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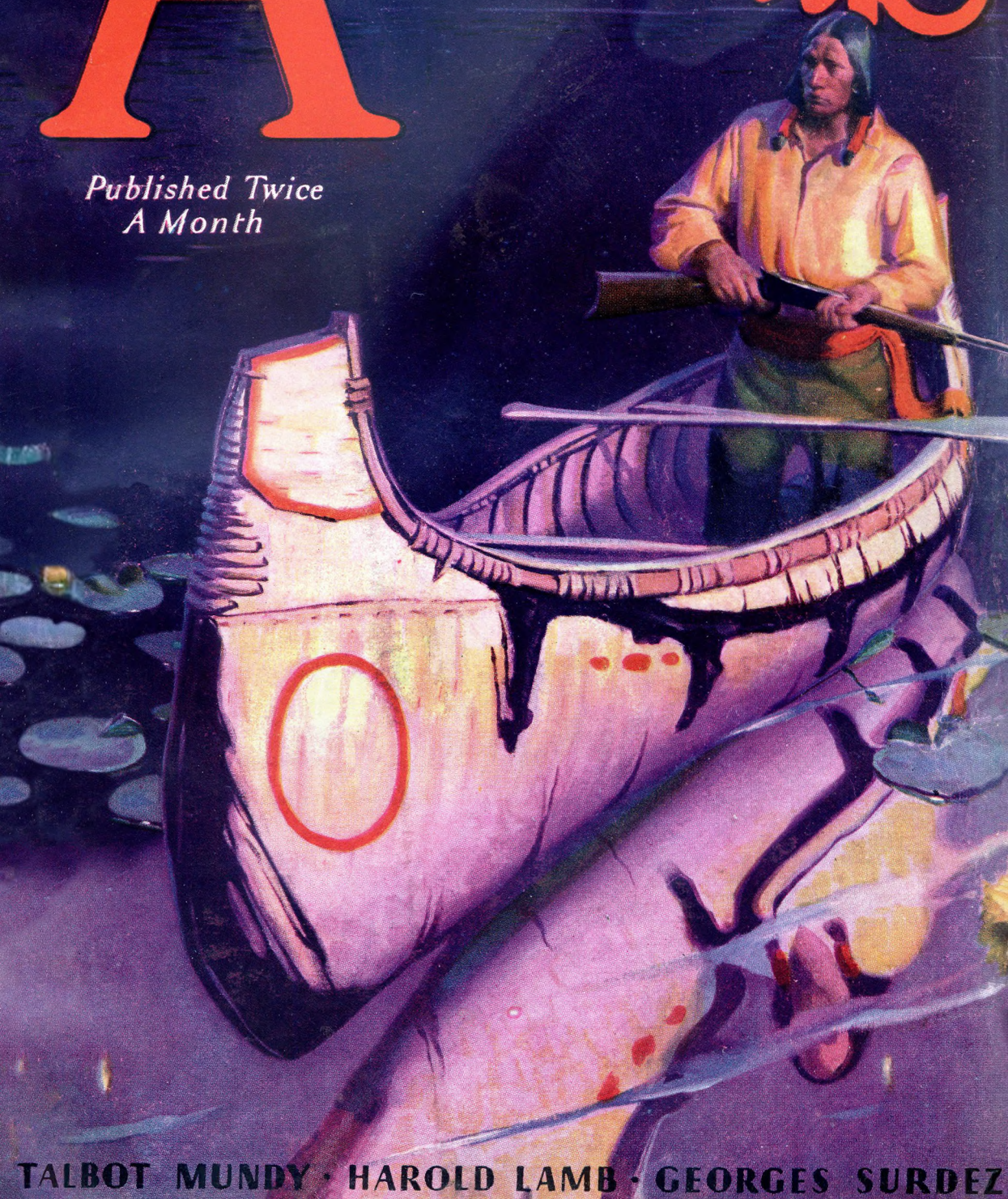

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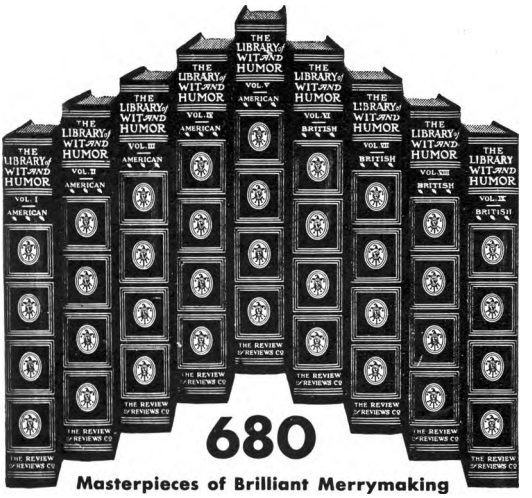

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A story of the Foreign Legion by the author of "They March From Yesterday"

WINESKIN

By GEORGES SURDEZ

SERGEANT REICHNER would not have seen the barrels, as he was responsible for the detachment. It was Legionnaire Burrus who happened to glance down the slope and catch a glimpse of their rounded oaken flanks emerging from the bushes.

"Couple of casks, Sergeant—not busted, either."

There are two versions of the storming of Kasbah Zagrit. A young and talented officer with the general staff at Rabat, Morocco, wrote the first one, which is official. Reichner composed the other at Post Kitosso, in the Mid-Atlas, and was punished. Both are sincere documents, and agree until the finding of the barrels.

It is probable that Reichner did not make his meaning clear. He always had been known as a notoriously poor scribe, whose reports supplied much needed comic relief to the dreary routine of the jaded clerks at regimental headquarters. A casual reading of his lists of punished yielded such pearls as follows:

"Legionnaire Bohermann, Frederick, Number 11657: Despite severe pains in his mule's belly, failed to report this sad condition to the veterinarian, thus causing the death of this animal."

"Legionnaire Schmaltz, Augustus, Number 10418: Ejected from an establishment of ill repute by its owner in a state of drunkenness, sheltered himself in the prevailing obscurity of the street to pose to the police patrol's sergeant as one of the officers living therein."

It might be claimed in Reichner's favor that he had been born in Germany and was not writing his native tongue. But he had followed courses in French, passed examinations satisfactorily. The real reason was no secret anywhere in the Legion. Reichner drank too freely, was known far and wide as *sac à vin*—wineskin.

He drank with traditional ardor, as the famous veterans of the pre-War Legion had drunk. Wine was as necessary to him

as fresh air to the average man. Until he had absorbed his *kilo* of red in the morning, he was not himself. And throughout the rest of the day, he had a sacred routine, lived from hour to hour in the hope of the pre-noon drink, the mid-afternoon sip and the pre-dinner Noilly-Cassis.

But liquor had no effect upon him beyond the odd spinning of fanciful sentences.

Outwardly, he remained dignified, respectful toward superiors, kindly toward subordinates. He was not reduced to the ranks for several reasons: He was a veteran, fourteen years in harness; the task of a Legionnaire is not primarily to write reports but to supply material for them. And Reichner was very brave, even when sober, in a phlegmatic, matter-of-fact fashion. Moreover, he was a handsome noncom, tall, strong, slim of waist and graceful of movement. He was

honest; and, finally, he was what is known as a "sympathetic souse," a man one could not help liking, one who fully deserved the providential help promised drunken chaps.

In routine life, in a garrison town remote from the front, Reichner was lost, for he had too many reports to make, and cafés were too near one another. But in an outpost, where he was not tempted constantly by thirst teasing signs, where only those who knew him—and consequently liked him—read his papers, he was invaluable.

The proof being that Lieutenant Picard had placed him in charge of the detachment that morning.

POST KITOSSO had been named after a sergeant of Senegalese Tirailleurs who had come from the remote Sudan to Morocco to find a grave. It was a triangle of tall walls crowning a high crest, with three bastions armed with machine guns sprouting at the corners. The hills surged in a green wheel to the blue horizon in a panorama resembling certain regions of Switzerland.

Five miles south was the limit of French influence, which meant that across this imaginary line were Berber tribes who did not pay taxes and engaged in the time honored sport of looting. The nearest hostile center was Kasbah Zagrit, stronghold of the old Kaid Hammou and of his partisans. The neighboring French Post was Asserdoun, on the main road to Arzew and Meknes.

Not long since a new resident had arrived in Morocco to represent the French Republic. He was portly, dapper, with a gray beard and no personal illusions concerning the people he was to rule. But he was anxious to please the home press, to further wider political ambitions in the future. Hence, according to the mode of the times, he declared himself a humanitarian.

His initial address made his stand clear: Kindness would be the rule. What brought antagonism from the tribes was the constant humiliating display of armed men. From now on, all combats would be avoided, patience resorted to, the sole weapon employed would be commercial persuasion. The Berbers would be made to see the benefits of hard work, of thrift, be brought around to perfect understanding that fifteen francs earned in one day with a pick or a shovel were a larger sum than five hundred earned by the mere pressure of a finger on a trigger. To test the result of his speech, which was repeated throughout the rebel zone, he had given orders that supply trucks in the Mid-Atlas would circulate without a strong military escort.

Post Asserdoun telegraphed Post Kitosso to inform its commander that three motor trucks, laden with supplies and handled by small crews, were leaving.

Lieutenant Picard had no illusions; he knew what to expect, and went on the north bastion to scan the countryside. Soon shots crackled in the distance, then three pillars of black smoke lifted from the burning trucks. The inevitable had occurred.

Picard gave orders that a detachment was to be formed immediately, and called for Reichner.

"The slobs got the trucks at the Horseshoe Curve. I don't hope that any man got away alive, but the devil may snatch me if I can stand here and do nothing when some poor driver may be hiding in the bushes and praying for help. Wish I could go myself, but my orders are to stick at the post, due to the general situation. With this damned foolish policy of the resident, we may be attacked any day. By this time the Berbers have left the place of attack. The trucks are only five or six miles away. You have time to go, look around for possible survivors, salvage whatever you can, and get back before night. For heaven's sake, be careful! You have twenty men, half of this garrison—"

"Understood, Lieutenant."

"Bear in mind that, with all this silly catering to natives, there are six hundred warriors in this region who wish nothing

better than to add to their loot. If you fool around after night falls, you're cooked."

"Understood, Lieutenant."

Reichner inspected the detachment, grinned with pleasure and confidence. These twenty men had been selected from the forty-five Legionnaires at Kitosso, but the whole regiment might have been combed without gathering a better bunch. Burrus, Choukrin, Borgar, Brooks, Cesari, Danilov, Sulpice and the rest were hardened gentlemen, very skilled at their trade, which was to kill and not be killed.

"General orders still hold, Lieutenant?"

"They hold, Reichner—even now."

"All right. Legionnaires—breech locks open—see that the chamber is empty. With blank cartridges, load! By combat groups, forward—march! So long, Lieutenant."

"Good luck, Reichner."

The sergeant pressed his chief's hand, trotted to take the lead, carbine swinging at arm's length. He turned several times to look up at the crenelated walls dotted by the heads of curious Legionnaires. Then he crossed the first narrow valley, forded the stream where fatigue parties came each day for water, was out of sight of the post in a thickly bushed area.

"Take those damned toys out of your guns, boys. Fill your magazines! And shoot down the first slob who shows himself." He smiled. "The warning shots shall be fired later."

The men laughed as they obeyed. When they resumed the march they were in much improved spirits. Walking about in this region with a useless rifle in one's hands was depressing.

Yet this was what they were ordered to do.

UNBELIEVABLE as it may seem, the new resident had issued general instructions to the frontier troops, forbidding them to shoot first, ordering them in case of an attack not to employ live ammunition at once, but to fire a warning volley with blanks!

In the guerrilla warfare of the Mid-Atlas, where the factor of surprise was all important, seconds were precious. The time needed to fire the blanks, to reload with a magazine stocked with real bullets, and there was nothing to be done save pick up the dead and care for the wounded. The assailants were out of sight, beyond reach.

This humane measure already had cost the lives of many Legionnaires, from Taroudant to the Algerian border. Men who had volunteered to fight for France were asked to allow themselves to be slaughtered. To crown his deeds, the resident had stopped all reprisals. Once a shooting scrape was over, it must be forgotten, forgiven; else how could peace ever prevail? The spirit of revenge was not Christian—a last argument which would touch Moslems deeply!

Reichner had obeyed the order, still obeyed it when with officers. But like the majority of noncoms, very much more exposed because they went out with smaller detachments, he deliberately disobeyed when on his own. He knew well that his men would not report him—squealers are not liked in the Legion, and their own hides were at stake—and he was aware that no doctor could possibly ascertain whether a man had been slain before or after a warning shot.

"Take it easy," he said some time later. "We're getting near."

The Berber raiders had selected an ideal place for ambush. Each of the three trucks had been fired upon when rounding a curve in the trail, where the path was strangled between a tall, stony bluff and a sharp slope.

Within five minutes of Reichner's plea for caution, the detachment came upon the first truck, a wreck of warped and twisted metal, blackened by fire. Papers, boards and excelsior were scattered about, thrown aside as needless weight by the looters.

There were two corpses on the front seat. The chauffeur still had one hand on

the emergency brake. Both men were charred beyond human semblance. On the road, near the right rear wheel, a nude body was sprawled, that of the man who had guarded the back.

For half a minute the Legionnaires stood still, afraid to look at each other, afraid to speak. Their years of warfare had hardened them; they had suffered from professional deformation of a peculiar type, affecting the mental rather than the physical. But the fate of the men on the truck might be their lot before long—and to stand in awe too long would be almost an admission of fear.

Burrus bent to scan the tattoo on the dead man's arm, picked up a brass shell and the white metal slide of a Lebel magazine. His face was very white for the moment, and his lips quivered, but his tone was calm, careless.

"Shot off his blank, the poor devil—then never had time to reload."

"The tattooing will identify him," Reichner said in the same casual, flat voice. The head had been cut off and taken as a trophy. "Let's have a look at the others, now."

The Legionnaires gathered around the wreckage of the other trucks. Chauffeurs and mechanics were dead, burned to a crisp, like the first men. One of the drivers had fallen forward on his wheel and, as the flames seared away his face, the bones had been bared. Sooty, long teeth grinned jovially. A remnant of shirt sleeve was draped from one wrist, held by a cheap, plated cuff link, which bore the Legion's badge. An ex-Legionnaire, a man who had once been of their own.

Choukrin, a Russian who had seen more horrors than any man has a right to, fingered the link, an odd look of sympathy and pain sweeping his aristocratic face. Then he saw the others watching him, and flung words from his lips to efface any impression of sentimentality, of weakness.

"Funny world, friend—" he shrugged his thin shoulders and smiled bitterly. "You help me understand many things. Shall we take him down, Sergeant?"

"No stretcher to take him back, and outside my instructions. Asserdoun will send a detachment to care for their dead. Say, the slobs are choosey, aren't they? Didn't take the heads from the burned guys. Don't think any one got away to hide—but orders are orders and I'll try anyway." Reichner cupped his hands about his mouth, shouted, "Relief detachment from Post Kitosso—come on out, the road's safe!"

He repeated the call several times without an answer.

"Better look awhile; some guy may be unconscious somewhere near. A group stays on the road to watch for trouble, ten men come with me."

THE Legionnaires scattered in the bushes. Borgar called soon. Reichner saw that the Legionnaire, a swarthy, cruel chap from the Balkans, former *comitadchi*, was shaken. Wordlessly the private pointed to a heap of flesh in the lee of a bush. Another body, beheaded, stripped of all garments. But this one had been captured alive—Berbers did not waste time torturing the dead.

One by one the men came to look down at him. Today, tomorrow, they might finish as he had. And they were aghast at the thought of the horrible death, suffered far from their comrades; of the need to remain brave, the conqueror, until consciousness left. They looked away, swore, and took long swigs from their canteens to steady their nerves.

"Snap it up," Reichner said. "Let's see, that's nine stiffs, three to a truck. That's probably all there were."

Then, Burrus, looking for bodies, saw the barrels.

To the half hysterical men who were biting their lips to keep from moaning their resentment and grief, the discovery came as an anti-climax, an instant and complete relaxation. Smiles reappeared; they flung themselves into a new interest, a new train of thought, as a man dragged from icy water might warm himself before an open fire. It was better for them

to speculate upon the manner in which the barrels had reached their snug rest than to speculate on how many minutes the dead men's agony had lasted.

"The slobs rolled them off the road to get more room up here," Choukrin explained, "for the damned fools scorn wine. You're right, Burrus, they don't look broken to me. Big fellows, aren't they?"

"Three hundred liters apiece," Reichner stated. When it came to casks, barrels, flasks, bottles, he was well informed. "Each of those figures a month's wine rations for every man at Kitosso. Check it yourself—a pint per man and per day."

"How will we get them back, that's the question," Burrus said.

"Can't. We'll tip off the next supply convoy and they'll be picked up."

"Like hell!" Burrus protested. "Those transport birds are too lazy to work—they'll stop off to drink the stuff while it lasts, then check it off to unavoidable leakage and wastage. Shame to let it go like this, Sergeant."

"What are you going to do about it?" Reichner asked. "They must weigh over six hundred pounds a piece. Feel like carrying one back, Burrus? I'll hold your rifle."

"Six hundred liters, Sergeant!" Burrus' eyes gleamed. "That means thirty quarts each for all of us. Of course, we can't swallow that much, but we can have a nip."

"This is a fine spot to stop for a drink." Reichner became sarcastic. "Suppose the raiders come back and pounce on our necks, what then? You'll ask them to have a drink, eh?"

"Listen, Sergeant—don't talk like a line infantryman. Do you think any of us would be worse off for a little wine? We don't get a chance like this every day, and we've been in the sun. Suppose we went down for a few minutes, just to taste it, with you standing by and letting each man get, say, a cup—say two cups? Even a quart wouldn't bother any man here—"

"If you think I'll let you get at one end of a barrel of wine, Burrus, you're crazy. I know you couldn't be dragged off until you saw the bottom."

Burrus shrugged, disgruntled. But he knew himself to be the spokesman of the detachment, felt the united hopes hanging to his ability.

"Never thought you'd turn out like that, Sergeant. You like good stuff yourself. And you're pretty understanding as a rule. What hurts is that this is probably the new wine to replace the stinking, sour, sock juice we've been issued. Say we go down, have a drink, then fill up our canteens after throwing out this tobacco syrup they've given us lately. What would be the harm?"

"Perhaps it's that special issue we've been promised," Choukrin said, gently. "Two francs fifty wholesale. That's our luck—lousy stuff is kept, good stuff gets lost."

Wine is sacred in the French army. The Foreign Legion being, its members will tell you, the élite of the French army, carries the worship of *pinard* to its highest degree. Often, when finding the body of a comrade, a Legionnaire will weigh the canteen in his hand and say, without humorous intention, "Well, he'd finished his wine, anyway."

There were traditions to be thought of: It would be the first time in the Corps' history that twenty thirsty Legionnaires, practically all long service men, and two barrels of good wine had come face to face without result. And Legionnaires led by Wineskin!

Reichner hesitated, was lost. He was a Legionnaire, and no true Legionnaire could have seen, without a tightening of the heart, the tragedy represented by the loss of this quantity of excellent wine. As a small boy he had been taught not to throw his bread crusts away, lest he should repent when hungry. He had a superstitious dread that should he scorn this wine, the time might arrive when he would lack wine.

Wine—which meant more to him than gold to a miser.

"If you'd quit when I said enough," he weakened.

"Word of honor!" Burrus exclaimed immediately.

"Legionnaire's word?" Reichner insisted.

"Well—" Burrus considered his strength of will, fearing to promise more than he could keep on the one oath he held as sacred. "All right—Legionnaire's word, Sergeant."

"Let's see; we'll go down four at a time," Reichner suggested.

"How'd you get the first four back?" Borgar asked.

The Balkanese spoke but seldom, being a stolid man, but his words were always carefully weighed and to the point. Once the top was knocked off a barrel, it would be impossible to bring any man away by mere orders.

"Guess we'll be safe enough down there," Reichner opined.

His imagination was at work, and he was growing thirsty rapidly at the thought of free wine.

"We're in the open up here," Choukrin put in. "Down below we could hide in the bushes."

"Let's go," Reichner decided quickly.

ALL SCRAMBLED down the declivity at top speed, without another glance at the dead men. The first Legionnaire to reach the barrels thumped his gun's butt against the staves, which answered with a rich, promising, dull thud: They were full.

Reichner cleaved the crowding men, drove them back with powerful sweeps of his big arms.

"Who's in charge? Who's in charge?" he challenged indignantly. "You guys form in line, tin cup ready, get your drink. Then you take the tail of the line again. I'll stand by and sock the first who tries to sneak up out of his turn right on the nose! This must be done in proper Legion style! Now, to get the top off—"

Neither trenches nor barbed wires ever stopped the Legion. The barrel had no chance. Six bayonets flashed into light, eager hands splintered the wood, tore out the short planks. Then a gasp of disbelief was uttered by every man present. Even Reichner staggered, dazzled by their luck.

"Take it easy," he protested. "We may be mistaken."

He dipped his tin cup into the liquid, held it up to the light. No, there could be no mistake; it was transparent gold—white wine instead of ordinary red. He took a sip, rolled it lingeringly around his tongue, splashed it against his palate, sighed and announced—

"First grade."

"It's the Greek's wine," Burrus declared. He had knelt to decipher the lettering painted on the flank.

The Greek was the lone civilian at Kitosso. He kept the only café. This white wine was undoubtedly the stuff he bottled, sealed with scarlet wax, and sold as sauterne for twelve francs a quart. Reichner felt as if distilled sunshine had caressed his throat and warmed his stomach. The liquid had a faintly sweet, gummy tang that was most pleasing.

"Wait!" The sergeant called for attention, to explain as was his duty. "This isn't red wine, remember. It's much stronger. White wine saps your strength, cuts your walking legs right off, makes you sleepy. We want to take it easy—one or two drinks each—that's all."

"Sure, sure," Burrus said impatiently, his cup poised. "Can I start in?"

"Go ahead, Burrus; that's it—end of the line. Choukrin—Borgar . . ."

Reichner knew the danger, and had resolved to watch for the first symptom of drunkenness. At the first stagger of the first man, he would stop all drinking, even if he had to spill the barrel on the ground. But habit was strong, and as he checked off each man, he dipped in his own cup, emptied it. The level lowered with startling speed, and he watched it, fascinated, one elbow propped on the edge of the barrel's rim, looking up from time to time to keep order.

"Burrus—Brooks—Cesari— Sulpice—Hermann—Magers—Burrus— Say, don't try that again. Each in his turn is what I said. Understood? Choukrin . . ."

"Fine stuff!"

"Slides down like greased salvation in velvet pants!"

"Don't need to prime yourself with salted herring!"

The Legionnaires exchanged appreciations. Occasionally a gloomy note would be struck by a careless chap, to remind them of their position.

"Tough on the guys on the trucks. They carted it all this way—and got nothing."

"One guy's bad luck makes another guy's good luck."

"Those Berber slobs stole macaroni cases and left this!"

"They're not civilized, anyway."

"I think that's enough," Reichner hinted from time to time. "We better quit—"

"Look at all that's left, Sergeant—there's plenty!"

Then Reichner gave up counting the men. They came too swiftly, and their faces seemed all alike. After all, this excellent wine could not harm a Legionnaire. He sat down against the barrel, mechanically passing up his cup to be refilled at frequent intervals. The men dipped their canteens, which came up dripping scintillating pearls. This made things easier, more comfortable; a man could walk aside, sit down in the bushes and drink at leisure.

The comparison of professional soldiers with young boys is ancient, and true. These Legionnaires earned from thirty cents to four dollars a month, out of which princely salary they had to supply themselves with the smaller luxuries of life. The few coppers remaining after purchasing stationery, soap, tooth paste and sewing materials were spent for drink. Before the barrels, they were as helpless, as charmed and as innocent of evil intent as a six year old child visiting a candy shop with his first dollar.

WINE was the embodiment of luxury. The majority had been at Post Kitosso over a year, in the Mid-Atlas fortifications for stretches ranging between thirty-six to forty-eight months. Kasbah-Tadla, with its three hundred-odd European civilians loomed in their minds like a remote, fabulous metropolis. On arrival there, when they came down from hill duty, they had planned to have all the wine they could hold, if they had to spend all their savings. And all the wine they could hold and several hundred liters more were to be obtained here, unexpectedly—and free.

"What time is it?" Choukrin wondered aloud.

"Four o'clock," Reichner said, after groping for his watch. "We can double part of the way and make the Kitosso by sunset, easy." He was growing optimistic, and his natural lack of fear was encouraged, multiplied by the increasing elation filling his brain. Six miles—that was no distance at all for Legionnaires.

"We'll start at five and hop right in. Say, this didn't turn out such a bad afternoon, did it?"

"Best since the time when I was in Rumania, during the war . . ."

Choukrin started a long story, studded with alien words, in which flickered scenes of gambling, drinking, dark tresses, brown eyes and pink favors.

"You were an officer, Choukrin?"

"Fate rules—I was. Fate rules . . ."

"You bet. Now, during the War, I . . ." Reichner grew reminiscent. There had been a certain Greek wine he had tasted in Salonika, when passing through with the Legion's March Battalion. "Guess I'm getting old, Choukrin—nearly thirty-five—and things don't taste the same. Although this stuff . . ."

One of the youngest men was sick, and loud jeers greeted his unconventional behavior. Burrus lurched nearer, flung one arm on his sergeant's shoulders.

"Thinks he's been drinking! Take me, for instance. Last year when I was convalescing from fever—remember how sick I was?—I went to a *claque* in the reserved quarter at Meknes—yeh, three doors up. Well, a gang of American tourists came in—Brooks was there—he's English and could talk fine—he told them what I could do and they said he was a liar. Well, I did my stunt. Ate two dozen

hard boiled eggs, drank eight quarts of wine, to win a hundred francs. They were paying for the stuff, of course.

"There was a pretty nice girl with them, all pink and white at the start. She kept telling me in rotten French to stop, that I'd get the money anyway; but I have my pride.

"'Take money, take money; you sick; stop, please; you sick—' and I'd gulp another egg. She was getting all yellow in the face just watching me down all that stuff. Well, I wasn't sick; but she sure was! And the old cat who had the place thought she was drunk, mixed her a pick-me-up. That made it worse. What a day that was, eh, Brooks, you *youm*. Tell 'em about me in Meknes that time."

But a Legionnaire had fallen halfway into the barrel, striving to retrieve his képi, dropped unguardedly as he reached too swiftly for another cupful. Reichner had to rise to help him out, and became thoughtful.

"Enough. Some of you are getting soused. We go back."

The canteens were filled with wine, every one had a farewell drink.

"Snap into it," Reichner urged.

"Let's roll the other barrel part of the way," Choukrin suggested. "The lieutenant will send for it in the morning if we get it near enough."

"Won't hurt to try," Reichner agreed.

Six or seven volunteers took hold of the huge cask, pushed up the hill. But the barrel asserted its six hundred pounds, and rolled back constantly—so fast that it was extremely difficult to dodge from its path. Others helped, sweating, grunting.

"Once on the road it'll be easy," all declared.

But the barrel was obstinate, kept coming back to the same spot. The men tried chucking it with bayonets after each push. But steel is brittle, and Reichner grew angry after three blades had snapped like glass stems.

"Get out! Leave the damned thing alone. There'll be busted legs around here. Go on, get out!"

He roamed among the bushes, kicked sleeping men awake. To make sure they were all present, he had them form in combat groups. His somewhat muddled brain could not permit him to count, but his trained eye would have noticed a missing member in a formation at once. The martial array of the detachment could not last on the slope. The soil was rubbery, crumbled under boot soles with treacherous brutality. But they all managed to reach the road after a time.

There was more delay while Choukrin insisted on leaving the dead chauffeurs a few cigarets. He was persistent, oblivious of logic, prey to some vaguely religious atavism which made it right to leave the dead offerings. Other men grouped about the mutilated bodies, cursing the natives, screaming madly at intervals.

"Forward—forward! We haven't all day!"

Reichner booted and cuffed.

HE HERDED the men forward like sheep, trotting here and there in a swaying lope, much like an elderly dog. He was worried about the broken bayonets, seeking a plausible explanation to save the men punishment. He decided on a confused story—the men had tried to take off a couple of tires still in fair condition . . .

"Some of you look tight," he announced. "Breathe deep. Maybe you'll get by at the gate."

"Don't worry. It'll be dark then," Choukrin stated.

"Dark?" Reichner looked up at the sky. The sun was low, big clouds dragged orange bellies against the remote violet mountains. The wind had freshened, and the feel of approaching night was in the air. "Sacred millions of horned devils! The lieutenant said to be sure to get back before night."

"Bah! He'll be so happy to see us back he'll kiss us," Burrus said.

Although he had emptied his tin cup oftener than any one save Reichner, he

was calm, walked erect. Only the peculiar, dancing light in his pale pupils revealed anything abnormal.

"Let's hurry," Reichner insisted.

"Don't get them winded at the start," Burrus advised. "What's needed is a nice, slow song to start with—getting quicker and quicker songs the nearer we get to the Post. That's the place where we've got to look good and smart, you know."

Reichner bowed before the obvious logic of this.

"Sing, then."

"In a minute—let me think."

Burrus was reputed a fine singer. For ten years his voice had contributed to the excellent spirits of the units he marched with. Old and modern, sentimental and obscene, civilian and military, he had an unlimited stock of songs. Before long, he had made his choice, and he lifted his hoarse.baritone in a whining chant:

"Elle connut pas son père,
Et quand mourut sa mère,
Elle resta seule sur la terre,
Sans gîte et sans pain!
Dès sa plus tendre enfance,
Elle connut la souffrance,
Pour gagner son existence . . ." *

The Legionnaires oscillated as they marched in rhythm to the chant. Those who recalled the old ballad picked up the chorus and informed the hills:

"There she goes, Maria—terror of the sidewalks! She knocks down the passers-by—and yet all men are crazy about her!"

Burrus was inspired and greeted the fall of night, abrupt as always in North Africa, with the time worn favorite:

"He uttered his call to arms; he fell bathed in his blood. But his death and cries of alarm had saved his regiment!"

Silence returned when they stumbled in the chilly waters of a brook which they knew was within a mile and a half of Kitosso. Where the ford emerged, the trail split into two branches, one leading to the outpost, the other to Kasbah Zagrit.

"I've an idea," Choukrin said, when they reached dry soil.

"Which is?" Reichner prompted.

"To pay a call on Kaid Hammou!"

"That's not so bright."

"Your stripes will pop off, anyway."

"Think so?" Reichner was worried.

"Know so. What's held you up so far is because you never cut loose on booze while on active duty. They won't just laugh this off. Nothing to lose—and we'd square things and play a dirty trick on the resident."

"We'd all be killed."

"What did we come here for—to live?"

"Seems stupid to me," Reichner said calmly.

"It does? Think of that guy in the bushes. Think of the others—one had been a Legionnaire. We're Legionnaires. The Berbers will get away with it; you'll get reduced; we'll get the jug; and what does it matter what we do? We're all soused . . ."

The idea was appealing. Reichner felt that it would be a stunt well worth the loss of stripes, something that would be talked about for years in the regiments. Of course, it was certain death. Kasbah Zagrit had been attacked before, by a whole mobile group, with mountain artillery, engineer sections, and had not been taken. The hillmen had gathered so thickly from their homes that the slopes seemed to be covered in white cloaks. But the sheer insanity of the undertaking held something sublime, unusual—was a gesture such as Legionnaires will die to make.

Perhaps their sacrifice, their showing the right way to honor the dead, would not go for nothing. The officers would be made to understand how the soldiers felt.

"Come close, you fellows!" he ordered. "Now, Choukrin and I are going to Kasbah Zagrit. We won't come back. Anybody who wants to can go to the post. Real guys follow us."

"We'll stick, Sergeant."

"Come along, then."

* She never knew her father,
And when her mother died,
She remained alone on earth,
With neither home or bread!
From her earliest childhood,
She knew naught but suffering,
And to earn her living . . .

HERE the official report written by the staff officer appears in error. For it is stated very clearly on page four, paragraph five, that the returning detachment lost its way, entered the hostile zone without knowing it.

To be fair, the writer had done much research work, not only delving into French sources, but questioning the native spies paid by France to give information on Kasbah Zagrit and vicinity. These secret agents all agreed on one point: The Legionnaires did not attempt to conceal themselves, as men planning an attack would have done. On the contrary, they came singing and calling out profanely from one man to another.

From their stories, it would seem that the Kaid Hammou was warned of their arrival long before they reached his home. But the watchmen declared they were few in number, most noisy, and the old chieftain believed them a decoy, to draw him from the shelter of the walls.

As it happened, he had only thirty-odd men within call, having ordered all the others to seek shelter in their scattered villages. He had feared—for he evidently did not realize the full stupidity of the resident, or more properly his ardent selfishness—a raid by a squadron of planes, such as he had known before. In this case, a far flung encampment would have attracted the flyers, and many bombs would have come down in reprisal for the attack on the trucks and the killing of the guards.

Therefore, he gave orders to ignore the Legionnaires until morning, when his warriors would return from their hiding places and massacre them easily. That explains the officer's statement that the detachment was lost. From then on, the two versions agree as to actual events, but differ widely in details, such as what motivated each episode, what was said, what was expected.

It was after eleven o'clock that the Legion detachment sighted Kasbah Zagrit. There had been two halts, during which the heavy canteens had been considerably lightened. This had contributed to stiffen certain vacillating resolutions.

Reichner led his men into the vast open area before the fortress and stared at the formidable outline flung darkly against the sky. In the milky moonlight, the red bricks turned to an intense black, and with its jutting, square towers, its massive redans, Kasbah Zagrit evoked in the sergeant's mind long forgotten engravings seen in story books, showing the gloomy castles of Teutonic fairy tales.

"Stay back. I'm going to speak my piece."

He strode toward the high walls, located the gate and struck the wood with the iron shod butt of his carbine. The blows echoed less dismally in the empty courtyard beyond than within his own chest.

"Who are you?" some one asked in Arabic.

This showed Reichner that his identity was known. Else the question, addressed to a man of the hills, would have been spoken in Chleuh.

"Detachment of Legion from the French Post."

"What dost thou seek?"

"The Kaid Hammou!"

"Why?"

"Why?" Reichner thought quickly. "To make him a prisoner for the murdering of nine French soldiers."

The sergeant chuckled, satisfied. The immense insolence of his words thrilled him. To come before these walls, on which a column sixteen hundred strong had broken its teeth in the past, and ask for the Kaid Hammou was a trick such as few men, even Legionnaires, might boast of.

"Go thy way. Allah will open another door."

Reichner stepped back, related his conversation to Choukrin.

"Guess that surprised him."

"I'll bet!" Reichner raised his voice, "Get ready, lads! When they open the gate to rush us, fire away. Kill as many as you can. Sorry I brought you here—

but the wine being drawn it must be drunk."

The proverb seemed oddly fitting. They formed a small, resolute square, bristling with rifles. All of them believed that there were hundreds of men nearby, that they were living their last hour. But long minutes passed and nothing happened. Reichner was finding out that it takes almost as much effort to be massacred when you desire to be, as to avoid massacre at other times.

"We can't stay like this all night," Burrus said.

"Hate to start back," Reichner spoke, "after talking the way I did. We'll look like damned fools to those guys."

"The minute you turned your heels," Choukrin stated, "they'd be out, cutting across country to ambush us elsewhere. Only one thing to do."

"What?"

"Attack," Choukrin suggested gently.

"Then what?"

"Bayonet as many as we can until we drop."

"How? We can't break that gate."

"No?" Choukrin rested one hand on Reichner's arm. "What job was scheduled for my squad for today, if this detachment had not been sent out on special duty?"

"Quarrying."

"Who handles the explosives? I do. Feel anything in my *musette* bag? Yes, four of them. The two of us go forward, you keep them busy talking, and I do my job. After the explosion, every one goes in with the pitch fork."

"How many men are in there?"

"Fine time to think of that. We'll have plenty of time to get clear after I plant my sticks. Special slow fuses—we were working under a ledge at the quarry. Come on!"

REICHNER pounded on the gate once more. He shouted, screamed insults—but no one answered. Choukrin was placing his sticks. A match sputtered, went out. Again came that sinister crackling, the smell of sulphur; a tiny yellow flame bloomed.

"Back!"

As they ran, a nervous guard atop the wall discharged his Mauser toward them. The bullet smacked ahead of Reichner. This was the signal for a general volley, and the sergeant heard the keen, eager drone of the missiles, heard the significant impact of lead into flesh.

A man went down.

Before Reichner could ascertain who had fallen, the charges exploded, and he involuntarily sheltered his face within his arms. Then he gave the order to go forward and all plunged ahead, with débris raining down everywhere, while a nerve twisting screaming stabbed the night—the wails of frightened women.

Neither the staff officer nor Reichner were able to reconstruct the events of the following thirty minutes. Grenades were used at first, on the nearest groups of defenders. But the men had not carried many. Most of the work was done with butts and bayonets, pistols and knives. The Legionnaires fought superbly—the better perhaps because not a few of them saw double and acted with consequent despair.

The sergeant did not try to keep his men together; the labyrinth of corridors inside the Kasbah forbade this. The Legionnaires roamed at will, entered doors at random, climbed stairs, leaped down from balconies into open yards, stabbing, clubbing. Before these men who laughed and cursed, who staggered about yet sent their lunges and shots home with precision, the defenders melted.

Reichner vaguely recalled passing under arched gates, stumbling up stairs. But his first really clear moment after the explosion was when he found himself on a spacious veranda, hugging one of the supporting square pillars. Below was a moonlit garden.

Choukrin stood near, firing his rifle across the open space, into a huddle of white figures on the opposite veranda. Reichner's carbine was empty, the heavy calibered Ruby automatic was in his hand.

He was shooting down nearer opponents, ten or fifteen yards away.

And even while he pressed the trigger he was aware that in the garden below him figures flitted and darted in aimless confusion, in a sort of whitish pit streaked with short spurts of flame from which arose roars of rage, stentorian, ribald laughter, oaths, screams of pain and the shrill, piercing notes of sheer terror.

Then Choukrin stood calmly, refilling his magazine.

"They've run," he announced.

"Here's one alive," Reichner grunted, lifting his pistol.

A man was crawling on all fours toward the entrance to a stairway. Choukrin knocked the sergeant's hand aside, the bullet was lost.

Then the Russian leaped on the native.

"Tell him to take us to Hammou's room!"

Reichner understood Choukrin's wish, and spoke as directed. With the hard muzzle of the pistol in the small of his back, the fellow did not argue; he led the way.

As they walked, Legionnaires emerged from passageways, recognized their chief and fell in behind. Then the guide indicated a door, fell on his knees, hiding his face against the wall.

The panel splintered under the gun butts, iron bars rattled to the floor. The room was not very large; thick rugs covered the tiled floor. There was no furniture save leather cushions and a wide divan. Light was supplied by a great kerosene lamp concealed in an immense glass chandelier hanging by gilt chains from the ceiling.

Two men rose to face the Légionnaires —one young, beardless, evidently terrorized, the other a tall, white bearded native with intense, fierce black eyes. For a moment there was silence, and no one moved. Reichner was aware of shots and shouts from other parts of the building.

"*Crève toujours le giron*," said some one.

A rifle was leveled, a detonation filled the room. The young man stared, slithered sideways, remained motionless on the couch.

The old chap leaped forward, but Reichner knocked the knife from his hand, gripped his shoulders with one powerful paw. He had no intention of killing him—did not want him to be killed. This man was Hammou, worth more alive than dead.

"Prisoner," the sergeant said. "In the name—of the law!"

