like my pig. But *I* do. I am the only Cheyenne with a pig-person, and I think you should remember that I am also the only one who has learned to like pig's flesh. Perhaps you are tired of my friendship. Anyhow, you must turn my pig loose. It is bad for her health to be shut up and stay in one place all the time."

The agent looked into the serious, hurt eyes of Black-All-Over. He knew him for a man of tenacity and courage. In fact, the very first time the agent ever saw him, he was fresh from the war-path, covered from top to toe with the black paint of victory. The agent was in a corner.

"Well, my friend," he said, "I am willing to turn your pig loose, if you will let me put a ring in her nose. Then she will find that it hurts her to root, and she will leave my potatoes alone."

The Indian was indignant at such a suggestion.

"You want to hurt my squaw pig and keep her from rooting? How could she eat, then? She would starve. I think you do not like my pig. But you can not put a ring in her nose. Nobody can hurt my pig-person while I live."

Black-All-Over slapped the butt of his Winchester.

"Well, then," the agent countered, "take your pig away somewhere and camp at a distance from the agency. Then she will not meddle with my potatoes. Afterward, when the potatoes are grown and harvested, you can come back."

The Indian glared at the agent.

"All right. You have given an order. You asked me to camp near the agency, and now you send me away. I will do as you say. I will go to the camp of Hump's people. He does not like white men; he always camps far off from you, but I will join him. I think you are tired of my friendship. But I told you I was going to raise pigs to eat, and I am going to do it. Nothing can stop me. And if anybody interferes with my squaw pig, he will have to kill me first. Now turn my pig loose."

Five minutes later, Black-All-Over, boiling with rage, was striding across the prairie, Winchester on arm, calling Sui-Sui, his pig-person, who trotted along behind him, grunting and shaking her ears.

Black-All-Over told his woman to strike the tent.

IT WAS twenty miles up the North Canadian River to Hump's camp, and Black-All-Over did not arrive there until seven days had passed. He found that the pig-person was slow in walking, and after a few miles no amount of coaxing would induce her to follow. They had to make camp wherever the sow decided to stop and rest; with the greatest effort, Black-All-Over made only about three miles a day.

Black-All-Over found himself the center of attraction in Hump's camp—a nine days' wonder. Few of those wild Indians had ever seen a pig, and certainly none had ever known an Indian to have one.

When Black-All-Over came walking into camp, calling, "Sui-Sui," and followed by this strange animal, the Cheyennes were all agog with curiosity and came running to watch. Their only domestic animal at all comparable to the pig was the dog, and, when they heard Black-All-Over address his lumbering follower as Sui-Sui, they promptly dubbed the creature *Ik-sui-sui-tam*—"the sui-sui dog"—which still remains the Cheyenne word for pig. Black-All-Over was delighted with the attention he received.

But Hump, chief of that camp, was not pleased. He preferred to be the center of attention himself. Truculent and crafty, he hated all rivals for public favor. Before the day was over he came to the tent of Black-All-Over and said:

"You are a stranger. I want you to know that I am chief here. If you camp with my people you will have to take orders from me."

But the pig owner paid no attention to Hump; he was too happy.

One morning when Black-All-Over returned from taking his ponies to water he found a painted stick planted in the ground before the door of his teepee. He knew what that meant: He was chosen as one of the men to go on the Spring buffalo hunt.

Although at that time the Cheyennes had come to their reservation, buffaloes were still to be found in Kansas, and their agent allowed them to make a hunt from time to time. In fact, he would have had trouble in preventing it. And now Black-All-Over was chosen—to ride all that way, clear up to the Arkansas River, perhaps beyond!

During the past week he had already formed a very good idea of the mileage which could be made by a fat pig-person. What would become of his pet on such a journey?

In those days the decrees of the council were as the laws of the Medes and Persians—final. Within living memory no man had ventured to dispute the decisions of the old men in such matters. But Black-All-Over did not hesitate. Boldly he went into the chief's tent, where the old men sat smoking, and informed them that he wished to be relieved of this duty.

"I can not go," he said. "My pig-person can not keep up with the horses. She is fat and heavy now, and the weather is warm. Such a trip would kill her."

The old men sat in silence, making no reply. Such a thing had never been heard of. Black-All-Over felt, in the silence, that he had made a dreadful mistake. But he tried to go through with it; he was a man of tenacity. He offered to pay a pony for relief from his duty—two ponies; three. He had no more to give. But the old men had no ears for his offer; there were not enough ponies to go round. It was clear that the stubborn old men never dreamed of giving way.

Hump, his red eyes glaring balefully upon the miscreant, proposed that they send the Dog Soldiers to beat Black-All-Over with their quirts. Seeing that this threat did not daunt the visitor, he added:

"If that does not knock the foolishness out of him, we can kill his pig. Then he can travel with the others."

Kill his pig! Had he been in his home camp, he thought, with his relatives about him, how the fur would fly! But now he was alone, and the chiefs were all against him.

Quickly Black-All-Over yielded. He said in a firm voice:

"Friends, I see that you wish me to go on this buffalo hunt. Good. I will do so."

Then he hurried home to make sure that his pet was still all right.

THAT hunt will long be remembered by the Cheyennes who witnessed it. A buffalo hunt was always a jolly affair. Every one was in holiday spirits as the long line of wagons and travois and pack ponies streamed out across the grass, the people horseback and afoot. But never had the Cheyennes known such laughter as on the hunt when Black-All-Over took along his pig-person.

They started before sunup, as usual, and for the first three miles Black-All-Over was able to keep the sow on her feet and moving. Owing to the fact that the march was not well organized as yet, and stragglers kept falling behind, he kept up with the procession until sunrise. But when the sun began to warm the prairie the sow grew hot and surly and persisted in stopping to rest. No amount of coaxing, no tidbits of tallow in the hand, would induce her to go farther. She lay down, panting, and there she stayed.

Hump sent back word by the Dog Soldiers that Black-All-Over must go with the party. If he could not take his pig along, he must leave her—leave her on the lone prairie, where the wolves were sure to get her. That was unthinkable, and Black-All-Over pleaded desperately.