For Reichner remembered that he was not taking part in a battle, but arresting an assassin on his private initiative.

But Choukrin grasped the man's arm roughly, brought the wrist before Reichner's eyes. There was a cheap little watch of imitation silver, fastened by a worn strap. Clamped in the leather was the metal badge of the transport corps.

"Prisoner—hell!"

And another Legionnaire pushed forward, shouting incoherently. He held two round objects at arm's length, close to Reichner's face: Two heads—the heads of Frenchmen, freshly cut.

"Hanging under the vault—hanging under the vault! I found them!"

"All right," Reichner agreed.

Choukrin grasped the white beard with one hand, clawed with the outstretched fingers of the other. Men leaped forward, struck out with clenched fists, swearing, howling, sobbing. They were not so much avenging those already dead as paying for their own mutilation in advance. The shaven skull bobbed and bobbed, vanished in the middle of the soldiers.

"He tortured that guy—"

"Here's one the resident won't save—"

"Let me at him—let me at him!"

Reichner sobered instantly. His duty as a leader came back with his finer instincts as a man. There were six, eight, young, strong men against one old fellow. This was not right, no matter the crime.

"Quit that, quit that! Are you Legionnaires or not?"

"Ask that of the poor devils on the trucks," Choukrin snarled.

But he was the first to release his hold, and seemed ashamed. The others imi-

tated him. The kaid rolled to the floor like a doll emptied of its sawdust.

He was dead.

Reichner left the room, ran back to the gate. He blew the rallying signal on his whistle, and men came toward the spot from every side. He counted them.

"Twelve—not so bad!"

"It was Brooks who got his outside; Sulpice went down in the garden; two of them cleaned up Borgar on the stairs after he had dropped five—prettiest thing you ever saw . . ."

The missing were accounted for one by one. The survivors were all wounded, not severely: Slashes, rips and punctures meriting nothing more than iodine and first aid bandages.

"Dig up timbers and mend that gate—the others will be coming soon," Reichner ordered. "And make sure there's nobody left in here."

"Nothing but women and kids," Burrus said. "Told them to keep quiet and nothing would happen to them."

Reichner nodded, with dignity.

"Nothing is right! Even a good souse ends."

THE AFFAIR was not settled without considerable trouble. Picard had reported the lost of the detachment to Asserdoun, and two companies were sent out to help locate it. They were very useful in freeing Reichner and his men from the circle of natives which had closed around the Kasbah within a few hours.

But when the smoke cleared, all had to admit the evidence: Reichner and his twenty Legionnaires had achieved something that had defied a mobile group. Luck had been with them, of course, but luck goes to him who makes it.

The resident was doubtless shocked by the slaughter. But he soon saw that he could never admit that such a stunt, which compelled the admiration from all the troops in Morocco, had been accomplished against his orders.

He posted up a very fine proclamation, in which he mentioned the iron fist in the velvet glove. He pointed out that the prompt punishment of the assassins was the best refutation to his enemies who said he lacked strength.

The valiant Legionnaires who had participated in the exploit would one and all receive the War Cross. Even those dead would be posthumously honored. To Choukrin and Burrus, who had distinguished themselves particularly, was awarded the Military Medal. As for the heroic sergeant commanding, he already had all the decorations within the gift of the French Republic—save the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

The resident was no miser, and granted him the Cross!

Picard was angry and was sulky with Reichner for a time, until the sergeant confessed the truth.

"You should be court-martialed instead of decorated," he declared, "although turning a collective souse into a feat like yours is perhaps worthy of the Cross."

Reichner brooded, grew ashamed of himself as the days passed. Soon, he would have to stand before the assembled regiment to be knighted. And he was tortured by the thought that he was not really deserving. His conscience protested at his being rewarded for disobedience.

What decided him to clear up matters was the staff officer's report, which was published full length in the *African Army's Magazine*. Reichner was appalled when he read it. It was so inflated, exaggerated everything. For instance, he could not remember feeling "heroic indignation" or "the irresistible urge to avenge French honor." His part in the fighting had been no more important than that of any other Legionnaire, certainly had been nothing worth "recalling one of Homer's chants."

His duty was clear; the truth must be told.

The others deserved what they had been given, for they had obeyed him, their superior. He would be careful not to take credit from them. After all, as his drunkenness had started the affair, the only drunkenness he needed to mention was his own.

He fortified himself with a bottle of Cinzano, locked the door of his room, labored an entire evening, tearing pages, correcting statements, seeking elusive words. The report started as follows:

> "The Post of Asserdoun telegraphed Post Kitosso, gravely fearing that the smokes which Lieutenant Picard, commanding, had seen were out of the normal, perhaps indicative of the chauffeurs' combustion. As a fatigue party was about to start for the quarry, other Legionnaires were added to vary its purpose and form a detachment of which I, Sergeant Reichner, took command without thinking of the explosives. Lieutenant Picard made it very plain that if I failed to return by daylight I would have to march in the dark . . . "

According to regulations which make it compulsory for reports to be forwarded by a man's direct superior, he submitted the document to Picard the following morning.

"Sure you want this sent in, Reichner?"

"Can't let those lies go on about me, Lieutenant."

"It does credit to your honesty," Picard admitted, "but that's about all."

The report came back from Meknes within a fortnight, which is record time for a report. Reichner was sent for.

"Colonel said to destroy it," Picard began.

"Why?"

"Conflicts with the official version."

"But I was there—I saw—"

"Surely—" Picard nodded, very kindly. "It was a nice report, a damned good report; probably the best I've ever seen of yours. Lots of interesting points in it. The newspapers would have liked to learn the effect of imitation Sauterne on modern infantry formations. I'm sorry, Reichner, but I have bad news for you."

"Go ahead, Lieutenant."

Reichner smiled the smile of a martyr. When the work he had perspired over a whole evening was scorned and ordered destroyed, he did not much care what else happened.

"The colonel instructs me to tell you privately that you have your recent citation to thank for not being reduced to the ranks. As it is, he was lenient, he claims. Reichner, it is my painful duty to inform you that you are confined to your quarters, with loss of privileges, for eight days."

"Eight days, Lieutenant?"

"Eight days, Reichner."

"Why?"

"That report."

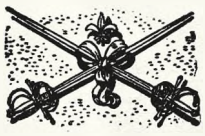
Reichner understood less and less. Then he remembered other punishments received while at Meknes, where they bothered over trifles, and recalled the familiar wording.

"For drinking when making a report, Lieutenant?"

Picard consulted the paper spread before him.

"For writing a report when drunk," he corrected.

Reichner never was quite sure of the difference.



A Tale of Limehouse and a Battle at Sea

BLINKY

By S. B. H HURST

BLINKY liked the fog, and the thicker the fog the better he liked it. A thick fog made the world seem safe for Blinky. The policeman at the gate of the East India Dock never saw him as he slunk past. To that policeman the city of London was a place of sound a mile away, and Limehouse a place of stinks which surrounded him—smells and people who drifted like ghosts in a fog that choked, with the noises of the steamers' winches unloading and loading cargo, a touch of a chillier mist oozing from the Thames, the rum-like odor of a dray of sugar creaking along the street, voices in uncanny fragments as it were from the mouths of fragments of forgotten people lost in a clinging abyss of atmosphere.

Had some one yelled "Stop, thief!" at his elbow, and the breath of that running thief been hot on his cheek for a passing moment, that thief had been as safe from capture as if a mile away—with the warrens and crooked streets and hiding places between Wapping and Old Stepney Church offering a haven for

all the thieves in London who sought sanctuary.

So the policeman never saw Blinky, and Blinky mingled with the laborers about the huge dock, with the *colashe* sailors, with lascars and negroes—and found his way to a big British-India boat unloading a general cargo from the East, to where a bright eyed *tindal*, who is the boatswain's mate, shivered by a warping bollard when, it being the hour of tiffin, he should have been eating curried fish and onions on the foredeck of the steamer.

The *tindal* had known Blinky during the space of fourteen months, which meant three trips from Calcutta to London and back. And Blinky opened quickly the large overcoat that had been made for a much fatter man. Two *colashe* sailors, who also should have been eating curry, loomed suddenly through the fog, wrestling, it seemed, with a coil of rope. No man spoke a word, although a sound like that made by an agitated snake issued from the lips of the *tindal*. Very swift was the operation, that opened overcoat permitting entry to cunning canvas sacks suspended from the shoulders of Blinky; a rapid business of putting something into the sacks. Something the *colashes* took from the coil of rope.

Then the *colashes* were rolling the coil away again, with a strange leer at the emptiness of its middle. And Blinky, praying to what gods haunt fried fish shops and care for the souls of dead cats in the mud of low water, was hastening back to the dock entrance and the stand of the big policeman.

And the gods of the stinks were with him. His nervous eyelids moved up and down like rapid shutters. That was why his pals called him Blinky. His twitching feet drove him to run, but he gritted his teeth and did not run. His aim was the air of innocent business, if the policeman saw him; but his hope was that he would not be seen—that the cold, caressing fog would enable him to slip through the dock gate like a wraith. And it did . . .

He knew the policeman was there by a stamping of cold feet and an untuneful whistling. He missed a lorry by inches, and cursed cheerfully. He gasped, and then laughed. Then nonchalantly he made off through a noon that was dusk and drab and horrible, through streets he had known intimately since, a child, he had played in their gutters. And the mud and the fog, and the smells and the noises of Limehouse seemed very good to Blinky Smith.

"Gorblime!" he exclaimed fervently. "Luv a duck, the blinkin' copper never saw me! Strike me pink if 'e did!"

He hurried past the old warehouses, saturated for more than a century with the spices and commerce of all the world, and exuding a breath of mystery and far places that mingled strikingly with the dark soul of Limehouse. A scent of Stockholm tar wafted through the fog like a vein of fine, clean metal in a mine abandoned to refuse, then the narrow streets became narrower. The figures met in the fog smelled less of bitter beer, more of rice and tea . . .

In a lane that twisted its muddy way into the heart of the Orient, Blinky was compelled to walk slowly. The pattering Chinese filled the sidewalk, their voices cleaving the fog sibilantly. But there was no longer any danger to Blinky. He could walk slowly and regain some of his lost breath. Here was the heart of the Limehouse district. Here the East had conquered England with the gods and ways of living that were ancient when William won at Hastings.

The Chinese shop that Blinky entered was even less pretentious than its neighbors, but it was as heavily freighted with the occult wares of Cathay. Its air of age and strange contents caused Blinky to blink more rapidly than usual, as it always did, and he suppressed a secret shiver when the eyes of the bland Chinese ushered him into the back room without a semblance of speech moving the emotionless lips. To Blinky that Chinese was "a queer blighter," but he paid well and on the spot for service rendered. And he trusted Blinky with an uncanny understanding of character. For Blinky was

honest. He could see no crime in running opium. If he didn't do it some other would, and there was good pay and short hours.

SO BLINKY walked with the air of a casual customer through the shop. He grinned slightly at a large advertising sign that the Chinese, professing much love for England and great regard for the well being of the advertisement, which the fog would render invisible and the rain would spoil if it were placed outside, had pleaded to be allowed to exhibit across a shelf of lacquered cases. The sign pointed at Blinky accusingly, but Blinky only sneered at its inference—

YOUR KING AND COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!

So said the advertisement, but Blinky passed into the back room muttering—

"Let them wot starts the bleedin' wars fight 'em!"

The Chinese followed and shut the door. He permitted his teak-like face to wrinkle in a slight smile.

"You catch?"

"I catch." Blinky grinned, and divested himself of his overcoat.

He transferred the canvas bags and their contents to the Chinese, who secreted them in places known only to himself. Then he paid Blinky ten pounds, which to Blinky was a large sum, and which would keep him in comfort for many days.

"You come back again tonight, eh?" said the Chinese as he paid over the money. "Want see you."

"Wot?" Blinky was slightly surprised. "Wot for? I'm goin' to go art with my girl tonight."

The Chinese smiled. In the smile was that persuasive power that lacks soul.

"See girl, then come back," he said. "See girl any night, but tonight come here!" He paused, then added, "Nice easy job for you. Makee money without carrying sacks. You come along here 'bout 'leven 'clock. See girl now, then come."

Blinky hesitated. He had enough money to last some time . . .

"You come 'leven 'clock!" said the Chinese.

For a second Blinky looked into the long eyes. Then his own blinked so rapidly that he could see nothing clearly. The eyes of the Chinese always gave Blinky an uncanny feeling. In them he saw snakes writhing. Blinky was strong, and he could have killed the Chinese with his hands, but those eyes stayed him with the fear of something that might happen —like the dread of a policeman who might be waiting around the corner.

" 'Bout 'leven o'clock, eh?" he muttered.

"Don't be late."

Blinky hurried out to the foggy street. There he felt free, like a man out of prison. Why had he ever tied up with this opium smuggling chink? To work for a white man wouldn't be so bad, but you never knew what a chink would do. Nasty, mysterious creatures! And who else was in with the chink? Who bought the stuff? . . . Other chinks, who smoked it . . . But had the old devil no partners? Come to think of it it was queer that Blinky had never seen any of the gang but the old chink—and, of course, the various native sailors of the ships that brought the stuff from India . . .

He walked moodily through the Chinese haunts, and from these to The Crown and Anchor public house. There he did some slow, lonely drinking. Blinky was quick witted, and game. To have lived and survived in Limehouse demanded such qualities. But to use his brain except for the immediate concrete bothered him. His nimbleness of wit had enabled him to dodge school when a boy, when, had the truant officer caught him, he would have been dull at lessons. He had meant to think out the puzzle of the old Chinese and his probable partners when he went into the pub, but he gave it up. And night came, and the dark and the fog turned Limehouse into a veritable labyrinth of the blind—weird upon the ears and an offense to the nostrils.

But not to Blinky. He had known it all his life, and if he had been taken away would have become homesick for its yeasting. He walked through the thick dark where occasionally a street light showed through the curling and clinging vapor, and he sang:

"Make sure you marry the sort of a gal
Who'll stick till the last dog's 'ung!
The kind that may 'it yer a punch in the mug,
But who'll fight by yer side till she's dead!"

Blinky loved the sentiment of that song, and so did Meg, his girl, who heard him coming when they met by appointment at a street corner. They kissed rapturously. The girl clung to him. She was a strong young woman, and Blinky knew he was being hugged. And she would have hugged him just as fervently if there had been neither fog nor night to confer a certain privacy.

"Gawd, Meg, I gets 'ungry to see yer, I does!"

Meg blushed becomingly, but her heart echoed Blinky's sentiment. Then a high, strident voice came from a distance, coming nearer along the street.

"Peas 'ot! All 'ot! Peas a penny! All 'ot!"

An ancient merchant of a very ancient trade—Old Benny selling hot black peas. That delight of children and grownups. Men said that Benny was past ninety, and he looked it, even if his activity belied such an age. The glow of his tiny stove, between the wheels of his little push cart, showed through the fog.

"Lets 'ave some," suggested Blinky.

Meg agreed and he bought generously. They stood there and ate hot black peas until they could hold no more, then had a glass of beer at the family entrance of a public house. Then they walked, the foggy, wet streets of Limehouse their lovers' lane. Blinky said nothing about Chinese or opium running. The strange professions of Limehouse demand discretion even in domestic circles. Meg was a wonderful girl, for whom Blinky would willingly have died, but he did not talk business when he was with her. He held it best to keep Meg and business separate. Women did not understand such things.

THE CHINESE was waiting at the door of his shop. He had just put out the light. Blinky followed him into the dark place of heathen gods and reptiles, stuffed things, carvings smelling of sandalwood and the far world. Blinky thought it a hellish place, with the old Chinese the presiding devil, weird tricks concealed up his wide sleeves. He did not relish the dark, but he squared his rather wide shoulders. This was business. You had to take chances in business. But he would get out of this business as soon as something else offered. If Meg knew she would not like it.

They did not stop in the back room as they usually did. What seemed like a fantastic altar of black and gold, with a fat god asleep on it, parted quietly at the yellow man's touch, showing a blank wall. But a panel in the wall yielded to a secret touch, and opened. It came to Blinky that the Chinese certainly trusted him, for this was the innermost privacy of the place, beyond the ken of policemen.

The room beyond the panel was dimly lighted, exotic, luxurious. In it was opium smoke, and a white man reclining on a couch of carved dragons that seemed to creep. Blinky winked at the illusion, and the dragons behaved themselves.

"They fair 'ad me seein' things!" exclaimed Blinky. And he turned and grinned at the Chinese.

The yellow man grinned also. The white man sat up on the couch. He was, as Blinky would say, a toff—a well dressed man with the air of a gentleman.

"This him!"

Thus briefly the Chinese introduced Blinky to the toff.

" 'Ow do, gov'nor," said Blinky with easy familiarity.

Toffs were toffs, but in this case they were in business together; and, among other things, Blinky always remembered that he was a free born Englishman and entitled to his rights.

"Ah, Smith, eh? I understand, Smith, that you are a clever man, and a man to be trusted. For that reason—for both rea-

sons, I should say—I am going to promote you."

"Promote?" exclaimed Blinky, surprised and not understanding.

"Exactly! You won't have to take any more chances of a policeman catching you at the dock gate. In fact, you won't have to run any more opium. You will be somewhat better paid, but you will be taking no risks."

"Lord luv us, but that sounds good," said Blinky fervently.

"You know what morphine is, of course. Less bulky, more easily handled than smoking opium. But we don't get it from India. We get it from the Continent—from Holland. I am arranging for a large shipment. It will come in cases of eggs. Harmless looking eggs. England imports millions of eggs every year from Denmark and Holland, you know."

"But—" began Blinky.

The toff waved a hand for silence.

"Morphine comes in powder form. The eggs come in cases—many dozens to the case. In every case we import will be some dozens of good eggs—eggs to eat. But the eggs in the middle of the case will be different. These eggs will have been blown—you know what that means? The content of the eggs blown out, and in place of egg meat morphine substituted. Then the eggs are carefully plugged again with lime. You could not tell the difference by ordinary examination. Even the exact weight of standard eggs is imitated—get the idea?"

"Clever, I calls it!" ejaculated Blinky enthusiastically.

"Glad you approve . . . Well, all you will have to do will be to take my orders to the shipper in Amsterdam. They will be in the form of a small letter which will tell the shipper how much to ship, and by what ship and when. An ordinary business transaction, apparently, in the egg line. No doubt you will see why I can not write to the shipper in Holland. Even in peace times it would not, perhaps, be wise; but now, with the war going on, and every letter leaving England censored, it would be suicidal to write. Of course my letter will be in code; and even though it may look like an ordinary letter ordering eggs, the censors are damn clever. It won't do to take chances. So you take the letter, instead. The Chinese, here, will sew it into the waistband of your trousers."

"But 'ow do I take it?" asked Blinky.

"By steamer, of course. And here is where our further precautions come in. You will not travel as a passenger. Every passenger has to explain to too many busybodies all about why he is traveling. But a deckhand on a steamer has no explaining to do. It is his business. And, of course, every deckhand takes a night or two ashore while the steamer is in Amsterdam—to see the sights, to see the girls, to have a drink of *schnapps*. Get the idea?"

Blinky nodded.

"You won't even have to handle the eggs. Nothing to do but take the orders to Amsterdam. The point is your trustworthiness, Smith, because, you see, you will have to visit the morphine shipper at night, at his home in the city. It would never do to allow a man less trusty than you to know where the shipper lives, to know what business he is in. If anything went wrong the shipper would blame me and, to be frank, he is not the sort of man I would want to offend.

"I am trusting you pretty far, Smith, but the Chinese here is an excellent judge of character, and you have always been faithful. Besides, I can size up men myself. Also, you are in with us, and it's your bread and butter. So be careful, because if things go wrong it means ten years at hard labor for you, and me, and all of us they can catch!"

"I'm square," said Blinky. "But wot I doesn't like, mister, is this 'ere goin' back and forth as a ruddy deck'and. For one thing, they makes a deck'and scrub decks. I wouldn't like that. But that ain't the worst of it these times. Every now and then some blinkin' German sinks a steamer, and the poor blighters of deck-'ands drowns in the sea."

"The navy protects the Holland boats

carefully, Smith," answered the toff patiently. "Accidents happen, of course, but there are wrecks in peace time, you know. And you want to remember that you are an able bodied young man, and that in a very short time there will be worse jobs for able bodied young men than being deckhands. The draft law has passed. They will force you into the army, into the trenches, to be killed in France. But sailors, deckhands, are not drafted into the army. Their work is even more important. As a deckhand, earning more money than ever any deckhand earned, you will be safe from the trenches."

"Let them wot makes the bleedin' wars do the fightin' of 'em, is wot I says," growled Blinky.

"Sound law and politics." The toff grinned. "But might is right in this era of civilization, as it always was; and unless you can show the authorities that you are regularly employed on a ship they will send you into the stinking trenches where the rats gnaw at you and the filth drowns you far more horribly than any clean North Sea—not to mention German mustard gas and other pleasant things. You've seen them come back here from France, coughing their lungs out and waiting, and praying for death."

"'Old on, mister," Blinky growled again. "Where's the ship that I deck-'ands on? And 'ere's me pants for the chink to sew the letter in— Oh, little packet-like, in oil silk, eh? You must think I'm going to 'ave to swim for it. Well, I carn't swim, but I'm game to try. No fighting for me. Let them wot starts the war do the fighting! Not a ruddy 'and would I lift to 'elp 'em!"

MEG WEPT when they kissed goodby. The dock was a-bustle and strange. She didn't want him to go. The sea was deadly—anything so different from Limehouse, despite its connection with things marine, was to Meg fearful. She would have argued in favor of being burned alive ashore rather than drowned, but the mate was shouting for deckhands . . .

A fine clear night, down the old river of romantic memories—but it was of little interest to Blinky Smith. He was afraid he would be seasick. He hadn't thought of that when he agreed to go to Amsterdam.

The Channel lifting to another clear day, with a breeze that sparkled in sunlight, and white on the tops of the waves. Blinky ate a hearty breakfast and was secretly surprised at his steady stomach. He had been compelled to beat up a shipmate in the forecastle the night before, because that handler of deck swabs had asked impertinent questions about Blinky's eyes. As a matter of fact, Blinky was a tough person, and the other deckhands believed him when he told them.

After licking the asker-of-questions, Blinky felt happier than he ever remembered feeling. He was puzzled, because winning fights to him was an old story. He was conscious of a sense of freedom from worry. Then he understood. There was no policeman looking for such as he around the corner of the deckhouse—no ruddy police on board the ship, and men could fight and settle their differences.

The one thing in the world that Blinky feared no longer troubled him—no longer the fear of what *might* happen. For on the *Bell of Goodwin*, so long as a man obeyed the mate with decent civility, nothing could happen except some indifferently hard work, a lot to eat, and considerable sleep and tobacco. The *Bell* was an old tub and did not carry passengers.

He got his first sight of the navy when, with the wind increasing, he saw a destroyer rolling and plunging like a porpoise, and sought information concerning her. The course of the *Bell of Goodwin* was not considered the happiest. The submarines loved it. And, in sight, were six other ships of the *Bell's* class rolling through the North Sea to Holland.

But nothing happened. Blinky watched the destroyer with much pleasure. She reminded him of a good dog, a faithful

dog. And Blinky had always been fond of dogs. He became carefree and told stories of a sort which Boccaccio would have considered unrefined. He was, as it were, the life of the forecastle until the *Bell* reached the Ij, which is an arm of the Zuider Zee. Then Blinky remembered more acutely that he was in the drug smuggling business, and he became quiet, self-contained and watchful. They had policemen in Amsterdam. He was sure of that. Like bed bugs and such pests policemen were to be found everywhere.

Blinky knew where to go the night he got shore leave. The toff in the opium den had given him clever directions, and Blinky's keen brain remembered clearly. He had a pictured chart of directions in his memory. All he had to do was to find the Dam, which is the vital heart of Amsterdam, and then walk east one street, and so on. And the Dam was easy to find. As easy, it seemed, as tulips, which were everywhere.

It was a handsome house, beyond the Single Gratch, where the streets were broad and avenues of trees and the Vondel Park gave Blinky the notion that here was the "West End" of Amsterdam. He was correct, in a way, but he remembered he was English; he remembered his rights and that he was in a foreign country for the first time in his life, and that, therefore, it was his duty to assert himself because his was the greatest nation on earth and other peoples were of lesser breed.

So Blinky, who in London would have gone to the servants' entrance, rang boldly on the front door of that handsome house in Holland.

To his surprise no servant opened it. At least the man did not look like a servant—quite the contrary, in fact.

"Go away," he said in English. "I do not wish to buy anything."

Blinky grinned. The toff in Limehouse had told him that the man for whom the letter was intended would say those very words. So Blinky replied, as instructed:

"Sir, forgive me; but in me rough clothes yer be'olds a hartist wot is seekin' a kermission to paint something for yer. Strike me ruddy well pink, but 'ere in Hamsterdam is the finest collection of paintings in the world. A fit place for hartists, eh wot?"

The man in the doorway suppressed a smile. Blinky had spoken the gist of the code message, and he was satisfied.

"Come in, my dear sir. An artist is always welcome in my house, even though I can not always afford to have him paint for me. But a glass of wine, now? Honor me, so! Come in!"

Blinky went in. He had never been in such a house in his life. Such furniture, such comfort, luxury—and good English the owner spoke, too. Good for a Dutchman. Spoke it like a foreigner, he did. But that was to be expected. It would be hardly fair for Blinky to expect a foreigner to speak English as well as he himself did.

He was ushered into a small room. The house was very quiet. All the time he was in it Blinky did not see any one but the man who had met him at the door. The man shut the door of the room, and Blinky said—

"Lend me yer knife, mister, so I can cut the letter out of me pants for yer."

The man smiled most affably. He poured out a drink for Blinky while Blinky was extracting the package. Then a cigar, while he read the letter. A very satisfactory order for eggs, it seemed. He smiled happily and read the letter twice. Blinky watched him with much friendliness. He thought the man had a face like a good looking prize fighter. He asked:

"Them scars on yer cheek, mister? Did a blinkin' cat scratch yer?"

The affability left the man's face with startling suddenness, as if Blinky had insulted him most vilely. Anger like sudden thunder. Blinky got ready to put into effect his principle to " 'it first and keep on 'ittin'!" but the man got control of himself. He managed a sort of smile.

"Not a cat," he said gruffly. "I fell against a window in the dark, and the glass cut me."

Blinky was puzzled for a moment by

the man's anger at the memory of the window, then he found the solution. No doubt about it, the fellow had been a burglar before going into the drug game and getting rich. He didn't like to be reminded of his late profession. Blinky knew intimately several burglars, retired and otherwise—those who had retired were in Dartmoor—who would not have grown angry at being thus reminded. But, then, none of Blinky's friends had such a house as this. This fellow was a toff in his own right.

"Is it all right abart the heggs?" said Blinky.

"Very fine—good!" answered the man.

"Then I'll be on me way," said Blinky. "Thanks for the drink and the smoke, mister, but as I sees yer 'ave no paintin' for me, I'll go back to me ship. Pleased to 'ave 'ad the honor of meetin' yer!"

Blinky meant his last words to have a fine flavor of sarcasm, but the man took them literally. This annoyed Blinky. But they parted with mutual expressions of high esteem, and Blinky felt that he had done a good night's work, and that the money he would get for doing it was a pleasure to earn. Not like dodging a policeman at the dock gate in a fog.

SQUAT, sturdy Dutch fishing boats, sea gulls following the herring schools, the windmills fading astern as Blinky's steamer left the Zuider Zee; then gray waves and a low and lonely sky, the thump of the engines that no longer kept Blinky from sleeping, and a windy night.

The shock came just at dawn, and the horror and the waking, the stunned sort of realization that all that offered was a broken boat and hungry waves, paralyzed Blinky for a moment. Then in the noise and confusion following the explosion—they never knew whether the steamer hit a mine or a submarine torpedoed her—he worked like a fighting man to get the boats clear. He had always known that he was "a cool 'eaded cove," but in that dire stress he surpassed even his own opinion of himself. But it was all to no avail. The steamer went down from under him like a stone.

Blinky found the water very cold, and he found himself and four others clinging to a life raft. The low sky, the gray North Sea with its misty horizon . . . Blinky could not remember just how he got to the life raft. He looked at his shivering companions.

"Gawd!" he muttered. "Us five, that's all. Them other poor blighters is drownded!" He looked around at the ravening sea. "Maybe they was better orf, at that. This 'ere waitin' is goin' to be 'ell!"

A larger wave spent itself on the raft, and the five men clung desperately. One of them screamed. The raft could not capsize but the men might easily be washed off.

"No good 'ollerin'," shouted Blinky. "Wot 'its yer 'its yer, and yer carnt ruddy well 'elp it!"

A childhood spent fighting for a crust to eat, with bare feet in freezing temperatures, no bed at night, sleeping in alleys or where he could, dodging police and with a fight almost every day—all this had made a tough man of Blinky Smith. He had a vague memory of a mother, none of a father, of a deadly boyhood fear that an orphan institution would take away his freedom. Life had been cruel, but he had survived. And the law of survival showed on that wave washed life raft.

" 'Ang on, mates, the old bus is turning a corner!" Blinky, cheering himself up as he had done through the drab years, tried to cheer up his companions.

"It's me leg," the man who had screamed explained. "It's broke!"

"Gawd!" said Blinky sympathetically.

"Damn the war!" another spluttered as his head emerged from a smother of spray.

"Them wot makes it hought to be made to fight it, I says," growled Blinky, his cheerfulness suddenly vanishing.

"Yer right there, mate," an elderly man with a beard agreed. "It's 'ard on the likes of us!"

After that there was little talk among them. They had neither food nor water. A wet plug of tobacco, which they shared

and chewed until aching stomachs rebelled, was their only comfort. They managed to get the man with the broken leg to the center of the raft, and tried to protect him from the buffeting seas, but he soon became delirious with suffering, and he began to sing in a voice that was terrible to hear. The cold became intense.

" 'E's 'appy," said Blinky. " 'E thinks 'e's a bleedin' music 'all hartist, doing three 'ouses a night an' going drunk to bed regular!"

No sun showed that day in the leaden sky. The man with the broken leg stopped singing and sank into a merciful coma. The other four held him on the raft. They had no rope or they might have tied him there. It must have been noon when one of the men announced that he had had enough.

"It's no use 'anging on," he said wearily. "We're freezing to death, anyhow. I'm going to let go and drown. Goodby, mates!"

Blinky reached the man and grabbed his arm.

"You 'ang on to this blasted raft," he said savagely, "or I'll bust yer one on the smeller!"

He lifted his head in command, and looked around to see that his order to hang on was obeyed. Then he saw something, and for a moment he could not speak. Blinky gulped when he saw that swift, gray shape in the mist, rolling and plunging like a porpoise. Then he cried out, so that his companions thought he had gone insane.

"Gawd bless 'er!" he shouted, his voice cracking. " 'Ere she comes, boys! The bleedin' bus wot will take us 'ome!"

BLINKY was impressed with the efficiency of the men of that destroyer. The young man in wet oilskins on her bridge who waved a cheerful hand made him feel warm inside. She did not launch a boat, and the transfer from the raft was difficult. The young lieutenant on the bridge gave crisp orders, which his men obeyed with a marvelous precision. Blinky, who for some hours had felt himself captain of that raft, felt that it was up to him to emulate the lieutenant. But *his* men were too far gone to obey, so he had to help them. He began with the unconscious one with the broken leg. Two sailors from the destroyer aided him.

"This 'ere bloke fust," shouted Blinky, careening with the raft. " 'E's gone and broke 'is leg!"

"Yes, sir!"

The sailors obeyed. They took Blinky for a ship's officer. They had seen many ship's officers who looked far worse than did he after hours on a raft, and who had had far less of an air about them. But how Blinky thrilled at that "sir"!

He thrilled again, and this time it was a rapturous thrill, a new sort of thrill, when the lieutenant, the transfer safely made, and the destroyer on her way again, slapped him on the back.

"Good egg!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "Come and have a drink!"

The word egg struck an ugly chord somewhere deep in Blinky's soul, but the word drink was music.

He was warm and in dry clothes when the lieutenant, his face alight with a strange inner fire, came to him.

"Got a wireless order to transfer you and your men to the *Lion*," said the lieutenant. "Destroyers are a bit crowded, you know. And the man with the broken leg can get better quarters on the battle cruiser. Main thing, though, is we're a bit crowded aboard here, and may get more so. Sorry to have you go, but—" the inner light glowed and glowed again—"you see, old man—" the lieutenant almost sang the words—"we're going into action!"

For a moment the rhythm of the destroyer's engines sang an old song to Blinky. And the burden of the song was—

"Let them wot makes the wars fight 'em!"

Then he looked again at the lieutenant's face, and said—

"The *Lion*, eh?"

"Yes," answered the lieutenant. "The flagship."

"Action," said Blinky.

"Yes," said the lieutenant. "At daylight, as we figure it. The admiral knows where the enemy will be. It's dark now. We'll have you on board the *Lion* in an hour."

The lieutenant went away. Blinky Smith was wondering how the admiral knew where the German ships would be at daylight.

The speed of the *Lion* made her seem to sweep through a living wind. Blinky had been startled at the massive nakedness of her—all that steel stripped for action. Taut and naked and terribly powerful. All hands—a thousand of them—at battle stations. Pulsing through a living wind . . . Blinky felt strange emotions stirring within him.

He was among the idlers, that ancient naval term, at the sick bay, ready to help carry wounded to the doctors. He was breathing rapidly, and there was a tingle along his spine.

The *Lion* shivered in her gait, and the report of a heavy gun ran through her. Then she surged forward again.

"A sighting shot—to try the range," some one told Blinky. "It fell short, but we'll be up with them in a few minutes."

He knew that the German battle cruisers were racing for home and safety, and he shivered with the excitement of the chase.

It came with a roar and concussion that more than shook the *Lion*. For a moment she actually seemed to stop—the recoil of that terrific explosion. Then she swept forward again.

"Fired all our turrets at once that time," said Blinky's informant.

Blinky nodded. He grinned as he thought of the orators whose words he had so often quoted: "Let them wot makes the wars fight 'em." How ruddy scared those fellers would be if they were where he was. But he wasn't scared. But, then, he'd always been able to take his own part. Nobody could ever say he was afraid to fight! Of course there was nothing for him to do on this great ship. No shots could penetrate that massive structure. There wouldn't be any wounded to carry to the doctors. How could anybody be hurt when sheltered by such great steel walls?

Then the first German shells to hit the *Lion* broke in staggering concussions, and their power was unfolded to him. Men said that three had gone clear through the admiral's cabin, and wrecked it. Done no harm, though!

But the next was like a slap in the face, as if some fabulous giant had slapped the laboring *Lion*. She staggered, shivered. Then she seemed to shake her head and plunge forward again, her guns roaring. Again and again she fought back like a living thing as she took the blows of the gallant guns of the fleeing enemy.

There was a fire in the ammunition hoist of the No. 2 turret. Blinky had seen many fires, but never such a fire as this. Men working like scientific demons to get it under control. A matter of seconds. A few breaths between life and death. For if a few sparks got into the magazine the *Lion* would be shattered like a glass ball in a shooting gallery.

BLINKY had no business there. He had followed a boy, who ran. A shell had broken communication between the turret and the conning tower. Blinky had followed the messenger midshipman. He found himself working in that hell.

They got the fire under control. The *Lion* was rushing through rough water. Again the Germans got her in their range finders. Shells struck her, and the sea mishandled her. Blinky picked himself up. A good natured seaman told him to get to hell out of there. Blinky laughed and again followed the midshipman.

It was at a secondary battery. The *Lion* was taking the worst pounding she had as yet received. The enemy ahead had concentrated on her, and the disabled and dying *Blucher* was making her last glorious effort of the battle. The *Lion* took it from all of them. And a clean hit

took that secondary battery. Blinky saw it through a blinding flash, and heard it like distant thunder. The tearing and breaking of the steel a few feet away sounded like an Earls Court fireworks display heard across London!

And then Blinky saw things which men try to forget, but dream about in after years when very tired.

"Me ears," gasped Blinky. "They ain't workin' right! Gawd! He staggered to his feet. There was a great hole in the ship's side. Waves seemed to be trying to come through. And men—they had been men a few moments before . . .

A nasty, dangerous place. Blinky cursed his uneasy footing. He cried like a child between the curses, and worked like a man to help the wounded. Then he saw the little midshipman again. There was less smoke now. The midshipman was badly hurt. Blinky's job was to carry the wounded to the doctors. He knelt down and began very gently to pick up the midshipman.

"I'll try not to 'urt yer, sir!" he whispered.

The boy smiled at him.

"Thank you," he said—as he died . . .

"Oh, Gawd," sobbed Blinky Smith. " 'E's dead! 'E's dead—an' 'e said thank yer as 'e died!"

It was some little time later that a shell smashed a feed control pipe. The *Lion* slowed, then lost her way, and stopped. She rolled there in the rough sea. She fired her guns as long as anything remained in range—and then the battle left her behind.

Men crowded out for a breath of fresh air. From the turrets, the engine room, from everywhere—to breathe and see. The *Blucher* had gone down, her last gun pointing skyward but still firing as the British light cruisers came up with her. The other German battle cruisers were out of sight ahead; the British, still chasing, disappearing in the misty horizon. The word went round that the admiral was leaving the *Lion*, transferring his flag to a destroyer, to try to catch up with the battle.

Blinky had surged up a hatchway in a crowd of grimy men from the engine room. He was, like the rest, naked to the waist. After an ancient custom, only the officers had retained the upper part of their uniforms. A huge, hairy man pushed Blinky up the ladder. From above, on the upper deck, came the sound of cheering. Hundreds of men roaring loyalty and approval. Men coming up the hatchways joined in the shouting. Blinky and the big man reached the deck as several officers came down from the superstructure, walking to the ship's side to get aboard the destroyer bobbing like a toy in the waves.

"That's 'im!" The big man spoke hoarsely in Blinky's ear.

And then the utterly unprecedented happened. The big man could no longer contain his excitement and admiration within the strict lines of naval discipline. He pushed through the cheering crowd. He rushed at the admiral. And he raised a huge hand and slapped the admiral on the back!

"Gawd bless yer, Davie! Ye're the boy to beat the Germans!"

A startled, almost horrified silence fell on the cheering. Then the admiral turned his head and laughed good naturedly. Sacrilege was averted. The frowning officers joined the laughter. And the cheering spouted thunderously.

What followed was to Blinky a series of changeful, fascinating pictures, all centered about the towing of the *Lion* back to her base. Big, panting naval tugs. And all about, twisting and turning and crossing, darting and plunging—like a flock of midges, as it seemed to Blinky—were the protecting destroyers. Dozens of them, with orders to sink any submarine that showed itself without waiting to learn its nationality.

Then the land again, the *Lion* still in tow. Under a towering bridge, with men and women looking like ants above the *Lion*, their cheering like the voices of children far away as she passed under . . . And Blinky Smith panted with the pride of being a part of it all.

Then, to his astonishment, the word

was passed that the captain wanted to see him. At first he thought it was some sort of naval joke. What would the busy captain want to see him for? He was told it was no joke, and that men on battle cruisers did not keep captains waiting. Then, for a moment, came the old fear of police and authority. Deep in Blinky's being was that phobia, acquired in infancy.

He went aft, the gorgeous pride and glory that had been his leaving him. A rigid marine, on sentry at the cabin door, winked at him, and Blinky felt better. After all, he assured himself, he had done no wrong. Eggs, of course, but the captain could not have heard about that order for eggs. Blinky, forgetting the fact that he was not on the ship's books, was in fact a passenger—forgetting a lot of things—saluted as the captain looked across his desk at him.