"Listen, pig-person," he kept saying, "if you stay here the wolves will eat you. I have to go on; I must leave you behind unless you keep going. Listen to me; open your ears. It is your friend who speaks to you."

But the pig-person merely panted and grunted and lay still.

Black-All-Over was at his wit's end. But at last he decided that he would try to lead the pig-person. Borrowing a rope, he fastened it around her fat neck and began to pull. The sow braced her forefeet in the sand and sturdily refused to be dragged forward so much as an inch. Also, she began to complain in a loud voice, so that people began to gather and watch.

"Do not be angry, pig-person," her master kept saying. "I know it is hot, but we must keep going. Come on now. Do not pull back like an unbroken horse."

But for all his efforts, the sow, what with temper and weight and stubbornness, refused to budge. The wagons were rapidly passing out of sight. But the men on horseback came hurrying back to see what all the noise was about.

"Why don't you drive her, friend?" some one suggested. "Take this quirt and make her travel."

Every one was shouting with laughter.

It cut Black-All-Over to the heart to strike his pet, but he was becoming exasperated, sweating in the sun. Removing the rope from the animal's neck, he began striking her hind quarters with the knot in the end of it. This brought results; she moved. Away went the pig, bouncing along through the grass, her red ears shaking, with Black-All-Over running a poor second. For a time the pig-person followed the wagons. Then an Indian dog saw her running, and came barking. Others followed his example, and the sow, beset on all sides, dashed back and forth, dodging and squealing, trying to avoid her tormentors.

Black-All-Over was frantic; he called upon his friends to help keep the dogs from his pet. Then there was a race, which for quick turns and excitement could not have been matched by a polo game. The more the sow ran, the wilder she became, the more heated. And, finally, worn out, she lay down. The dogs circled her, cautious with this strange beast, until Black-All-Over ran and flung his arms around his pet, comforting her with voice and hand.

Then he called to his friends to keep the dogs away.

"She can not walk," he called. "I will carry her."

Stooping, he put his arms around the pig and lifted her up. Then things began to happen. Wild and intractable as she had been on the ground, she was frantic when held. It was all the man could do to keep her in his arms. She was heavy, she was scared, and her voice drowned out his words of reassurance—even the loud laughter of the warriors looking on. Never was heard such an uproar on those plains before.

Still Black-All-Over struggled on with his unruly burden. Sweating and hot, his naked chest rasped by the rough hide of the animal, his arms aching with

the constant effort to keep his hold on her, his legs tired of the heavy burden, he plodded on, surrounded by a mob of laughing boys and men, who shouted mockery or advice. Ponies crowded him, excited dogs had to be kicked away to keep them from nipping the sow, and all the time the sun rose higher and hotter. In the first mile she got free five times and raced about the grass, only to be captured again. By the time Black-All-Over reached the halted wagons he was exhausted. But he held on to the pig.

"This pig-person is terrible," he said. "She won't follow, she won't lead, she won't drive, and I can carry her no farther. I can not leave her, so what shall I do?"

"Put her in the wagon," said his wife. "Tie her legs together, and she can ride there, safe enough."

Black-All-Over considered this proposition. It had come from a woman, but it was sensible enough. An hour before he would have been angry at the mere idea of tying up his pet. But a good deal had happened during the last hour. He did not argue. They reached camp that night, with the pig-person resting comfortably in the wagon bed. And so every day they traveled, until the scouts brought word that the buffalo herds were only twelve miles away.

But the dogs had become accustomed to chasing the pig by this time, and as soon as she was set free about the camp, Black-All-Over was kept busy every moment defending her from these prowling enemies. One dog in particular, a big wolf-like creature, was always after the sow, and at last seized her by the ear and bit it off. This was too much for Black-All-Over. He ran into the tent, snatched up his bow and shot the dog through the heart. As it happened, the dog belonged to Hump's wife; but Black-All-Over did not know this.

That day the hunters rode away and made their "surround." When Hump came home to wash his feet and change his blood spattered moccasins for a fresh pair before he dined and smoked, his outraged wife told him how Black-All-Over had killed her dog. Hump waited for his chance to avenge himself.

Black-All-Over was told of this, and at once sent word that he was ready to pay for the damage. He got no answer. Thereafter he kept his pig inside the lodge, where he sat all day with his Winchester across his knees, ready to defend the sow with his life. His words were repeated from lodge to lodge—

"Whoever kills my pig-person will have to kill me first."

Hump was ready to shoot the pig, but he hesitated to go into a man's lodge and do it. There might be murder, and a murderer would be exiled forever from the camp. Hump loved his position as chief too much to bring such a punishment upon himself over a dog. And yet he thought of nothing but how to get even with Black-All-Over. And at last he hit upon a solution.

NOW that the hunt was over, the camp remained in one place while the women jerked the meat. At such a time the young men would be dancing every night, and many war stories were told, firing their hearts with martial valor. The Dog Soldiers held a meeting, and Hump proposed that it was now time to send out a war party against the Pawnees, their hereditary enemies, some of whom were known to be within a few days' ride. The Dog Soldiers knew, of course, that the agent would be very angry if he ever found out about this. But they thought they could keep it dark, get away with it, or make up some story about how the Pawnees had attacked them. They cared little for the agent in those days. Hump's suggestion was adopted.

When the Dog Soldiers went to war, it was their custom to elect some good man the leader, give him a lance and a sash, the insignia of his office, and follow him off the next day. The man who wore the sash was under an obligation never to retreat, but to stand his ground whatever happened, with his lance stuck into the earth through the dragging tail of his sash. Only a comrade could release him.

Naturally, few men cared to be so honored; and when the word got out that the Dog Soldiers were going to war, men who thought they might be chosen slipped away from camp and hid until

the war party was on its way. The office had to seek the man. And therefore the Dog Soldiers ordinarily kept their plans secret on such occasions.

But this time Hump saw to it that the news of the meeting leaked out and found its way to the ears of Black-All-Over. As chief, Hump had the right to speak first in council, and immediately nominated Black-All-Over for this dangerous duty.

Said Hump to himself:

"If he sneaks out of camp to avoid election, I will shoot his pig. If, on the other hand, he remains to guard her, he will be chosen to lead the party; and when he goes on the warpath, he will have to leave her behind, and I will shoot her all the same. Either way I get my revenge. For he can not refuse to go with the Dog Soldiers. If he does, I will suggest that they kill his pig as a punishment. And he can not take a wagon on the warpath."

Black-All-Over, though he knew the Dog Soldiers were meeting, did not leave camp. He was a stranger, a visitor; he did not expect them to choose him for leader. When four of them came to his lodge to lead him to the meeting he was taken by surprise. They came right into his lodge and told him he was elected. He sprang to his feet to escape them, but they grabbed him by the arms and took his gun away from him. They were used to seeing nominees for this dangerous honor struggle to get away. It was the custom, in fact—even when the nominee was willing to go. It was one way of calling attention to the honor of being chosen, to go struggling through the camp in the hands of the Dog Soldiers.

But Black-All-Over was in earnest. He put up a great fight, and only gave in when they promised to post a guard over his pig while he was in the meeting of the society. He was hard to hold, he had had so much practise lately wrestling with that pig-person.

To Hump's intense delight, Black-All-Over accepted the post of leader, and was formally dressed in the gaudy red sash and had the lance put into his hand. Such an honor had not come to him before, and he was not going to miss it. Seven other men agreed to go along. They were to start next morning. Hump went to bed, chuckling, sure of his revenge. Black-All-Over had walked right into the trap.

When the warriors assembled next morning, ready to ride away against the Pawnees, Hump stood by, rifle in hand, happy in anticipation of his revenge. Hump was not going, and as soon as Black-All-Over was out of earshot the pig would be at his mercy. But Hump's satisfaction was soon changed to amazement. When Black-All-Over came riding to the rendezvous he was leading a pack horse. Attached to the pack horse was a pole drag, or travois, and in the basket of the travois reposed the pig-person.

"I am taking her with me," said Black-All-Over.

Then the warriors covered their mouths with their hands, utterly taken aback. When they found their tongues again, they were loud in protest. They told him he could not go to war with a travois; that the pig-person was a woman, not fit for war; they said the pig-person would be a burden and a trouble to them all, that she was heavy and contrary, and might litter any time. They said she made too much noise, that she would betray them to the enemy. In short, they said they would not go if their leader took her along. Hump agreed with them.

But Black-All-Over merely replied:

"You have chosen me as your leader. I can not draw back without disgrace. I love to eat pork, and this pig-person was given me for that reason. If I leave her here, something may happen to her. There are many mean dogs in this camp. I am going, and I am going to take her along. If you do not wish to follow, you can stay at home."

He struck his pony with his whip and moved off, the pig complaining loudly as the travois began to jerk beneath her fettered legs.

"It would be ridiculous to follow such a leader," said Star. "People will laugh at us as long as we live if we go to war with a pig-person. I am not going."

Within a few moments the warriors had scattered to their lodges. Black-All-Over went on the warpath, alone, with jeers and laughter in his ears.

HE FOLLOWED down the Arkansas until he came to the country where he expected to find traces of Pawnees. Then he kept hidden by day, and moved by night. Going ahead in this way, he found a fresh trail and, concealing his ponies and the pig in some thick brush, scouted forward and located a camp of three teepees. They were Pawnees; he recognized their hairdress. Then he went back to his camp to wait until nightfall, when he would have a chance to steal horses.

Everything was just as he had left it —except for one thing. Instead of one pig-person, he found he had eleven! The sow had her litter at last, and Black-All-Over was so delighted that he forgot all about war for awhile. There they were —ten little pigs, pink and tender. When he got home with them, and raised them, what a lot of feasts he could make! And the best of it was that Indians did not as a rule like pork. He would eat all of those pigs himself! He could begin as soon as he got home!

Then he began to wonder how he could get home. One travois would certainly not contain eleven pigs. They would be crushed, they would be lost, they would suffocate. All at once he remembered that he was only a little way from the enemy's camp, which certainly contained three men, maybe more. And he had to have another horse to carry his pigs. His saddlehorse would never allow him to put a travois on it; it was a high-strung war horse, nervous and spirited. He saw he must capture a horse from the Pawnees.

That night he crept into their camp just before dawn, cut the lariat of a pack animal, slid noiselessly upon its back and drifted out of the camp, silent as a wraith. There was no alarm; no one followed. He rode the horse back to his camp in the brush.

Then, as rapidly as possible, Black-All-Over set to work to make a second travois. It took time to cut the poles, to make the basket of willow sticks, to weave the mesh of leather strings cut from his buffalo robe. The sun was up before he had finished. Black-All-Over was worried. It would be difficult to get away from there with two packhorses by daylight. Almost impossible.

How impossible it was he hardly guessed until he tried to put the pig-person and her little ones into the two drags.

It appeared that the mother was not in the humor for travel. When he approached her to pick her up, she grunted savagely and tried to bite him. When he touched her, she raised such a loud squealing that he was alarmed and begged her to be quiet.

"Pig-person," he pleaded, "keep quiet. We are close to some enemies. I have stolen one of their horses. It will be hard enough to get away safely, as it is. But if you keep making all that noise, they are sure to hear you, and then they may kill us. We can not run away. Please hush."

But she was unreasonable. The more he talked, the more noise she made. He decided it would be better to put the little pigs into a travois first, and then put her into the other. But the moment he touched one of her litter, she began to make more noise than ever. It seemed to Black-All-Over that her voice must fill the air for miles around. In vain his pleadings; she was beyond the power of words. Every time he picked up a piglet, she struggled and squealed, and the piglets squealed back, and the air was rent by their chorus. At last he got the piglets into their travois and turned his attention to the mother.