"Ah, Smith! The *Thistle* picked you up from a raft. The lieutenant in command advised me that you are the sort of merchant seaman we all admire. Your conduct on board the *Lion* has borne out that statement. Permit me to congratulate you!"

The captain stood up and offered his hand to Blinky Smith. In a sort of daze, Blinky wiped his hand on his trousers' leg. He felt that he ought to say something appropriate to the occasion, but for the first time in his life his easy flow of language was dammed.

"Thank you, sir," was all he could manage.

"And," went on the captain, "take this letter with you when you go ashore. It is a testimonial to your courage which I have just signed. Good luck to you."

Blinky's mental condition when he went out of the cabin was such that he forgot to wink at the sentry. In fact, he never even saw him.

A SMALL cruiser was landing some German prisoners. Their faces showed that they were glad to be out of the war. All except one of them. He stood to one side. Blinky, looking at him, saw something. Startled, he said to a sailor:

"That feller there," he whispered. "Look, them marks on 'is face—like a big cat 'ad gone and scratched 'im! Wot's them?"

The sailor grinned.

"Cat yer grandmother! Don't yer know wot them scars is? Them's dooling scars! That bloke's a orficer. Them Germans 'as guts, and don't yer ferget it. They gets them scars, the orficers does, when they's boys at school. It's like this. Yer see, when English boys goes out to play together they picks up—picks up fifteen a side and plays football. But them Germans they never heard of football. So wot does them German boys do but swipe their fathers' swords and starts a dool. See? They cuts and slashes at each other to see which can take the most punishment. Guts they has, like I told you, even if they is ignorant of football! Them scars is old dool scars. Only orficers 'as em!"

They gave Blinky a distressed seaman's pass, and he started for London. But he took a growing horror with him. A horror that had begun with a dry taste in his mouth and a sick feeling in his stomach when the sailor had explained about dueling scars. Blinky had asked more questions. He had learned that any man bearing those scars held it an honor dearer than life to serve his country, to die for the Fatherland.

And now Blinky's memory of the man with the same scars in Amsterdam was an agony. Would such a man be smuggling morphine in crates of eggs? Many things there were about the war that Blinky did not know, but some things he did know. And he remembered what Meg had wailed through her tears when her brother, one of the old Contemptibles, had been killed.

"It ain't only the bullets. There's worse than that in France, and at 'ome 'ere! Sneaks and spies that lets the Germans know where our men is, so they can shoot 'em. Spies and sneaks, with dirty, cunning tricks!"

Blinky thought of the white man in the smoke filled room behind the shop of the Chinese. The man who looked and spoke

like an Englishman. The train was rushing through a tunnel. Blinky gritted his teeth.

"I'll 'ave it out wiv 'im!" he growled. "Gawd 'elp 'im if 'e's gone and made a Judas out of me! I'll arsk 'im fair, I will. Get 'im alone, first. Have it out wiv 'im! And I won't let 'im know wot's 'urting me, no! But Gawd 'elp 'im if he's made a Judas out of me!"

NIGHT and the fog and the shop of the Chinese, and Blinky with a grin he strove to make seem natural. Through the back room and the wall to where the white man lay in languid comfort on the couch.

At the sight of him Blinky became cool again, and cunning. He was going into battle now, and it would be a fight to a finish. Blinky Smith was captain of his soul. He gave no thought to what might happen to him. He saw again the gallant smile of the boy who, dying, had said thank you . . . And steeling him was that something which had entered into his being with the thunder of the guns of the *Lion*.

"Ah, Smith!" The man sat up eagerly. "Everything go all right?"

"Fine," said Blinky. "And the gent in Hamsterdam 'e told me to tell yer that the heggs would be hextra fresh."

"Excellent. I knew you would handle the job well. I'll send another order by you in a few days. Here—"

He handed Blinky five ten pound notes. More money than Blinky had ever possessed at one time before. Blinky clutched the money. He wanted to cram it down the man's throat. He could not altogether control his fury. He tried desperately. It would never do to allow this fellow to suspect what was in his mind. A sudden notion came to his help. Blinky turned and spoke angrily to the Chinese.

"Wot yer grinnin' at? 'Ave yer nothink to drink in this 'ere shop of yours? An' me thirsty arfter me journey!"

The Chinese, startled out of his usual placidity, went to get the drink. The white man asked:

"What's wrong? Isn't the pay sufficient?"

"Perfeck, gov'nor. But I 'ates to 'ave that ruddy chink a-watchin' me every move. Fair gets on me nerves, it does." He turned as if to make certain the Chinese could not hear. "I 'ad to get rid of 'im, too. Got a special private message for yer, gov'ner, from the gent over there in Hamsterdam. 'E told me not to let anybody know 'e give it to me for yer, see? I'll meet yer at eleven tonight—just at the end of the street. It's important, so the Hamsterdam gent said, and strictly private!"

The white man nodded understandingly as the Chinese returned with the drink.

Blinky sought the lonely places, deserted wharves. He wanted to be alone. He had to be alone. He felt that if he met a friend he would scream. So he wandered until the chimes of Old Stepney warned him.

"I don't quite understand, Smith," the toff said irritably when he joined Blinky. "Of course, anything the gentleman in Amsterdam tells you is important, but why bring me out here in the cold? The Chinese is as trustworthy as you and I. Did the gentleman in Amsterdam tell you he was not to know about the message?"

"Mister—" Blinky's whisper was sibilant—"this 'ere wot I 'as for yer is so himportant that I cawn't even tell it yer on the street! Come on darn this 'ere halley, where we can be alone."

Blinky grasped the toff's arm and began to lead him.

"Hold on, Smith—I don't like this! What the—"

"You blinkin' fool," snarled Blinky. "Do yer want all Lime'ouse to know wot yer hup to? Come on!"

The man, who had hung back and dragged at Blinky's arm, seemed reassured.

"Seems silly," he said, "but the gentleman in Amsterdam has his own way of doing things."

"He 'as," said Blinky, thinking of the scars.

They reached a quiet, rotten old wharf. The smell of the mud of low water permeated it. London, Limehouse and the rest of the world was but a sound.

"It 'as to do wiv cats," began Blinky.

"Cats?"

"Yus—but not the kind you'd likely see in the mud, if it wasn't for the fog. Leastwise, I thought it was cats at first!"

"Are you drunk, Smith?" The man shivered slightly.

"And a boy wot said thank you when 'e died," added Blinky.

The man shivered again, this time with fear. He saw Blinky only as a vague figure looming in the mist.

"Boy that died," he muttered. Then he laughed. "Cats! Drunk you must be, old man!"

The attempt at friendly equality in that "old man" told Blinky much.

"I thought it were a cat," he said grimly. "But it were a sword!"

"Stop this damned rot," the other said with sharp nervousness. "If you have a message, give it to me!"

"The message—" Blinky hesitated, then. "The message is: 'Can't you do more for the navy?' "

"Oh!" said the other, as if understanding.

Then Blinky knew. He spoke softly, but it was a deadly softness—

"You made a Judas out of me!"

"Eh, what?"

"Judas, you swine! I know yer, you dirty spy! Heggs, you said—Heggs!" Blinky laughed harshly.

"Don't be a fool, Smith! Don't be a—You would, eh? Take that, then!"

The tiny revolver made little noise. Blinky felt the bullet sear the skin of his left arm. Then he jumped for the toff—jumped with a delightful joy. And his fingers were at the other man's throat as they fell, Blinky on top. He was choking the man, and when the other tried to lift his head Blinky smashed it down on the wharf again . . .The toff ceased to struggle.

Blinky got to his feet, relaxed and weak. He heard voices, the sound of running feet. Somebody, then, must have heard the revolver shot—but what did it matter?

He was turning to go, where he neither knew nor cared, when the two policemen came running, their flashlights flaring oddly. They seized him, but he made no resistance to the handcuffs. One of the policemen knelt down on the wharf. He examined the toff.

"Dead!" he said quietly. "You killed him?"

Blinky did not answer. He was listening. Far away, the voice of old Benny, "Peas 'ot! All 'ot!" . . . Blinky thought of Meg. He would never see her again. He would not let the police know his name. He would never let them know why he killed the toff. His shame must die with him.

"Peas 'ot! All 'ot!" Blinky gulped painfully.

"You'll hang for this," said one of the policemen.

Blinky laughed hysterically.

" 'Ang," he muttered. " 'Ang! But Judas 'anged his blinkin' self!"

"You're drunk," said the policeman.

WELL, what did it matter? At the police station they had searched Blinky and taken his money. He wondered who would get it after they hanged him. He didn't care. He shuddered as he thought of Meg getting his thirty pieces of silver. A lawyer? What was the use of hiring a lawyer?

Blinky bowed his head in his hands, sitting there in a cell. How long would it take—the trial and the fuss before they ended it? They knew his name was Smith—that letter from the captain of the *Lion*—but that knowledge would not help them much. They seemed to think he had robbed the toff of the fifty pounds, and then killed him. All right, let them think that. Better that than to have them know the truth. Smith was the name, eh? Well, there was nothing wrong about the name Smith. Lots of Smiths. No disgrace to be named Smith—but

Judas! That was something else. Must never let them know that his right name was Judas.

Smith a robber and a murderer was not so bad. Lots of Smiths and lots of robbers and murderers. Rough lot of fellows, but decent in their way. But Judas! Nothing so rotten as Judas in all the world. That was Blinky's name now; Judas, not Smith. But he would never let the police know that. No, he was just plain Smith to them, and they would hang him as plain Smith—just plain robber and murderer, without ever finding out who his girl was, or anything personal about him. And without ever knowing that his right name was Judas!

That light from the passage shining into the cell—that was a damned nuisance. How could Blinky hide from himself with that light shining full on him? If they would put out that damned light he might be able to forget for a few minutes that his name was Judas— Ah! Now what did they want?

The jailer had unlocked the cell door and beckoned to Blinky. Blinky got up from the bench. With the jailer at the door was a man in plain clothes.

"Go along with this gentleman, Smith," said the jailer.

Blinky obeyed. He walked with the plainclothesman down a long passage. They had not handcuffed him, and Blinky wondered. What was up? They weren't going to try him yet. It wasn't more than an hour since he killed the toff. Not two hours, anyway. They wouldn't hang him the same night. Blinky wished they would.

The plainclothesman said nothing. Now and then he indicated a turn with his hand. Then came an elevator, and another passage. A lot of doors in that passage. It wasn't a jail, this passage. Offices, like. Finally the plainclothesman knocked on a door.

"Come in!"

The plainclothesman opened the door, and motioned Blinky into the room, saying, "Here he is, sir." Then he shut the door and went away, leaving Blinky alone with a man who sat at a desk.

He was a naval captain. Blinky, dazed and puzzled, stared. It seemed a funny way to treat a murderer, leaving him alone in this office with this captain— and with no handcuffs.

"Sit down, Smith."

Blinky was even more startled. Was this some sort of trap? The captain was pointing to a very comfortable, deep leather chair by the desk.

"Sit down!"

Blinky obeyed automatically.

"And now," said the captain quietly," tell me all about it."

"Abart it?" The words were forced from Blinky by surprise.

"Yes," said the captain.

Blinky closed his lips tightly. So this was how they did it! This was how they found out all about a man's personal affairs, who his girl was and all about him—when he wouldn't tell? Clever, but it would do no good in Blinky Smith's case. Not a word would he say.

The captain was watching him closely. Suddenly he opened a drawer of the desk and took out a bottle.

"Have a drink?" he asked.

Blinky opened his mouth—and shut it again. It surely was not a part of official proceedings to have a captain in the navy offer a drink to every murderer arrested. But maybe this wasn't real. Some sort of dream, maybe. The captain had put the glass in Blinky's hand. It would be rude to refuse to drink. Blinky drank. It was real whisky. Blinky was certain of that.

"Just to make it easier, Smith, suppose I say— Tell me how you came to kill this German agent?"

Blinky's curiosity overcame his determination to say nothing.

"A German, eh?" he asked.

"Nothing so decent," answered the captain. "The fellow was an Englishman—a traitor."

"Oh—" Blinky shivered. "Oh, a sort of Judas, eh?"

"Exactly!" exclaimed the captain.

Blinky put the empty glass on the desk.

"Good stuff that," he said. "Thanks, Mister Captain!"

"Well?" said the captain.

"You cawn't beat Dewar's twenty-year-in-the-wood when it comes to whisky," said Blinky in a conversational voice.

THE CAPTAIN did not answer. He was apparently studying Blinky—like reading a book. He put a hand in his pocket and took out a cigaret case.

"May as well be comfortable," he said, and proffered the case.

"Thanks," said Blinky Smith. Then, feeling it was only decent, he added, "Ye're treatin' me nice, sir, but it ain't no use. I ain't the sort of cove to be caught by kindness. Not that sort of a bird, I ain't. The bobbies that took me said a warnin'—that anything I said might be used against me at me trial. So mum's the word!"

"Suppose," said the captain, "that I offered you immunity. Suppose that I promised that, in return for your story, authenticated, I would allow you to go free? Suppose I offer you freedom for the truth as to why you killed the traitor? Would you trade?"

Blinky shook his head.

The captain smiled.

"You have told me what I wanted to know, Smith," he said. "Not all of it, but all that really concerns you. Your refusal to buy freedom. Listen—don't look so surprised. My bureau is in business to find out things. Here we have a young man named Smith, picked up by a destroyer after his steamer is torpedoed or hit by a mine. Smith behaves so well on the raft and during the transfer that the commander of the destroyer mentions his conduct. On the *Lion* said Smith acts heroically. Faces what seems like certain death after a secondary battery is destroyed. The captain of the *Lion* gives said Smith a letter. Next thing we hear about Smith is that he is arrested after, presumably, killing a creature we have been seeking for many months.

"In the pockets of Smith is what for Smith is a large sum of money. Why did Smith go to Amsterdam? He is not a sailor by trade—carries no discharge papers from previous ships. Copy of ship's articles says no previous ship. Hum! Killing the traitor is worth probably a brigade to Smith's country. Merits a reward. Gallant fellow, this Smith. But if Smith will only tell something more—something which evades deduction—he will have served his country just that much more. His information will probably save a battleship—and he will be free to go home!"

Blinky sank into the chair.

"Yer spoofin'," he said weakly. "And, besides, I won't tell!"

"Why?" The captain smiled again. "Brave men, such as Smith," he said, "do not carry messages to the enemy. Not if they know what they are doing. When they find out they have been tricked—they kill the man who tricked them!"

Blinky sat up as if the chair had become electrified. Then he sank back again.

"But—it makes me a murderer!"

"Even in peace times a lawyer would plead self-defense, and the verdict would be not guilty. The fellow shot at you. You naturally jumped him. His head hit a ringbolt . . . Forget your conscience a minute, Smith."

"But you won't tell nobody that—about wot I did—about being a unbeknown—Judas?" gasped Blinky.

"On my word of honor, no," said the captain.

Then Blinky told his tale . . .

When he came to the location of the Chinese shop, the captain pressed a button under his desk. The plainclothesman came in. The captain gave him orders and directions.

"Hurry—get them all!" he finished.

The plainclothesman hurried away. The captain turned to Blinky.

"And that information may save a squadron," he said. "Continue, please."

"But a opium smuggler," said Blinky.

"Must be caught with the goods," said the captain. "I have promised you immunity, now I will go farther and ask

what sort of reward you wish. What can we do for you in return for helping us smoke out this nest of spies and traitors? For the priceless information in the address of that gentleman in Amsterdam. What marvelous messages he is going to receive from a man he does not know is dead—and will not know is dead! . . . Go on, Smith. What, besides immunity, do you ask for?"

"A job on that there *Lion*," said Blinky stoutly. "Don't care wot it is so as I get a job along wiv them fellers!"

"Good man! It shall be arranged."

"And nobody is to know about—about me taking that horder for heggs to Hamsterdam, sir? You won't tell nobody—you won't say nothink to Meg?"

"I won't say nothin' to Meg," promised the captain gravely.

The WALLS

By

HAROLD LAMB

FOREWORD

IN THE YEAR 1187 disaster befell the Crusaders in Palestine. Saladin, Sultan of Islam, swept over Jerusalem at the head of a counter crusade, driving the Christian knights down to a few isolated ports on the coast.

So swiftly did Saladin strike with his *jihad* that no aid could be sent out of Europe to the hard pressed defenders of the Holy Land. But when a ship with black sails brought into the West the tidings of the disaster, all Christendom mobilized to journey into the East to recapture Jerusalem.

This was the beginning of the world war of the medieval age, which lasted not four, but forty years.* Friederich Barbarossa, Emperor of the Germans, was the first to move out, marching down through Constantinople. William, Duke of Sicily, and the contingents from Flanders and Scandinavia set out in fleets. Leopold of Austria, Philip of France and Richard the Lion Heart, King of England, mustered

*This crisis of the Crusades included what is known as the Third Crusade, the Fourth and Fifth as well as various others. The old expedient of numbering the Crusades is misleading. For one thing, after the "Third" Crusade, it is not possible to keep an accurate count. For another, these great expeditions were simply the ebb and flow of the universal conflict.

of ACRE

A True Narrative of the Crusades

their own mighty armed hosts to follow.

Saladin, confronted by greater forces than the Crusaders had ever gathered together before, mobilized the Moslem horsemen from Cairo to the Caspian. Even so, he had at the most some 40,000 cavalry, to meet the armies emerging from Europe with a combined strength of over 200,000 men. The Christians, however, were coming in separate divisions under separate leaders — Barbarossa having the greatest force, some 100,000 men of all sorts. And the Moslems were all mounted, while few of the Christians were able to bring their horses. Saladin hastened to reduce the last strongholds of the knights in the hills of the Holy Land, but by the early summer of 1189 he had not captured the seaports of Tripoli and Tyre, the last being ably defended by Conrad, Marquis of Montserrat, who had arrived on the scene with some ships from Constantinople.

So Tyre served as a rallying point for the garrisons of Crusaders driven from the interior and the first-comers from Sicily. Here also appeared the incapable Guy, King of Jerusalem, ransomed with many other nobles from captivity after the battle of Hattin. Guy, the weak king, in-

sisted on taking the command from Conrad, the strong adventurer.

While Saladin assembled his army in the hills, watching for the oncoming fleets of the Crusaders—and especially for the approach of the old Barbarossa—Guy did a foolhardy thing. He marched south from the protection of Tyre with only 7,400 men to besiege Acre, the nearest—and strongest—seaport of the Moslems.

At first Saladin, intent on watching for the arrival of the great fleets of the Crusaders, ignored Guy's little army. Then he sent out a portion of his cavalry, to catch the column of venturesome Christians before the walls of Acre, where it could be crushed between his cavalry and the Moslem garrison of the city.

In this way the plain of Acre became the battlefield of the war.

THE PLAIN of Acre they called it. A flat shore, stretching south for twenty-odd miles, from the Ladder of Tyre to the mass of Mount Carmel. A fertile shore, hot and green in this month of August of the year 1189, extending roughly seven miles inland to the foothills. Beyond the foothills in the northern part rose the gray slopes of the higher ranges, with Hermon's bald summit above them. From this plain of Acre a horseman could ride in a week to Jerusalem, down in the south behind its barrier of hills.

Midway along the shore a small, low promontory stuck out. All this promontory was surrounded by a wall, and within the wall lay the city of Acre.

South of Acre, a long shallow halfmoon bay extended to the point of Carmel. The shore here was sandy. Palm groves clustered about the sedge grass. A small river, laboring across the plain, debouched into a half dozen streams that ended in the sedge, forming a marsh. Such was the plain of Acre, and upon it waited a destiny more terrible than the fate of Waterloo.

The army of Crusaders should never have descended into it, from the rocks of the Ladder of Tyre. But the men and women who marched across the plain of Acre were weary of waiting at Tyre; they wanted to open the road to Jerusalem, and Acre was the first city upon their way. In spite of everything, they decided to besiege Acre.

By so doing they courted destruction, because the Sultan's horsemen were already between them and their refuge at Tyre, where Conrad waited with his followers. The countryside swarmed with aroused Moslems. Guy and his column were out in the open, in the face of odds of ten to one. Their fate seemed to be inevitable.

The weak king could not have given the order to march to Acre. Probably the high spirited queen, Sybil, had urged him to it, or De Riddeford, the stern master of the Templars, had demanded it. There were other reckless spirits among the leaders of the column—Balian of Ibelin, already twice a prisoner, Amalric of Jerusalem and Humphrey, lord of Toron, all eager to avenge the rout of Hattin.

There were, however, wise heads among them and instead of camping under the walls, they marched direct to a mound, or rather a line of mounds above the plain a half mile from the sea. While the tents were pitched on the high ground, the men-at-arms labored at digging a ditch around the mounds. All through the night they worked, and in the morning they diverted the water from the nearest stream into the ditch so that they had a fairly good moat around the camp. Then they began to throw up an earth wall behind the ditch.

Naturally the Moslems in Acre took an interest in their visitors, and sallied out to skirmish in the plain. Nothing serious happened for awhile because the Moslems were waiting for Saladin to come down from the hills with his army and erase this audacious encampment, while the Christian knights knew better than to venture far from their lines. They raided the plain for supplies, and they did not lack for water.

They christened the new position the Toron, or the Hill. And, realizing that

they were cut off here, and would soon be besieged, they began to turn anxious faces toward the hills. Only a day's ride past Saffuriya to the east lay the great plateau of Hattin, where even the ravens had long since forsaken the gaunt bones of the dead.

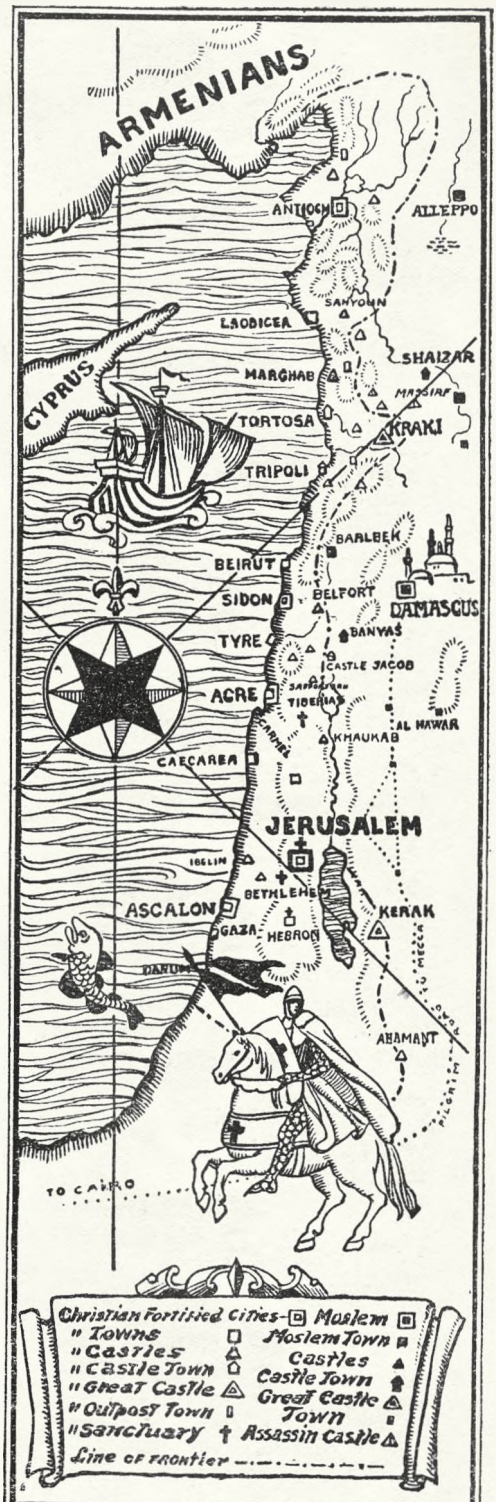
So they waited on the bare brown knolls, with the banner of the cross planted by the queen's pavilion, and their horses picketed down in the grass by the ditch.

What happened then is related by a minstrel of the king's court named Ambrose, who was there and saw it all.

"They dared not linger in the groves below them; they stayed on the heights. It was three days after our men arrived and settled themselves on the Toron, where they kept under arms all night against the attacks of the Saracens, that the troops of Salahadin* came—Turks, Persians and Beduins—and occupied all the country. The third day of the week Salahadin came himself, thinking that he would soon have the heads of the Christians.

"Do not be surprised if they, who defended their heads, were uneasy and anxious during the watches and labors on this Toron where they had settled themselves. The Turks assailed them night and day, and wearied them so much they could scarcely eat. There Geoffrey of Lusignan spared himself nothing in defending the host. Long had he been hardy and wise, but now he gained great renown. From Monday to Friday they were all in this peril. But you will see how God defended them.

"While the king and all his men were in such fear that they watched the far-off sea and begged God to send them some aid, behold, there arrived a great fleet of barks with people in them. It was James of Avesnes, from Flanders. I do not believe that Alexander or Hector was ever a better knight than he. It was James, who had sold his lands and possessions to



* So Ambrose has written Saladin, correctly. Geoffrey was the third of the Lusignan brothers, Guy the king and Amalric the constable being the others. Ambrose, being a minstrel of Guy's court, deals charitably with the weak spirited king.

put his body in the service of Him who died and arose again. He had with him fourteen thousand renowned men-at-arms. Then it was the fleet of Danemark that came with many fine castellans, who had good brown horses, strong and swift."

What had happened was that the Pisan, the Danish and Frisian fleets bearing the Crusaders to the coast, had sailed down from Tripoli to Tyre. There they had heard of the king's sally to Acre, and came on to join him. Galleys and galleons were run up on the beach near the city, and the newcomers fought their way across the plain to the camp.

Conrad of Montserrat arrived from Tyre in his ships, to join the gathering host. The Christians now numbered more than thirty thousand and their ships blockaded the port of Acre. They dared extend their lines on either hand, so that the Toron camp became a semicircle, isolating Acre from the hills. Meanwhile the Sultan, Saladin, seeing that the Christians were in strength before Acre, gave up watching for Barbarossa and other fleets and hastened down to strike at them.

So, in September, the Crusaders who landed upon the coast of Palestine, and the Moslem forces alike encamped upon the plain of Acre.

SALADIN, convinced that the real force of the Crusaders was centering here, called in his divisions from the northern hills. His first effort in that month of September was to provision and strengthen Acre, which had not been prepared for a siege. Without much trouble, Taki ad-Din's cavalry broke through the camp of the Pisans which adjoined the sea at the northern end of the semicircle, and for two days kept open this avenue of approach, while strings of camels laden with grain and supplies were passed in, with a whole corps of the army commanded by Karakush the Egyptian veteran, expert in fortification, who had been summoned from Cairo. The Sultan and Baha ad-Din, his devoted secretary, counselor and friend, went in and walked along the walls, studying the lines of the Crusaders.

With the city thus strengthened, Saladin withdrew from it and took command of his army which had been increased daily by new contingents. Moving down from the hills into the plain, he surrounded the Crusaders in his turn.

Ambrose tells how, in this crisis, new masses of Crusaders arrived from the sea.

"A fortnight had not gone by when the Count of Brienne arrived to join us, and with him his brother Andrew, son of a good father and a good mother. There came also the seneschal of Flanders with more than twenty barons, and a German landgrave bringing with him good Spanish horses. And the Bishop of Beauvais who was neither aged nor infirm, with Count Robert his brother, a skilful and nimble knight. And the Count of Bar, as courteous a man as you could find. Many others, valiant and wise, joined the host at the same time.

"But the more they came, the less the Saracens feared them. Night and day they delivered attacks, and approached even to the tents. Those in the city made sorties. Know well that they had not been taken from plough and cart, those people in Acre. They were the best of the infidels, to guard and defend a city.

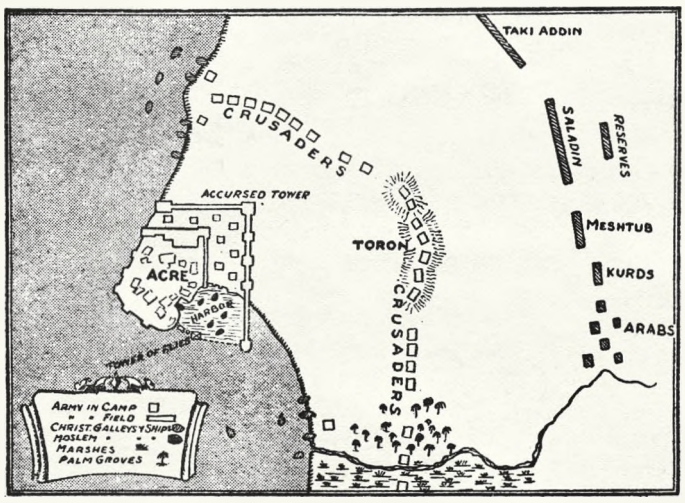
"The others outside grew in number every day, and filled the whole country so that our people looked upon themselves as prisoners."

At the end of September Saladin made his effort to break the line the Christians were extending around the city. As usual, he chose a Friday when the Moslems all over the world would be at prayer, for the attack. He was in the saddle himself before daybreak, and without eating anything. "Like a mother," says Baha ad-Din, "who has lost her child."

He launched his cavalry at different points of the line, to break the close ranks of the stolid men-at-arms, and to separate the divisions of the Crusaders. But the issue was not decided that day, nor for several days thereafter.

"On a Friday of the month of Septem-

ber," Ambrose relates, "I remember that a dire and sad misfortune befell our people. The Saracens attacked them without a day's respite. The Christians armed themselves and arranged themselves in good order, in the different commands that had been agreed upon. On one flank the Hospital and the Temple held the shore and river where numerous enemies were—it was they who always began a battle. In the center of the army the Count of Brienne and his men, the landgrave and the Germans who formed a great company, remained by a deserted mosque and cemetery. King Guy and the Pisans and other valiant men were on the right, at the Toron, to watch the Turks.



"The Saracens came on with spirit. You would have seen fine regiments among them.

"The Templars and the Hospitallers charged, assailed the first ranks, pierced them, threw them into disorder, drove them in flight and pursued them. Then the other Christians charged also, and the Saracens gave ground. But there was such a mass of them that the Christians did not know where to turn. The Turks could not rally themselves. They were drawing near the hills, when the Devil mixed himself in it and caused the death of many of our men.

"A horse belonging to a German ran away; its owner pursued it, and his companions also ran after the horse without being able to catch it. The horse ran toward the city. The Saracens believed our men were fleeing, so they faced about and charged in their turn. And they carried themselves so well that those who should have directed our army were only able to defend themselves."

While the worthy Ambrose attributed the defeat to Satan's power, the Moslems knew better, and Baha ad-Din wrote a clearer account of the battle.

It seems that the best of the Moslem generals, Taki ad-Din, commanded the strong right wing of Saladin's army. The Sultan himself led the center, which was made up of their household troops. One of the older amirs, Meshtub, had the left wing, with mixed divisions of Kurds, Arabs and Mamluks, near the river.

When the Templars charged, Taki ad-Din decided to draw back his line to higher ground, and Saladin mistook this maneuver for flight. The sultan sent his reserve cavalry from the center to the retreating right wing. The commanders of the Christian center noticed this weakening of the Moslem center and charged pointblank at the sultan's standard. Some Moslem regiments were broken and driven back, but Saladin's Mamluks retired a little without breaking ranks. So by midday the Moslem right wing was swinging away from the rest of the army, and the center was pivoting back on the unbroken left. It was as if the Crusaders had pushed apart double folding doors.

They poured through the gap, pursuing the scattered Moslem regiments—some of which fled headlong until they reached the bridge over the Jordan—until they sighted Saladin's camp ahead of them.

The guards of the camp rode off, and the light fingered Arab clansmen began to plunder the tents even when the Crusaders were riding in. Some of the knights penetrated as far as Saladin's pavilion before they realized that they had advanced miles beyond their main forces, and that the Moslems on either hand were making ready to resume the battle. Then the too venturesome Crusaders started back on tired horses, only to be struck and badly mauled by Taki ad-Din's and Saladin's horsemen on either hand. They were thrown into disorder and lost heavily.

"There was killed Andrew of Brienne," Ambrose resumes, "may his soul be saved—and never died a knight so valiant and helpful. The Marquis of Montserrat was so hemmed in by his enemies that he would have been left there if the King Guy had not aided him. And here also was slain the master of the Temple—he who spoke that good word, learned in a good school, when all, brave and fearful alike called to him after the attack, 'Come away sir, come away!'

"He would have come, if he had wished it. 'Please God,' he answered them, 'no one will see me again elsewhere, and no one may reproach the Temple because I had been seen flying.' And he did not do it; he died there, for too many Turks cast themselves upon him. And of the common men, five thousand died there—stripped and bare their bodies lay on the field.

"When those other infidels in the city heard of the defeat of our men, they mounted their Arab horses, went out the gates and attacked our men with such fury that they would have done them great harm if it had not been for their fine defense. But our men faced them. The knights struck good blows; the King Guy did wonders, and Geoffrey of Lusignan, who endured much that day, did likewise, and that valiant James of Avesnes. So the enemy were beaten back and driven within the city again.

"So passed this day in which fortune went against us. The Saracens were so encouraged—may God curse them as I curse them!—that they began to vex and harass the Christians more than they had done before. When the valiant men and the barons saw this, they said, 'Seigneurs, we gain no advantage at all. We must resolve upon something to protect ourselves against those offspring of Satan who torment us every day and steal our horses in the night.'

"Here is the resolution they made. They dug a ditch, wide and deep, and lined it with shields, mantlets and beams from the ships. Thus they divided the ground by the ditch. However, the Saracens attacked them without ceasing, and left them no peace.

"Listen to a sad thing! At the end of the slaughter of which I have spoken, and which was so grievous for the Franks—the day after the *élite* of the host had been discomfited and so many poor people who had come there for God had found death—Salahadin had all the dead bodies taken up and sent back to us by casting them into the river of Acre. This was an ugly shambles, for the bodies drifted down the current until they arrived in the midst of the army, and as the heaps of the dead grew, such an odor arose that all the army had to go off far enough to be beyond it. And long after they had been buried, we still kept away from the odor.

"Meanwhile the Christians worked at the ditch which served them as a rampart. They kept themselves behind it when the Saracens came to attack it, as they did every day, hot or cold. This ditch became the battlefield of the people of God, and of these dogs. Our men wished to dig it deeper and the others wished to destroy it. You would have seen then—— arrows.* They who dug the ditch passed them up to those who defended it. You would have seen, on both sides, men hardy and courageous. You would have seen the fighters fall, rolling over, and cutting open bellies, and giving heavy blows. Only the night separated them.

* A line of Ambrose's manuscript here is obscure. His narrative is in short, crudely rhymed verse. Two examples of Ambrose's verse are given presently.

"Even those of us who were most at ease endured fears and watches and fatigues; they dared not take rest before finishing the ditch.

"On the eve of All-Saints' day happened a great misadventure. Those who were on the Toron watched the side toward Haifa, and they saw a great fleet of galleys approach from Egypt. The fleet drew near in good array, and the news spread swiftly throughout the host. Some believed, although no one knew it for certain, that these were vessels of Genoa, of Venice, of Marseille or of Sicily that came to aid in the siege. While they gave themselves up to wondering, the galleys came in, and they came in so well that they entered the port of Acre and in doing so they carried off one of our ships which had men and provisions on it. This ship was towed into the city; the men were killed and the provisions taken.

"Listen to what the Turks did. On All-Saints' day, they hung on the walls of Acre in defiance the bodies of the Christians they had killed in the ship. So the souls of the dead shared, our preachers said, in the great joy of the heavens that day.

"This infidel fleet of which I have told you guarded so well the port and the coast that aid no longer arrived for the defenders of God. The winter came on, without bringing fresh provisions to them. They had finished the ditch, but later on it was ruined in spite of them."

SO AMBROSE wrote, in blunt, awkward words. It is clear that Saladin made every effort to break the line of the Christian camp and failed. While the Crusaders had been worsted and cut to pieces on the first day of the battle, they held their ground thereafter. Saladin felt that the issue must be decided now, and the attacks pushed home. Ill as he was with malaria, he summoned his amirs to his tent, saying:

"Now we have before us the chance of victory. Our enemies are few, but they will remain and more will come over the sea. And the only aid we can look for is from Al Adil, in Egypt. It seems best to me to attack."

But the amirs persuaded him to change his mind. The autumn rains were beginning, with the holy month of Ramadan, and they were eager to return to their homes for the winter's planting. The Sultan himself was ill, and later in the spring Malik Adil would join them. So they argued and Saladin consented to send the volunteer levies home and to cease the battle, withdrawing himself to his main camp in the hills. Arabs and detachments of regulars were left in the foot hills to watch the Crusaders.

During the stormy season no new fleets could approach the coast of the Holy Land, nor were the ships of the Crusaders —long, unseaworthy galleys, or round tubs of cargo vessels or open barks—able to blockade the port of Acre. Winds from the west drove a heavy, ceaseless swell upon the shelterless shore, and the larger boats that could not be drawn up on the beaches had to return to the northern harbors or to the nearby island of Cyprus.

In mist and wind and beating rain the year 1189 ended. The siege of Acre had begun. But the Crusaders outside the walls were hemmed in and besieged in their turn. Open warfare, in the outer country, ceased for the time being, and in the Acre plain a new kind of strife was born—trench warfare.

Seen from a distance, Acre looked very much like a clenched fist projecting out from the shore—a gray and motionless fist that never changed. Its outer wall made a right angle, stretching from the joint of the little finger inland to the wrist bone. At this angle rose a square bastion and a mighty tower that the Crusaders christened the Accursed Tower.

South from the Accursed Tower, along the other side of the angle, the wall extended as far as the joint of the thumb, where it reached the water again. Then, like a massive thumb crooked away from the clenched fist, the wall went out some two hundred yards into the water, forming a harbor between it and the city

proper. It ended in a tower. Between this tower and the city—between the curved thumb and the first finger of the fist—an isolated tower rose from the water. This, for good reason, was known as the Tower of Flies. From it, a great chain ran to the end of the wall, just under the surface of the water. The chain prevented enemy ships from coming into the small harbor, and it could be lowered to let a Moslem vessel pass.

Within the large right angle of the outer wall stood a smaller angle, the inner wall, on higher ground. The broad space between the two was occupied by the troops, the horse lines, and markets. Rising over the inner wall could be seen the watch towers of the Templars' house, and the terraces of the Hospital, and the poplars around the little cathedral. (For Acre had been built almost entire by the Crusaders, and the Moslems had only held it for two years.) The bell tower of the cathedral was now surmounted by a *muezzin's* balcony, and the call to prayer echoed among the kneeling throngs in the courtyard below.

Many of the Crusaders knew every stone of the great city wall—upon the summit of which four horsemen could pass, riding in different directions—with its square towers and fortified gates. They knew that no scaling ladders planted in the wide ditch would prevail against that wall.

To enter Acre the Crusaders must build engines powerful enough to open a breach in the wall. Meanwhile, during the rains, they built up their camp.

IN THE MUD of the plain a strange city was growing up, within the camp of the besiegers. A city of tents and clay walls, lying in a half circle beyond arrow shot of the battlements of Acre. Its walls were yellow clay and sand, its streets were mud, and its gutters canals.

Under bending date palms clustered the drenched pavilions of noblewomen, ladies of Beyond the Sea and the courts of the West. When the sun struck through the clouds they rode out on their palfreys, long skirts hiding their feet, and samite and velvet sleeves hanging from their shoulders. The newest arrivals wore brave, embroidered crosses upon their breasts. Around them thronged youthful esquires in heavy mantles, and proud knights in girdled chapes and fur coats lined with ermine or sable. Hunting dogs trotted after them.