But now, with the wailing of her little ones in her ears, the sow was frantic. Tied as she was, she floundered about, swinging her head from side to side and trying to rip him with her teeth, mad as a bear deprived of her cubs. She soon had him bleeding, and he began to realize that this pig-person was a dangerous animal. It was impossible for him to take her up, to carry her to the travois. And the noise grew louder every moment.

Poor Black-All-Over wiped the sweat and blood from his skin and stood panting. At last he had an inspiration. He would untie her. Then she could follow the pigs, and all his difficulties would be over. He was sure she would not try to leave him while the little ones were calling. Leaving his weapons on his saddle, he went to work.

Gingerly he went to her, and with his knife slit the thongs that bound her feet together. Instantly she was on her feet. But before he could reach his horse, the nervous animal shied away from the sow, now close on the man's heels. She scraped his leg with her sharp teeth, and he barely saved himself from falling by a quick leap to the side. Again she came charging, uttering her war cry. In despair he flung himself upon her, caught a leg and an ear and threw her upon her side, where she lay kicking and squealing. And in that position the Pawnees found him.

BEFORE he saw them they were already within the little clearing. There were three of them. They had read his trail, and they knew he was alone. Confident in their numbers, they rushed forward, giving their war cry. Their leader, a seasoned warrior, made straight for Black-All-Over, brandishing a triangular war club, with three butcher knives set in the business end. The other two, younger men, ran to secure the horses.

Black-All-Over was unarmed. His Winchester and lance hung from the horn of his saddle on the war-horse, and his knife lay where he had dropped it when the sow attacked him. Helpless and startled, he sprang up, released the sow and jumped backward from under the upraised war club. Already the big Pawnee was upon him, his painted face full of triumph. Black-All-Over could not avoid him; there was not time.

But the sow, scrambling to her feet, lunged away toward her squeaking brood, and her heavy body, launched at full speed, took the oncoming Pawnee squarely on the shins. Down he went, and before he could roll over the Cheyenne was on his back, trying to grab the haft of the knife in his belt. The Pawnee was big and strong, but Black-All-Over found him not half so hard to handle as that savage pig-person. The two of them rolled and wrestled on the ground. Both were desperate.

The sow was plunging after her young. For as the two Pawnees ran toward the horses, the animals became frightened by their sudden movements, shied away, and the travois containing the litter of pigs was upturned against a tree.

Three of the little pigs fell out, crying pitifully. Instantly the sow was on the scene. Frantic, she charged the nearest Pawnee, whose naked legs stood among her young. Before he saw her, her sharp teeth had raked him, bringing the bright red blood over his moccasins. With a yelp of pain and alarm, he turned, just as she ripped open his other leg. Maybe that Pawnee knew pigs, having seen them at the Pawnee agency. Maybe he saw that, having hoofs, she could not climb. Maybe he acted without any thought whatever. At any rate, he did not stand there. Dropping his rifle, he leaped for the cottonwood bough above his head, and pulled himself up into the tree.

The third Pawnee, hearing his comrade yelling, turned from the horse to see what was up, and trod on one of the young pigs. He too felt the teeth of the fierce sow and, following the example of his comrade, he clambered hastily up into the tree, his filled quiver on his back.

By that time the fight on the ground was finished. Black-All-Over might be inexpert in pig culture, but he was no novice on the warpath. From the first he had had the advantage, thanks to the pig-person, and he soon gained possession of the Pawnee's knife. As his hand closed upon its haft, he drew out the blade, stabbed his enemy twice, and stood up. The Pawnee did not stir.

By the time the two men in the tree recovered their wits and could turn their attention from the pig to the Cheyenne, Black-All-Over had run to their cottonwood, picked up the rifle, and was taking aim at the man who had dropped it. The Pawnee tried to avoid the bullet, tried to interpose the thin trunk of the tree between himself and the muzzle of the gun. But the branches hindered his movements; he was too late. Black-All-Over fired. The Pawnee slowly released his hold and tumbled backward to the earth.

That rifle was a single shot breechloader. It was useless now, and the other Pawnee had a bow in his quiver. Black-All-Over flung down the rifle and sprinted to his horse, jerking out his Winchester from its fringed leather cov-

ering. Meanwhile the lone Pawnee in the tree realized his hopeless position there. He swung himself down on the side opposite the sow and dashed into the brush. There, under cover of the willows, he unlimbered his bow and arrows and prepared to fight. Black-All-Over could see him there, and ran toward him.

The Pawnee let fly a shaft. Black-All-Over dodged, but the aim was true. The arrow passed through the flesh of his bare shoulder. He felt the warm blood running over his arm, and some of the fight went out of him. He took cover behind a tree trunk and watched for a chance at his enemy.

The Pawnee, now that the Cheyenne was out of sight, grew bolder. He was angry; he wanted to do all the harm he could. There was the sow who had caused all the trouble. Busy with her young, she could not understand her danger. The Pawnee's arrow sped across the clearing and stuck in her fat ham. She let out a pitiful squeal.

Black-All-Over turned at the sound and saw what was done. He was furious. If she died now, all her little pigs would die with her; he would never have any pork again. Forgetting his wound, heedless of danger, he dashed from cover, straight at the Pawnee, firing as he ran. The Pawnee saw him coming and let fly one random arrow. But he had no heart for such a contest; he had just seen his two comrades die. He turned and ran. After a chase of twenty yards through the hampering brush, Black-All-Over saw him tumble into the weeds and lie still.

Now his pig-person claimed all his attention. Aroused as he was, he would not let her get the best of him. Catching her by her one good ear and a hind leg, he got astride her prostrate carcass, lashed her feet together, drew out the arrow and dressed her wound. It was not dangerous, he decided. Having loaded her into the travois, he picked up the piglets and put them back. Then, riding his war horse and leading the packhorses, he set out for home.

On the way he rode straight through Hump's camp, singing a song of triumph, loudly bragging of his success and the success of his Sui-Sui. The Dog Soldiers, now sheepish and subdued, listened with amazement to his story and marveled. For from the curly tail of the red sow there dangled three fresh scalps and an eagle feather! They invited Black-All-Over to stop and dance, but he would not. Instead, he lectured them.

"This pig-person, whom you laughed at, is a warrior, friends. She is only a woman, it is true, but she was braver than I was, for she struck the enemy first. We are going home now. You are only a lot of wild Indians; you are not civilized like me. You do not know how to appreciate a pig-person. I do not think she would be happy here among you."

Loading his wife, his pigs and his tent into the family wagon, Black-All-Over set out for the south.

One morning, somewhat later, the Indian agent knew that Black-All-Over had come home. He had just counted eleven pigs in his potato patch.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A NOTE on crooked gambling devices, by Stephen Allen Reynolds, whose story, "Double Squeeze," appears in this issue:

Carmel, California

It may be of interest to Alaskan old-timers to know that in the fictitious town of Whiskeyville I have visualized a settlement at the mouth of Little Munook Creek. I tarried there in October of 1897, having got stuck on the Yukon Flats while attempting to get through to the Klondike.

Of more general interest perhaps is the subject of unfair gambling. I am no gambler in a professional way, nor despite near-friendships with gentlemen of the fraternity have any of them ever taken me fully into their confidence; yet I've been made to learn that any man who goes up against a banking game is a sucker. I say without hesitation that the only square roulette in the world is that played at Monte Carlo.

With a Single O and trued wheels a fellow has a slight chance to beat the percentage for a while. In the end it eats him up, and the limit prevents his doubling beyond certain points to recoup his losses. Here in the States we have both the Single O and Double OO against us. And as if this percentage were not enough, they have rubber "bouncers" to slip into the pockets and electric controls to whip the loaded ball wherever they wish. This may be hotly denied. The claim may be set up that *most* roulette wheels in this country are "fair," depending on percentage alone for profit. Take it or leave it, whichever you wish, *but keep away from all wheels and banking games,* unless you have will power enough to confine your betting to a white chip or two merely for the sake of the excitement and atmosphere of the gaming tables.

THE "squeeze" spindles are one of the older and better known devices for fleecing the unwary. Many patterns were on the market, some of them so ingenious and mechanically perfect that you could really take 'em apart without discovering the "brake" or "squeeze". And the same applies to faro boxes for a game no longer fashionable. Faro boxes for crooked dealing have in some instances been handmade at a cost of $1,500. A regulation box used to cost $8.00. "Brace" boxes were priced commencing at $15, a "sand-tell" of fair workmanship costing around $85.

Electrically controlled transparent dice are the cleverest feature of our day. The dice, absolutely transparent, contain an amalgam of some sort sensitive to a magnetic current. You step up to a cigar counter and roll out your dice. You may make five threes, for instance. Under the counter is a switch-controlled magnet, concealed maybe in the moistener. The dealer rolls, simultaneously stepping on the switch, and presto! the magnetic pull comes through rubber and glass and what-not, and you're topped by five fives.

Cards may be cut "humps," "wedges," or for "strippers," according to the game to be played. Certain cards are separated from a pack, the remainder placed in a vise or press, and sanded or shaved slightly smaller at the ends or sides. Now the selected cards are replaced, after themselves being humped or wedged. If wedged, they may be stripped from the pack and laid on top. If humped, and you're cutting for the high-card, you'll be out-cut unless you know where to lift.

—STEPHEN ALLEN REYNOLDS

THE American version of the blowgun, still used among the Cherokees of Carolina, as described for us by Paul M. Fink, of the Southern Mountains section of Ask Adventure:

Jonesboro, Tennessee

In the Ask Adventure section in the Feb. 1st issue I read with great interest Gordon MacCreagh's reply to J. W. D. Chesney *in re* blowguns, and am prompted to add my bit about this same weapon as used by the Cherokee Indians living on the Carolina slopes of the Great Smoky Mountains, probably the only place in the United States where the blowgun is in use today.

The Cherokee gun varies in length from 8 to 10 feet, and is made of a single length of cane, with the joints burned out. Formerly this was done with red hot pebbles, but now a long wire is used; and then the inside smoothed with a home-made tin instrument looking for all the world like a nutmeg grater fastened on the end of a long, thin stick. My own specimen lacks an inch or two of nine feet, and bears the patina of certain age. The bore at the larger end is five-eighths of an inch and the smaller seven-sixteenths.

WITH this is used a three-sixteenths hardwood dart two feet long, feathered for four or five inches at its rear end with thistledown, spirally lashed to the shaft, the completed projectile resembling a flute cleaner more than anything else. The point is sometimes fire-hardened, often not, and is never poisoned.

In the old days this gun was widely used for hunting birds and small game, and the Indians attained remarkable accuracy, according to Henry Timberlake, who in 1761 spent several months among the Cherokee, and who records in his memoirs, "a sarbacan, or hollow cane, through which they blow a small dart, whose weakness obliges them to shoot at the eye of the larger sort of prey, which they seldom miss."

Such marksmanship is rare today, but I have seen some of the men shooting at empty cigaret packages at fifty feet and registering this in three trials out of five. Just what range these experts get I do not know, but I have sent a dart nearly 200 feet, and with the gun have killed doves and one of the neighbor's chickens. —PAUL M. FINK

INFORMATION on the action of smokeless-powder gases in breech- and muzzle-loading guns:

North Woburn, Massachusetts

In a recent article in Ask Adventure entitled "Buckshot," Ozark Ripley says it would be impossible to confine smokeless-powder gases in a muzzle-loader to get their fullest powers. In the spirit of a friendly reader I wish to say that I don't believe it. I do not have any claim to be an authority but, as I understand this matter, it is rather difficult to make a mistake or overload a gun with black powder because you can only burn so much in a given length of gun barrel; the surplus burns in the air at the gun muzzle.

In using smokeless powder it is easy to overload, *also dangerous*, because it burns all at once in one flash and burst gun barrels can happen from improper loads.

I never knew that it was difficult to get the fullest powers from smokeless powder anywhere in any gun. There are several different powders for various purposes like rifle, revolver, shotgun, etc. In using these it is advisable to ask the powder maker's advice to keep out of trouble—perhaps the old gun barrels will not stand what a new modern gun will; the metal might be different in the barrels.