They might ride along the white sand of the beach at either end of the intrenched city, where naked fishermen swam out against the surf, towing nets behind them. Or they might venture into the perilous plain, where Arab horsemen watched for a chance to snatch loot or slay a Christian and carry off his head. Mounted bowmen went out to hunt the Arabs, and knights relieved the dull hours by coursing hares and riding after gazelles toward the foothills.

Through the streets of the tent city surged a motley throng—burghers debating the price of corn and barley stored in warehouses, varlets and masterless men seeking the sheds where sheep were slaughtered and broiled over glowing charcoal, gaunt men-at-arms in leather jackets. Soft Provençal voices mingled with harsh German tongues; blacksmiths' hammers clattered with the swordsmiths' forges; carpenters' axes tapped at the great ships' timbers that were being shaped into arms for the mangonels and sheds for the rams.

Even the rain could not wash away their good humor. Soon these mangonels would be casting darts at the infidels of Acre, and the heads of the iron sows would be butting the great wall yonder. Pilgrims labored to aid the carpenters in the good work, and they sang together:

"Hear us, O Christ our King,
Hear us, O Thou who art Lord of Kings,
And show us the way."

And the voices of the barefoot monks made answer—

"Have pity upon us,
And show us the way."

At nightfall processions wound through the streets, carrying tapers; and throngs gathered in the chapels, between walls of damp clay bricks, where the good bishops with their golden crooks sat in their robes by the new altars, and the swinging censers sweetened the stench of the mud underfoot. At all hours men came to the churches, for their needs—the sick to be sprinkled with holy water, babies to be christened, troubled spirits to be confessed and relieved.

For the church was the life center of this multitude—council chamber and dispensary and hospital. It was pleasant for tired eyes to watch the soft lights moving over the altar and the gleaming vestments of the servants of God; it was good to hear the rise and fall of the old chants that even the fishermen knew, the *Ave Maria* and the *Te Deum*.

Here the shaggy jackmen were as much at home as the valiant father bishop of Beauvais, who liked nothing better than to don armor, and who dreamed of becoming a second Turpin—"If," as one man put it, "he could find a Charlemagne."

"Verily," said another, "here is the Frisian who hath left his fish scales, and the Scotsman who hath left his fellowship with lice."

True, they had no acknowledged leader, but they managed well enough. And by early summer the valiant old emperor, Red Beard himself, would come down out of the north with the German host. While, men said, at home the young king, Richard of England, had made up his long quarrel with Philip, King of the French, and the twain had taken the cross. Soon they would be upon the sea, with their armies.

MEANWHILE the artisans of of the tent city were finishing three mighty towers built upon rollers and strengthened by heavy timbers and covered with fresh hides nailed to the wood—to protect them against fire. These three towers tapered to summits higher than the wall of Acre, and when they could be rolled against the wall—then the good work would begin.

The rains diminished, the muddy water dried in the ditches, and fresh winds cleared the sky, so that the sun beat down again on the damp walls of Acre and on the dark tent city of the plain. Soft green covered the sand and clay, and spread to the distant summits of the hills. The sound of running water ceased, and the ground all at once became hard underfoot. Along the beaches, the heavy pulse of the swell dwindled. Sails moved over the motionless sea.

Horses and sheep were taken out to the plain to graze, under guard, and men wandered about restlessly. Spring had come to the shore of the Holy Land, and the war began again. Rusted mail was washed and cleaned with oil; bows spliced anew, and arrows sorted over. Men swarmed like flies around the clumsy wooden engines, twisting ropes into place—drawing the engines out over bridges across the ditch, into the No Man's Land between the camp and the walls. Sturdy arms carried mantlets—giant wicker shields covered with leather—and set them up in a line within arrow shot of the walls. Knights in armor led out their chargers and stood up to guard the new line of assault.

Meanwhile the galleys from Tyre came down with the Genoese fleet, and the Crusaders thronged to the shore to watch the daily skirmishing between their ships and the Moslem galleys from the port. Men waited eagerly for their turn to go out on the ships. The daring seamen even forced their way into the harbor past the Tower of Flies and towed out a Moslem vessel, landing their prisoners on the shore.

"The joy was great," Ambrose explains, "and you would have seen our women approach, with knives in their hands, to seize the Turks by the hair and tug at them with all their strength. Then they cut off their heads and carried them away. At sea, by God's grace, we had the victory—for detachments of knights from the host, valiant men and well armed who

fought hardily, took turns upon the boats. Our fleet drove the enemy galleys within the chain. From that day the Turks shut up within the city could not receive any aid by sea or land."

Slowly the three great towers creaked and swayed, drawing nearer to the outer wall, while mangonels on their summits spewed iron darts against the battlements. Large as mountains were the three towers, each with half a thousand men within it. On one the banner of the landgrave stood, on another that of the King Guy, and on the third that of the Marquis Conrad, who had come back from Tyre for the assault.

From the embrasures of these moving pyramids crossbows snapped and their iron quarrels whirred over the parapet of the wall. When the quarrels struck a man they tore through shield and mail and flesh and bone. From the barricade on the tops of the towers skilled archers plied their shafts. Sliding over stone rollers, the towers drew nearer the moat of Acre.

Already columns of men waited, behind the shelter of the mantlets, to run forward into the towers when the drawbridges should be lowered upon the wall and swordsmen would rush forward.

Swiftly the Moslems labored to destroy the towers before they could approach too near. Engines on the walls, working under the direction of Karakush, the Mamluk who knew all the arts of siege and defense, cast stones against them. But they were built of solid beams joined together. The beams cracked and yielded, without breaking. Other engines shot out flaming timbers that struck down the Crusaders on the tops. But the hides, soaked in vinegar covered the wood, and prevented the fire from catching.

While the throngs of men labored, a youth of Baghdad, Ibn an-Nadjar by name, sought out Karakush, standing among his amirs on the wall.

"I wish," said an-Nadjar, "to aid my master Saladin, and burn these towers."

The veteran Mamluk listened with half an ear.

"And how wilt thou do that?"

"I will prepare naphtha by a formula I know, and I will cast it upon the towers. If they were steel, they would burn."

"Ah, well"—Karakush looked at him —"do the best thou canst."

And he gave the young copper worker two hundred *dinars* to prepare his materials.

Later in the day, an-Nadjar was ready. He returned to the wall with soldiers who lugged three large copper cylinders from which short tubes projected. These pots, as the Moslems called them, were placed opposite the wooden pyramids, and one of them was lifted into the arm of a stone caster. The arm was drawn back, and released—whirling the copper bomb against the broken face of the tower opposite.

Flames roared from the bomb; streams of fire shot into the framework of beams. Within the tower the Crusaders could not go near the copper bomb, and the fire caught, soaring up when the wind sucked at it. By sunset on that day the three mighty towers lay in smoking embers.

The loss of the towers put an end to the attack, and the Crusaders withdrew into their camp to plan new engines. They had known of the terrible weapon of the Arabs that they called Greek and wildfire, and they had heard that it was compounded of sulphur or naphtha, but this was the first time they had felt the effects of it.

They were too full of hope to be discouraged. Did not the men from the ships say that the great Kings of England and France had put to sea with new hosts? And rumors trickled down through the mountains of the Armenians —strange stories of Barbarossa at odds with the treacherous Byzantines; prevailing over the Byzantines and marching on and on, over the barren lands, drawing nearer every day.

Spring was in the air, and they had food and plenty of ships. Soon they would be ready again to face the minions of Mahound, the very legions of Anti-Christ who had mocked them from the wall.

JACKMEN and axmen, varlets and peasants, seafarers and bowmen, they put their heads together and decided to do something on their own account. While the great lords lingered, they chafed at the waiting. They could not climb the wall of Acre, that was certain. But off yonder they could see the tents of the infidels, in the foothills, and they wanted to strike a blow or two. Besides, there would be plunder in the tents.

So they banded together, burly Flemings and shaggy Danes, eager Provençals and Pisans. Sergeants, ribalds and men-at-arms—ten thousand of them marched off toward the foothills without leaders, on the fête of Saint James.

"They were," Ambrose says, "poor fellows, having great need and driven by their suffering, for we were not at ease in the host."

In orderly ranks they marched off, and later in the day word came back that they had entered the Moslem tents. But they did not appear with their spoils and presently some knights went to look for them. That evening a few of the infantry did come back, escorted by the horsemen, and without plunder of any kind. The rest of them, seven thousand, lay dead within the Moslem lines.

But the daily conflicts in No Man's Land, around the engines, went on without ceasing. Ambrose made note of them.

"As the days passed, many things happened. Before and behind the stone casters, which were numerous in the host, many men came and went. I can not remember or relate all the adventures, but here is one:

"A Turk came out with his crossbow for a shot at our men, and would not go away. A Frenchman, aroused by this obstinacy, went out on his side. The Frenchman called himself Marcaduc—he was no son of a duke or a king—and the Turk, hardy and powerful, called himself Grayir. The one made ready to aim on the other—the Frenchman on the Turk, the Turk on the Frenchman.

"Grayir demanded what country Marcaduc was from. 'I am of France,' he replied, 'and thou art mad to come down here.'

" 'Thou art no bad shot,' the Turk said to him. 'Wilt thou make an agreement? I will shoot, and thou wilt stand the blow without flinching; and if I miss, I will await thy shaft in the same way.'

"He talked so much, and begged so that the Frenchman agreed. Then he shot, but his hand slipped and the arrow did not fly.

"Marcaduc said to him, 'My turn to shoot—wait for me!'

" 'No,' he said, 'let me shoot again, and thou canst then try twice at me.'

" 'Willingly,' said the Frenchman. But while the Turk was feeling in his quiver for a good shaft, Marcaduc, who was all ready and who did not relish the new arrangement, let go his own arrow and shot him in the heart. 'By Saint Denis, I will wait no more for thee!'

"Another time, it happened that a knight was down in the fosse, outside, on an affair of his own that no one can do without. As he placed himself so, a Turk in one of the outposts—to which he was paying no attention—separated from his companions and raced his horse forward. It was villainous and discourteous to seek to surprise the knight while he was so occupied.

"The Turk was already far from his own people, and was approaching the knight with lance in rest to slay him, when our men shouted,

" 'Run, sir—run, run!'

"He had barely time to get up. The Turk came up at a full gallop, believing that he would be able to turn his horse and wheel back, if he needed to do so, but by God's grace, he did not succeed. The knight cast himself to one side, and took up two stones in his hands—listen to how God takes vengeance! As the Turk checked his horse to turn back upon him, the knight saw him clearly, and as he drew near, struck him with one of the stones upon the temple. The Turk fell

dead, and the knight took his horse and led it off by the rein.

"He who told me this saw the knight mount the horse and ride him off to his tent, where he kept him with much joy . . .

"Many of our people who were attacking the walls of Acre, tried to fill up the ditches.* Some gave it up, but others went on piling in the stones they carried there. Barons brought them as well, on their chargers or pack horses, and many women also found satisfaction in carrying them. Among the others, there was one woman who took great pleasure in it.

"A Saracen archer on guard upon the wall, saw this woman about to cast down her burden from her neck. As she came forward, he aimed at her, and struck her. The woman fell to earth mortally wounded, and every one gathered around her. She was twisting her limbs in agony, when her husband came to seek her. But she demanded of all who were there—valiant men and ladies—that, on behalf of God and their own souls, they should make use of her body to fill in the ditch whither she had carried so many stones.

"This was done, when God had taken her soul. Now there is a woman who should be remembered!"

DAYS went by, and the grass turned brown under the scorching of the sun. The axes of the carpenters tap-tapped along the beams; the forges of the smithies muttered and purred. Riderless horses were seen galloping over the plain. A dry wind stirred the brittle palms, and brought to the camp the distant sound of weapons clashing and the hoarse voices of laboring men.

Dust swirled around the tents, where women lay, waiting or nursing the sick. By candlelight the barons of the host sat in talk, anxious for news, uncertain what to do next. The water was growing bad, and they had seen the banners of Saladin again on the hills.

One day there was a new sound. Drums thrumming in the foothills and cymbals clashing. Horsemen in mail rode down, to wheel before the watching Crusaders, and swing their long sleeves over their heads. A few hours later—the city always seemed to know the tidings from the hills, although no man could pass through the Crusaders' lines, or any ship through the blockade—the excitement spread to the wall. Turbaned heads appeared between the crenels, and voices mocked the besiegers.

"Slain is your emperor! He hath come to his end and now . . . it is as if he had never been!"

Troubled were the barons of the host. The good Barbarossa dead! But what of his army, and the German princes?

Other Crusaders came in ships to the shore: Henry, Count of Champagne, a quiet man, kinsman to all the kings. And Thibault of Blois, with the proud Count of Clermont, and the tall Count of Chalons. The chivalry of France was assembling anew in the camp, but they brought evil tidings.

Barbarossa was indeed dead. The old emperor had been at the head of his army, within sight of the Armenian mountains, after many a desert march and struggle. At a ford, where the freshet ran deep, his horse had stumbled, throwing him, clad in his mail, into the water. He had been lifted out, but the shock had weakened the old man and within a few days he ceased to live. His son Frederick had taken command, but many of his nobles had turned back. Others were at Antioch.

The Crusaders listened grimly, and after a council chose Henry of Champagne to command them, and to assault Acre without delay.

FROM his base in the foothills, seven miles away, Saladin watched and weighed events. He saw the steady increase of the Crusaders' host, and unseen messages reached him hourly from Acre.

*Outside the wall of the city. The great moat, or fosse, had to be filled in before an attack could be made, and the common people of the Crusader's camp risked their lives by carrying stones or dirt to the ditch, and dumping in their loads.

In the north the little garrison of Belfort had yielded at last, and the mountain strongholds were all in his hands. But the new leader of the Crusaders, Count Henry, sallied out to attack the camp of the Moslems, and Saladin was the first in the saddle. He had with him then the armies of Damascus, of Egypt and Mosul, and his veteran horsemen beat back the Christian onset, taking a heavy toll with their swords.

It was like thrusting back the incoming tide. The water could be dammed or turned aside, but the pressure of the water never ceased—more and more of it came in from the sea. And the Moslems waited anxiously for word from the far north, whether Taki ad-Din had gone with the army of Aleppo, to check the advance of Barbarossa.

Saladin knew now that the great emperor was dead. A letter came in from the Catholicos—the Christian bishop of Ani—who sent information to Saladin. The Catholicos said that the son of the emperor still had 42,000 men, somber and weary men wearing nothing but armor, marching with rigid discipline and intent only on reaching the Sepulchre. The Armenians had withdrawn from them, and Kilidj Arslan's Seljuks were attacking them.

Then the Catholicos sent down a spy, who told this story:

"I took my stand on a bridge that they had to pass, to watch them, and I saw many men pass by, almost all without mail shirts and without lances. When I asked them the cause of this, they replied, 'Our provisions were gone and all our firewood, so we were forced to burn a great part of our gear and furniture. We had many dead. We were obliged to kill our horses and eat their meat, and to feed the fire with our lances.'

"They were still very numerous, but growing more feeble, having almost no horses or supplies. The greater part of their baggage they carried on donkey back."

The third message came in from Taki-ad-Din. His cavalry had met the marching columns of the Germans, and scattered them along the plain of Antioch. Only 5,000 survivors, escorting their sick prince, reached the shelter of the city where the Armenians and the lord of Antioch were scheming to seize their treasure chests.

Saladin no longer needed to guard against the German Crusaders. He ordered the northern armies back to Acre and the victorious Taki ad-Din rode in with the lords of Baalbek and Schaizar, while his wild Kurds sang of their deeds, and the drums of the Moslem camp thundered a greeting to them. The Sultan received his nephew in his own tent, and feasted him with a full heart.

In these months Saladin had to force his fever wracked body to keep to the saddle, and he leaned more and more upon the strength of Taki ad-Din who had once been a harebrained raider, but who was now the most able general on either side.

Before long the Germans also reached Acre. But they drifted down in ships, some 2,000 of them with sixty horses worn to skin and bones. Frederick of Swabia commanded this remnant of the great host that had set out with Barbarossa.

Saladin heard of them, and their condition, almost as quickly as the Crusaders who welcomed them. Twice a day the Mamluks in Acre reported to their master in the hills, by pigeon post. Messenger pigeons, released from the roofs of the city, flew over the Crusaders' lines to the pavilions of the Sultan. On the minute scrolls of paper within the silver cylinders attached to their legs were written the details of the siege: the losses in fighting, the progress of the enemy's engines, and the amount of provisions on hand.

Just now—at the end of the summer—the Crusaders were closing in on the wall with grim determination. The battle of the engines began again. The mightiest of the *perriers* on either side were matched against each other, fighting gigantic duels with boulders and tree trunks as missiles, until one or the other was broken down.

The pigeon reports told of a Christian mangonel destroyed by a great iron arrow, its tip heated red hot, shot from the wall.

The struggle went on at sea as well. The Pisans built a roof over one of the galleys and constructed platforms upon the masts, with flying bridges that could be lowered from these fighting tops. While other galleys bombarded the Tower of Flies with missiles, this strange craft was laid alongside the tower, and the seamen attempted to board the tower from the bridges. The attack was beaten off, and the galley burned by Greek fire.

What bothered the defenders most were two *bêliers*—the Moslems knew what the Christians called them—built by the Bishop of Besançon and the Duke of Swabia. Two moving castles with framework of iron, and a kind of protective mat of plaited ropes on the side facing the wall. Their tops were fortified, and in the opening beneath one of them an iron beast's head hung, waiting to be swung against the lower stones of the wall.

The *bêliers* went forward on wheels, while attacks were made simultaneously at other points where the moat had been filled in. Karakush and his men tried everything to find a vulnerable spot in the moving castles. When whole marble columns shot from the largest stone casters failed to break the iron framework, the Moslems cast out dry wood in front of the *bêliers*, setting fire to the heaped-up wood. But the castles did not burn.

The Moslem engineers tried all their stock of flame weapons: glass bombs filled with naphtha, and pots of burning tar and sulphur, and cylinders of Greek fire. Still the strange castles did not burn, and the iron beast came nearer.

But the constant pounding broke in the top of one of the *bêliers* and the engineers on the wall hastened to drop their bombs of Greek fire into the shattered part. This castle went up in flames.

The other succumbed to different measures. It stood opposite a gate, and the Moslems sallied out unexpectedly, drove off the Crusaders, and held their ground long enough to set fire to the interior of the giant machine. Curiosity impelled them to attach chains and iron hooks to the *bêlier*, and when they retreated, they drew it after them through the gate, to inspect it at leisure. It took days to cool off, and they estimated that the iron plates and frame weighed 10,000 pounds. Later, they managed to send the beast's head on the ram around to Saladin.

This success encouraged them to try another sally. They armed themselves with some kind of flame projectors, and when the Crusaders rushed at them, streams of fire were turned on the armored knights, burning through cloth and skin, and shriveling the flesh beneath. While the Christians rolled and twisted on the ground in agony, the Moslems turned the flames against the line of mangonels and burned up many of the engines.

All this was reported to Saladin by the pigeon post.

FOR SOME reason no pigeons were available to send messages into Acre, but the resourceful Arabs found another way. Volunteer swimmers went down to the shore at night, stealing as near as possible to the Crusaders' lines. Stripping off their mantles, they slipped into the water; floating past the anchored boats of the blockade, they made their way into the harbor with gold coins and letters sealed within their belts.

Some of them were killed, and others dropped out of the perilous service, but one man survived and made the trip every other night, swimming back in the alternate nights. Always his safe arrival was announced by the first pigeon of the morning—until the day when the pigeon brought no word of the swimmer.

Several days later his body was washed up on the beach within the harbor. He had been drowned, but the belt and the sealed packages within it were intact.

"Never before," says Baha ad-Din, "did a man deliver after his death a charge entrusted to him."

No longer did Saladin's armies range the countryside. Instead, they settled

down in the base camp up the river, building themselves barracks and shops. A steady stream of camel strings moved into the camp with grain sacks and oil jars, cloth and weapons. Beside the caravans walked laborers, slaves, *kadis* and vagrant nomad clans.

Around the pavilions of the Sultan grew up a third city, with makeshift mosques and covered markets. Saddle workers sat in their booths beside coppersmiths, and barber-surgeons who proudly displayed the teeth they had pulled out and the corns they had cut off. Barefoot cobblers squatted in the shade of woven mats, stitching riding boots and slippers, while their urchins fought in the street in front of them.

"The market was enormous," a visitor from Baghdad relates. "It had four hundred shops of farriers and veterinaries. I counted twenty-eight kettles in a single kitchen, large enough, each one, to hold an entire sheep. There were seven thousand booths—so long had the army remained in the same place.

"The Africans had charge of the baths. They dug down an arm's length in the ground and found water; they made a tank and a wall to enclose it out of clay; and they covered it all with a roof of wood and matting. In the thickets around them they cut firewood, which they heated in kettles. It cost a silver coin, or a little more, to bathe oneself."

This was a new kind of war for the Moslem troopers—a test of endurance. Spies were sent into the Christian camp—unarmed peasants carrying fruit or meat to sell—and they brought back surprisingly accurate information. Baha ad-Din, writing his journal in the Sultan's tents, knew as well as Ambrose in the Crusaders' huts, what happened each day; knew how food was failing and how the last ships of the autumn brought in the first English contingents led by a certain archbishop of Canterbury, a warlike prelate.

Gangs of Arabs made nightly raids upon the Crusaders' horse lines and seldom returned without trophies of some kind. They even crept through the guards. Clad in black, and moving as silently as animals, they stole into the huts where men lay sleeping—and awakened the sleepers with knives at their throats. Holding fast their prisoners, they explained by signs that an outcry would result in a slit throat. Then they stole back with their captives through the lines.

As the autumn passed, the Christian leaders — the archbishop, and Count Henry and Conrad the marquis—made a sortie in force to get possession of a supply of provisions the Moslems had left by the palm grove of Haifa, in the shadow of Carmel. They crossed the river and marched in a compact column between the swarms of Moslem horsemen, the Templars and the English keeping the rear.

They were out in the open country for three days, and Saladin lying helpless in the grip of fever, fretted himself with worrying because he could not take the saddle against them. And after three days of fighting they cut their way back again to the Christian camp without the provisions, that the Moslems had had time to remove.

So the balance held even between the two hosts. If food was scanty in the Crusaders' camp, it was still more so in the city of Acre; if an epidemic swept through Saladin's open camp, it raged more disastrously among the Christians.

"The two sides were so accustomed to the sight of each other," Baha ad-Din relates, "that the Moslem soldiers and the Frankish soldiers sometimes ceased fighting to talk. The two throngs mingled, singing and dancing together, after which they returned to fighting.

"Once they said, 'We have been fighting for a long time; let us stop awhile and allow the boys of the camps to show what they can do.' So they matched two parties of boys, who struggled together with great eagerness. One of the young Moslems, seizing a young infidel, lifted him off the ground and threw him down, making him a prisoner.

"A Frank who was watching came forward and redeemed the captive for two gold pieces. 'He was your prisoner,' the Frank said, to the victorious youth."

THE RAINS began again, but brought no respite this time. The chronicles yield glimpses of the good and ill fortune of both sides—the death of the Duke of Swabia; grain ships coming from Egypt at sunset in a rising storm; the ships driven upon the shore by Acre, while Moslems and Christians fought to carry off the precious cargoes . . . Part of the weakened city wall falling, and the garrison building it up anew under the swords of the advancing knights; a surprise attack upon the wall by a single ladder, that almost prevailed . . . Saladin, debating for long hours with his amirs and in the end deciding to relieve the garrison; the war-worn garrison taken off by ships that brought fresh men in, under command of Meshtub, the Kurd, during the storms; Karakush still in command . . .

Even Ambrose, watching this struggle of unyielding multitudes, felt that something rather epic was taking place before his eyes. He knew, it seems, the legends of antiquity and the songs of the elder minstrels. He tried in his own crude verses to make clear what he felt.

"Seigneurs! Not of the death of Alexander
Whose passing made such direful clamor,
Not of Paris, nor of Helen,
Who had from their amour such pain,
Nor of Arthur's deeds of Brittany,
Nor of his hardy company,
Nor of the stalwart Charlemagne
Whom jongleurs sing so merrily,
Do I know the verity.
I can not say 'tis truth or lie.
But of what befell this host of Acre—
The cold, the ills, the pain they suffer—
All that I can relate indeed,
And good it is for you to heed.

"In winter that brings the wind and the rain, it is then that the little folk of the host of Acre had so much misery. Famine had come, and day by day it grew greater. All went well enough, it is true, until Christmas; but when the time of Christmas passed, the lack of things was felt. A man could carry a cask of grain easily enough within his elbow yet it weighed upon him greatly because it cost a hundred besants. A single egg sold for six deniers.

"Seigneurs, I say in all truth that they skinned good war horses, and ate their meat voraciously. A crowd gathered around whenever a horse was killed, and a dead horse sold for more than it had ever been worth alive. Even the entrails were eaten. When the men who had money wished to share provisions with others they could not, because so many people came to demand food. Without the herbs they had planted from seed and out of which they now made soup, they could not have held out. You would have seen good sergeants, and even nobles accustomed to wealth, watching the herbage growing, and going out to crop it and eat it.

"A sickness followed, and I will tell you about that. It was caused by the rains that fell without ceasing, until all the host was drenched with water. Every one began to cough, and their voices became hoarse, while their heads and limbs swelled.* A thousand died in a single day in the army. Because of the swelling, their teeth fell out of their mouths. Many could not cure themselves because they had no food.

"Listen to a great evil and a pity! Some men, made by God in His image, were forced by suffering to deny Him. The lack of food was so great in the host that many of our people went over to the Turks. They renounced their faith, saying that God could never have been born of a woman—the cross, and baptism, they renounced all that.

"There were in the host two comrades, poor sergeants, who had between them no more than one denier of Anjou, and nothing else unless it was their armor and clothing. They debated how they would use the denier—what food they would buy with it, to suffice for a day. They

* Baha ad-Din says the epidemic came from intestinal fever. When Ambrose speaks of sergeants he means the men-at-arms on foot.

cast lots, by counting the hairs on bits of fur, and finally they decided that they would buy beans. They got thirteen, and in this number they found one that was hollow. To change it one of them had to go back more than seven acres, and then the merchant would only change it after much discussion. The sergeant returned, and they ate the beans, nearly mad with hunger. When the beans were gone, their distress was twice as great.

"Many men got along with a kind of locust bean and little nuts. Those who were sick drank heavily of strong wine, of which they had a good supply, but not having food to go with the wine, they died by threes and fours at a time.

"All the winter the famine lasted, and the men suffered, who had come to aid God—from Christmas to mid-Lent. I know this for certain, and not by hearsay. There were provisions enough in the host, but the merchants sold them dear.

"Some men made a search for those who were most miserable: the Count Henry did much good, and Sir Josselin of Montoire, who ought not to be forgotten, the Bishop of Salisbury, who did not keep his hands closed, and likewise many others who feared God. Supplies arrived at Tyre, but the Marquis of Montserrat kept them there and did not let them come to the host. Then they cursed the marquis. No one knew what would happen, and people went about without wishing to look at each other."

In spite of the famine and the general discouragement, the siege was pressed. Before the end of Lent the first grain ships appeared off the coast, to the delight of the common folk who rejoiced in the fate of the Italian merchants who had hoarded grain in the camp for still higher prices. Between Saturday, when the ships arrived, and Monday, the price of grain fell from a hundred besants to four.

In April of this year 1191—the second year of the siege—the army had new cause to rejoice. Six great ships came in, one of them bearing the standard of France and the King Philip II, Augustus. With him landed a splendid group of nobles, the Count of Flanders among them. The young king had been long on the way, but he was here, and the whole chivalry of Western Europe gathered at last on the sands of Acre.

Some of them saw a bad omen in the landing. A large white falcon, a favorite of the king, escaped from its keeper and soared up over the camp. The falcon came down on the wall of Acre, to the satisfaction of the watching Moslems who caught it at once. Later, Philip sent an envoy to Saladin to buy back the bird, but the Sultan answered that it could not be bought.

After this the French pushed the attack with new spirit, pounding the crumbling wall with their engines. And at each attempt, Saladin's horsemen, warned by the beating of drums in Acre, swarmed to attack the outer line of the Crusaders' camp.

Then early in June twenty-five galleys and ships sailed in to the shore. At sight of them all work in the camp ceased, and barons and men-at-arms thronged down to the sea. The clamor of horns and uproar of voices greeted the leading galley—a red vessel bearing the banner of England.

That evening the tapers in the churches were lighted, and bonfires blazed on the shore, while the Crusaders sat over their cups, or danced in the streets. And the Moslem spies hastened to Saladin with word that Richard, King of England, had landed.

"A man," Baha ad-Din said, "mighty in strength, vast in courage, and firm in will. Great battles had he fought, and daring was he in war."

TRAIL BREAKERS

By CHARLES A. FREEMAN

Storm flag a-whippin' th' top o' th' staff,
White flakes a-whirlin' an' flyin' like chaff,
Wind from th' Rockies jus' bellers an' wails,
An' us troopers gotta break garrison trails.

Ol' Colonel's daughter's got no sense a-tall;
Mighty tough night t' be givin' a ball.

Buffalo coats buckled tight 'cross our blues;
We're crowdin' our stirrups with clumsy gumshoes;
Gloves 'neath our gauntlets, and fur caps drawn low,
Ridin' in fours 'gainst a smother o' snow—

Yellerleg soldier's got no chance a-tall,
With officers' women folks set on a ball.

Hosses jus' stumble an' flounder around.
Hoofs all balled up take no grip on th' ground;

Tighten' yer reins an' look out for a crash . . .
Icicles hang on th' Top Kick's mustache.

Ol' Colonel's daughter's got no sense a-tall.
She's picked a bum night t' be givin' a ball.

Lamps gleamin' brightly in Sliney's Red Star
Dancin' on bottles behind th' long bar;
Cow waddies drapin' themselves on th' rail
Laughin' at Cavalry breakin' a trail—

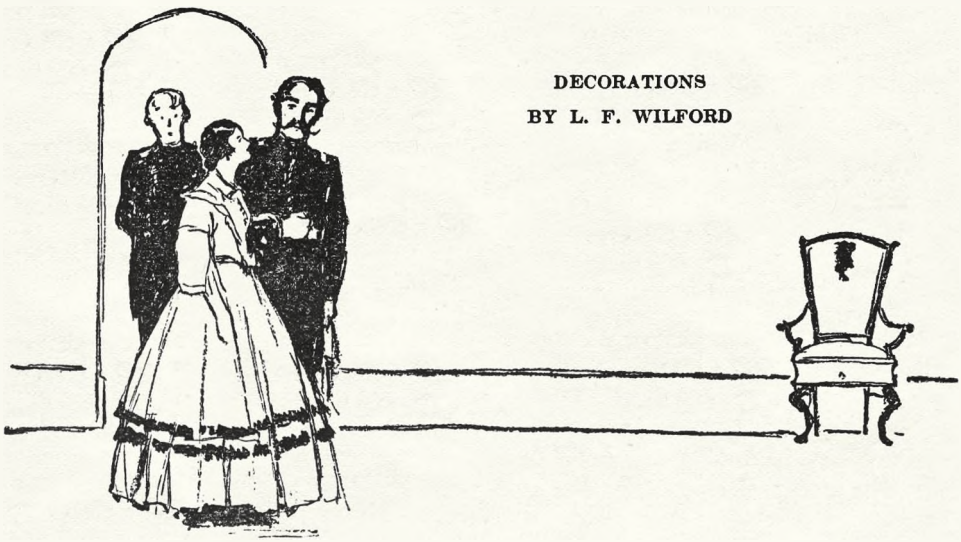
Reenlist? Nothin' doin'. Some folks has got gall
T' pick blizzard weather t' pull off a ball.

Officers' guests are sassiety folk,
All 'counta them, the trails mus' be broke
Down t' th' railroad from Shoulder Straps Line—
Gee, but that icy blast sure chills my spine!

Ol' Colonel's daughter's got no sense a-tall,
Mighty tough night t' be givin' a ball.

Doughboys a-chucklin' in shacks down th' Row—
Us cussin', an' clawin' our necks clear o' snow,
Romance in soldierin'? Bunk like th' rest.
Wait till you've served as a trooper out West!

Yellerleg rider's got no chance a-tall,
With officers' women folks givin' a ball.



DECORATIONS
BY L. F. WILFORD

The Gold Chained Buzzard

By T. SAMSON MILLER

A Story of Black Magic

EYES as blue as an April sky, hair as yellow as August wheat and wiry as mattress stuffing, shoulders a yard wide, Joe Lamb was bound to be known as Swede. That was in the Oregon lumber camp. But Joe came by his name in a good, honest American way; a grandsire had driven a prairie schooner from Missouri to Oregon, fighting Indians on the way.

There was a lot of that pioneer spirit in Joe. He sailed out of San Francisco in an Alaska salmon packet, then ran down to Chile and worked the nitrate fields. Next he found himself cruising mahogany in Honduras, then back to the Pacific Coast, minus bankroll and job, but plus a lot of experience, iron hard muscles, a wonderful feeling that the world is easy picking, and a liking for the smell of the sea, ships and wharfs and their odors of tar, hemp, rotting piling, lead paint, barnacles . . .

When the steam schooner *Minnie Hansan* cleared from Eureka, California, with railroad ties for the Gold Coast, West Africa, Joe had a bunk in the forecastle. The mere name Gold Coast was

inducement enough. Joe was now twenty-four, and ready to try anything once.

Joe jumped his ship at Sierra Leone, leaving behind two-thirds of four months' pay as able seaman. In the grog shops of the Gold Coast he met with men who told fabulous tales of fortunes in ivory and rubber. Tales of gold gods and gold and jeweled appointments of the sacrificial altars of the *juju* groves in the jungle forests. Tales of chiefs buried with treasure that would make King Tut's tomb look insignificant. Moreover Joe discovered that a white man didn't work in West Africa. He became a Ruling One. He went about in a sun helmet and ducks and told black men what to do. He had a boy to lace his shoes, pipeclay his helmet, tote his baggage, cook for him—all for a shilling a day.

But, somehow or other, the thin faced victims of malaria and jungle fever were astonishingly shy on details of the fortunes when they sobered up, and Joe tried to bring them down to brass tacks. He was soon flat broke. A white flat broke in Sierra Leone is out of luck; that is to say, a husky white whose livelihood depends on his muscular activity. He wouldn't clerk in a store, and native driving for fifty dollars a month was not to be thought of. His thin faced friends came to his aid—with free advice.

The coast was no place for a white man. Now, the Oil Rivers . . . Oil! Joe knew all about oil. Nothing doing. The dirtiest, hardest work on the face of the earth. He didn't mind that so much, but you worked for others, and if the well didn't come through good and plenty your wages went flooey. So:

"Nothing doing, bozos. I'm off oil."

They laughed, and set him right. The Oil Rivers were the many mouths of the mighty Niger River, which got their name from the thriving palm oil trade.

"Tell you what you do, Yank. Hop a coaster for Burutu. That's the entry port of a big English soap company. They use palm oil in their soap. They do a bit of mahogany cutting on the side. You let their agent give you the onceover, and you're hired. You're the kind they're looking for. They'll give you a trading station—make you agent. And you don't take orders from nobody."

JOE TOOK a rope ladder down the rusty sides of a coaster to a spindle legged wharf at Burutu in a drenching rain. The wet season was on. When the wet season is on in West Africa the sun becomes a wistful memory. Joe squelched through mud to a group of galvanized iron stores, took an outside gangway to offices and living quarters for whites over a barter store. The agent, Mr. Marshall, had said:

"Stick around, Lamb. A call will be coming from one of the stations for an assistant. The pay isn't much—five pounds a month and keep. We reward ability with a bonus system. Stick around. This is the Land of the White Man's Grave. Fever is the great promoter and opportunity maker. Stick around."

Joe had not berthed in forecastles without acquiring a taint of superstition, as, for instance, belief in the existence of the two dames, Lady Luck and Lady Bad Luck. The trouble is, the one sometimes appears in the guise of the other.

In a short time Joe got an appointment as assistant to Robert Walker, the agent of N'da, under circumstances that made it a difficult matter to decide which dame was on the job.

A dugout had appeared one day out of the deluge that obscured river and jungle at Burutu. It was paddled by ugly, squat junglemen with deep gashes down their flat noses, by way of tribal mark. The Slit Noses, Joe heard them called. The instant the dugout slid up on the beach, a white in a hooded raincoat rose from the well and scurried up to the store. As he came up the gangway and hurried along the balcony to Marshall's office, Joe got a glimpse of a white and very scared youth. Then he heard a whimpering voice, mingled with soothing words from Mar-

shall. But the crying voice took a rising pitch.

"I tell you Walker is crazy. Everything at N'da is crazy. A wizard came—"

Marshall interrupted hurriedly:

"Nonsense. You've got fever, Gurney. You've let this *juju* stuff get on your mind."

"On my mind!" screamed Gurney. "I suppose that buzzard was only a dream. I tell you Walker's a fiend. How about the assistant before me—Syd Carter? What did Walker do to Carter? What happened to Carter?"

Marshall's reply was spoken in a low tone that was lost to Joe. Then he heard the agent tell Gurney to take quinine and get under blankets.

"You've got fever. It makes one see things. Get to bed."

A little while afterward Marshall sent a houseboy for Joe.

Marshall was very affable. He uncorked a bottle of whisky, called Joe Mister Lamb and spoke of the N'da assignment as a "golden opportunity".

"You are in luck or out of luck, Mr. Lamb, according to how you shape up. In this country it is all up to the man himself. That is why we pay by the bonus system instead of straight salary. It puts a man on his mettle. Too, we have had much unpleasant experience with tropikitis cases—men who sluff off, when their pay is not dependent on the showing they make.

"Now, N'da is a good little station. Apart from the palm oil nuts there is untapped mahogany country. We never had a man there who could size up standing timber. That is where your Honduras experience, Mr. Lamb, will serve you a good turn. The agent at N'da gets a ten per cent. bonus on his trade."

"Yeah, Mr. Marshall. But this Walker guy is the agent," Joe reminded.

"Quite so, quite so, Mr. Lamb," chirped Marshall, wincing at Joe's slang. "Walker was a good agent, but he's about done. I have been sending him assistants who would, I hoped, pick up the barter tricks and qualify to take over the agency."

"And Walker was too slick for 'em," said Joe, making a direct thrust. "I seen the scared face of that kid Gurney, and I heard his blubbering. By the looks of it Walker ain't keen on training his assistants for the agency."

Marshall pushed a box of cigars across the table to Joe.

"Lamb—" Marshall dropped his formal manner—"you don't want to let anything you heard Gurney blubber affect your prospects. He seems to have acquired a *juju* complex. *Juju* is a state of mind."

"Maybe, but not if the yarns I heard in Sierra Leone had anything to 'em," Joe commented. "Maybe they put something over on me, and maybe they didn't; but they sure knew their onions about wizardry and black magic and fetishes and such *juju* stuff."

"Oh, if you're frightened—" There was the suggestion of a sneer in Marshall's voice.

Joe hit the table with a shut fist—a sledge hammer blow that made the cigars jump in their box, the glasses splash their liquor.

"Afraid, hell!" he bellowed. "All the same, I like to know what I'm going up against. I'll do the deciding about *juju* being a state of mind after I have sized up things at N'da."

"Oh, sure."

"Gimme me the lowdown on this Walker guy, Mister Marshall."