Black powder bought in cans has no instructions to follow, but smokeless has safe loads printed on the label in Troy weight for standard guns. —A. F. BRACKETT

Mr. Ripley's answer:

Chattanooga, Tennessee

Your letter was sent me promptly for reply, since a good deal was left unsaid in my recent reply in *Adventure* to which you took exception.

Again I repeat, in a muzzle-loader you can not get the result from smokeless powder gases which you can in a breech-loader. The reason is simply this: Most of the pressure is quick and at the breech and extremely fast. In a muzzle-loader there is no way in which you can prevent powder gases from escaping, at least some. Even if you try oversized wads you can not, because there is no way to crimp the load properly for that purpose, and the right pressure on powder can not be obtained with a ramrod. Added to this, gas will escape through the cap tubes and often blows them out completely.

Another and most important thing with nitro powders and our latest colloid nitro powders, the closer the hot flame which ignites it, the greater the volume of gas developed. We use for that purpose the modern primer, or really detonator,

which explodes or creates what dynamics' experts call the "hot flame" right up in the powder itself, and thus creates still greater energy or volume of gas than formerly. That is the reason of present high base shells and primers. Figure the distance on a muzzle-loader of the cap from the primer and the impossibility of creating a big hot flame right in the center of the powder, and my answer is not difficult to understand.

The different powders (rifle, revolver, etc.) while made from the same formula, are cut in different shape grains, which produce different speeds of ignition. To slow up burning at present smokeless powders are subjected to a certain coating.

YOU are mistaken in your conception of black powder, which is made of sulphur, charcoal and saltpeter. When this is ignited, it is instantly changed into a practically gaseous liquid, the residue of which crystallizes on contact with the air or cold surfaces. You can burst a gun barrel with black powder by overloading. But black powder is slower burning and has a longer propelling gas column than smokeless powder, and thus the energy developed at the start continues for a longer distance within the barrel than ordinary smokeless. If the barrel can not accommodate the amount of gas liberated, something is going to burst, and a reduced amount will shorten the column.

For your own satisfaction, experiment with an old brass shell, using modern smokeless powder of a standard load for a breech-loader. It will give you some idea of the reason you lose gas power in a muzzle-loader, and the majority of muzzle-loaders are not constructed at the breech to stand the terrific breech pressure which the colloid powders develop.

—OZARK RIPLEY

IN CONNECTION with "Strangers of the Amulet," his two-part story beginning in this issue, Gordon MacCreagh sends in the following:

Centerport, Long Island

Solomon's mines—where were they? These tall Falasha Jews who figure in the second part of my story—who are they? The gold that was lavished upon the great temple of the Hebrews—from where did it come?

Nobody has found an answer to those questions. Theories and legends galore; but nothing more definite than guesses. Holy Writ says that "the servants of the King traveled a far road and brought gold".

And in those days in all the known world there was only one place that supplied any quantity of gold: Africa. And there was only one road that led for any distance into Africa: the Nile. Somewhere at the end of that road was gold. We know today that there is no appreciable quantity of gold anywhere along the three thousand and some miles of the Nile Valley. Somewhere up in the headwater tributaries then; somewhere in the mountainous territory of East Central Africa was gold.

"GOLD out of Ethiopia" is Hebrew as well as Roman text. And all the tributary rivers rise in the mountains of Ethiopia. Those mountains fall away suddenly in abrupt terraces to the scrub and desert country of the Sudan. Unexplored country. That is to say, inhabited by natives but little known to white men. The chief of Beni Shangul, the mountain borderland district of Ethiopia—the ancient name that the Abyssinia of the white man's maps prefer—pays his tribute to the imperial government in links of a very yellow and soft gold.

But Chief Ganyasmatch Shoghali isn't letting white men go prowling around his country "discovering" anything that will bring white men in their eager thousands.

White men— a very few of them—have been. They have pretended to be scientists and hunters and explorers and even photographers; and they have all made quiet surveys and prospects. Endless trouble has been theirs. Men have deserted; pack-mules have died; villages have refused to sell food; petty local sub-chiefs have refused passage until passports could be verified by some higher up chief two weeks' journey distant. And when all else failed to discourage the white men's indomitable thirst for gold, there have been bandits who swooped down from their mountain fastnesses and looted.

AND still Beni Shangul pays a fabulous tribute in pure yellow gold. And the Ethiopian legend that goes back to Solomon the King—and which, by the way, is quite as well documented as much that Christians believe to be sacred history—claims that Beni Shangul has always paid in yellow gold.

So then these Falashas. From where did they come? Hebrews they are in feature and character and religion. Only their language and their history has been lost to them. Long ago it must have been that they came for whatever purpose they came and some of them stayed. Long centuries ago. And their strongest characteristics survived the dark years of isolation: their religion, intact in form and ceremony; their extraordinary urge to learn, (I have seen a group of them walk a month's journey to come to the little Falasha school established in Adis Abebba by Dr. Faitlovitch) and—this is peculiarly pertinent—the Falasha Jews, of all the much mixed peoples in Ethiopia, are the only ones who have the handicraft and the skill to work in fine metals, to make jewelry of gold.

Where then were the golden mines of Solomon the King?

—GORDON MACCREAGH

PLEASE address all communications intended for this section to "The Camp-fire", care of the magazine.

ASK Adventure

For Free Information and Services You Can't Get Elsewhere

Monsoon

IN THE East Indies it is just a refreshing daily shower.

Request:—"Is there any season of the year in which the climate would make a visit to the East Indies unpleasant?"

—GEO. W. ROEDER, Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Capt. R. W. van Raven de Sturler:—The Dutch East Indies, while subject to the monsoons, can be visited the year round—in fact, are at their best during the rainy season, which does not mean a steady downpour lasting for hours or days at a time, but is more like a daily half-hour shower in the early afternoon, refreshing men and nature and reducing the tropical temperature.