Marshall evaded the question:

"You're a personable chap, Lamb. You'll make it all right with Walker. You've got to, if you hope to land the agency and bonus. An assistant is promoted only on the recommendation of his agent that he is capable and reliable."

"Kind of puts it up to me to take anything this Walker guy hands me, don't it?"

"A bull's-eye every time you open your mouth, Lamb." Marshall's eyes twinkled. "Yet you may be missing the target this time. Speaking personally, if

you were my assistant on a lonely trading station I'd respect your broad shoulders and those bulges in your sleeves. I have had you under observation here, Lamb. I think you are the man for N'da."

"That's not answering me about the lowdown on Walker," Joe stubbornly insisted.

"I don't want to prejudice you. Listen, Lamb . . ."

Marshall went on to paint West Africa as the sanctuary of men who escaped trouble back home—men who made bad marriages, or were careless about putting their signatures to checks that had no bank accounts behind them, or failed in business, or kicked at civilization, or were lured out by romantic dreams of fortune. Good men and bad men; clever men and fools.

"Some acclimate to the West African environment, others go all to pieces—go native, Lamb. The finer the man, the greater his fall."

Joe intruded another bull's-eye.

"All which ain't getting down to cases. What's wrong with Walker?"

"I was coming to that. Walker is the brainy type. He can put Ph.D. after his name, if you know what that means. He's an Oxford University man, and God knows what disappointment sent him to Africa. He handled the station well—threw himself into the job for awhile. But he's gotten sidetracked somehow—I don't know . . . By the way, there's a letter for him from a London publishing house. Walker mailed home, about a year ago, a bulky manuscript. He's an authority on primitive religion, and it seems he's always on the trail of first-hand knowledge of *juju* and such. Beyond that you know as much as I do, Lamb."

Joe cocked a knowing eye at the agent, then he made his final bull's-eye.

"Mister, just between you an me, man to man and right out, what the hell's wrong at N'da?"

"That is your job—to find out."

"What's Walker been pulling on his assistants?"

"Pulling? Oh, that's American slang, eh? Lamb, Walker and N'da is your nut to crack. There's an agency and a fat bonus in it for you. Are you funking the job?"

"Not by a jugful. I'm curious, that's all. When do I leave?"

"Right now. I'll provision the dugout of the Slit Noses for four days. They will drop you at N'da, *en route* to their village. Gurney hailed them as they were passing N'da. Gurney ran away from Walker. But that won't scare *you*."

"You said a mouthful, mister. Gimme that letter."

Afterwards, when he sat in the bottom of the dugout between the bending, naked bodies of the Slit Noses, Joe thought of the curious smile that crossed Marshall's mouth—a speculative sort of smile; a smile that seemed to say—

"You will make it or you won't—and God help you if you don't."

A MAZE of crisscrossing, narrow brackish water lanes walled in by dense mangroves. A low cloud pall and steady torrents of rain. Twelve black bodies swinging like automatons at their paddles; creatures who spoke—if they spoke at all—in a guttural gibberish, and whose actions were unlike anything Joe had known in human beings. A strange world peopled by strange beings. When the Slit Noses took to sleep they put red feathers across the black tunnels of their nostrils, lest a homeless spirit enter their bodies by their noses and dispossess their own spirits while the latter were away on a dream journey.

Four days of that—four days of a stagnation so intense that the shriek of a parrot was like an explosion—played the devil with Joe. He began to see that he was in a world about which he knew nothing. Hours on hours in which nothing happened, yet which were filled by the Slit Noses with uncanny happenings—things a white man does not see, as the passage of a bird of ill omen, or signs of evil spirits, which Joe could sense in the

strange precautions taken by the blacks—had an eery effect. He fell to thinking about Marshall's curious smile, and about Walker and N'da. There was nothing else to think about.

N'da? The cloud palled gloom of the fourth day was deepening into night when the dugout raised a black hulk moored to the swamp with rusting steel cables. The stumps of three sawed off masts showed through a deck roofing of galvanized sheet iron. The absence of canoe or launch or anything in the way of a tender raised hopes in Joe that the place was not N'da. But the Slit Noses paddled to a gangway and waited apathetically for the white man to debark.

Joe stumped up the ladder to a gap cut in the side timbers. Brushing aside a mosquito net, he stepped into the well of the main deck. A Slit Nose brought up his dunnage bag, dumped it just inside the net and ran back to the dugout, which went on its way, to a village somewhere in the lost world of water and forest.

At a long board table sat a narrow shouldered, angular man in pajamas, his bony feet bare on the seamed deck. His thin sallow face showed a stubble of several days' beard. His high forehead was that of a scholar. But the most arresting feature was his eyes—deep set and staring, lost brooding upon some indefinite point in a blue murk of tobacco smoke, which oscillated sluggishly to the slow beat of the *punkah*—a square frame with flapping burlap that swung on iron rods from the ceiling to the indifferent pull of a boy, who sprawled against a corrugated iron partition that divided the place. The black held the *punkah* cord by the flexible toes of his left foot, which dangled from his crooked right knee. A briar pipe hung from the agent's thin lipped, hard mouth, its smoke shadowing the lean face.

Joe waited for the deep amber eyes to take cognizance of his presence. The dead stare was creepy. Joe felt an urge to challenge it, to shout to the agent to snap out of it; but he was restrained by a vague diffidence.

Meanwhile his senses registered a drone of guttural dialect from the quarters aft, and pungent odors of sweating raw rubber and rancid palm oil nuts from the hold. Then his eyes fell on a calabash with tobacco ash and broken pipe stems of amber, bone, briar, meerschaum. With a shock he saw that the stems had been bitten through. The discovery conjured up a shuddersome picture of teeth grinding into bone and amber in a savage, consuming rage.

Still Walker said nothing. The somber, inward gazing stare focused on Joe's dunnage bag. After an interminable while Walker spoke—or chuckled:

"This is something new. The others had steamer trunks, kit bags, guns, cameras." Then he shouted, "Youth and bold adventure!"

Joe checked a sarcastic rejoinder about pajamas and unshaven chins. He had to cultivate the good will of this man if he hoped to achieve the agency. Too, he and Walker had to live on that isolated hulk. He took thought:

"I've got to go easy. I've got to get this guy's number. It won't help any to fly off the handle at the start. He's got it in for his assistants, that's plain. But if he picks on me—cripes, I could eat him up." Then, aloud:

"My name's Lamb—Joe Lamb. Where do I stow my dunnage?"

Walker shouted—

"Speak up!"

Then Joe understood that voices had to be pitched above the drumming of the heavy rain on the iron roof. He repeated his name and question in a bellow. Walker clapped his palms in summons.

Instantly, as if his existence were ruled by the clap of Walker's palms, a huge black sidled in through a door in the corrugated partition. His ebony body was naked except for a breech clout and a necklace of charms—bits of shell and bone, a crocodile's tooth, and something that looked like the dried gizzard of a hen. He slunk in, hangdog and furtive, his great dark eyes fixed on space, as if he feared to look around—feared ill things

in the air. Joe had a feeling that if he slipped up behind the negro and gave a shout he would let out a shriek.

"Son-of-a-gun," said Walker, in the ordinary tone of addressing by proper name, "you will be Massa Goof's boy. Show Massa Goof to the assistant's cabin." He resumed his inward gazing stare, as if the arrival of a new assistant was a mere trifle, an annoying interruption in a train of thought.

The black took up the dunnage bag and went toward the forecastle. Joe hesitated. If he didn't call that "Goof" there and then he would be stuck with it for all time. But it was a small matter to make trouble over. Joe took thought.

"He's trying to get my goat, like he got Gurney's, and that other guy's— Carter. Wonder what he did to Carter? Maybe this big nigger knows. Ten to one he was Carter's boy. I'll have a talk with the nigger."

JOE FOLLOWED the black to a forecastle that had been made over into two cabins for the agent and his assistant. The negro entered the cabin on the jungle side and began laying out the contents of the dunnage bag. He kept his back toward Joe and pretended to be completely absorbed in his simple occupation, fixing his eyes on the object that happened to be in his hand—shirt, comb, shoe, hair brush—as if striving to shut his mind to things around. Joe had seen the Slit Noses act thus in the presence of mysterious evil, as if they were playing 'possum with the occult—playing 'possum with themselves.

The black's stealthy movements, his mask-like face, his studied avoidance of Joe's eyes, his dragging feet, listless body, hung head, and the necklet of charms that reflected an abject abasement to superstitious terrors, presented a primitive creature so remote from Joe's experience of mankind that he was at loss how to set about the talk he wanted.

"Hey, Son-of-a-gun!" he bawled at the negro's back. He might as well have shouted at a statue of black marble. He caught the negro by an arm, swung him around, knocked up his chin. "Say, listen; you were Massa Carter's boy, eh?"

At Carter's name something shadowed across the ebony face—fear, horror, guilt, Joe could not say which. Then a drum sounded. The black bayed that it was the chop drum, and made his escape.

Joe finished dressing, then went back to Walker. He found the agent seated at the head of the table, which was laid for the evening meal. He evidently intended dining in rumpled pajamas and bare feet. Joe swallowed the insult, with mental reservations.

Son-of-a-gun stood back of Walker's chair to pass the dishes. As Joe took a seat a serving boy came from aft. The patter of his bare feet was followed by a sound that seemed to Joe like claws, or talons, striking the floor. To see what made the sound he had to look sharply to the left, but in the act of turning he caught Walker observing him with a slyly expectant expression. Satanic imps seemed to dance in the opaque eyes. Then Joe was struck by the attitude of Son-of-a-gun. The black's body was rigid. His eyes were frozen on something behind the serving boy. He held his arms stiff at his sides with the hands balled and the thumbs crooked. Joe had learned on the Gold Coast that crooked thumbs were West Africa's great jinx dispeller, its most potent charm against *juju*.

The serving boy passed on the opposite side of the table and set before Walker a tureen of palm oil chop. At his heels stalked a buzzard—bald, with ragged wings, scaly legs and floor scraping talons. Around the bird's neck was a thin gold chain—a watch chain.

Joe was familiar with the sight of the scavenger buzzards of the Gold Coast, strutting impudently in and out of huts, snatching plantain skins from children, dipping their beaks into the family mealie pots, roosting on the eaves of the dwellings and whitening the clay walls with their droppings. But this was something different. That much was made

evident when Son-of-a-gun took the first plate Walker filled from the tureen of yam and canned beef floating in palm oil and set it on the floor before the bird with a long, panicky reach, and a backward jerk that could not have been more fearful if the bird had been a viper.

Joe sensed the presence of an obscure drama. Notwithstanding Marshall's casual dismissal of the *juju* at N'da as purely imaginary, it had demoralized Gurney, it had Son-of-a-gun in a grip of horror, and it had the *punkah* and serving boys terrified.

Joe's natural reaction would have been to demand what was going on; why the bird was there; why it was given first consideration in the serving; why it wore a watch chain, whose chain it was, and he would have asked for some explanation of Son-of-a-gun's terror. Joe would have blurted out the questions, if something about Walker had not made him wary. The agent was still covertly watching him. Like a practical joker, Joe thought; and he decided to hold his peace.

But as the dinner dragged out, Joe saw that his silence and air of indifference which he affected toward the *juju* gave him away. Walker must know that he was thinking about the strange business. Too, Walker would guess that the runaway Gurney had talked at Burutu of N'da. He must be wondering how much Joe knew. Joe sensed that Walker was lying in wait for comment or question.

"To string me along; spring something ugly," Joe mused.

Between them, then, there was a sort of duel, Walker laying traps for Joe's curiosity, Joe affecting to ignore them. Thus, Walker called the bird Old Top, addressed remarks to it in a personal way, as if the creature were some reincarnation. In fact he spoke of it to Son-of-a-gun as a bush soul, in an ordinary voice, as if bush souls were commonplace. Joe checked himself on the verge of shouting:

"Well, I'll bite. What's a bush soul? Shoot!"

He strove to encourage a conviction that the *juju* was some sort of ghastly practical joke, but he was haunted by the tales of the Old Coasters in the Gold Coast grog shops. Then there happened that which made the hoax theory seem too vicious and cruel to be tenable, unless Walker had a warped sense of humor —a touch of jungle madness.

THE BUZZARD made a short, awkward flight to the back of a chair, then flew to a perch on the swinging *punkah*. In its flight it came between a hanging Dietz lantern and Son-of-a-gun. The black threw himself sidewise, with a strangled cry, from the path of the bird's distorted shadow. Walker affected to be tremendously concerned.

"It got you that time, nigger," he asserted gravely. The black's nostrils were dilating like those of a frightened horse, his great chest heaving. "There," observed Walker, "the *juju's* affecting you. It's working. The bush soul's shadow touched you that time."

Joe saw red.

"Only a cur would torture a nigger through his superstitions!" he blazed at Walker.

The agent directed at him a steady, penetrating look that was unaccompanied by any movement of his brows or head.

"Superstition, Goof?" he said gently, as if he was addressing a child. "Superstition?" he repeated, this time with a slightly ironic inflection.

Joe squirmed. The clouded amber eyes seemed to withdraw their gaze, to look inward—reflect upon mystical things, beyond the ken of man . . .

Of a sudden Joe Lamb, whose slogan was that he was willing to try anything once, and whose protection was two quick fists, found himself jumping from his chair and striding away. Had he stayed there he would have wrecked forever his chance of getting Walker's indorsement of his fitness to take over the agency. He would have said things that would have made an enemy of Walker, and enmity

between two men isolated in the primitive jungle was no light thing.

Later, when Son-of-a-gun came to the forecastle cabin to perform the evening rites—which included an inspection of Joe's toes for guinea worm and tucking the bed net under the mattress to keep out tarantulas and centipedes, and cleaning Joe's comb—to cache the loose hair in his breech clout and secretly burn it, lest an enemy get hold of it and make bad magic against the massa—Joe put the black through a third degree.

"Son-of-a-gun, why are you scared of that buzzard?"

The black looked down between his planted feet, dumb.

"Son-of-a-gun," Joe said in friendly, coaxing voice, "you and me make talk. Why does Massa Walker call the bird a bush soul? What's a bush soul?"

"Sah—" The black gulped pleadingly.

"Why were you scared of the bird's shadow?" Joe asked, beating from one question to another in the hope of getting a rise.

"No fit to make talk 'bout dat," the black whined.

"Whose chain was that on the bird?"

Son-of-a-gun gave a shudder.

"Was it Carter's?" Joe asked, making a wild guess.

The black lifted to him tortured eyes, then dropped his glance again to the floor between his feet.

"What happened to Carter?"

The black shook as with palsy. His chin went down on his chest, his shoulders drooped.

"You were Massa Carter's boy?" Joe persisted.

"Sah," the black bayed with an imploring note, "I no fit to talk 'bout Massa Carter."

"Why?"

Son-of-a-gun gulped despairingly.

"He done lib fo' Abambo!" He made a sudden dash from the cabin.

Joe listened to the receding patter of the black's feet on the deck; then he laughed. But there was no merriment in that laugh—for all the scorn he affected for *juju* horrors as sheer nonsense. He tried to dismiss it all as the result of jungle isolation—the trick of a brain warped by loneliness and inward brooding. But Joe was doing a bit of 'possum playing on his own account, or he would have remembered the letter for Walker and have recognized in his forgetfulness that he was more muddled than he would have cared to admit.

When he got to bed he was unable to sleep for thinking of Carter and bush souls, and wondering what lay behind the lost stare in the clouded amber eyes and the slovenly pajamas—what was the hell behind the calabash of teeth shorn pipestems.

AT EARLY morning coffee, Joe met the same scene to which he had bade goodnight the evening before: Walker in the same crumpled, stained pajamas; the lolling *punkah* boy and his lazily stirring square of burlap; Son-of-a-gun, as furtive as before; the drumming rain on the sheet iron roof.

From aft issued the now familiar guttural drone, and the air was still dim with stale tobacco smoke. The litter of broken pipestems had not been cleared away; and the brooding eyes of Walker were not lightened even momentarily by a "good morning" as Joe entered, wordless, to take his place at table. And, even more intense than before, did the newcomer to N'da feel that oppressive awareness to a dark drama, slowly unfolding . . .

As much to break an intolerable silence as to get down to facts, Joe asked where Abambo was—where Carter went, he added. Instantly he saw that he had made a slip, an exposure. The amber eyes seemed to say, "Ah-hah! So we had a talk with Son-of-a-gun on the Q.T, eh? We're morbidly curious about Carter." Thus the eyes, while the strangely pitched voice said—

"Abambo, my dear Goof, is that astral counterpart of the natural world to which spirit souls go."

"Carter dead!" gasped Joe. Then sudden rebellion at the agent's mysterious manner swept him and he demanded to be given his work.

"Work!" Walker chuckled. "Work?" he echoed derisively. "If you can find a thing to do, Goof, you're welcome. Take a look around the hulk. If you can find a thing to put hand or mind to you're a wizard."

Joe could not believe it. The odors of palm oil nuts and sweating rubber from the hold gave evidence of barter. Perhaps the wet season held things up, he thought. Still, it was strange that there was no tender, no means of drumming up barter. Yet the company did not maintain an agent and assistant for nothing. But Walker sneered that away.

"We're here at no more cost than a succession of tureens of palm oil chop, which you'll soon be screaming at, Goof. Oh, yes, they make an airy flourish about bonuses!" He chuckled. "That's good bait for romantic youths."

Joe refused to believe it. He had to refuse to believe it, for it robbed him of hope. It made the hulk a deadly prison. It left him without relief from the ghastly drama of *juju*—Walker. For Joe decided that the agent was a soured, disappointed man, disillusioned of life.

Yet, he wasn't so sure even of that. Walker did not drink. In spite of his slovenly appearance he was not a sot. There was about him a covert awareness to all that was going on. Joe felt that he was watched, dissected. And the blacks, too, were watched, their reactions studied closely, as if Walker were experimenting; diabolically or scientifically, Joe could not say.

He tried to wear a grin, and to hang to the commonsense deduction that the company did not man the hulk for nothing. For one thing there were the blacks aft—inactive now; nothing to do but jabber—but there must be work for them at times. There were five of them, huge Jakris. One had a leg swollen to the size of his body. Joe mentioned the leg at chop one noon—the buzzard present, the *punkah* waving, the rain beating down.

"Yes," said Walker, "and you and I would call it a case of elephantiasis, because elephantiasis is common in West Africa. But the blacks know better. You see, Goof, that leg began to get big after poor Carter—" He broke off, leaving the rest unsaid, allowing Joe's imagination to work. "But I must not put morbid fancies in your head about poor Carter," he added.

The adjective *poor*, the insinuation of a terrible fate suffered by Carter, and the way Walker had made the swollen leg serve to bring up the mystery of Carter's end, shook Joe's restraint to the winds.

"Well, I'll bite!" he yelled. "Shoot! Why *poor* Carter? What's the connection between Carter and that nigger's big leg?"

"Easy, Goof, easy," cooed Walker. "Easy, or you'll get to raving, like that ass Gurney. You mustn't let this *juju* stuff get you like that."

"What are you trying to do, Mr. Walker?" Joe demanded, suspiciously.

"I'm cautioning you, Goof. This is the Niger—the land of witchcraft, spiritism, necromancy. You'll see strange stuff, Goof." Walker struck a match to his pipe and blew smoke into the oscillating mists. "You see, after poor Carter—" he paused—"went Abambo, the blacks drummed for a wizard. One came from a village nearby—the Village of the Pythons. You must remind me to tell you about those pythons. Strange stuff, Goof. They're bush souls, like Old Top, here . . .

"Well, the wizard came, in a cloak of black hens' skins and mask of coconut fiber, and he hung Carter's watch chain on Old Top— But, Goof, are you sure you want to hear the rest? I don't want you shouting in your nightmares. Sure you want to hear?"

"Not half so much as you're wanting to tell it," scoffed Joe. "Call it off or go on, it's all the same to me."

A light akin to admiration passed in Walker's eyes, then their gaze drew back into their inward-gazing stare. He seemed to forget Joe . . .

For the first time in his life Joe found himself in a situation where a pair of quick fists was no defense. For that matter, he never thought of having it out with Walker in that particular way. Nothing could be gained by a fight, for one thing, and for another, even if Joe did not recognize it, he was dominated by a more subtle brain and stronger will. He felt that he was being tricked; that his thoughts were being steered into a channel of mystery, for some purpose. But there was nothing he could come at grips with, nothing that could be pegged down to a definite issue.

He got mad enough at times to want to smash a fist to Walker's stubbled jaw, but the consciousness that he was stronger muscled, more powerfully built and in better shape restrained him. Too, he was vaguely sorry for the man. Something had hit Walker pretty hard.

A TRIFLING incident left Joe with a sense of an immense loneliness about him. He had hooked back the door of his cabin for air. He was lying there pondering over the fate of Carter and his connection with the bird and the watch chain, the visit of the wizard, the swollen leg of the black, aft, and Son-of-a-gun's abject terror of the bird, or bush soul—a terror so much more intense than the fright of the other blacks as to suggest that Son-of-a-gun was personally implicated in Carter's fate—when a patter of feet came up the passageway preceded by a light.

The feet stopped at the open door. Walker's tall body blocked the opening, while he threw the light of a hurricane lantern around the cabin walls. Joe sat up, resenting the intrusion. Walker remarked:

"Why, Goof, you haven't tacked up the girl's photo. The others did that the very first thing." He essayed a jocular note, but failed.

Walker often brought up points of difference he had had with his assistants. Once when writing, of which he did a great deal, he burst out against Carter:

"The insolent puppy had the gall to tell me I was wasting my time scribbling nigger stuff. Said all writers were nuts. Nigger stuff! There's wonderful material. Goof, in the spiritism and mysticism of West Africa. I'm on my second volume—'The Five Souls of Niggerdom'. You didn't know a black has five souls, eh? There's the spirit soul that goes to the Abambo astraland; the bush soul, which is reincarnated in an animal, snake, tree or bird; the ancestral soul, that homes in the village tree of the ancestral spirits—you'll find these sacred trees all over negroland; the shadow soul and the dream soul that goes on journeys when a man sleeps. Ho-ho! Never move a sleeping man or his dream soul may not be able to find him when it returns!"

Walker went on to tell of fetishes and taboos governing a black's conduct toward his five souls, of charms and strange practises, of ritual dances—the Dance of the Return of the Shadows after the shadowless rainy season.

"Agent at N'da!" he flung out derisively. "Chaser of a ten per cent. bonus on barter returns! Not by a jugful. The world is getting curious about the sources of religion. I have magic, wizardry, the great unexplored mystery of necromancy—primitive religion. I'm working on my second book."

His second book! Joe was suddenly reminded of the letter from the London publisher. He had put it in the inside pocket of his raincoat. But when he went to his cabin for it he could not find it. It must have dropped from his pocket in the dugout. Well, the Slit Noses would find it. It would turn up.

"He's a brainy guy," Joe mused. "He's put everything he's got into his writing. Wonder what he's trying to live down. Seems like he hopes to redeem himself with his books."

Anyway, part of the mystery of Walker was cleared up. But it left Joe with an uneasy feeling of being marooned with a mystic, a delver into the unnatural. Things were getting on his nerves. There

was no escape from the *juju* drama and the contagion of Son-of-a-gun's terror. The very sight of shell and bone and tooth charms about the black's great neck suggested the presence of ghostly things. And Walker was apparently experimenting with the *juju* that involved the black, the bush soul bird, and Carter.

Somehow Joe got the weird idea that Son-of-a-gun regarded the buzzard as the bush soul of Carter. Walker had a way of insinuating such ideas. Joe could never shake off a suspicion that he was being tricked and steered into something nasty. He made mental resolves:

"I've got to keep up a grin. I mustn't let this stuff get me . . . Lord, I wish I had something to do!"

Conditions were against him. Day followed day without any cessation in the torrential downpour, reverberating thunder, the roar of the forests under the lashings of cyclonic storms. There was no escape from the growing horror of Walker's slow retreat into the ghostly, incomprehensible magic of the jungles.

Human nature has its limits of endurance. Prison warders know that. Riot and savage rebellion may break out any moment. Any trifle may serve to touch off the explosion. In Joe's case it was the buzzard. Coming to chop one night, he found the bird perched on a chair at the table right across from his seat. Son-of-a-gun, as usual, set a plate before the bird with a panicky hand. With a sudden surge of anger, Joe reached over the table and took the bird by its long neck. A thrill of savage triumph went through him as he yanked the carrion creature across the table and hurled it toward the gangway. The net carried away with the impact of the bird, which fell entangled in the folds, clear of the gangway, into the river.

Joe laughed. It was such a simple solution of the disgusting problem. He was angry with himself for not having thought of it before. He grinned to Son-of-a-gun. If any one had cause for thankfulness it surely was the black. But stark terror gripped the big fellow.

Walker's voice rang with ironic concern:

"You've done it now, Goof. You've upset the whole apple cart of spiritism."

Son-of-a-gun shook off his spell, to dash at the gangway and make a running dive into the river.

"If he doesn't rescue Old Top," Walker said with apprehension, real or affected, "the wizard will have to be summoned—to do it all over again."

JOE CHOKED back a shout as to what the wizard had to do all over again. Instead he grinned, a wry grin, but still a grin. He knew he was about to witness mysterious stuff. He could read as much in the sparkling expectancy about Walker—the expectancy of a chemist experimenting with unknown elements. He could feel it in the intense quiet of the room; a silence that seemed actually to pant. The *punkah* boy had ceased pulling the cord. He had jumped to his feet, to stare frozen at the black hole the gangway made in the black night. The stopping of the slow scroop of the *punkah* was as the stopping of a clock in a death room.

The gangway creaked to slow, ascending steps. Son-of-a-gun appeared in the gap, his right hand dangling the dead bird by its neck, its scaly legs dragging the floor. Joe savagely told himself there was no real tragedy in that carcass with drenched feathers and white streaks of coarse skin. But Walker let drop a rumination that gave the psychology of the situation, or the Africans' viewpoint.

"What we believe, that really is," he said.

For an interminable while Son-of-a-gun stood in the gap, stunned. Then, as one in a nightmare, only half conscious, he took the watch chain from the bird's neck, dropped the carcass back in the river and went aft. An excited guttural gabbering began on the other side of the sheet iron partition. Walker said it was *juju* palaver—big *juju* palaver. A black came from aft with chalk rings around his

eyes—the sacred chalk of *juju*. He carried a small drum—a hollow cylindrical log with goatskin ends. He crossed to the gangway with a fixed stare. Walker explained that he was on *juju* business, thus dead to all mundane things. He descended the gangway, to drum close to the sound carrying river. He was summoning the wizard of the nearby Village of the Pythons.

Walker softly rubbed his palms together, with a sort of gloating anticipation.

"You'll see great stuff, Goof," he promised. "The wizard will be here in a jiffy, with his wicker basket and necromantic pot. You'll see him trap poor Carter's bush soul."

Joe retained his grin with effort. If he didn't grin he would go crazy. He strove to hold on to sense and reason.

"That bush soul stuff is nigger superstition, Mr. Walker, and you know it. S'pose you give me a few facts as to what Carter died of, and what this wizard is going to pull."

"Good idea," Walker responded readily. "It'll help you understand the wizardry, and it will kill time till the wizard's coming. But to understand this, Goof, you've got to think black—think in the irrational way of the blacks. Poor Carter . . ."

Joe learned that Carter had disappeared off the hulk. The blacks believed he had thrown himself into the river. The bush souls of men who die suddenly and unnaturally are vicious. That there was a vicious bush soul on the hulk after Carter's disappearance was made manifest in the swelling of the leg of one of the blacks aft, and in a fall down the hold and breaking of the arm of another black. Plainly Carter in Abambo was avenging through his bush soul on earth some wrong or other. It came out that Son-of-a-gun had stolen his master's watch chain. So the wizard was called. He trapped the angry bush soul, reincarnated it in a buzzard with a broken wing that made the hulk its home, and put the watch chain around the bush soul's neck, by way of righting the wrong.

"So you see, Goof, when you so thoughtlessly croaked Old Top you let loose that bush soul and a lot of trouble." Walker packed the bowl of a briar, smoked. Joe said nothing. He suspected a catch somewhere; imagined inward mirth in Walker's next words. "Here, Goof, we see the very beginnings of religion. Call the Five Souls of Niggerdom makebelieve stuff, if you like, but what is religion but makebelieve—a safety valve for the emotions, an attempt to dodge the bald facts of life and death? Laugh at Son-of-a-gun's avoidance of the shadow of the bush soul of the man in Abambo who is seeking to avenge the theft of his chain, but you can't laugh away the black's genuine terrors. We have to look at these things—" He broke off at a thin voice from the river. "The voice of *juju!*" he said. "Just between ourselves, Goof, the wizard is shouting through a hollow stick with pebbles in it. But to the blacks—well, here they come, to the call of *juju*."

They came in from aft, the elephantiasis case, and Son-of-a-gun with the watch chain, making the houseboys seven very scared Africans. They ranged themselves against the partition, tense, rigid. Walker pushed the table back, clearing a space.

The gangway again creaked to ascending steps. The wizard appeared, in a long cloak of hens' skins, a high head dress festooned with abominations, a mask with holes for two gleaming, intense eyes. Strutting to the middle of the room with click of ivory anklets, he set on the floor a pot of necromantic mess and a small reed basket whose cover had a small hole with a hinged lid. Son-of-a-gun nervously dropped the chain into the basket.

"That's bait for the bush soul," Walker said in Joe's ear. "You see, that chain comes from the person of Carter . . . Watch the lid," he enjoined. "It flies over when the soul has entered the basket. It flies over of its own accord. There's no mechanical trick. I inspected the basket that other time the wizard trapped Carter's bush soul."

Joe did not see the lid fly over. He was diverted from the scene, which might have been from a stage play of the Dark Ages, by Walker's excitement—suspicion of a warped mind experimenting with black magic—a play behind a play. He missed the movement of the lid. Absently he saw the wizard raise the lid from the closed hole, take out the chain, throw open his cloak and loop the chain over the head of a young python coiled about his emaciated waist. The wizard then took up a collection of cowry shells and portentously departed with firm conviction that he was making off with the bush soul of a "massa".

Joe looked at the lean, stubbled face of the agent with angry suspicion. Walker was far away—a brooding figure behind the veil of smoke mists, unapproachable, remote.

Then Joe became conscious of something unusual about the quiet in the room. Of a sudden it came to him that the rain was no longer pounding on the sheet iron roof. Then he recollected that as the wizard had gone about his *juju* business, ivory rings around his ankles had clicked with a distinctness that had not been possible if the rain had been drumming down.

Joe jumped to the gangway, to discover the cloud pall riven with streaks of starry sky. He shouted the news into the room:

"It's not raining! I can see stars!"

Walker came out of his spell.

"Tomorrow you will see the sun, and then nothing but sun," he promised. "This is a land of sharp and violent contrasts. Is it any wonder that the blacks cringe to malignant gods and—"

But Joe was escaping. He was sick to the soul of Walker's informative drone, sick to the soul of the subject. He was in revolt. He went to his cabin, to sit on the edge of his bunk and wrack his brains over the incredible things he had been witnessing—the tragedy behind them. What did it all mean? And ought he not to tell Walker of the letter? Yes—tomorrow.

THE MORNING proved Walker to be a good weather prophet. Joe woke to a sun drenched world of forest and muddy water. He went to the poop deck, to drink in the wonder of vivid sunlight, feast his hunger for blue skies, and hear all the jungle life awakening to the chatter of monkeys, scream of parrots, distant trumpeting of elephants, barking of crocodiles. He breathed deep of an aloe scented air. It was pleasant up there. He sprawled on his back on the deck, looking up into the blue, feeling the sun hot on his face. As the hulk rapidly dried out, her oakum and tar seams gave forth an odor that to Joe was reminiscent of many a tropic wharf. He lay there listening to the jungle life, and thinking if only there was a tender, barter to go after, it would be paradise.

Suddenly he jerked his body to a sitting posture, listening. Unless he was dreaming, he heard the exhaust of a launch. Sure enough, a white craft nosed around a bend in the narrow water lane and made for the hulk. He shot down to the gangway. A colored skipper saluted him respectfully. In a brief exchange Joe learned that the launch had been under repairs at Burutu; that it was the tender to the N'da station.

Joe charged into the hulk, to Walker.

"Say, Walker, what's the big idea? You gave me to think there was no tender to the station. You heard me wonder about it, but said nothing."

"My dear Goof," cooed Walker, "do you suppose I am concerned with the trifles of young romanticists unable to see beyond dreams of barter and rapid bonuses?" Then, chuckling, "Out here, a joke on impertinent youths. My lad, everything in good time."

Joe caught a note of bitterness in the jibe at youths' ambitions, financial hopes, romance. And all at once he understood the jibes and the slovenly pajamas and unshaven face as reprisals. Then an outburst from Walker about his assistants gave support to the theory.

"But you've been decent, Goof, really.

That prig Carter, with his whistling and photos of girls and cocksureness, had the gall to say I had gone native. Stepped in here with a chirp. 'I'm your assistant, Walker. Hope we'll make it all right,' he said, and waved away the tobacco smoke, saying, 'Oof! How can you breathe here? Gosh!' Cocky—as long as they last."

Then Joe understood much that had been dark. The teeth broken pipestems and brooding gaze bespoke a man at the end of his tether—a failure. A man bankrupt in hope and resource, marooned with younger men whose optimism and assurance and alien ambitions were torture to him.

Suddenly the thought struck Joe that it would be a big joke if there had been no bush soul to trap. A sudden suspicion found vent in a hard thrust question—

"Did you ship Carter's things home, Walker?" he demanded.

"Why, no. If the blacks are right about that drowning, then Carter took his goods with him to Abambo. He'd need 'em up in that astral counterpart of the natural world. That's why when a chief is buried, his cooking pot and hunting spears are buried with him. They used to slaughter his wives and—"

Joe cut in with a yell:

"Let up! I'm fed up on that stuff. I ought to knock the block off you, Walker."

"My dear Goof!" Walker blew rings of smoke.

"Carter did a sneak, like Gurney," Joe charged.

"Well, now, there was a sternwheeler here loading palm nuts. I do have an idea that Carter sneaked his stuff aboard and made a getaway. But you see, that elephantiasis case, and the nigger who was tripped by an angry bush soul down the hold—"

"Shut up!" blazed Joe, then got a grip on himself. "All right. You've had your laugh. Carter and Gurney yellow—and yet had the nerve to sneer at you. I'll allow the provocation. Let's wipe it off the slate. How about putting me wise to the barter tricks? I'll work that end, and you can go on writing. That reminds me. I had a letter for you. I dropped it in the dugout of the Slit Noses."

"A letter?" Walker shot to his feet, vibrant, electrified. "A letter? Not a package? A letter?"

"Sure. You scared they're sending back your book?"

"A letter!" Walker repeated, as if it were a reprieve.

"Sure. Small envelop with publisher's name in top corner."

"God! You had a letter! You left it in the canoe! Just forgot it! The stupidity, the utter selfishness of youth! Boy, where're your wits?"

Walker made with long strides for the launch, shouting to Joe to come along. He was a changed man—a man to whom the prison doors had opened. He explained that they were going to the Village of the Pythons, the head village of the Slit Noses, for the letter would have been passed along to the chief. He talked all the time, animatedly. Joe must hurry up and catch on to barter . . .

"For I am going to kick out. It's kick out or kick in here. I am kicking out! A letter, you said? God! I've put it over—"

Joe, scanning the forests as they went along, joyfully pointed out giant mahogany.

"Gosh! Give me a nigger crew and axes and crosscuts! A ten per cent. bonus. Cripes, Mr. Walker, it's a gold mine."

But Walker was directing the launch to a hut village on a bank. For once no pipe jutted from his lean face. His eyes were fixed on blacks gathered at the beach to meet the launch. He picked out the chief, an enormous man with his upper lip pierced by leopard's teeth. The instant the launch grounded Marshall leaped ashore and engaged in the dialect with him. Joe saw the chief point to a few huts set apart from the main village, back in the jungle.

"The huts of the priests," Walker ex-

claimed. "To be sure, the letter would be there. A letter has a spirit in it, by which whites send messages to each other. Come on. Look out for the pythons. They are dangerous to any one but the priests."

The big constrictors, fifteen to twenty feet long, lay coiled here, there, everywhere.

WALKER spoke of serpent worship, in all ages and all climes, from Egypt to the altars of the ancient temples of the Amazon.

"The blacks here are only doing what primitive men do and have done the world over. Big stuff. I have seen in West African legends traces of Persian influence. These pythons are the bush souls of deceased Slit Noses. That's totemism, same as your American Indians."

He had reached the hut pointed out by the king. The hut proved to be completely void of furniture or utensils. On the clay floor lay the letter, flung there and avoided as white man's magic. Walker snatched it up and stepped back into the sunlight, tearing open the envelop. Then he took thought of Joe watching him, got a hold on himself, masked his eagerness with a flow of talk about the pythons.

"They look sluggish, Goof. Don't go by looks. There's no quicker way of shuffling off this mortal coil than to disturb a python," he said, still reading the letter. "Two coils, then the constriction—"

He broke the sentence as sharply as if he had been shot.

Never had Joe seen on a man the look that sickened Walker's face. Joe prayed he would never see such a look again. He strove to ask what the matter was, to offer cheer, but a choking lump in his throat prevented. Then, strangely, the sick look passed from the lean face. Too, the brooding expression passed from the eyes. There came to the features a resolute expression. An expression more nearly normal than any Joe had seen on Walker.

The letter had evidently brought the agent to a momentous decision; a decision that wiped away grueling uncertainty. He fished a pencil from one of his pockets and wrote with steady hand on the back of the letter. In the shuddery aftermath, Joe cursed his stupidity in not having sensed that that calmness and seeming normality were, in a man like Walker, evidence of abnormality.

Walker thrust the letter in the open front of Joe's shirt, then made two swift, long strides to a python and kicked it sharply. The reptile uncoiled with unbelievable rapidity.

Taken completely by surprise, Joe's mind failed to grasp the tragedy that took place before his eyes. The utter preposterousness of it, the ghastly incredibility was stunning. It was a mad day dream.

Joe had a visual impression of the snake gliding, coiling up and about Walker's body. But it was quite awhile before realization of the tragedy aroused him from his paralyzing coma. And at the same time came the realization that man's hands, man's strength, were powerless against the two hundred pounds and more of infuriated snake.

Joe cast about frantically for a weapon. A fish spear stood against a hut some two hundred yards distant. But even as he started for the thing a priest, divining his intention, raced him for it—beat him and tossed the spear into the hut.

"No fit, no fit!" the priest cried. "Man kill snake, man die quick time!"

That was the sacred law; the reptiles were protected. And, anyway, Walker was beyond human aid . . .

The motor of the launch echoed back from the jungle. A herd of hippos sported in the way.

The guttural voice of the colored skipper broke into Joe's abstraction.

"Sah, what fo' Massa Walker go fool wid dat python? No sense to fool wid python."

Joe went to the letter for the answer. First he read the penciled scribble:

Dear Marshall:

I am kicking in.

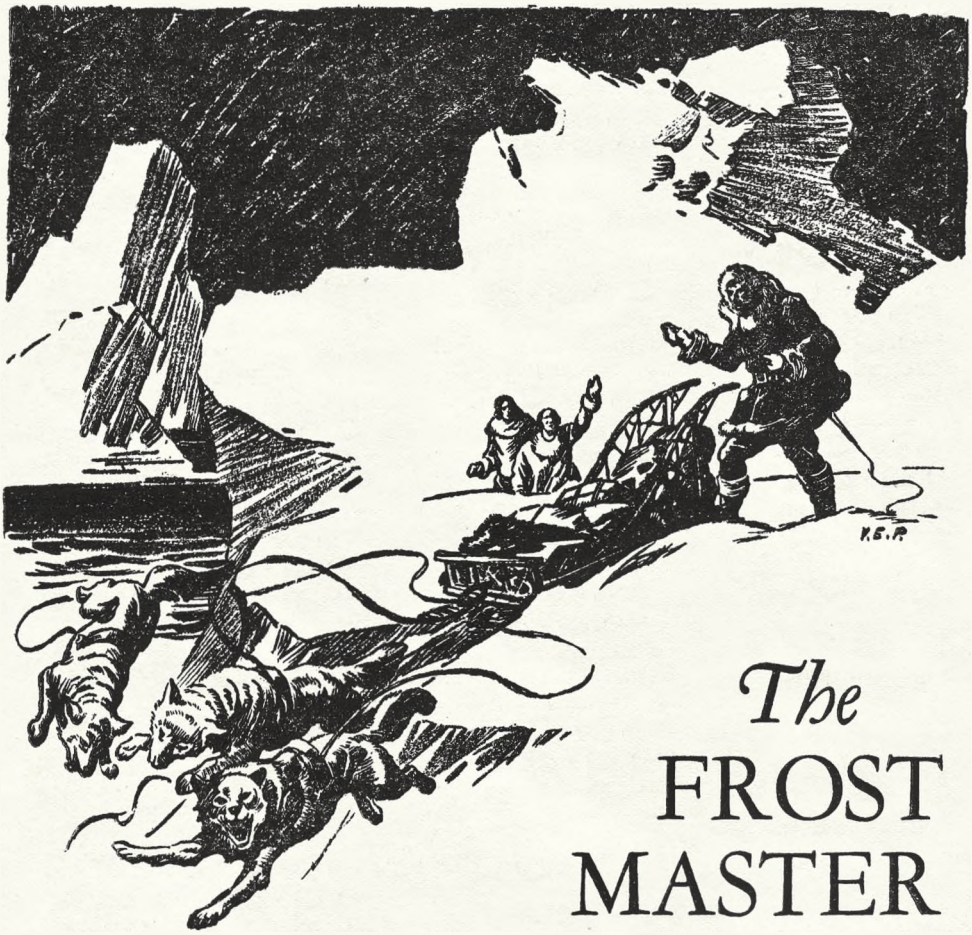
This chap Lamb is O. K. He's good. No damn coward, like the others. He'll get out and do things. He knows mahogany, and there's lots around here. —WALKER

Joe turned the letter over and read the communication of the publisher:

. . . While we recognize the able and sincere work in "Lore and Legend of the Niger" and acknowledge its valuable contribution to folk lore literature, we doubt if there is a public interest large enough to make the volume a paying venture.

We are holding the manuscript awaiting your instructions.

"Cripes!" Joe breathed. Then again, "Cripes! And all this mahogany here, and a launch to scoot around in and—Lord, what hunting! The poor fool!"



The FROST MASTER

A Tale of the Far North

By VICTOR SHAW

A GREAT WIND swooped down across the polar pack from the top of the world. It struck without warning, a howling, screaming blast laden thick with snow that leaped savagely upon the three fur clad human atoms who sledged south along the shore ice of the desolate Arctic coast. Caught unawares, they hunched stoic backs to the furious gusts and fought on through swirling snow clouds.

The wind increased in violence. Men and dogs moved like phantoms in the white veil, incased in armor of hard packed frost. Volleys of ice needles bit into exposed flesh like tiny knives and the dogs cowered, whimpering. Whiplashes stiffened and were useless. Even the voices of the drivers whirled into space and were lost, as they urged on their teams. Underfoot the ice field shuddered. There was an ominous groaning, as of a fettered giant, earsplitting crashes like musketry—then, with a thunderous roar of pressure artillery, the vast frozen pack began to move and break up. . . .

It was late in the spring sledging season. Three weeks before, his work finished, John Wayne with two Innuit helpers and three sledge teams had beat a retreat down the ice locked western coast of Grant's Land. He was headed out, eager for the homeland.

Helpers and dogs were in condition. Wayne kept himself always fit. With the priceless field notes, instruments and ample supplies divided into three sledge loads, he had no doubt that he would win through safely to the world of life and sunlight four thousand hazardous miles away below the Circle.

John Wayne had left years of polar travel and research behind his competent back. Trained to such work, he had little use for the so-called will of fate. A man of action, he believed in himself and with good reason; in his physical prime, a lean six feet in his sealhide *kamicks*, thewed with rawhide muscles. The shaggy yellow mane and beard frozen now to the fur hood of his *kulita* framed a rugged, square jawed face that was calm and confident, and in his steady, ice-blue eyes flamed an unconquerable spirit.

Thus far, it had been dirty weather. For over twenty days he had fought south into the teeth of a storm that tested both men and dogs. Every foot of the shifting white trail he had contended with dogged persistence, knowing that to complete the long traverse through Nansen Strait and across to Smith Sound before sledging failed, he must keep moving to the limit of endurance.

An hour ago, during an unexpected lull, he had halted for a hasty meal, with a ration of frozen caplin for the dogs. While gulping pemmican and tea hot from a thermos, the opaque white veil had been briefly torn aside and in the wan Arctic twilight far to the south he had noted a gap in the pallid sweep of coastline, which he judged to be the entrance to the strait for which he was heading.

A little later the wind had shifted suddenly into the north, bringing with it dire peril. A mile seaward, a wide lead of inky black water opened abruptly and along its edge the ice field began to disintegrate before the giant levers of wind and wave. In that direction the cannonade of riven ice was now continuous, as shattered floes were hurled like battering rams against the crumbling barrier, although where he stumbled blinded and gasping the pack held firm.

Alive to the danger, Wayne bellowed a warning to the Innuits and swung his straining team shoreward at top speed. From somewhere close in the driving snow smoke came shrill cries and a yelping chorus of dogs, as the Innuits also turned and rushed headlong toward safety. Behind him, the uproar of rending floes acted as a spur.

In mid-flight, Wayne's sledge slewed violently and upset. The uneven footing as he heaved it upright convinced him that he had reached the series of old pressure ridges, which lay well offshore—huge blocks tilted into frozen hummocks by former tidal action.

Working up the smooth incline, the dogs lunged into their traces with yelps of fear. Wayne got one shoulder behind the load and shoved desperately. The team labored, bellies to the snow, digging deep furrows as they clawed frantically for a foothold.

AS HE WON to the top and the sledge began to slip down the other side, a muffled screech off in the driving snow set Wayne's heart to hammering in his throat. It sounded like disaster; but the coasting sledge yanked him forward, clinging to the rear upstanders.

The next instant it swerved sharply to the right, and vanished with a sullen splash into a yawning black lead that had opened just ahead. In a shower of icy spray flung up by the madly fighting dogs, Wayne threw himself violently backward to avoid following them over the slippery edge.

His scalp crawled as he stared stunned and shaking into the quieting water. The snow drove hissing upon its impenetrable surface, empty save for the mock-

ing ripples. Gone—everything. Wiped out between two breaths. The team, tangled in the traces, dragged under by the weight of the loaded sledge.

Suddenly Wayne's jaw set and he leaped to his feet. Perhaps it was not utter catastrophe. What of the two other sledges? Calling the Innuits by name, he raced along the ice edge in the direction of the recent outcry. There was no answer. Only a thunder of disruption and the roar of the gale. Again and again he shouted into the wind, but his voice was hurled back in his teeth.

The water gap had widened. He could not see the ice on the other side at all. On the side where he ran the open lead bent to the left, forcing him that way; and as he followed along the edge, he heard a weird muffled crooning not far ahead. A vague shape loomed through the storm . . .

Apoo, swaying crazily on his knees, shaggy hair whipping from his hood as he stared blankly into space and mouthed the native sorcerer's appeal to the drowned:

"We stretch forth our hands,
To lift thee up.
Come up then from below,
From the hollow place.
Force a way through . . ."

Farther on Kyua crouched, moaning, snow matted thickly in the black locks streaming from his bowed head from which the hood had blown back. He paid no heed when Wayne stood beside him and spoke in the Innuit tongue. Wayne shook him to attention and again shouted the question to which he had already guessed the answer.

"Kyua, hear me! Where are your dogs?"

The Innuit youth peered up at him vaguely, unaware that the streaming tears were freezing on his swarthy cheeks. In stony despair he turned without a word and hid his face in the white hair of his bearskin breeches. Wayne stood humped against the drive of the gale, his gaze fixed upon the almost obliterated sledge track that led to the water's edge and ended. Apoo's monotonous chant ran on:

"We are without food,
Without the fruits of the hunt,
And here we lie down.
Come up then from below . . ."

A terrific, crunching jar knocked all three sprawling. The ice beneath them shivered in rebound, swung lazily and with a slow ponderous finality began to move downwind. On hands and knees Wayne felt the motion and staggered to his feet, pawing the frost thatch from lash and brow. He could see nothing, beyond the length of his extended arm, yet he knew he was cut off from land—adrift.

At that moment death seemed to hover very near. He was stripped to the furs in which he stood, in an uninhabited waste where within the radius of a thousand miles not even the nomad Innuits wandered. Worse, he was afloat on a gale lashed floe without shelter, food, or fire. A stroke of mischance had swept him back untold centuries. At one leap he was in the Stone Age, facing the relentless forces of the Northland armed only with bare hands, his brain and an indomitable will—just another grim jest of the polar sphinx.

And he stood alone. The Innuits, fatalists both, lay where they had fallen. Mere liabilities, Wayne reflected, noting that the salt spray spouting from the floe edge was freezing on their furs. He stooped, secured a grip on each limp arm and dragged them to a safe distance. Wet furs meant a speedy end and he did not intend to die—at least, not yet.

The odds against survival seemed a million to one, yet there was a chance the floe might ground while strength remained and, once ashore, he had resources. Mentally, he tightened his belt. At any rate, he'd not go down without a fight.

IT WAS swift, decisive action alone, that, three days later, enabled John Wayne to snatch the luckless Kyua from the jaws of an icy trap, just before they closed. It happened in this wise:

For more than seventy hours the ice raft with its human freight had smashed through the loosened pack in the grip of the polar current, which set south along the coast. Toward the last the weather had cleared, with forty or fifty degrees of frost. There was no moon, but countless points of white fire pricked the dusk and from the south the aurora shot sinuous whorls of rosy flame against the zenith. In this spectral light the floe rammed the shore ice on a cape, where a giant headland loomed against the stars.

The din of collision was as the birth throes of Creation. Of the floe, chiseled to a fraction of its size, there had remained a solid half acre ten feet thick; a prodigious plow, which sheared into the frozen barrier and heaved it aside like soft mold. A thousand tons of ice whirled high in the twilight. Massive blocks upended and shot into the air, tossed aside like feathers as the vast ice sheet tilted and rode higher, forced slowly onward by the enormous pressure of the pack; while foaming seas, spouting from the jagged pack behind, glittered like gouts of molten silver in the starlight.

The three castaways crouched, stunned, in the center of the lurching floe. The hurtling masses of shattered ice fell short, but as the surface tilted and its slope increased, they shuttled helplessly down the snowy incline, clutching vainly at chance inequalities and projections. The floe came gradually to rest. Wayne and Apoo lodged solidly against a block protruding from an old pressure hummock; but being farther to one side, Kyua missed the block and skidded with a wild howl into a pool of ice choked water below.

Wayne leaned over and saw him braced knee deep on a submerged cake, shrieking for help through chattering teeth as he pawed crazily at the smooth slope above. At the same instant he noted an immense ice pan rising just beyond, levered slowly upward by the advancing pack. He whirled on Apoo and made suggestive motions.

"Grab my feet and when I get him—pull!" he yelled.

Head first, on stomach and elbows, Wayne slipped to the limit of Apoo's reach and, making a long arm, secured a grip upon an outstretched wrist. The ice pan now stood upright, towering overhead. Apoo hauled mightily, jerking him backward up the slope with his burden; and when Apoo seized Kyua's other wrist, the pan swayed toward them toppling in descent. With one frantic heave they yanked the young Innuit into safety—just as the ice mass crashed down, burying the pool, to be shoved grinding onward up the slope . . .

But Wayne was already on the move, scrambling landward along the precarious footing, with the others gibbering at his heels. Into the jumbled nightmare of tilted pans and blocks they plunged in a mad flight for the temporary security of the solid, stable land.

At the base of the cliffs, the Innuits fell spent and gasping on the wind packed drifts; but Wayne prodded them to their feet, ignoring grunts of protest, and urged them on.

An icy wind keened along the shrouded shore bringing a faint rumble of the subsiding pack, which echoed hollowly from the vast wall above. Frost carved, iron stained and fretted with a tracery of white, the cliff soared a thousand feet into the night, alight with diamond dust and crackling rosy banners. Light enough, with the reflection from the snow to make visible the thing Wayne sought: the bands of dull gray, crumbling limestone under its granite cap—a source of flint.

The land looked desolate—dead. But Wayne had learned that behind the stern mask it teemed with life, and that under the frozen exterior every vital essential lay ready to his hand, if they could be found in time. They were haggard, gaunt, weakened by fasting and exposure, but the man's spirit flamed undimmed. To live, he must have fire, food and shelter; and fire first, lest Kyua lose his feet.

It seemed a superhuman task, but his

pinched, frost matted face glowed with an inner satisfaction and content. He herded his sluggish charges along eagerly, slipping and stumbling over mounded hummocks beneath the sheer façade. Kyua moved more and more slowly. When at last he fell Wayne jerked him upright by one furred arm, motioned Apoo to take the other and dragged him on more swiftly.

It was shelter of a sort, toward which he struggled now—and found, in the lee of the great headland. In due course, he had Kyua deposited in a snug cavern free of snow, and roofed by flat tilted blocks of talus fallen from the cliff, wherein the air though cold was very still.

Peeling off Kyua's frozen *kamicks*, Wayne rubbed snow upon one dead white leg and foot until the victim howled with pain, while Apoo performed like service on its mate. When circulation began, he gave Apoo careful instructions, then vanished to be gone some time.

When he returned Wayne reeled upon his feet, but his deep lined face glowed and his blue eyes sparkled with success. Under one arm he carried a huge bundle of dry Arctic moss, dug from beneath the hillside drifts; under the other was a mass of queer, yellowish brown fiber, soft, and fluffy; and in one mittened hand he clutched several fragments of flint and of pyrites from the detritus under the cliff.

He dumped his burdens on the rocky floor and smiled cheerily at his woebegone charges through the dim halflight. Apoo sat with legs spread wide. Kyua lay stretched between them on his back, feet and legs thrust under the front of Apoo's caribou *kulita*.

"Feet all right, Innuit?" Wayne asked, squatting down.

Kyua's olive features twisted in a painful grin.

"*Achu-u?*" he grunted. "Spirit fires—and knives of ghosts."

Wayne chuckled as he lifted the *kulita* and exposed the reddened feet pressed against the bare skin of Apoo's abdomen for warmth. Just then, with a little yelp of excitement, Apoo snatched a wisp of the brownish fiber from the floor. His black eyes fairly snapped.

"*Omingmuk mani* — musk oxen are here!" he crowed.

"*Pi-i-uksoah!*" Kyua marveled, mouth agape.

Well did they know that curly wool underlying the long hair of the shaggy little Arctic cattle, wool that was shed each spring in wide sheets and patches to be blown hither and yon by vagrant winds.

Wayne merely smiled and nodded, already busy.

With a sharp edged flint he scraped a wad of fluff from his undershirt, placed it with great care upon a tiny pile of fine crushed moss and picked up a fragment of the pyritic rock. Holding it close to the lint, he struck it repeated glancing blows. There was a shower of golden sparks. The lint smoldered, glowed. He blew upon it gently and presently a miracle of crackling flame thrust back the frost and gloom. Wayne spread the wet *kamicks* near to dry and fed the flame.

The Innuits bunched close, their drawn faces framed with the long black hair taking on new life. They stared happily into the merry blaze, visioning herds of fat musk oxen pawing through nearby drifts to reach the moss, and licked thick lips in hungry anticipation.

LATER, on a gentle slope behind the cliff where the windblown snow was thin, a herd of ovibos with hair that dragged the ground milled slowly in a bed of exhumed moss beneath the frosty stars.

They were queer, squat creatures, short legged, broad and heavy, with wide, flat curving horns and hairy muffles like a sheep or goat. Some pawed fresh forage with odd shaped hoofs that were hairy underneath, bending short necks to snuffle with content beneath the drifts. Others stood idly chewing on their cud of resinous moss, their frosty breath rising in a thick fog about the low swung, chunky

heads. Some thirty of them, placid and very much at home.

Presently, a bull upon the inner flank raised his massive head with a snort of inquiry, peering through the fringe of hoar frost on his matted forehead at three dark objects creeping up behind. The others paused, gazing, not startled, merely curious. But, when the crawling shapes came closer, they bunched uneasily and moved on down the slope to work back inland. Cut off at once, they climbed the ridge with bovine clumsiness; to be herded then shoreward along the crest, slowly but surely, to the very verge of the great cliff's outer face.

It was then that the half starved castaways leaped into life.

With shrill excited yelps and wildly waving arms, they rushed in from three sides upon the frightened little beasts that crowded close with snorts of fear, jostling, trampling each other in a mad struggle to escape the unknown menace that shoved a dozen bawling from the rim. The rest streamed back upon both flanks unnoted and, unpursued, stampeded crazily into the night. The triumphant hunters, buoyed by success and avid in their need, staggered down to the shore.

Arriving on the steel hard beach, each with a sharp flint gripped in readiness, the ravenous trio found the trophies lying crushed and still. Three pairs of eager hands heaved the nearest upon its back, slashed through the tender belly skin and opened a cavity that filled quickly with rich, hot, steaming blood—life giving food. With cupped hands shaking, they scooped it up and drank.

Wayne said, at last:

"Stop. No more, now. We'll be ill."

Apoo paused, reluctant, panting, with scarlet icicles already tinkling on mouth and hood. But Kyua delved more deeply in the steamy mass, with gory hands groping, hacking; and, kneeling so, began to stuff his greedy mouth with great handfuls of the Innuit dainty—the contents of the paunch.

Wayne twisted red fingers in the folds of the youth's hood and jerked him sprawling. Kyua, on his back, stared up amazed; then scrambled to his *kamicked* feet and laughed aloud.

"Wait, Innuit," Wayne admonished, smiling through the dusk. "We are men, not dogs. First, before they freeze, we take off all the hides for beds. We must have sleep. When that is done, eat all the tender fat you want, and meat."

Hours afterward, well rested and replete, Wayne spoke his mind freely and at length: Of using the thin, flat shoulder blades as snow knives, to construct an igloo floored deep with skins; of hunting soapstone to make stone lamps, fueled with blubber and wicked with moss, for light and heat. Seals must be killed for hides, perhaps a walrus, gulls also, and later, eider ducks. Salmon must be caught, or speared, eggs gathered as the spring advanced, and white hares snared.

"It needs time," he said, "to get and cure skins for new *kamicks* and a summer tent; to fashion spears and harpoons of bone with heads of flint; to make the rawhide lines, bird darts, rabbit snares, fishlines and ivory lures, a bow-drill shod with flint; and, the most important thing, a *kayak* large enough for three.

"And so," he pointed out, "you will not see your igloos and *koonas*, Innuits, until the sun comes back, has bedded in the south again, and once more shows his face."

The Innuits, nestled in the heap of shaggy hides thick wooled and elastic though frozen hard, stared long and silently into the flickering flame of the moss fire. The quick tears came as they pondered the stunning news.

Wayne watched them, with a mixture of amused affection and stern inflexibility. Children. Sunlight and shadow. Irresponsible, yet loyal in their fashion. Happy with so very little. He sighed, and patted the flat bulk in a pocket of the wool suit beneath his furs—his journal of the work. At least, he'd saved the proofs.

Then Apoo nodded, dumbly, accepting fate; but Kyua, with a furtive side glance, ventured a protest.

"But, why, Waynaksoah?" he questioned humbly. "Why not pack much meat upon our backs and walk? Omingmuk are plenty everywhere."

"Then how—" Wayne smiled—"can we cross the open water of the sound, when we arrive? For that we build the *kayak*, understand? And time is short for all we have to do. So now—to work . . ."

* * *

The year passed. At last, before a balmy summer wind, with the midnight sun gilding the hovering ice cap and beckoning, the three adventures came paddling in on placid, ice free waters to make their landfall on the longed for Greenland shore.

The dun home *tupics* spied them out and emptied to a man; a howling, skin clad throng, who raced to welcome those long mourned as lost. But they eyed the queer approaching craft in growing wonder. An open *kayak*, twenty feet in length, and heaped with a full equipment!

Its occupants leaped nimbly to the beach, hardy and fit, with rounded, ruddy cheeks and sparkling eyes. Wayne stretched both hands in greeting with a quiet smile. Behind him Apoo and Kyua strutted, swelled with pride, tasting the greatest moment of their youthful lives, and rolled their jetty eyes at Waynaksoah in reverence and awe.

But when they told the tale to eager ears, they boasted he was their familiar friend. All powerful he was, yet called them brother. A mighty wizard, to whom demons of land and sea bowed down; a very god, whose commanding hand could conjure life itself from barren polar snows. The proof? Behold them—risen from the dead!

TRAVELING WITH AN APPETITE

By KELSEY KITCHEL

NO DOUBT many good souls are blessed, as I am, with a missionary cousin who, when living in foreign parts, declines to eat anything that he cannot open himself—and therefore subsists on eggs, oranges, canned beans and soda water. Such sanitary craftsmanship is perhaps commendable, but is it amusing? As the gentleman from Texas says: "Not hardly!" At least to the consumer. If one has an optimistic tummy and an inquiring mind one may extract limitless joy from culinary explorations, which have nothing in the world to do with gluttony and gormandizing. Tucking a napkin across a waistcoat and settling down to chicken à la King and a bottle of Pol Roget does not give you the keys to a foreign city's kitchen.

But if you enter a prickly pear surrounded adobe inn in Mexico, and sit on a greasy bench in a smoke dimmed room

while you investigate the thrills lurking in a dish of boiled cow's eyeballs, you will be traveling with an appetite. Said appetite may vanish before you sample those staring globules—but at least you have seen something of the World's Table without the necessity of joining the Marines to do it. Hasty tourists talk a lot about *tamales* across the Border, but a Mexican eats tamales about as often as you eat ham sandwiches. Is there a reader of these emotional words who has lived in Mexico and tasted *mole?* Let him come forward and embrace me as a brother. Talk about ambrosia! Inez, the cook, will tell you that there are at least fifty ingredients in this sublime stew of turkey or fowl. The sauce is the thing. It begins with powdered chocolate and red peppers and ends with the fifty oddments including thyme, sesame and other Biblical condiments. Man! If you haven't eaten turkey *mole* you haven't begun to know your Mexico.

Most of us have idled in the West Indies bringing home with us a memory tinged with Bacardí and fish. Go to! A million black faced Caribbean cooks are preparing daily an Olympian dessert made of stewed guavas adorned with cream brewed from fresh coconut milk. This is a dish that surpasses all dreams of gluttony, and makes us forget fish and Bacardí.

AGES ago sybaritic Roman emperors caused the delectable sea urchin to be wrenched from its bed in the sea; the yellow, tongue shaped insides were served raw with a dash of lemon juice, or else were cooked with eggs. The emperors have been gathered to their fathers but the sea urchin is still served at Latin tables in the good old way. If you go to Chile for that winter cruise you have been contemplating, you will find *erizas* served at the best hotels. Yes, they are the interior decorations of the classic sea urchin, and they are cooked in an omelet or else served raw, with limes. But watch your step! The raw segments are arranged in a flower shaped circle on the plate, with the lime triangles in the center. And you will notice small grayish objects creeping among these imitation petals.

"What are those?" you ask your host.

"*Eriza* crabs. You eat 'em!" he replies, bolting his.

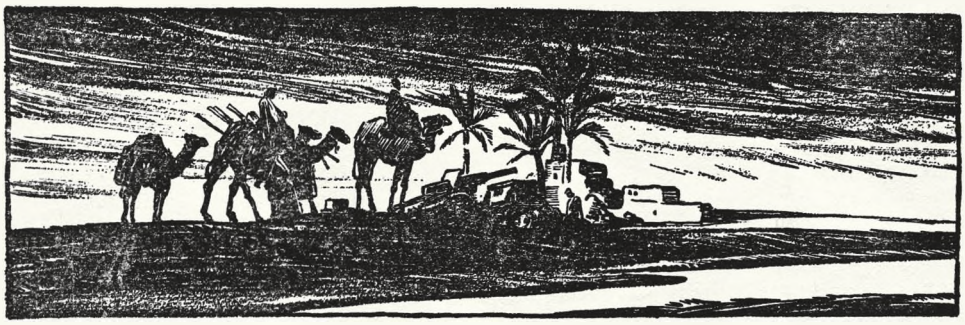
"Not alive!" you gasp.

"Rather! Alive and kicking; and you let 'em tickle all the way down!"

In the Peruvian interior you will find an ancient dish that is served only to the elect; it is stone soup. The broth is prepared the day before; then all available vegetables, including corn, peppers, tomatoes and parsley, are diced. The housewife has in her possession an heirloom consisting of a set of water rounded stones about as big as an egg; these are made red hot; the broth is put into the tureen with the raw vegetables, and then the hot stones are dropped in one by one. You sit at the dining table in rapt awe watching the process. When the broth ceases to boil, the soup is considered to be a finished product, and the hostess serves a liberal portion to each guest, dropping a hot stone into your plate as a special treat. You refrain from eating the stone because it would break the set. You ignore the fact that the vegetables are semi-raw as you meditate on the fact that the stone soup recipe has been handed down from mother to daughter from a time long antedating the conquest of Peru.

In the secret fastnesses of Bolivia you find the famous *picante*—a delicious stew of meat or fowl soaked in *terra cotta* colored sauce which is so peppery that it paralyzes your palate for the ensuing week. This, too, is quite an ancient recipe.

One's engineer friends dwelling in the mountains complain bitterly that they cannot keep pet kittens at the mines because the Bolivian laborers are so inordinately fond of kitten *picante*. I never tried it myself—at least so far as I am aware. Even an optimistic consumer of foreign food must draw the line somewhere.



KING *of the* WORLD

By TALBOT MUNDY

THERE were three of us in the prefect of Marseilles' police office who heard Meldrum Strange name the man whose ambition led to the exploding of the French cruiser in the harbor that morning. And, forthwith, we were all of us precipitated into the most incredible plot against civilization since Satan fell from the grace of God!

James Schuyler Grim—a soldier of fortune known throughout the length and breadth of the world as Jimgrim—was quietly unmoved; Jeff Ramsden, that volcano of a man always with Grim, looked bored; but Strange, with as many millions as I, Major Robert Crosby, have dollars, was as agitated as myself.

"And this man you name—Dorje?" prompted Grim.

"A half mad inventive genius who plans to be King of the World!"

There was no doubting the existence of such a creature when, a moment later I was mistaken for Grim by a beautifully gowned woman who, without preliminary, launched into torrential speech:

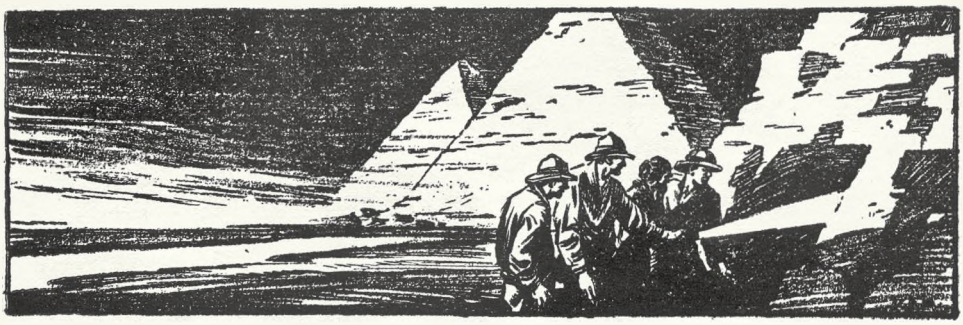
"I am the Princess Baltis, Jeemgreem. We have always been together in past incarnations, and you must come to me! Solomon is coming to be King of the World—and his name is Dorje!"

Things moved rapidly thereafter. At the loss of the prefect's office we learned that Dorje's invention—a harmless looking brass tube—was an energy converter that became active near any free electric current, detonating all explosives within such an area as to prove to us the uselessness of modern arms against it. Then it was that Grim spoke.

"I'll take this case."

We proceeded immediately to Baltis' apartment. The woman was so cunningly ambiguous in her admissions that even Grim was unable to pin her down to a statement of her side in the issue before the world. Finally, after we learned that Dorje's whereabouts were last thought to be in the East, Grim, by a masterly simulation of trust, got Baltis' promise to join him in Cairo—to be brought into the presence of this would-be world conqueror.

In Cairo we found, one by one, Grim's companions in adventure gathering. Major McGowan of the British army; Chullunder Ghose, the elephantine *babu* who veiled in fountains of extravagant speech the wisdom of genius. Ghose had even indulged in a little preliminary espionage and was able to report to Grim that Baltis, who had already arrived, had contacted



Part Three of a Novel of Jimgrim and Jeff Ramsden

one Tassim Bey, known to be an agent of Dorje. Grim momentarily confounded Baltis by passing the information along to her—and telling her that Tassim was already taken.

Leaving the others with Baltis, I followed McGowan to a hospital. "A woman," he explained, "horribly burned. Dorje agent, suspect. One of those damned tubes . . ."

I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the victim—Baltis' twin! She was dying.

"Baltis—the liar, slut! Says she is Queen of Sheba—I am! If you can reach Karachi, Dorje will come to me! . . ."

McGowan was sober as we went out.

"To me," he said, "it begins to look as if those two women have been dealing with different men—and neither knew it!"

"WE SEE Grim first?"

"Right you are. Grim sees Tassim."

However, Grim thought otherwise, and at that we had to spend two hours looking for him, in a city that was more like Dante's hell than Cairo. Plundering was already beginning, and there were outbreaks of fire in a dozen different directions—obviously incendiary fires, because Cairo is not a city that burns readily.

We found Grim at the high commissioner's residence, where Chullunder Ghose was enjoying an argument under the portico; he had got the goat of one of those rather old fashioned British subalterns who still believe that hauteur is the correct attitude toward inferior races, and the subaltern's neck was beet root color. Grim, still dressed as an Arab and indistinguishable from one, came out and told us Jeff had recognized a man who might be important and had gone after him. Before we had finished telling him our story Jeff brought in his victim, an enormous man, who looked like a Dervish and who appeared to have made the egregious mistake of offering resistance; Jeff was holding him by one arm, but the arm seemed painful. They were both of them smothered in dust. Jeff grinned, as is usual when he has had, or expects to have, a genuine chance to use his muscles:

"Had to carry him part of the way, but he's good now."

He led his man straight in to the high commissioner, which was, to say the least of it, an unusual proceeding. Grim said to me:

"Will you go with Chullunder Ghose? Turn Tassim inside out."

He asked McGowan to keep out of Tassim's sight, and me to play up to the *babu:* "Because a mistake might make Tassim tell specious lies that would confuse us more than ever." Then he talked to the *babu* alone for about two minutes before hurrying into the house to interview Jeff's prisoner.

So the *babu,* McGowan and I got into McGowan's car and drove half across Cairo again, to a place where prisoners can be kept for a day or so without the publicity that might be caused by putting them in the regular jail. It looks not in the least like a prison; it stands in the midst of a garden and thousands pass it daily without suspecting its real purpose. The entrance to it is through a deserted looking building used by the police for storing all sorts of odds and ends, and along a path between stone walls that are hidden by trees and shrubbery.

We were admitted by a one armed Sudanese who wore five or six medal ribbons on a non-military smock that looked as if it had been taken from the lost-and-found rubbish bin and then washed threadbare. He saluted McGowan, then grinned like a gargoyle and relaxed into an attitude of deferent familiarity. McGowan remained in the passage with him, but Chullunder Ghose and I were led by another Sudanese to the door of a small room facing on an even smaller inner courtyard. He opened the door and locked us in.

Tassim Bey stood up to greet us. He had been seated on a trestle cot, there being nothing else in the room, except the floor, on which he could sit. The cot was beneath the only window, which was iron barred and devoid of glass. There were no windows in the other three walls of the courtyard, and only one small door that looked as if it had been locked for half a century or so; there was a short flagged path leading from that door to a well, above which a rusty iron wheel was still hanging from a wooden beam.

TASSIM BEY looked to me like a typical upper class modern Egyptian of the semi-political, traveled, alert, intellectual type. As he stood up he polished his finger nails on the cuff of his smartly cut jacket. He had bored eyes with a slightly simian expression caused by their being set too close together and by their perpetual search for something in which there might be something good for Tassim. Lean, but with a tendency to stomach. Stooped, but with an air of stooping merely because it was the distinguished attitude. Rather pale faced, only slightly olive colored. A nose like Abdul Hamid's, probably betraying a trace of Armenian ancestry. No caged monkey ever looked more suspicious or determined to avoid compromising himself.

But, on the other hand, no *babu* ever looked more sympathetic than Chullunder Ghose.

"This *babu* makes obeisance. May your Honor very soon have vengeance on your enemies. That is my humble prayer."

"I don't know you," remarked Tassim.

"Naturally not. Also, in said sad circs your Honor's icy incredulity is highest form of hot-from-pot good judgment. I admire same. Never mind me. Doubt me all you like—until I tell you."

"Who is listening?" asked Tassim.

"No one—except this man." A bit scornfully the *babu* jerked his head in my direction.

"Who is outside the door?"

"No one, on my honor. If I could open same, would prove it to you. But let us speak in low tones."

Tassim sat down, with his hands on his knees.

"I have nothing to say to any one except this: I am unlawfully imprisoned."

"Sahib, same here," said the *babu.* "This man and my most respectful self are prisoners as much as you are—held without warrant on charges so unprovable that same are secret."

"You mean you are both prisoners along with me?"

"*Verb sap.*"

"And you don't know why you are imprisoned?"

"Oh, yes. Why is one thing. Justice is another. It being essential that your Honor should escape, this *babu* was ordered to effect same."

"Ordered by whom?"

"Now, by Jiminy, I don't know. Am too lately from Karachi, having come as supercargo on *dhow* running cargo of contraband. Your Honor doubtless will perpermit me not to enter into details—must not speak too plainly in front of this person; venial very, and to a certain extent one of us, but only partially trusted because we have goods on him. Get me? Nod is good as wink to blind horse."

"Man or woman?" Tassim asked him.

The *babu* hesitated, glancing at me as if doubting the wisdom of answering that in my presence. But I think he was looking to see how I reacted to his description of me as a venial person.

"Man or woman?" Tassim repeated, and the *babu* still appeared to hesitate.

"I understand you perfectly," he answered. "It is, however, forbidden to repeat countersign in this person's presence. Nevertheless, there are two women, if you are asking for information."

"Damn!" said Tassim. "Do you speak Arabic?"

"Unfortunately, no. Am very ignorant *babu.*"

He talks Arabic better than I do, but such men as Tassim, loathing all things English except money, speak the English language spitefully, which is to say indiscreetly.

"Two women?" said Tassim, lowering his eyelids.

"Both named Baltis."

"And both of them ordered you to effect my escape?"

"May I sit down?" asked the *babu.*

HE GAINED almost a minute by dragging a mat from in front of the door and arranging it so that he could sit down facing Tassim. Evidently the pace was too fast even for him; he was inventing lies at random, his favorite amusement.

"My God, no," he answered at last, looking blandly up into Tassim's face. "Two women—same age, same name—just as much alike as two fleas in an ear. One says one thing, one the opposite. One says learn from Tassim Bey where to deliver the contraband, then kill him to keep his mouth shut and here are pounds Egyptian fifty. See them." He dived into an inner pocket and produced the paper money, flourishing it in Tassim's face. "Said the other release Tassim, he is necessary to me. Might as well tell me to build new pyramid without straw. But there you are; she said it. Fortunately, *he* said otherwise, or this bewildered *babu* might have relapsed into state of oh-my-Godishness, no use whatever."

"He? Who?" asked Tassim.

"Lord high-halleluiah headman; and you know who that is, so don't ask me. Trouble is that this *babu* delivered contraband from Karachi as per orders. But now where is it? Nobody knows except Tassim Bey, who is in hands of hated English, who also don't know whereabouts of said stuff, but who intend to torture Tassim until he tells."

"Bah! They would never dare," said Tassim. But he did not look as if he believed his own words.

Men given to inventing atrocity stories end by convincing themselves if no one else. He had turned a shade paler.

"Baa-baa black sheep! Same is kid stuff, proving nothing. Why are you in this place and not in jail?" Chullunder Ghose retorted. "British, scared stiff, mean to find that contraband. Pragmatically minded secret service experts, reasoning with candor logical in said circs, argue what are agonies of one man compared to destruction of Cairo and all explosives belonging to British army of occupation including air force? Can be managed secretly and Tassim, if too seriously injured or if uncommunicative, can be dropped down disused well in courtyard and covered with stones. There is courtyard. There is well—through window. Obvious."

"How do you know this?" Tassim asked him.

"Person name of Baltis overheard same. Heard Jimgrim say it. Have you heard of Jimgrim?"

"No. Who is he?"

"Swine, devil! U.S.A. American in pay of British and in love with Baltis, who is making big fool of him. She will stick him in gizzard doubtless, or let us hope so. However, *he* said—and I need not say who *he* is—Tassim deserves fate of rat in trap for daring to get caught. Something in that, too, come to think of it. Nevertheless, important point is present whereabouts of said contraband, known to Tassim only."

"Why to me only?"

"Because certain idiots went and killed themselves by making an experiment. It is true, they blew up air force gas tank, many other people and an ammunition wagon. But of what use is that, since no one now knows where remainder of cache is hidden? Therefore, *he* said, making use of Solomon-like logic, go to Tassim and let him tell you whereabouts of cache with absolute exactness. *If* Tassim tells you, good. If not, not good—at least for Tassim, whom the police will torture crudely but efficaciously. Nevertheless if he tells you, and word reaches me, he will not be tortured—because the cache will be in my hands and the British will very soon know it—very soon, very soon indeed they will know it. And not even the British torture people when there is nothing to be gained by it. But furthermore, said *he*, if Tassim tells you, then I will rescue him before the night is over, although I will never forgive him for having been caught. Henceforward Tassim may consider himself dropped and utterly unknown to any of us."

"Oh, thank God!" said Tassim.

Tassim, hardly realizing what he did, had confessed himself utterly sick of intrigue, but he was not yet unsuspicious of the *babu*, who understood that perfectly.

"If you are a prisoner, how are you to get word to him?" he demanded suddenly. "And how do you come to be a prisoner—you and that man?"

Chullunder Ghose assumed his blandest air of impudence.

"AM AUTOMATIC penny-in-slot astrolger; oh, yes! Can answer all questions on all subjects. But one at a time. And we have so much time to waste before the police bring in their whips and little bits of wire and God knows what else. However, I will tell you since you are curious. This *babu* is not unknown to notoriety as expert prestidigitator, if you know what that is." Chullunder Ghose kicked off a slipper and began his favorite trick of catching his handkerchief between his toes. "Am also expert opportunist. This man—" with a gesture of contempt he indicated me— "is malpractitioner of disrepute but some skill. Lost his ticket. Got caught selling opium to undergraduates at college where he was teaching how to perform Cæsarian operation. Hard up—betted, gambled—lost, of course and, presently, wrote some one's name on back of note. So you see how he got into our hands. And he can pull teeth very expertly, so I brought him along because I happened to know that Sudanese ex-sergeant-major without pension who guards this place has painful abscess. So—you get that?"