Snakes As Pets

RATHER dull. They can go without food for years.

Request:—"I've been considering for some time the possibility of keeping a snake aboard ship as a pet. We are on a Venezuelan run and aren't in cold weather very long at a time. What sort of food would you give them, or it? And what kind of snake would you advise me to get?

A snake is an odd sort of pet, but I want something that the crew will leave alone. If you have a dog, every one aboard the ship makes a pet of it; it's soon spoiled. Monkeys are too filthy. Birds are too much trouble to move when leaving."

—R. D. ELY, Gulfport, New York

Reply, by Mr. Karl P. Schmidt:—Snakes are not very exciting as pets, as they often fail to eat in captivity. On the other hand, they can be kept for months without food—the record seems to be four years.

The small boas, and especially the handsomely colored tree boas which you might pick up at the Venezuelan end of your run, would be the most satisfactory kinds. Try live mice on small snakes; rats on larger ones. They are likely to pay no attention; but if they do it will be quite a show.

Snakes have an uncanny way of escaping from boxes and cages of all kinds, and I would strongly advise against keeping any sort of poisonous variety.

Stamp

LINDBERGH'S cat—whether or not such a mascot existed—has gone down into Spanish history.

Request:—"I have a Lindbergh Air Mail stamp issued by Spain. In the right hand corner it has a cat sitting. Will you please explain why the cat should be on this stamp?"

—LUCILLE CRADY, San Diego, California

Reply, by Dr. H. A. Davis:—The cat on the Spanish Lindbergh stamp is supposed to be the black cat that was his mascot. It is said that he carried a black cat on his famous trip to Paris in 1927. However, I do not know how authoritative this statement is.

Savages And Sago

MEN who live in trees and consider boiled sago a great delicacy.

Request:—"1. I am writing to you in regard to the native Papuan. I have heard that they sometimes build their houses in lofty trees. Is this true?

2. Could you tell me what sago is?"

—E. GARNETT, Brooklyn, New York

Reply, by Mr. L. P. B. Armit:—1. The mountain people still build houses in trees, but as the country becomes policed and the old-time tribal wars are no longer waged, these peculiar dwellings are no longer used. The tree-house was mostly

a refuge when marauding tribes came around in search of heads and meat, though some of the tribes actually used the tree-house as a dwelling—and still do so in some of the more distant districts inland. I have seen three houses in one lofty tree—one in the lower branches, another higher up, and the third right in the crown of the tree.

2. Sago grows wild all over the great island; it is a very large palm and it is invariably found in swampy land. The palm is felled, the pith is dug out, broken into fine shreds, and these shreds are then washed and strained through sieves of palm bark until the "flour" has been separated—washed out by the water. This "flour" is dried and is the sago that you use for puddings, etc.

But the Stone Age savage does not know anything about puddings and such things as biscuits; he just boils his sago into a sort of mush, packs the wet sago into leaves and roasts it on the coals, or uses it to thicken his stews.

Africa

NO AMERICANS are needed by the big companies just now—but if they were, this would be the routine.

Request:—"1. When the large American firms are operating in your section of Africa, what is the average day's routine for white men in their employ?

2. What are the sports and recreations?"

—G. W. CANTHORN, Richmond, Virginia

Reply, by Mr. N. E. Nelson:—1. It is rather difficult to average the daily routine, but the following will suffice:

5:30 A.M.	Awaken. Coffee or tea and apple or other fruit.
6:00	Shower.
6:30	Breakfast.
7:00-11:00	Morning's duties.
11:00-12:30	Social and recreation period.
12:30- 1:30	Luncheon.
1:30- 2:30	Rest.
2:30- 4:30	Afternoon's duties. Tea.
4:30- 6:30	Outdoor sports and recreation. Bath.
7:00- 8:00	Dinner.
8:00-	Social duties.

2. Tennis is perhaps the most popular sport; others are hunting, fishing, swimming (where possible). Bridge is the most popular recreation.

Archery

IF YOU have a license, you can hunt with bow and arrow in every State except Arizona.

Request:—"Will I need a regular hunting license to shoot deer in the archery game preserve of my State?"

—OWEN A. HOYT, Sutton's Bay, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—You will need a regular license for hunting. As far as I know, it is the same in all States except Arizona where, by some piece of asinine stupidity, they have passed a law against hunting with the bow—yet allow a *shotgun*, of all barbarous weapons!

Sloop-of-War

A BRITISH hulk that has lain buried since 1798 with its million-dollar cargo.

Request:—"I would like to get some information regarding the English war sloop *De Braak*."

—NORMAN WILSON, Palmyra, Wisconsin

Reply, by Lieut. Harry E. Rieseberg:—The British sloop-of-war *De Braak* went down in 1798 and the divers who have now found her near Cape Henlopen, after surveying the 134-year-old hulk, report that it is buried to the level of the main-deck in the sand. She had over $1,000,000 in specie when sunk. Plans are being made to salvage her, if possible, at an early date.

Baseball

MANY a pitcher has acquired speed by throwing stones.

Request:—"As a pitcher I have plenty on the ball and fairly good control, but lack speed. Could you tell me of some exercises, or of some other method, which would help develop a faster ball?"—HENRY KRUIZENGA, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. Frederick G. Lieb:—It is difficult to find any exercise for the arm to increase the velocity with which you can pitch a ball. I would recommend throwing at every opportunity. If baseball is out of season, try throwing stones at trees or some other object. It will develop your arm and help your control. Pitchers, especially those from farm districts, have told me they threw rocks or stones by the hour for strengthening their arms. However, always stop throwing when you are tired, or the exercise will do your arm more harm than good.

Mexico City

HOTEL REGIS, the crossroads where all Americans meet.

Request:—"Does any Mexico City hotel now enjoy the popularity among Americans that Porter's did twenty-five years ago? Of course I know that Mr. Porter died in 1909, but do you by chance know what became of Mrs. Porter and Mr. Porter's children, Clyde, Homer and Grace (Mrs. Albright)?"