Tassim nodded. He seemed to be trying to remember whether or not the Sudanese had toothache. Chullunder Ghose continued, giving his imagination full rein now that he saw Tassim really weakening:

"Sudanese at gate was uncommunicative about everything except his bad tooth. Told him this man is debtor to me, who am exasperated creditor and will oblige him, for sake of humiliation, to pull tooth *gratis*. So he admits us inside gate. Am prestidigitator as aforesaid. While disgusting operation takes place, key of this prison discovers itself as if by accident in my hand. Easy. Open door and walk in. However, along comes British officer in uniform who bangs at outer gate. Strict orders—very strict orders to

admit no one, you being what is known as incommunicado. What shall Sudanese do? Damn poor devil without pension, drawing miserly pay from secret service fund, likely to lose job sees starvation staring at him, naturally, pushes him and me in here and returns to talk with officer, excusing delay on ground of accident to mouth and spitting blood in proof of same. So you see how we got here. We will get out by being let out, after officer is gone—and also, doubtless, after being searched by Sudanese who will appropriate my pounds Egyptian fifty, which is why I said there is no justice when I first entered. Having got out, I will tell *him* very extra damn quick just where contraband is hidden. Then, before midnight, or not much later than that, you also will find yourself out of this place. So make haste before the Sudanese comes. Tell me where the stuff is."

Tassim Bey took his heart in his hands and told abruptly, in the same sort of way that a scared man takes a header into ice cold water.

"In the new tomb east-southeast of Gizeh—the last one opened, in which nothing was found."

"Very well," said the *babu*. "And the other Baltis woman—what about her? Why did you not meet her in the garden of your deserted villa?"

"I was afraid of her," said Tassim. "She looked too much like the other woman. It was uncanny. It made me creepy. But I did go to the garden, because I was afraid not to. And in the dark she looked so like the other woman that—well, I remembered that the electricity never had been disconnected at the main switch, which is in the gate house. So I turned it on. And she screamed. A fuse blew and I saw her drop something that was white-hot."

"Yes, and—?"

"That is all. I went away."

"You let her lie there?"

"I did not know she was lying there. How should I know it. I could see nothing. My eyes were dazzled, and it was dark. I tell you I saw nothing."

"When did you go to Brown's Hotel?"

"This morning."

"Did you tell the other Baltis?"

"No. I tell you, I saw nothing. What was there to tell?"

Chullunder Ghose got to his feet. He bowed to me.

"Let us go, sahib. Am eloquent and unscrupulous person, but words fail me. Kindly kick that door—make much noise—my own slippers are ineffectual. Be good enough to summon keeper swiftly before I forget my immorality and slay this reptile. Did you hear him? He admitted it! He left her lying there."

As the door opened and we passed out he turned and hurled a Parthian shot at Tassim, who sat goggle eyed, hardly even yet realizing how completely he had been tricked.

"You are not even a mean white. You are not even mean. You are a maggot. May you reincarnate in the belly of a leprous jackal, which is to say, in English, damn your dirty soul to hell!"

CHAPTER XII

"Delphic-oracally minded babu spilling non-committal verb sap."

EVENTS moved so swiftly after that, that it is difficult to recall them in their proper order. The army's precipitate fight from the scene had been strategic. As we threaded our way across Cairo again to find Grim, detachments were reentering the city from several directions; some one had taken the responsibility of letting the men have rifle ammunition and we saw one volley fired over the heads of a mob that immediately took to its heels, and I think that was the only volley fired that afternoon.

We found Grim at the high commissioner's in a big bay windowed room where sunlight formed a golden pool on the enormous Turkey carpet.

The high commissioner was not there, but his secretary was, and so was the legal member of his council. There were also three Egyptian officials of high rank

and a British brigadier-general who was trying to disguise dislike for Grim under an air of politely professional incredulity. As we were ushered into the room I heard him say:

"It's a mare's nest. In the first place we haven't a scrap of proof that these infernal machines actually exist. There's nothing easier than to make even experienced men think they see what they don't see. Dorje? Another chimera—probably invented by that Baltis woman—as imaginary as her own title of princess. A discredited French spy—sent here for us to prosecute and save the French the inconvenience and scandal. I object to doing France's dirty work. I say, send her back to France and let's try using common sense for a change."

GRIM was not listening to him; he and Chullunder Ghose were carrying on a conversation *sotto voce*, probably in Pushtu. The brigadier suddenly grew aware of that and lost his temper.

"If there's a dump of these mysterious gadgets anywhere in Egypt, show me!" he exploded. "I'll give you two days. After that, Major Grim, you may rely on my determined opposition to your methods. I shall object, among other things, to our employing aliens who are not subject to our orders or, for that matter, to our discipline."

"You've given me a good idea," said Grim. He got up, bowed and took his leave. He hardly glanced at McGowan as he led the way out, but McGowan followed us into the hall.

"Can Baltis be forced to return to France?" asked Grim.

"Not if she pays her own fare. But that brigadier can send an official cable to wherever she does go and she'll be held up at the port of entry."

"I have heard of cablegrams that never reached their destination," said Grim. And McGowan nodded. "Deport her. See that she goes anywhere she pleases. Now—do you know some one who would lend us one of those army searchlights on a truck? We'll find that dump tonight, and you take credit for it, to oblige me. There's nothing worse, on a job like mine, than stirring jealousy. It's bad stuff. Meanwhile, if you want me I'll be at Brown's Hotel. Sorry to seem to use you as an errand boy, but I would do the same for you—I think you know that."

"Jimmy," said McGowan, "don't I know it! You're beyond my depth, though."

Grim hates explanations. However, he knew he owed one to McGowan.

"We must find Dorje. She probably knows where he is. She doesn't dare to return to France. I'm going to give her such a dose of emotions this afternoon that she'll go to him as straight as she can make it. I want her deported, but with leave to go wherever she likes, provided only that she hates me."

"Have a care, man. She'll get you."

Grim grinned. Jeff and I were equally bewildered, I believe, by his tactics. The only one of us who really understood what Grim was driving at was our *babu*.

GRIM must have told Chullunder Ghose that he would like Jeff's prisoner released. Obviously, to have asked that brigadier to release the man would have produced the exactly opposite effect, since he was so jealous of Grim that he would go to almost any limit in order to create difficulties. McGowan was helpless, in that instance, because the brigadier was his senior and might invoke the rules of discipline. But neither discipline, nor seniority, nor red tape were of the slightest use against the audacity of Chullunder Ghose.

It appeared that the prisoner—Mahdi Aububah by name, a Somali of sorts—had been turned over to the red faced subaltern for safe keeping pending a decision as to what should be done with him. As we passed out to the portico that subaltern approached us, evidently hell-bent on another altercation with Chullunder Ghose; he had probably thought up lots of

things that he might have said on the first occasion, and perhaps of something that he might have done.

He was haughty, hot tempered and ignorant of the fact that Grim was not an Arab; and he made the crass mistake of thinking Chullunder Ghose an obese, unwar-like person suitably to be admonished with a kick. Personally I would rather take my chance of kicking a champion wrestler, who might be all beef and no brains.

Grim, as a non-Egyptian Arab, might be expected to get out of the way of a British officer in uniform. At any rate, that youngster expected him to. There was a collision in which the subaltern had the worst of it, although Grim was polite in fastidious Arabic which the subaltern did not understand. Chullunder Ghose, noisily chatting to me about nothing as an excuse for not looking where he was going, bumped into the subaltern, who lost his balance and fell backward into a flower bed. Chullunder Ghose did not apologize. The subaltern got up and kicked him. Grim was just in time, with a word in Arabic, to prevent Jeff Ramsden from interfering, and Jeff's outthrust arm stopped me.

Chullunder Ghose, who is nothing if not a surprising person, slapped the subaltern, suddenly, noisily, shamefully, straight in the face; and all the inflammable indignation of about a dozen generations of English squires, now concentrated into one young, peppery descendant, burst into action.

"Did you see that! By heaven—he hit me!"

The second kick missed. Chullunder Ghose—portly, enormous, ridiculous, but remarkably swift in short spurts, as an elephant is or a hippopotamus—took to his heels with the subaltern after him. With a judgment of speed worthy of a race course jockey he timed his spurts so as to keep the subaltern exasperated but encouraged. And instead of making for the main gate he elected to follow a path between shrubbery and flower beds toward a building that looked like a garage.

At one end of it four Egyptian soldiers stood on guard before a door that seemed to have been left partly open for ventilation, since the room into which it gave had no windows. The subaltern shouted to the four soldiers to stop the *babu*. They hesitated and then ran toward him. One of them tripped him by shoving a rifle butt between his legs, and all of them, *babu* included, went down in one whale of a rough house.

Gardeners, servants, chauffeurs, grooms —all sorts of people came on the run from everywhere, but kept their distance when they saw the subaltern in charge of operations. And behind the screen that they formed, Mahdi Aububah, Jeff's erstwhile prisoner, slipped through the partly opened cell door and rather casually trotted through an open gate to the highway and freedom. I don't know whether or not Chullunder Ghose had shouted to him, but I think not: I believe the man had been watching his chance and took advantage of it when it came.

That subaltern was almost precious as a maker of mistakes. Jeff Ramsden, who can outsprint me by almost two to one, was in time to prevent him from trying to thrash Chullunder Ghose with a stick that he snatched from a gardener. He almost struck Jeff, he was so beside himself with anger. But Jeff's deep voice and quiet manner had a somewhat soothing effect.

"Dammit, he hit me in the face—didn't you see him? I'll have him—"

"No, no, no," said Jeff. "Too many witnesses. Look to your prisoner. He's gone. You'd better catch him."

THE REST was merely pitiable. The youngster tried to save his face by abusing the Egyptian soldiers in astonishingly bad Arabic, and two or three minutes were lost while they talked back to him. By the time he had come to his senses and hurried them off in pursuit of the prisoner there was no longer a chance in a thousand of overtaking him, and not one in a hundred even of learning which way he had gone. Chullunder Ghose, limping and

rubbing his chin, returned along the path toward where Grim was standing. Jeff turned to me.

"Tell Grim I'll join you at the hotel. I'll overtake that young fool and see if I can't save the day for him. He doesn't deserve it, but if I don't he'll make trouble for us. He'll get court-martialed, and he'll accuse the *babu*. We'll get called as witnesses. No percentage in that. I'll tell him Mahdi Aububah had not been legally arrested—no warrant, not even a verbal order—so he can't be court-martialed for letting him escape. He probably can be; but if he thinks I'm a possible friendly witness he'll think twice before he sticks a spoke in our wheel."

Grim had not budged from where he stood observing the whole episode. He made no remark, either to me or to the *babu*, when we got into the car that McGowan had left for us, and he was silent all the way to the hotel, which he entered by a back way as if he were one of the hotel servants. He said nothing whatever for nearly an hour as we sat in Jeff's room with the door ajar while Chullunder Ghose rubbed salve on his injured shin and pitied himself because neither of us took any notice of him.

CHAPTER XIII

"*Does Jeemgreem—does he do that to me?*"

AT LAST Grim glanced at me. "Do you mind getting the princess? No hurry, if she's in a mood for confidences, but don't try to get her to talk. She may spill beans, if you can make her think you're sore at me."

The princess herself opened the apartment door, and as she had a low opinion of my intelligence amounting almost to contempt she made a rather bad beginning.

"Ah," she said, "you notice, don't you, that my trunk is missing? What does that mean?"

I answered:

"I don't know, unless it was true that McGowan's men went through it. I have come to say goodby. I'm off home."

"You, too? You are disgusted? Come, sit down and tell me." Then, suddenly, as I sat beside her on a comfortable lounge, "Of course, Jeemgreem sent you to extr-r-act my se-crets?"

"No," I answered. I began to get the hang of the situation, so I lied as wildly as Chullunder Ghose. "The truth is, he wanted me to come and pump you, but I'm fed up. I'm not constituted so that I can keep on mentally torturing a woman. I would have had you guillotined, hanged, imprisoned—whatever is coming to you. Grim won't do that."

"Tell me, why not?"

"He doesn't tell anybody why or why not. That's my quarrel with him."

"Then you don't know what all this means?"

"All what?"

"So many things. They take away my trunk. If they have opened it, they have found three of those—those *things;* you know what I mean. Will Jeemgreem—will that man McGowan—hand me over to the police, or to the military? There is martial law, is there not?"

"Yes," I said, "there's martial law. I daresay they could take you out and shoot you, after a secret trial in which you wouldn't have a dog's chance. Such things happen. But I think McGowan took the trunk in order to prevent that. As long as he hides the evidence, they can't convict you."

"Then what does this mean? There is a brigadier-general who has just sent word I am to be deported."

I said:

"It looks as if you will be leaving the country. Pretty soon, too. Military deportations are about as swift as telegrams."

"Does Jeemgreem—does *he* do that to me?"

I nodded.

"Do you agree with it?"

"I was not consulted."

"Do you understand that he is throwing away pr-riceless assistance? That he is acting dishonorably? Let him think—let him say what he likes of me—he struck a

bargain, did he not? He snatched me away from my environment, at a time when I could easily protect myself. Now will he send me back there, to be at the mercy of men who have had time to cover up their guilt, of which I then had knowledge? Am I to return discredited? I tell you I will sooner kill—myself."

I think she intended to say she would sooner kill Grim, but changed it. Perhaps I betrayed what I thought. At any rate, she produced a small phial of cyanide capsules, taking good care not to let me get hold of it.

"You will let him do this wrong thing?" she demanded. "Do you hate him?"

"I can't prevent him," I answered.

"Where is he? Do you know where he is? Then come with me to him and help me to persuade him. Do that, and I will always be your friend—always, whatever happens."

I fell in with the suggestion, but not too eagerly, lest she should suspect that was just what I wanted. She rushed into her bedroom, put on lip rouge, rearranged her hair and changed into a yellow frock as quickly as an actress touching up between cues.

"Now we are friends," she said, "you and I. We help each other. You shall learn what a friend I can be."

She took my arm and we walked along the corridor together, her perfume hinting what her eyes and lips left unsaid.

"If you have offended Jeemgreem, I will help you to be friends with him again —yes?"

GRIM greeted us quite casually, although Jeff seemed nervous, as if they had been discussing a plan that Jeff thought too far fetched. The smile on the face of the *babu* confirmed that impression; he loves sheer madness; I believe his heaven will be a place where fat adventurers can skate for all eternity on thin ice.

"Jeemgreem—" she began; but Grim interrupted her.

"Have you a turban? Green, yellow, red—it hardly matters. Thirty or forty yards of narrow silk would be about right. Can you? Would you mind bringing it?"

I supposed he was making an opportunity to speak to me, so as soon as she left the room I began to tell him what had happened. However, I had guessed wrong.

"Afterward," he said, "if you don't mind. She might come back too soon and overhear."

Not one of us spoke again until she returned with a whole piece of purple Lyons silk. She was gone three or four minutes and during all that time Grim studied his own face in Jeff's shaving mirror. When she came in and gave him the silk he passed it to Chullunder Ghose.

"You do it. Shall I sit here?"

The *babu* stood behind the chair and began binding the turban on Grim's head.

"Jeemgreem—what means this deportation order?"

"What do you think it means?" he answered.

"You get rid of me?"

"You are no use—as the Princess Sitlab."

"Is that a kind way—a proper way—a wise way to dispose of me?"

"I can't think of a better. Can you?"

His coolness seemed to disconcert her even more than the dread of deportation did. The *babu*, with a face like a Sphynx, went on twisting away at the turban, arranging each fold with exact precision; and Grim's face seemed to change into some other man's as he sat there staring at it in the shaving mirror.

"Jeemgreem, I will rather die than go to France."

"You may have to."

"What do you mean? I do not understand you."

"None of us understands the situation yet," he answered.

Then McGowan came in, in uniform, sweating and wiping his face on a dripping wet silk handkerchief. But under cover of the handkerchief I saw him pass a note to Jeff, who gave it to Chullunder Ghose, who slipped it into Grim's pocket.

"Hotter than hell," he remarked. "Good evening, Princess. Well, it's all right. Tassim had a French governess for his latest lady love. She's decidedly out of a job, and she hasn't been paid for so long that she's flat broke. Anything to get home to France. A free third-class passage looks to her like a gift from Providence. I'm giving her your trunk, Princess—that big one that we filched from your apartment; saved trouble; it has your name on it. She'll keep the underwear—the poor girl needs it. Soon as the deportation order comes my men will put her on the train and lock her in; one man will go with her to Port Said, where we have a berth all ready for her on a French boat, which waits for the train and leaves directly afterwards. She can tell her own tale to the French authorities. The brigadier—"

"To hell with him," said Grim. "He'll be too late whatever he does."

The princess—bright eyed, not exactly trembling, but vibrant with sudden excitement—stared at McGowan, then at Grim.

"Jeemgreem—what do I do?"

"Change your frock at once," he answered. "Put on something much less noticeable. Then come back here, and come with us."

"Come where?"

"I intend to show you. Between now and midnight we are all going to take a long chance. You, too. You have fifteen minutes. I have ordered sandwiches and claret."

CHAPTER XIV

"Is it the key to Dorje's cipher?"

BELIEVE me, Cairo burning kerosene and candles is a very different place from Cairo lighted up. Brown's Hotel was like an old time monastery; even the shadows on the walls leaped with a sort of restraint that reacted on people and made them move more stealthily. The suggestiveness of that subdued men's voices, and a feeling of awe, not far from horror, very soon ensued.

Outside, the streets were in almost darkness, although the starlight helped the dim lanterns of the pickets and patrols and there was some light oozing through the cracks of doors and shuttered windows. The authorities had clapped on a curfew regulation and it was working with the surprisingly sudden efficiency with which most things British do function when the first, invariable contemptuous scorn of the unexpected has yielded to common sense.

No cars were allowed in the streets, no pedestrians, no traffic other than deliveries of food protected by written permit or provided with an escort. We were stopped at least twenty times by men whose bayonets shone in the lantern light, and though McGowan's uniform was sufficient passport, more than half a dozen officers demanded to know our destination before they would let the car proceed. McGowan gave a different one each time. If reports were actually turned in and coordinated, our behavior must have looked a bit bewildering next day.

The princess sat beside me on the rear seat of McGowan's car. She was wearing a hooded cape of striped silk—one of those astonishingly simple adaptations that the French make from exotic models, suggesting without defining Oriental inspiration. She had pulled the hood low over her forehead, so I could hardly see her face, although we sat close because Chullunder Ghose was jammed into the same seat on my right hand. Jeff and Grim were on the folding seats in front of us. McGowan sat beside the driver. About the only remark we made was when the *babu* nudged me and said:

"Sahib, difference between ecstasy and torture is merely poetic distinction, and poets are crazy anyhow. Am passionately tortured by esctatic blue funk mixed with curiosity and would not swap with Dorje himself. Feel my emotions."

He thrust his wrist into my hand. His pulse was going like an air brake piston. Then the princess whispered to me:

"I am having the best time of my life. I hope we all get killed in a ter-r-iffic climax. I am so excited I can hardly sit still. Where is Jeemgreem taking us?"

Then Grim, turning suddenly, spoke out of the corner of his mouth—

"To see your sister."

I could feel the rigor with which she suddenly controlled herself. Then she relaxed and sat still, turning her head away. If Grim wanted her rattled he appeared to have succeeded, but she was a difficult woman to diagnose, just as his motives are sometimes almost impossible to detect at the time being. He may have purposely prepared her for a shock, because of his theory that people at a too great disadvantage almost never do the thing expected of them. Whether he expected her to behave as she did when the actual shock came, I don't know. I can only report what happened.

In almost total darkness near the hospital two military trucks were waiting for us, one containing a powerful searchlight driven by a gasoline engine and the other jammed chock-a-block with men; their officer was waiting for us on the hospital steps; he saluted McGowan, who gave him directions; he and the trucks vanished.

Then, McGowan leading, we invaded the hospital, where flickering candle light cast spectral shadows on the white walls. There was some one screaming in a room at the end of a passage, which enhanced the effect—mystery—gloom—horror. We were in single file. The princess walked in front of me. I saw her shudder.

"This way," said a surgeon.

THEY expected and were ready for us. A nurse unlocked a door as we approached, and turned her back to us as we entered. She had been told we were not to be recognized. The surgeon came in with us, but there was a screen in front of the door and he stood behind that with his hand on the key—obviously a man whom McGowan trusted, but one who preferred not to know too much about what was not his concern; he was a cadaverous looking North Country Irishman, overworked and melancholy.

The room was lighted by two candles, one on each side of the head of a bed, on which was laid out, very beautifully cared for, the body of the woman with whom McGowan and I had talked not very many hours before. In death she resembled our princess even more closely than she had done in life, but perhaps that was partly due to the candlelight, which softened the lines of suffering. Only the head and shoulders were visible, with dark hair arranged on the pillow a bit too regularly to suggest sleep.

"Dead?" The princess' voice suggested the clash of engaging bayonets. Silence then, for I dare say thirty seconds.

"Dead," Grim answered.

"Why did you bring me here?"

"To prove to you that she is dead."

"Very well. She is dead."

"You recognize her?"

"Yes." Silence again. "What is your purpose, Jeemgreem?"

"At the moment, to learn whether your statements agree with what she said in the presence of witnesses before she died."

"She was always a liar. And she hated me. She was my twin sister, and we fought from the day we were born. She hated me because I was the elder. She stole my name Baltis. When I befriended her during the war, because we two so resembled each other that she could pretend to be me and I could seem to be in one place when I was actually engaged in espionage somewhere else, she betrayed me to the Germans.

"Then, believing I was executed, she found her way to Dorje and again pretended to be me. She made that scar on her lip to heighten the illusion. For a time she deceived even Dorje. And when Dorje found her out, he laughed.

" 'A too significant coincidence,' said Dorje, 'to be treated according to rule.' So he did not kill her. He gave her a chance to redeem herself into his favor by doing exceedingly dangerous work."

Grim turned suddenly and looked into

her eyes that shone in the candlelight like fiery jewels, but of no sort known to commerce.

"How do you know it?" he asked her.

For about ten slow seconds she answered his stare. Then—suddenly she looked away from Grim and turned again toward the bed, approaching it almost on tip-toe as if reverence for death offset hate, and she wished to make some sort of farewell gesture. From where I stood it even seemed as if her eyes were closed and that her lips moved, as if she were saying a prayer, as she stooped over the dead woman's face. I saw her draw a very deep breath, as if sighing. And then the light went out. She had blown out one candle and had pinched out the other.

"Keep the door shut!" That was Jeff's voice.

"Shut it is," said a voice at the screen.

Then McGowan—

"Dammit, where's my flashlight?"

I produced my lighter. It refused to work. I could hear the *babu* groping on the floor and did him the injustice of supposing he was so scared as to try to get under the bed. Not a sound from Grim. And apparently not one of us had matches. I groped blindly, reaching for the princess and expecting to be met by a revolver shot. But I clutched Jeff's arm; he was doing the same thing, and expecting the same. She could have shot us all easily. But suddenly the *babu* grunted and exclaimed "I have it!" He had found McGowan's flashlight on the floor. He switched it on. The princess was standing quite still near the head of the bed.

Then Grim struck a match; there had been a box in his hip pocket all the time. He carefully re-lighted the candles, smiling to himself. Chullunder Ghose laid a hand on his heart and bowed profoundly.

"Princess sahiba, this *babu* makes semi-absolute salaam. It should be absolute if only you had not let fall that flashlight when you took it from McGowan sahib's pocket. Self am sleight-of-handist in *excelsis*, plus and then some, as U. S. Americans say with native modesty. Am personage whose praise is priceless. For a female woman that was not bad. Ma'am to you. None but a prestidigitatress of much promise would have caught it on her instep when she dropped it, to prevent noise. Ma'am, I adulate you. Kicking it under the bed was also very *verb sap*—no end top-hole, I assure you."

"*Nom d'un imbécile*, you nudged me," she answered, smiling—but the smile was tart and boded malice.

"Strange—strange how women never love me," sighed the *babu*. "Even wife of my own bosom is indignant with me when she is caught in act of reprehensibility—not seldom, too, believe me."

Grim looked carefully at the bed clothes and McGowan turned the flashlight on them, nodding. Even so, it was several seconds before I noticed they were slightly disarranged; they had been moved during those seconds of darkness and rearranged so deftly that only a skilled eye would have noticed it at first glance.

"Wasn't this what you wanted?" Grim asked.

And he held out the package that I had seen McGowan pass by way of Jeff to Chullunder Ghose at the hotel—the one that the *babu* dropped into Grim's hip pocket while he was twisting on Grim's turban.

The princess nodded.

"Maybe. You humiliate me purposely. What is it?"

"See for yourself."

SHE OPENED the envelop. Inside was a small cardboard box of the kind in which druggists send pills to their customers. It contained what almost any one would bury with its owner, what even a prisoner would be allowed to retain—a cheap bronze chain about a yard long and extremely thin, to which an amulet was fastened; and the amulet looked like a wad of paper very tightly pressed into a leather bag of the sort in which some people carry their watches.

She turned toward the nearest candle

as if to examine and perhaps identify the thing. And she was quick. But Grim made a signal to Jeff, and Jeff was even quicker; he caught her by both elbows—and Chullunder Ghose filched the thing out of her hand. He tossed it to Grim.

"Why burn it?" Grim asked.

She showed a stiff lip—defiant. But she was hanging on to herself, I could see that. Almost any kind of medical practise equips a man for judging how near a person is to the borderland between hanging on and letting go, and my practise has been peculiarly educational in that respect; but, of course, what is unpredictable is the strength of that last *quantum* of resistance. And I could see that Jeff was pitying her, as I was also. One by one Grim stripped away the shreds of her own self-evaluation.

"It can't be an identification tag. Dorje isn't such a fool as to label his agents."

"It is a talisman," she answered. "There is a mantra written on it. A man from India gave it to me, and my sister stole it."

Grim ignored that obviously lame lie. It might turn out to be ingenious, but it limped. Its value was that it proved she was weakening; but he knew that already.

"And it can't be anything you need in order to do Dorje's work, or you would not have been willing to burn it."

"I am no longer doing Dorje's work," she answered. "Must I strip my heart to you before these people?"

He ignored that, too, not giving her the slightest hint as to whether or not he believed her.

"For the same reason, it can't be anything you need in order to work against Dorje."

"It is nothing," she said. "I told you it is merely a mantra."

"Then why go to all that trouble?"

"It has sentimental value."

"Then why burn it?"

"Because I know it by heart. And it is after all something sacred. I did not wish it to fall into irreverent hands."

"Mine, for instance? Are there—were there ever any duplicates of this?"

"How should I know?"

"You say you know it by heart. And you are against Dorje."

"Yes. But how shall I ever make you trust me, Jeemgreem?"

"Difficult, isn't it?"

"You are blind when it comes to women. Men, yes. But a woman—you are without passion; and that is, without understanding. You do not understand me. If you were not so blind, you would see that I truly fell in love with you. And when I love, I idolize. And how else shall I make you love me than by proving to you that I am necessary to your very being; because what is your being, Jeemgreem, except doing? Oh, I know you. You and your love and your work are the same thing. Can you not read in my eyes that I adore you?"

"You have just told me how blind I am."

"Jeemgreem, in all other matters—Oh, what is the use of talking? I must prove it to you."

"And if your trick had succeeded and you had burned this, you could prove it more easily?"

"You are cruel."

"Because you know it by heart. And if it were burned I might have to depend on your memory?"

"A mantra. What if I know a mantra? What good would that do?"

"It would be more than good," said Grim. "It would be excellent if it should happen to be the key to Dorje's cipher."

She was silent.

"Is it?"

"It is a mantra."

"Is it the key to Dorje's cipher?"

"You are talking nonsense."

At that Chullunder Ghose spoke up.

"Nevertheless, this *babu*—being high degree initiate of nonsense—notices that Princess sahiba's fingers twitch like bally tearing into tatters said absurdity! Am destitute; but will bet pounds Egyptian fifty that Jimmy Jimgrim sahib has hit nail on apple of its eye! Oh, whoopee! That is U. S. A. American for 'Let's go, Gallagher'. Am individual who decoded

cipher despatch from German G. H. Q. to Indian revolutionary council—and was locked up afterward for six months to prevent me from bragging of same, such is gratitude! Krishna! Let me see it!"

IT WAS psychologically perfect—one more instance of the *babu's* genius at playing into Grim's hands by making himself ridiculous. He touched off her temper. She turned on him.

"Animal! I hope you try to solve it. This time they will lock you in a mad house!"

"Goal of my ambition! Everybody talking nonsense at same time, free from obligations, debts, responsibilities and labor—three meals daily. Nevertheless, I bet you pounds Egyptian fifty I can solve same."

"Then you with your ape's brain will be cleverer than—"

She checked herself and Grim opened the amulet, gingerly unfolding it under McGowan's flashlight. It consisted of parchment-like paper about four inches square with heavy writing on one side of it, done with a brush and Chinese ink. He read aloud—

"Forty-five minus forty-five equals forty-five."

"Obvious," said the *babu*. "I know that one."

Grim continued—

"Underneath that it reads, 'Bible, McClaughlin's Dictionary, Encyc. Brit. Eleven.'"

"Mantra—poetic, sacred!" said Chullunder Ghose.

"And beneath that, 'One to twenty-eight equals circle. Nine, ten, eleven are one, two, two-two.' That's all."

"Yes, that is all," said the princess. "It is supposed to be a magic formula."

"Why in English?" Grim asked her.

"It is the most spoken language."

"In which Dorje publishes commands to his subordinates all over the world?"

She flared up, possibly because the *babu* picked up one of the candle sticks and held the light so that he could see every movement of her face and she could not avoid seeing his mischievously triumphant smile.

"You are crazy! I have told you what that is. Why do we stay here? Are we to attend a funeral?"

Grim passed the paper, chain and leather sheath to McGowan.

"You've had it photographed?"

"Yes. Here in the hospital. Did it while she was unconscious—gave it back to her before she died. We've two copies for you—one enlarged. Are we ready?"

"Not quite," Grim answered. He stepped up to the princess and Chullunder Ghose held the candle between them. "Is it the key to Dorje's cipher? If not, why did you challenge Chullunder Ghose to solve it?"

"It is not."

"How do you know it isn't?"

"Oh, very well; I don't know."

"I will give you your choice of three alternatives," said Grim. "You may return to France, remain in Egypt as a military prisoner charged with high treason, or cooperate with me. Choose now."

"Do you mean I am to interpret that, or—"

"Is it the key to Dorje's cipher?"

"Very well. It is. I won't interpret it."

"I wouldn't trust you to interpret it."

"Jeemgreem, if I thought you would trust me— Oh, how shall I make you?"

"Prove up," he answered. "Are we ready? Let's go."

CHAPTER XV

"The Lord Dorje the Daring
—the King of the World!"

AT LAST Grim took all of us at least partly into confidence. McGowan drove, letting the chauffeur act lookout, as we went at top speed along the tree lined road that leads southward toward Gizeh. It was almost totally dark between those trees. The car lights were switched off. Grim sat facing the rear of

the car with his elbows on the back of the folding seat, speaking rapidly, economizing words.

"Now the long chance. Jeff's friend, Mahdi Aububah—bad bird, fanatical, stupid—almost sure he brought about a *dhow* load of Dorje's gadgets overland from the French Somali coast and cached 'em near here. Probably has a tough gang. Tassim told Chullunder Ghose and you, Crosby, that the cache is in the last tomb they opened. We know where that is. It's surrounded now by troops, and if the stuff's there we'll find it. But that's a mere detail. We want Dorje."

"He is not in Egypt," said the princess.

"No—but you are. And there are not more than ten quite dependable people who know that your sister is dead. Mahdi Aububah had orders to report to her, and he has no way to know she is dead. In the dark you look exactly like her."

"I don't know him," she answered.

"But he knew her. He had spoken to her. He had given her at least one of those gadgets. At least that's probable. If she had brought the one that killed her all the way from the Cape, it's likely she would have been more familiar with it and wouldn't have got killed. And it's equally probable that Mahdi Aububah is not in command of his party."

"He is too big a fool," Jeff agreed. "I used him once on *safari* to Kilimanjaro from Dar-es-salaam. Good in some ways, bad in others. No good without some one to keep after him. Taciturn, faithful, brave, persistent—but a damned fool."

"He was allowed to escape," said Grim, "because he almost certainly had nowhere else to go but to his captain."

"Was he followed?" I asked.

"He was. While you three chased that subaltern I sent a good man of McGowan's to keep close on his heels."

The princess chuckled—maliciously. It was her first chance to get back at Grim by shattering his self-assurance.

"And you drive into the desert, by night, to find that one man? Well, we will have a nice ride. You are lucky, Jeemgreem; but not so lucky as all that."

"The luck was, that McGowan had left a good man at my disposal," he answered. "He has already sent back word by motor-cycle from the outpost near the Minah Hotel. We know the general direction to take. He will be on the lookout for us."

He leaned closer to the princess and, at a whisper from Chullunder Ghose, I lighted a cigaret so that the flare of the lighter let him see her face better. There was so much wind at the speed we were making that I had ample excuse for flashing on the light at least a dozen times.

"Let us understand each other," said Grim.

"Can you?" she answered. "I understand you. But you me—?"

"I intend to give you a chance. You are once more Baltis, but not the same one. You are now your sister. And if you meet Dorje tonight—"

"I tell you, he is not in Egypt."

"No? Well, if you meet him, tonight for instance, remember which woman you are."

"*Alors*—what else?"

"Who knows?" he answered.

SHE WAS silent for several minutes. But the atmosphere was vibrant. Nobody knows what thought is, although science comes closer day by day to grasping the principle behind thought-transference. But as I sat between her and Chullunder Ghose, and facing Grim, with Jeff's broad back toward me, such a flood of suggestions poured into my brain that my own long standing prejudice against almost all metaphysical theory was forced on the defensive. I could almost feel Grim's alert neutrality; he keeps his mind wide open and deals with every situation, minute after minute, as it comes, avoiding prejudice and despising nobody and nothing. I could almost equally feel Jeff's arrogant reliance on Grim's genius. I felt sure that the *babu*, on my right hand, was speculating as to what he would do

if he were the princess; and for the sheer, stark fun of living he was hoping she would do it.

She, I knew, was turning over bargains in her mind and was intensely puzzled by the complex knowledge not only that Grim almost never made bargains, but that she herself almost never kept them and Grim knew it. Presently she said:

"Of course, your information may be accurate. It is possible that you do know where Dorje is. If we meet him tonight, I shall choose between you."

"Very wise. Choose Dorje," Grim advised her. "If I'm not badly mistaken, and if he is the man whom I suspect we are on our way to confront with something slightly different in the way of crises, then by all means choose him. Because he looks like winning."

"Now you make me wish to choose you, Jeemgreem!"

"Reserve your judgment. If we lose tonight's trick, bang goes the rubber as far as I can foresee."

"Jeemgreem, if you believed that you could manage without me, you would not have brought me. Therefore, I am indispensable, and you know it. I tell you, if Dorje truly is in Egypt, and if you meet him tonight, then you are done for. Because Dorje is almost superhuman in his ingenuity and you can nevaire defeat him —nevaire—without my showing you how to do it. You will nevaire be King of the World if you cross swords with Dorje without knowing what you are up against."

"Never," said Grim, "is a long time."

I don't think another word was spoken until we drew up near the Minah Hotel. The hotel was in absolute darkness; not even candlelight was showing in the windows. On our left the huge form of the Great Pyramid loomed utterly unearthly against purple night—the two other piles dwarfed into insignificance by its majesty more than its size.

A man who looked like an Egyptian, but who turned out to be a cockney Englishman, thrust his *tarboosh* covered head as close to Grim's as he could and began whispering, but Grim told him to speak up, so that McGowan could hear from the front seat.

"Followed 'im all the way 'ere, sir. 'E rode a bullock cart part o' the way, and part 'o the way 'e ran like 'ades. Then 'e jumped another bullock cart. 'E's in the pyramid—the big one."

"Where are the sheik's men?" Grim asked.

He referred to the Bedouins whose claim to guardianship of the pyramid is more or less officially recognized.

"Gone, sir; and it takes something more than a kick or a threat to shunt those blighters. The police 'ere at the station 'aven't been relieved since trouble started. They're gray gilled and don't know much. Their telephone ain't working, and instead of answering a feller's questions they do nothing but ask. But one of 'em told me the pyramid Bedouins got scared o' ghosts and 'ooked it."

"What do *you* think?" Grim asked.

"Well, sir, I *know* them Bedouins 'as scooted; and I *know* there's more than jus' Mahdi Aububah in there, although the police say not."

"How do you know?"

"I was up close, nigh an hour ago. I seen two, in the entrance, keepin' watch; and I heard 'em speak to some one inside."

"All right. Follow us, and if any one bolts keep after him. Any sign of the army?"

"Sure. They've drawed a cordon, but it's awful wide. Camel and horse and infantry. They're prob'ly patrolling the river, too, in motor boats, but that I can't say. If somebody'd offer me a tenpun note to get through that cordon 'most anywhere, I'd make it easy. It's a joke, sir, if you asked me."

McGowan drove on, up the pyramid road that is white as a bone in moonlight, but on a moonless night like that one it was merely a river of mystery, so dim with gloom that one could barely trace its curve from fifty yards away. A long way from the pyramid he stopped and we all piled out. Grim drew Jeff Ramsden

aside; McGowan listened to them while they whispered. Presently Grim beckoned Chullunder Ghose, and I was left alone with the princess.

"Does he think that Dorje is such a fool as to let himself be taken in that trap?" she asked me. Then, since I did not answer because I did not know, "If Dorje *were* in there, it would mean it is the deadliest possible trap for trespassers. But I think he is not in there. I think Jeemgreem is making us all ridiculous."

IT SEEMED to me that Grim would have asked me into that conference unless he counted on my definite reaction to the circumstances and to being left alone with the princess. Otherwise it would have been more logical for him to keep an eye on her himself.

My actual impulse at the moment was to seize her by the back of the neck and shake her. I wanted her scared—as scared as I was. But to use physical violence would have been a bit too emphatic, although I am almost sure she was the kind of woman who is loyal only to a man who thrashes her. If Grim had knocked her senseless two or three times, I believe she would have loved him with such frenzy as might even have destroyed her usefulness. I believe she loved him from the moment she first set eyes on him, but that, being what she was, she derived exquisite emotions from sadistic efforts to betray him at every possible opportunity. I believed that then, and I believe it now. My problem seemed to be to trick her, somehow, into cooperation with Grim during the next few, probably intensely dangerous, minutes.

"I hate to be made ridiculous," I said. "If he does that to me I will turn my back on him forever. He is one of those men who can only learn by being badly licked. If he had real good sense he would confide in you and make use of all your knowledge."

"That is it," she answered. "How shall I make him listen to me?"

"Well," I said, "I'll tell you what I think. Grim doesn't trust you. I believe he actually counts on you to try to betray him. And he trusts himself to turn the tables on you. That's his way of finally convincing you that he's the head man; and if he once does that you're done for; he will simply use you as a pawn in his game forever after, just as he uses me."

"Yes—like an err-rr-and boy!"

"I want to see him win this game," I went on, "and I don't believe he ever will win it without your assistance. The thing for you to do is to convince him that he can trust you, especially if you get an opportunity tonight to do the opposite. Surprise him by your apparently blind obedience. If we all get killed, no matter. If we don't—if we get out of this alive—he will have changed his attitude toward you; and after that I'll be able to help you to steer him along the right line. Personally, I think you have more brains than he has."