—FRANK E. KNEELAND, Searsport, Maine

Reply, by Mr. John Newman Page:—The Hotel Regis is now the great gathering place for Americans. If you will but sit in the lobby long enough you'll be pretty likely to meet any American residing in Mexico. Sorry I can tell you nothing of Mrs. Porter or her children but Bill Vail, editor of the *Two Republics*, surely can, if you're interested enough to write him.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelop and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The expert will in all cases answer to the best of his ability, but neither he nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment. Ask Adventure covers outdoor opportunities, but only in the way of general advice.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 536 S. Clark St., Chicago, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

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All Shotguns, *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

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Edged Weapons, *pole arms and armor.*—CAPT. ROBERT E. GARDNER, 17 E. Seventh Ave., Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Hiking and Health-Building Outdoors CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Camping and Woodcraft PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tennessee.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Mining law, prospecting, outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery, Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R. (Retired), 442 Forty-ninth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 128 S. Edinburgh Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 176, Farmingdale, N. J.

Federal Investigative Activities *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 176, Farmingdale, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 189-16 Thirty-seventh Avenue, Flushing, New York.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.*—THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1709 Berkley Ave., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ornithology *Birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

✠**Skiing and Snowshoeing** W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Wrestling CHARLES B. CRANFORD, 35 E. 22nd St., New York City.

Boxing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, New York Athletic Club, Central Park South, New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, wages, duties, statistics and records of American shipping. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all government owned vessels.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 47 Dick St., Rosemont, Alexandria, Va.

★**The Sea Part 2** *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

★**The Sea Part 3** *Atlantic and Indian Oceans: Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.) *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.*—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Arizona, care of Conner Field.

★**New Guinea** L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands** WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, Box 197, Centerport, Long Island, N. Y.

Asia Part 2 *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir, Nepal. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure*.

Asia Part 3 *Anam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin-China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*.

★**Asia Part 4** *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*.

★**Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn.

Asia Part 7 *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

Asia Part 8 *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*.

★**Africa Part 1** *Egypt, Tunis, Algeria.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 2 *Abyssinia, French Somaliland, Belgian Congo. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVENDE STURLER, care of *Adventure*.

Africa Part 3 (British) *Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure*.

Africa Part 4 *Tripoli. Including the Sahara, Tuaregs, caravan trade and caravan routes.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 5 *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 6 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar: West Africa: Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, Firestone Plantations Company, Akron, Ohio.

Africa Part 7 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Box 107, Santa Susana, Cal.

✠**Africa Part 8** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe G. I. COLBRON, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn.

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*.

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 457 W. 123rd St., New York, N. Y.

✠**West Indies** *Cuba, Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—E. BRUGUIERE, 438 W. 20th St., New York City.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States of Old Mexico, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Mexico Part 2 *Southeastern Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and States of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

✠**Mexico Part 3** *Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Newfoundland C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

✠**Canada Part 2** *Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungova and Keewatin.* Big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts, Indian tribes.—S. E. SANGSTER, 27 Plymouth Ave., Ottawa, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Chronical*, Arnprior, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Road, Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Humers Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

✠**Canada Part 7** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Canada Part 8 *The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere.*—PATRICK LEE, 189-16 Thirty-seventh Avenue, Flushing, New York.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing. THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 922 Centinela Blvd., Inglewood, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 1 *California, Utah and Arizona.*—E. E. HARRIMAN, 854½ East 47th St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 2 *New Mexico.* Also Indians. Indian dances, including the snake dance.—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 West Roma Ave., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Western U. S. Part 3 *Colorado and Wyoming.* Homesteading. Sheep and Cattle Raising.—WILLIAM WELLS, Sisters, Oregon.

Western U. S. Part 4 *Nevada, Montana and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nevada.

Western U. S. Part 5 *Idaho and Surrounding Country.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

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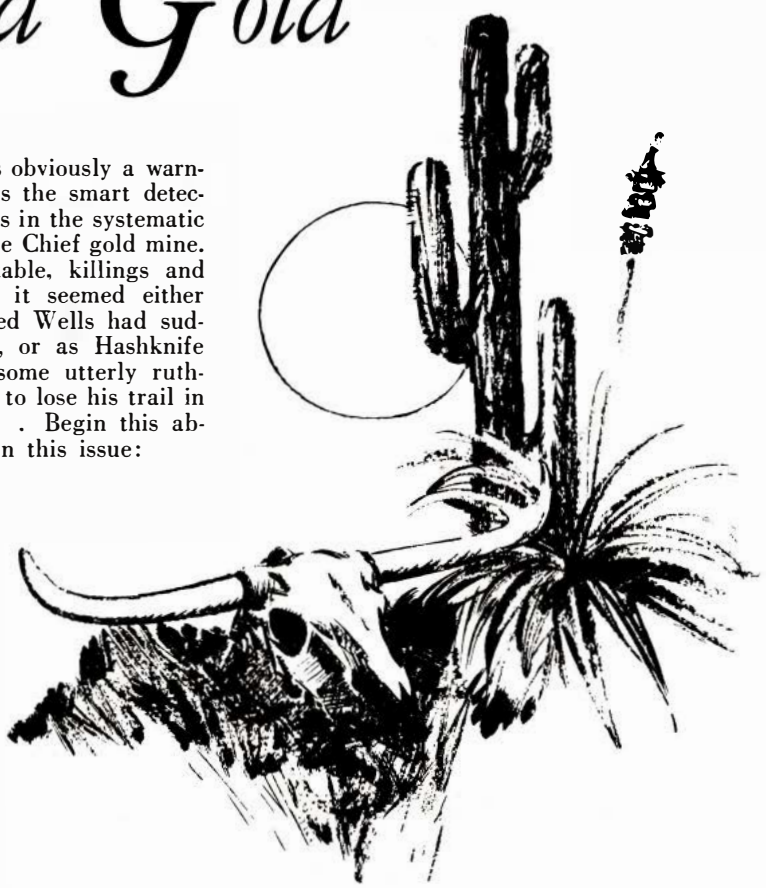

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