"I think—a leetle bit—you like me?" she suggested.

"I think you're the most intelligent woman I ever met."

"You, too—you have intelligence," she answered. "Good; I do it. Afterward we help each other. But I think we go into a trap. How gor-r-rgeous if we all get killed in one sensational affaire! I adore to die that way."

Then Grim beckoned us and we all went forward in a group, Jeff leading. He looked like a factory owner on a surprise visit of inspection at the new plant, with his fist in his right hip pocket and his air of deliberate, punchful personality. Chullunder Ghose drew back beside me.

"Did you annoy her? Same was indicated as proper prescription. Always, sahib, always irritate a woman in any emergency whatsoever. She emerges forthwith. *Verb sap.* Very. Shakespeare, who I was in previous incarnation, should have said, 'Oh woman in our hour of ease, you're no good on a lover's knees; but angry you're a lil—and how! So do get angry—do it now—!' Am terrified. A kind of yellowish purple funk with spots on it is melting me. That is

why I quote immortal poetry. Nobody treats a poet seriously. I do not wish calamity to treat me seriously. Is calamity a person? I believe she is a female. Are females persons? Let me get at that one. Let me irritate her."

She was overtaking Grim. He followed, I close on his heels. He pushed past her roughly, although there was plenty of room on the road. She resented it—

"*Cochon d'un Indien! Vache!*"

"French," he retorted, "is diplomatic language—very. Damn French! Damn you! You are interloper! You imagine you will scheme your way into Jimmy Jimgrim's confidence and make him hate me. Bah! You haven't brains enough! In previous incarnation you were Delilah who shaved Samson. But Jimmy Jimgrim wears no whiskers. I bet you think tonight you make him love you. I bet you can't! Pounds Egyptian fifty. Take me?"

"Silence!" Grim commanded.

THE AUTHORITIES have made it very easy for the tourist to invade the pyramid. There is a ramp and a system of steps, by which one reaches the opening, about fifty feet above the level of the ground on the north side. As we approached I saw somebody drop to the ground, not by the steps but by using the huge stone courses as a stairway. I don't think he saw us, but he was in a tremendous hurry; the moment his feet were on the sand he took to his heels and ran southward. He was a big man wearing a white smock tucked into a pair of cotton knickers, but it was much too dark to identify him. Grim, quite casually, turned and stared into the darkness behind us. Almost instantly, not more than fifty yards away, there was a sudden flick from some one's pocket flashlight. It was repeated a moment later twenty or thirty yards farther southward. McGowan's cockney had given chase. Grim resumed his interest in the pyramid.

In another moment we were observed from the pyramid opening. Fifty feet above us I heard voices and some one challenged, in a low voice, as if visitors were expected. The challenge was repeated in several languages—Arabic, Hindu, two that I did not recognize, and at last in English—

"Who are you?"

To me the voice sounded something less than confident. However, there was no time for speculation; Grim pulled me into the deep gloom at the base of the pyramid and whispered:

"Go up with them. Your job is to be mysterious and say nothing. Don't let any one know whether you are armed or not, or what your game is. Smile, look confident, do nothing—and don't speak."

There was a stone missing from the second course; he pulled himself up into the gap and sat there, perfectly invisible from a distance of two yards. It was no use asking questions. I followed the others, overtaking them just as the challenge from above was repeated—

"Who are you?"

Jeff pushed the princess forward, holding her by the arm, and she answered—

"Baltis!"

"You come late. He is waiting."

The words were English, spoken with a turgid, foreign accent. Jeff nudged her and growled something in an undertone. She spoke again—

"I send some one."

Before there was time for the man above to answer her Jeff went on up alone, important looking, as if he meant to buy the pyramid provided it was up to sample. He climbed as if there were no such things as rifles or automatics.

The darkness in the mouth of the opening was of the sort that the ancients used to sell in sealed jars to the tourists of those days, and the silence was of the same quality; one's own heart beats were like the noise of marching men and a wrist watch ticked like the clangor of cymbals. Looming up there against the astonishing starlight Jeff looked twice his natural size until he strode into the opening and vanished.

The princess stepped nearer to me and

I think she was going to whisper, but McGowan prevented her; and then Jeff reappeared, both hands in his pockets this time. He spoke louder than necessary, I suppose to make sure that Grim should hear him.

"All right. Come on up."

McGowan stayed. "Might be recognized," he whispered. The princess, I and Chullunder Ghose made the ascent, in that order, and I could hear the *babu* daring her to try to rob him of Jimgrim's confidence. Halfway up, when she paused for breath, he changed his tone and pleaded with her, wiping the sweat from his face in a way that almost suggested tears.

"Am lamentable *babu*. Sorry I spoke roughly. Please don't steal *all* my credit. Give me *some* chance!"

She ignored him. When we reached the small level space at the mouth of the opening Jeff bowed as if he were her dragoman, and led the way in. I went last then. There were no lanterns. It was darker than death, and stifling. I know that entrance intimately, but I had to grope like a blind man, and was not reassured by a hand in the small of my back—that held a knife for all I knew—and by a thin voice like a eunuch's that mewed in my ear:

"*Longesa—juldee—sita—kabadar*— Go on, all right, I shove— *Ham poosh diunga!*"

I despise being "pooshed" from behind but Grim's injunctions had been strict and permitted no speech, no resistance. Fervently, not for the first time, I cursed Grim's *modus operandi*. With the sweat running into my sightless eyes, that hand at my back and that voice in my ear, I wished him close, where I could kick him and then tell him why. My nerves seemed all short circuited, and the noise that the others made, clambering along ahead of me in pitch blackness, making preposterous echoes, revived a dread of the unseen with which destiny cursed me the day I was born. Nowadays, almost always, I can conquer it; but not that night. Only they who suffer from the same form of hysteria can gage what mental effort it cost to climb that ascending passage and arrive at the foot of the ramp of the Grand Gallery in fit condition to remember, let alone obey Grim's injunctions.

That damned old pyramid invariably reduces me to speechlessness. Perhaps that is why I did obey, although I think I really had myself in hand again. At any rate, I controlled myself when some one pushed past me from behind, although the temptation was almost irresistible to hit out at him, and the next sixty seconds were a nightmare. Then suddenly some one switched on an electric lantern and the strong light caused those incredibly marvelous walls to seem to leap forth out of darkness. I can't help my emotions. It always seems to me like sacrilege to stand in that place; and the sight of the names of the swine who have carved them on the immortal granite makes me capable of mayhem. The name of John Smith was about three feet away from my eyes. I turned away from it and brought up face to face with the most extraordinary person I had ever seen.

He was not more than five feet tall. He had an enormous head with a bulging forehead and deep sunk eyes set wide apart. He had a thin neck that looked incapable of supporting all that weight; a big torso, with a huge stomach and extremely long arms; short, fat legs and enormous feet. He was sweating, and because of the stifling heat in there he had discarded almost all his clothing. His stance was insolent. His up-turned nose, with negroid nostrils, indicated a colossal self-esteem. The glance he gave me did more to restore my nerves than anything else could have done. It made me ache to pick a row with him. He and I hated each other instantly, and he sniffed like a dog as he turned and faced the princess.

We were all in a group—we, that copper bellied monster and seven others, including the leathery looking mongrel Swahili-Somali-Hindu who had pushed me from

behind. The remaining six were rather dignified looking men, and three of them might be Persians; the other three had decidedly Mongoloid features. He who had shoved me up the passage was the only one who showed a weapon, but that was a shuddersome, wave edged knife with two blades and an ivory handle. There was no sign of Mahdi Aububah, so I supposed he was the man I had seen scramble down from the entrance and take to his heels.

In a language that I could not identify the copper bellied captain of that strangely assorted crew angrily ordered the man with the knife to return to the entrance, and he went as if dogs were after him. I remembered to smile, and when the monster stared at me again I thought he looked vaguely disconcerted. Once more he faced the princess.

"Baltis! Where d'yew get that garments? What-a yew been doing all this long time? All gone wrong—we waiting and no message! What-a yew been doing?"

Instantly Chullunder Ghose spoke up. He gave her no time to invent a story of her own that might have upset Grim's calculations, whatever those were. He lied like lightning, prodded by the twin horns of necessity and inspiration.

"*Chupp!* Be silent, you abominable bungler! Damn fool! She has had orders from Dorje. Let her tell it."

"Dorje?" He seemed staggered for a moment. "*Wass ist loes* now? Dorje is not in Egypt." He glared at me again. I remembered to smile. He lost a part of his arrogance. His companions looked actually scared. He stared again at her. "You bring me cock or bull tale?"

I only wish I could tell what passed through her mind. Completely mystified, but certain that Chullunder Ghose had spoken as Grim had told him to, and left now to her own resources, there was nothing she could do but, as it were, follow suit. She let her lip curl.

"Bungler!" she retorted. "Where is Dorje? We were to meet Dorje here, in this place."

He of the copper belly backed away from her.

"Who has fooled yew? Yew go mad, eh? I am Dorje's man here."

"Where is Dorje?" she repeated.

"Yew not know, eh? Dorje get him a new woman!"

He backed farther away. I saw Jeff's muscles tighten for a scrimmage, and I was getting awfully tired of smiling like a wise fool. I saw copper belly make a signal with his left hand, and then out went the light. The princess did not scream, but I heard Jeff close with some one and there was a thud as his fist hit some one else. Then a voice—up aloft at the top of the ramp—said sternly—

"Turn that light on!"

It was so sudden and dynamic that it stopped the scrimmage. It was Chullunder Ghose who answered, loud and high—

"Who are you?"

"Dorje! Turn that light on!"

It was I who found the lantern in the dark and snatched it from its owner. Luck, that—he was making for me. I switched it on. Jeff had copper belly in a stranglehold. Chullunder Ghose had dragged the princess twenty feet away along the floor of the Grand Gallery and she was struggling, not knowing who had hold of her. She had drawn a long, thin knife. The lantern saved the *babu* by a fraction of a second.

At the top of the ascending ramp, as calm and cool to look at as if he were the spirit of the genius who built the place, with his back to the gloom of the low arch leading to the Great King's Chamber —incredible, because there was no hint of how he got there—turbaned, thinly smiling and alert, with folded arms, stood Jimgrim!

"Dogs! Blunderers! Idiots! I am Dorje!"

It was touch and go then. It depended absolutely, solely, on the princess. Staggered, admiring, amused, aware that for the moment the ace of trumps was in her hand, she seemed to hesitate, prolonging the suspense, enjoying it. The

others stared at her. She knew; none else did; she was Dorje's woman. Then at last:

"Lord Dorje, you are greater than even I believed! Greeting! Down on your knees, you reptiles! Bow to him—the Lord Dorje the Daring—the King of the World!"

CHAPTER XVI

"Can't make brain empty. Can't listen."

WHEN, on the spur of that moment, Baltis acknowledged herself as her dead twin sister, and acknowledged Grim as Dorje, she did it recklessly, thrilled by the danger and almost drunk with the daring of the idea. The drama of it had us all by the throat. Grim—turbaned, laconic, inscrutable—suddenly seen in the glare of an electric lantern, standing at the top of that ageless ramp in the heart of Gizeh, would have astonished almost any one into at least momentary obedience.

Grim had gambled on the possibility that Dorje's men had never seen their master; although, when he explained it afterward, that part of his strategy turned out to have been closely reasoned and at least in line with probability. Baltis almost exactly resembled her sister, and Dorje's men had no conceivable reason for supposing she was not the woman who, to their probably certain knowledge, did know Dorje intimately. Grim had gambled on her convincing them.

But that, also, was not a very long shot considering the pains he had taken to prepare the ground by proving to her that her only hope lay in playing up to him. She might have wrecked Grim's chances by denying him before those men, but it would have meant her own undoing. It was obviously more to her advantage to play with Grim, at least for the present, rather than against him.

The really deadly risk Grim took was that he made her the key to the future. If he was going to pretend to be Dorje in order to reach and uncover the mystery man who was aiming to master the world, Baltis would be in a position to betray him whenever she pleased. She fully realized it.

But at the end of a long pause Grim spoke again, as usual seizing a dilemma by the horns.

"Baltis, come forward into the light!"

She obeyed. I have seen nothing, anywhere, more graceful than her movement as she stood near the foot of the ramp and bowed to him with outstretched arms. I think the feel of that splendid shrine had hold of her and she was acting as Bernhardt used to, her imagination for the moment making real the unreality she played. But if so, Grim very swiftly brought her back to earth.

"Lord Dorje—" she began.

"Silence! Every order I have given has been ignored or bungled in the doing. I blame you!"

It was crafty. Inflection of voice and attitude were indescribably suggestive of a swordsman's way of tempting an opponent into indiscretion. She realized it, as he intended that she should. No word, no gesture indicated that she was not his real target. One sensed rather than perceived an invitation to the others to join in and blame her for everything that had gone wrong. He of, the monstrous head and copper colored belly went into the trap without a second's hesitation, swaying forward into the stream of light; I let him have its full strength, leaving Grim for the moment dimly outlined by the outer rays that made him look more like a ghost than a man.

Torrents of words, in a language I did not recognize. Eloquence killing its own effect by too much emphasis that conjured hollow echoes from the womb of Gizeh and changed it to cavernous sounds like the thunder of waves in an underworld. Stopped by Grim's voice, like a cracked whip:

"Dunderhead! Speak English!" He pronounced the words as if he were using familiar but not his own native language.

"Lord Dorje, I wished only you to understand!"

"Since when do your wishes overrule mine?"

"Then I speak English. Yes, she is wholly to blame. She has bewildered us. She left us here—huh—so long time in this place—and no water—none here—none now left. So I sent Aububah. And he came back; and he said she is making love in Cairo. Huh! Kill her! Say it. I wring her neck!"

"You, who have failed to carry out my orders, dare to advise me whom to spare and whom to kill?"

And then Chullunder Ghose, before the copper colored individual could answer:

"Let us set things right first. Then, of the Lord Dorje's wisdom, let him slay the right ones at the right time. Any fool can be temperamental. We do not follow the Lord Dorje because he is either fierce or merciful, but because he is wise and exceedingly daring."

"Light!" Grim commanded. "You—set a light in the Great Chamber!"

Hesitating, slowly, because he feared some ghastly fate awaited him, the copper bellied man advanced up the ramp, feeling his way through shadows cast by the light behind him. When he reached Grim he went on his hands and knees and crept through the low opening into the Great Chamber where the so-called sarcophagus stands. There was long silence until light at last streamed through the opening from behind Grim's back. Grim turned and vanished into it. Then copper belly came on hands and knees and called down:

"He says everybody come!"

Jeff sent the princess first. I followed last, behind the last of Dorje's men. But I had not taken two steps up the ramp before I heard a sound behind me. It seemed to come from the so-called Queen's Chamber, which is reached through a narrow opening that turns off the ascending entrance passage before it reaches the Grand Gallery. Lantern in hand, I turned back to investigate.

At the point where the passage to the Queen's Chamber turns off there is a rough opening in the floor. It is the mouth of a descending shaft, and no one knows who bored it or what its purpose was. Feeling my way along the wall in order not to have to use the lantern, and then switching on the lantern suddenly because a new sound made my skin crawl, I almost kicked a man's face.

HE WAS on his way up through that hole in the floor. Both hands were on the rim of the hole, so I knew he had no chance to use a weapon; I could reach it before he could, supposing he had one. Remembering Grim's instructions to smile and say nothing, I held the lantern so that he could see my face and beckoned him to come on up.

Apparently he was unarmed. But he did have what appeared to be copper wire looped over his shoulder and made fast to the belt at his waist. It was the end of a long line of wire that he was dragging up after him. I assisted him to drag it and it took most of our united strength, so that I drew the conclusion that its lower end was somewhere in the subterranean, so-called unfinished chamber that was hewn from raw rock by the builders when they laid the pyramid foundations.

He appeared to take it for granted that I was some one sent to help him. He made no remark of any kind, but he grinned once or twice, and even standing between him and the lantern, so that my shadow interfered, I could see he was a Chinese. When we had pulled up possibly a hundred feet of wire he left me suddenly and ducked down the very low horizontal passage that leads to the Queen's Chamber, dragging the wire after him. I followed.

Suddenly I switched out the lantern again. I could see light ahead. The Chinese paused in the passage; I had to shove him to make him go forward. He went, reluctantly, and twice he tried to double back. When at last I had pushed him into the Queen's Chamber, which is only about seventeen feet square, he rushed forward—still speechless—and furiously tried to interfere with a man whose back was turned toward me. Small

flashlight in hand, he was examining some kind of instrument. I had to switch on the lantern before I recognized him as McGowan. With a gesture he invited me to hold the Chinese, which was not difficult; he was not physically strong, and when he saw that the instrument was being very gently handled he seemed satisfied to kneel beside me and just watch.

But he watched like a lynx, and it seemed to delight him that neither McGowan nor I could explain the instrument. We could not even discover its purpose. Its outside was made of rare wood, highly polished. It was rather larger than an ordinary typewriter, something the same shape, and about as heavy. Its upper part was divided into small squares arranged in several horizontal rows; exactly in the center of each square there was either one numeral—from one to nine—or a symbol such as plus or minus.

These figures, which were as small as those on the dial of my wrist watch, appeared to have been painted with a brush on extremely thin, square leaves of a metal resembling platinum. The moment the instrument was touched every one of the leaves trembled, as if they were held in position by vertical wires up the middle, thus permitting motion of about an eighth of an inch on a horizontal plane.

NEITHER McGowan nor I knew a word of Chinese, but we tried every other language that we did know. The Chinese did not even take the trouble to shake his head; he acted as if deaf and dumb and seemed actually unaware that we were asking questions, until McGowan threatened to smash the instrument and went through the preliminary motions, standing up and drawing back his right foot. Then, however, he found speech—English at that—and frenzy along with it. He threw himself on the floor in the way of McGowan's foot and curled himself around the instrument.

"Can make do—ten minute—twenty minute! You wait! You see!"

He evidently thought we were disgusted because the machine had not been working properly. It did not seem to occur to him that we were possible enemies. We were task masters. With his left hand he groped for the loop of the wire that he had dropped on the floor when I first seized him, found it, held it up.

"Can make do! You wait! You see!"

McGowan sat down on the floor to watch him, borrowing my lantern because his own flashlight was so small and apparently all that the Chinese had was a box of big wax matches like miniature candles. So I took McGowan's flashlight in exchange. There was no sense in two of us watching one weakling, however interesting he might be. And I was even more curious to learn what Grim was doing, as well as anxious to help out in the event that trouble had developed.

In the Great Chamber Grim was standing with his back to the stone cistern which antiquarians insist on calling the sarcophagus. It does not resemble one; it never was one; it was never intended to be one. Dorje's men had used it as a tank to hold their drinking water, and that, at any rate, was something more like its original purpose than the use that the word sarcophagus suggests. In fact, allowing for different costume, and for the absence of the wood wind music that was probably essential to the rites, the scene as I saw it may not have been so vastly less impressive than it was in the days when they initiated priest-kings in the same room—five, six, seven thousand years ago.

To my mind, that is the most solemn and the grandest place on earth. It is not large, but its proportions are so perfect that the actual dimensions don't much matter; and the workmanship is so simply magnificent that no human hand has ever been able to equal it, anywhere. Light from a dozen candles, set in a circle on what looked like a nail keg in the middle of the floor, cast velvet shadows on the smooth, red granite walls.

The princess, still wearing her hooded cape in spite of the heat, was standing facing Grim. She might have been a

priestess seeking the hierophantic blessing. Most of Dorje's men stood stripped to the waist, with their backs against the wall on Grim's right, although the copper bellied man was on his left hand. Chullunder Ghose had shed most of his clothing and looked exactly like a priest of some occult religion, albeit a fat priest given not too much to austerity. Jeff Ramsden, in his shirt sleeves, stood near the entrance. Until I came in and stood beside him Jeff was the only genuinely modern touch, because Grim, in that mood and that turban, might have stepped out of a Persian picture; leaping shadows, warmed by the granite background, dimmed the outline of his suit until he might have fitted almost any age and any setting.

Copper belly spoke:

"It is good yew come. She ball it all up. Can't get messages."

"Why not?" Grim demanded.

"How? How get them? Too much worry! How make brain blank, and all that excitement? Sit still, sit still, sit still—nothing! Listening machine, too—no good!"

"Why?"

"Same reason! Too much disturbance! Told Li-Pu lay long wire. How do it? Where put it? Outside? People see it. Inside? No place."

Said Grim—

"What is worse than a fool?"

"Nothing," the man answered. "Nothing."

THEN, although I did not realize it at the moment, Grim took hold of and began to follow up the thread that was to lead to all the information he needed.

"You accuse her. But you are a fool, and I know she is not one. Answer now, and if I catch you lying to me you shall not name your own punishment. That one shall name it." Grim nodded in the general direction of Chullunder Ghose, who sighed and licked his lips with satisfaction. "Have you forgotten the general orders?"

"No, no. I forget nothing—nothing!"

"It is easy to say that. But prove it."

"Lord of men, he said—"

"Who said?"

"Lung-ten Rim-po-che, your councilor. He came to me and said—"

"Where did he come to you? When?"

"In Bagdad. Now it is nearly four months since he came to me, in the house between the shops of Gabriel de Sousa and the Parsee Jamsetjee. He came by night. He said, 'Now, he who calls himself Mahdi Aububah takes a *dhow* load of the thunderbolts and—' "

"Whence? From what port?"

"From Karachi, All Wise. Whither, I know not, but to some place north of Bab-el-Mandeb. The meeting place, he said, is this place. Huh. Me, I am to wait for others, who will come and obey me. But I am to obey her. Huh. Because she knows it all. Huh. Orders, he said, shall come as usual to me. But I am to tell her. Huh. Obey her. Huh. Couldn't get orders. Couldn't hear um. Huh. She said—"

Grim made a sign of impatience.

"She shall speak for herself in her turn. I perceive the fault is yours. Have you been drinking?"

"Water—hot; too little. Out of that. We filled it half full. Huh. All gone now." He pointed at the cistern.

"You say the listening machine was no good? Where is it?"

"Down below bottom of this place. No good."

"I will prove to you," Grim answered, "that it is good. Why do you *think* it won't work?"

The man hesitated. I jumped to the wrong conclusion, that Grim had seen the Chinese's machine before he pushed past me in total darkness and made his way to the head of the ramp to surprise us all. As it turned out, he had not seen it—knew nothing about it; he was merely bluffing and leading his witness. But the bluff worked.

"Huh. I said too much disturbance. Can't make brain empty. Can't listen. How shall the machine work?"

Grim took another long shot in the dark.

"There is no disturbance. This is the best place in the world. What is the matter with you? Have you forgotten the key?"

"No."

"Are you ill?"

"No."

"Have you not had enough training?"

"Huh. That may be. High there, low here. Hear it all in mountains."

"Couldn't you hear in Bagdad?"

"Not much."

Then the longest shot of all. It was a shot that saved civilization.

"My rule is to destroy fools who bungle my orders. But I must find out how this happens. I will have you tested. If the fault is not yours, then you shall be employed on other business. Otherwise—"

The man was trembling.

"Lord Dorje—"

Grim glared him into silence.

"Go to my place."

"Which place?"

"Perhaps I had better rid the earth of such an idiot!"

"But how—huh—how I get there? Officers all on lookout. Bombay? No chance. Karachi? No chance. Sikkim—Bhutan—Nepaul? Huh. Not a rat get by—not now; not now this happened. Huh. How you get here?"

"Do you question *me*, you bungler!" Grim pointed to Jeff Ramsden. "You will go with that man. He is not suspected. He will take you through all barriers. He will protect you; and you will show him the road to my place."

"Huh. I don't know it."

"What is the nearest to it that you do know?"

"Chak-sam."

"That is at the crossing of the Tsangpo, on the way to Lhassa. Go there. I will send word. You will find a guide awaiting you. Give him the signal but answer no questions, and ask none."

"Which signal?"

"The same that I have been sending you, these days past, and that you say you can't hear! You dog, you have forgotten it!"

"No. Huh. How could I forget that?"

Grim smiled scornfully. He glanced to his right at the others, who were standing with their backs against the wall. They were frightened. I think they would have backed through the wall if they could.

"You are all bunglers! It begins to seem to me some bungler chose you. Do you know anything? Which of you knows the signal?"

Each man made a different gesture of assent. They all knew it, but none betrayed it. I thought Grim was stumped. But I was reckoning—as Grim was not—without Chullunder Ghose. The *babu* piped up:

"Humbly this devoted servant makes salaam, and ventures to remind your Mightiness that the signal was recently changed. Perhaps these miserable people only know the former one. That might account for much of all this thus-ness."

Jeff Ramsden, with a subtlety that one would hardly have expected of him, seconded Chullunder Ghose.

"It is against the law to give the signal unless there is need!"

Grim nodded.

"It is a wise law. I will not change it. However, there is need now. I command it. Let them give the signal."

"Which way?" demanded copper belly, and Chullunder Ghose stepped promptly into that breach.

"Mightiness! This *babu* bows! Wisdom of sparing this individual was not apparent until now to any one except the All Wise! But I now perceive what you did—that he has an element of merit, since at least he guards that signal! He is not like the fool who betrayed it to—"

He stopped abruptly, staring at the princess, who looked too innocent not to be up to mischief. She was standing naturally, with her hands at her sides, not smiling.

"Thought so—old signal! Look here!" He held his hands exactly as the princess

held hers, with his left thumb touching the palm of his left hand. "Four, eh?" He moved his right hand, thumb in natural position, merely to call attention to it. "Five, eh? Now reverse it. Right hand, four; left hand, five. Then reverse it again; left hand, four, right hand five. I said it was old stuff, didn't I? Forty-five, minus forty-five, equals forty-five. They have been making that old signal during last five minutes. Now let us sing hymn 'Bicycle Built for Two', which is appropriately up-to-date!"

Grim smiled at the princess.

"You, too, Baltis? Are you using the old signal?" I don't believe he knew, or she either, whether she had done it deliberately in order to help him or half consciously from force of habit. But he was so pleased to have learned it that he offered her a chance to lead into his hand again. She did it.

"Dorje," she answered, "don't show these blunderers the new one. They are too stupid. Send not one, but all of them to Chak-sam."

Grim nodded.

"Nevertheless," he said to copper belly, "when you reach Chak-sam, use the old one. It will serve your purpose."

IT OCCURRED to me then that, since McGowan was busy with the Chinese's machine in the Queen's Chamber, there was no one left to keep watch at the pyramid entrance. There was not going to be any fight in the Great Chamber; I was simply wasting time there as a mere spectator. Besides, Jeff Ramsden could probably lick that whole crew single handed.

So I slipped out—not doubting that Grim would notice it—and, with the aid of McGowan's pocket flashlight, groped my way downward toward the entrance.

The light served perfectly to stir such shadows as not improbably gave birth to all the legends about ghosts and demons, and it seemed to multiply the silence as well as to destroy all sense of earthly time and space.

Before I had gone twenty paces down the great ramp I had begun to feel like a dead man in another world. It seemed like an eternity since I left the others in the Great Chamber. I could not hear their voices. My mental picture of them was as dim as of the half remembered scenes of years ago. Bats added to the weirdness, flitting past me so closely that I could feel the wind they made.

Sounds ahead startled me. I switched off the flashlight and slipped it into my pocket to leave both hands free. I had almost reached the point where Al Mamoun's men dislodged a triangular limestone block a thousand years ago and thus discovered the ascending passage, which is still blocked by a tremendous granite plug. Al Mamoun's men quarried around that through the softer limestone, so that the passage makes a forced turn and the going is not particularly easy. There I waited, irritated by the ticking of my wrist watch because it sounded to me like the beat of a hammer on brass. I could hear footsteps . . .

TO BE CONTINUED

Whence Came the West

By

RAYMOND S. SPEARS

THE MORE I examine Western conditions, looking into the wide open spaces or weighing the ideals of individuals or communities, the harder I find it to put into so many words a definition of the West.

Wild and woolly figures in the fabric of the whole terrain—they are what nearly every one who crosses the Missouri to go into the rays of the setting sun believes in, hoping to be a witness to some feat or incident or condition according to the stories of Western fiction. The innocence and primness with which we veneer our expressed ideals and aspirations become perforated if we bring ourselves down to facts. Sure, we don't actually want ourselves to be mixed up in awful things; but we don't cross the Mississippi on our first transcontinental tour in the hopes of finding Iowa's culture and cow college education better and higher than Yale's, Harvard's and Vassar's. No, indeed! And our delight when at Ames the young ladies absorbing local culture come over to the camp grounds to make fun of the community's guests—and they sure found my bed making amusing—was not because we were embarrassed but because they were the first indication on the trail that the Old West's laughing at tenderfeet still survives.

Strong men bullied the weak under the old régime. The very best, the most human fact stories of the West have been those in which individual heroes stood forth and by skill, good fortune or moral superiority broke through the defenses of mere physique and brought to earth the animal instinct to be cruel, and thus elevated the growing will of humanity to be kind. Physical tortures figure in the old Indian West. These were at their worst when the white race pressed over the Catskills, up the Mohawk Valley and down the Ohio or along the Great Lakes. Bad men chose to torment newcomers mentally, humiliating them. And now an undergraduate's laughter is the last trace of Indian torture.

I have an idea that the West is our greatest national pastime because during the transition stage from physical to mental or moral attitudes individual heroism conspicuously attained its finest poses. Without preaching about or even discussing the consciences of those who made the West, the fact remains that the Border was a conflict less between men of physical abilities than one between different habits of thought, varied viewpoints on right or wrong. There a great population of individualists wrestled in their own hearts and souls, trying to determine each for himself what he or she must do to be happy. The West enthrones each individual in his own due place.

The American continent was settled by fugitives from the trammels of family, royalty, national custom, depressive stat-

utes and racial oppressions. The Puritans were just as clearly seeking freedom as the men and women who gave themselves into bonds for passage to the New World. The nobility of France came in gambling ruin and social disgrace to New France. In a few years they were *coureurs des bois*—runners of the forests. Each had an Indian squaw and a tribal name, such freedom from rule and artificial conscience as to alarm the representatives of state and church at Montreal. And those French adventurers gave color, tone and customs which to this day can be found along the upper Missouri, especially if one is so lucky as to come upon a ranch party where the old-timers preserve the gay intimacies of the quadrilles, swinging with the waltz dignity or the two-step abandon. *Coureurs* would go two thousand miles, meandering, to have a little spree at the famed sisters' place about where Cape Vincent now stands. In those old days it was magnificently timbered, but later log thieves skinned it.

To the French Canadians we must ascribe a great deal of the buoyancy and liveliness of the Western habit. The Holland Dutch out of Manhattan Island and Corlaer—Albany—were phlegmatic. The Puritans were conscience ridden, reacting against the licentiousness of the English court practises which rose to their worst in the day of King Charles I. The Cavaliers of Virginia were too dignified to let go so completely, but we have at Wheeling, West Virginia, and subsequent proceedings down the Ohio one of the main branches of Western inheritance. At Fort Duquesne, there were lively doings under French and English commanders. But I think the Wheeling frontiersmen gave us the first distinct West as it came to be during fur trade days at St. Louis and cattle, camp and gold excitements from '49 down to the present.

I am inclined to say that Lewis Wetzel, a German, and Simon Girty, a Britisher, were the first Westerners—after the *coureurs* of New France. Simon Girty after the Revolution used to ride on horseback into Walden over in Ontario, shooting his flintlock pistols, whooping like an Indian. Lewis Wetzel—the premier still hunter of the Ohio Valley forests—bullied the American frontier. And Girty was, I think, the first Britisher to shoot up a town on horseback. Anyhow, I find no record previous to him. But, of course, Montreal and the Canadian towns were not infrequently alarmed and disgusted at the antics of the uncontrollable *coureurs*. And we can find in English, Scottish and Irish history references to wild men doing stunts of bullying with their bows. The historical sequence can be traced, in fact, back to David's desperado bands of cowboys and sheepherders in the Palestine frontier days when Saul was king, as described in the Bible.

There are tons of books about the West. But in many communities the resentment is marked when one endeavors to obtain historical information. The real estate agent takes us out to see the new school or the great vista of new subdivision, when the thing which would really tempt us to settle there is the old hotel around the corner or a group of night birds who continue, in spite of frowns, the old free ways. The curious thing is that the people who have benefited most by their historical and regional affiliations are often the most resentful at the community's reputation as being bad. Tourists go hundreds, thousands of miles seeking the flavor of the West. Suppression of the local cut-ups in a stern effort to boost realty values doesn't always pay. There is in one of the Dakotas a town no one ever heard of. It should have been the Mecca of every lover of banditry and seeker of thrills. If Dodge City had surrounded its Boot Hill with a proper fence and kept the tale of the buried notables open for inspection, instead of building a schoolhouse there and sniffing at those who came seeking the exact data, the community's tradesmen could have cashed in to the tune of fifty thousand dollars of curiosity and fame money every season.

Who cares about niceness and genteel-

ness and style when he sees a genuine city marshal come strolling by, his gun ready for business and his beak aquiline? Believe me, one of the liveliest feelings I ever had was in a little restaurant at Rawlins, Wyoming, when I saw just such an old boy come in and lean to whisper with a sharp, wizened boss or something of the town.

And Texas won't be the same when the garages stop selling crude oil instead of motor oil to travelers along the old Spanish Trail. Nor will it be the same when the nice people have forgotten, deliberately, the wonderful record of the Texas Rangers, which is every day being added to according to the traditions of America's most famous police force. There is no essential difference between the cheating by gamblers, a small and interesting part of the population, and the garage humor to increase business of repairing burned out motor bearings by smudging and gumming shut the oil pump rights of way into cylinders.

The fellows who held up one Rocky Mountain automobile camp three times in one summer, the robbers of the Yellowstone tourists and the riders into Coffeeville or Northville or Winnemucca, they are of a piece, warp and woof. And we can trace historically the lines of lawless descent from those of loyalty and patriotism down to those of sheer greed. But it is worthwhile emphasizing the several distinct lines of inheritance, to help understand.

The French, the Mohawk Dutch, the Puritan and Cavalier English, the Spanish of the Western and Southwest inheritance were main strains. In the Ohio Valley the Girty Irish opposed the Wetzel Germans.

Down in Texas the Davy Crockett North Europeans faced the South Europeans in the Spanish; but on the Border today the two strains of outlawry have united.

The greatest of the outlaws sometimes had a sincere claim against the Government. Butch Cassidy, leader of the Hole-in-the-Wall gang, had been a rollicking, expert, good natured cowboy. Then at thirty years of age out in the Little Rockies he fought a duel with his employer, a rancher, killing him. I have never been able to learn the details of that fight, but other ranchers objected to a hired man's killing one of them and hounded Cassidy, under his name of George W. Parker. And as an outlaw Cassidy from 1887 to the early 1900's raided cattle, banks, trains. He got two hundred thousand dollars' worth of cattle in one State in one year. Harvey Logan, alias Kid Curry, one of the Wild Bunch, began violence under what he claimed to be a false accusation of stealing a calf when a boy. The fine of fifty dollars he regarded as unjust. The killing of his accuser and the loss of millions in damage and of countless other lives resulted.

Social injustice and the increasing demands of the people's code of honor on the individuals brought feuds, wars, duels and numerous variations of violence along the seething line between the physical and the moral powers. This was visible as the Frontier moved westward, the mental border between law and lawlessness being shown visibly in the conflicts of sheriffs, city marshals, deputies and posses with the desperadoes, bandits, violators. The old fires still burn or smolder.

Under Spanish rule Murietta was a law abiding citizen. Under the régime of first comers to the California goldfields, some of whom violated his hospitality, he became a reckless killer for vengeance.

And Lewis Wetzel, having been acclaimed in the 1780's as the most successful collector of Indian scalp bounties, was ostracized by the very same people when he killed, and boasted of having done so, the Indian chief who saved his life from the Sandusky Indian torture fires and knives. And Slade, manager and developer of a stage route, was for a time a hero and then the hanged victim of a vigilance committee when his drunken sprees and violence had become, instead of masculinely sportive, outrageous.

IT HAPPENED IN FRANCE

A Story of the War Flyers

By ANDREW A. CAFFREY

HERE is a little story that will serve very well toward giving a cross section of so called flying luck—or better, flying bad luck. It is a story replete with irony. And it is true, every last word of it. Maybe, toward the end, you'll get a lump in your throat. Perhaps you'll know a finishing moment of gloom. Well, what of it? What if it does gloom you? This story, at its origin, gloomed a whole flying center. There were lumps in plenty of throats. However, at that time, lumps in throats were regulation equipment, the order of the day. This is a story of France.

It is a story of Issoudun and Field No. 8. Issoudun, Uncle Sam's greatest A. E. F. training center, has been rightly called the cradle of flying courage. Field 8, the combat airdrome of that great flying

school, has also been aptly named. It has been called the Oxford of air.

There was only one Field 8. There will never be another. Wars to come may see bigger fields. But wars to come most surely will come with more cut-and-dried organization than Field 8 ever knew. We took Field 8 right out of February's mud and had it in full bloom before March snows had blown away. I say we because I was there to push a muck stick on most of the construction work at 8.

They never dug a ditch or graded a path or road without letting me help. And when a well was sunk through forty feet of hardpan—also a great wide and deep cistern—they made sure that my strong back and weak mind were on the job. I mention these things, not because they have anything to do with the story, but merely to prove that I was in a position to know—and now tell—what was going on at that post. Also, these things prove that Field 8 was born of the only things that worthwhile things are born of: sweat and mud and blood. And again we say that Field 8 was as it was because of its lack of cut-and-dried origin. It was—as they say all great works of art should be—spontaneous.

After the establishment of Field 8, every American pursuit pilot came to 8. At this field he took his course in aerial combat. He did this combat work with a camera gun; and until such time as his combat work was good, he either remained at Field 8 or was relieved from pursuit training and sent to two-seaters. So, you see, this last school was a tough school. It either made or broke a man. It could be the threshold of fame or the greased slide into flying oblivion. And, as has been said, *all* pursuit men had to take the course at 8.

When you say all, you include them all from lieutenant-colonels and south through majors, captains and lieutenants, first and second, winding up with lowly cadets. This was as it should be, for it barred the favored few from beating the gate. But it had one drawback: it compelled some newly-arrived-in-France, finished flyers to go through it all and place themselves in jeopardy. By finished flyers I mean men of the old schools of aviation, men who had trained with Curtiss and Martin and the Wrights. These were men who knew more about air than any Army school—any school of '18—could teach.

But, old as they were in air, these ancient exhibition pilots had to come over to 8, unroll their blankets among the raw-john students, and go through the school's curriculum, step by slow step. It was tough for such men as Farnum Fish, Post and Tony Janis, just to mention a few.

It was slow; killing. At least, it was killing for one of these; and that's where the irony comes in. Think of going through all the hell and danger that those early flyers knew, and escaping, only to be knocked off—in training—back at Field 8, with the Front one short step removed. You'd kick. Almost any man would kick. But these men did not. They took the game as it was dealt, never even calling for cards. You'd wonder how they could do that, too.

Captain Tony Janis, I understand, was one of two brothers prominent in early American air. At the time of which I write, this Captain Tony Janis was commanding one of Issoudun's many fields. Just which field it was I can not say, but let's suppose that it was No. 3. Field 3 was really part of Main Field, which means that it was some nine or ten kilometers removed from Field 8. Now, as was custom, while Captain Janis was commanding 3, he was also finding time to carry on his parade through all the other fields of the center. He, of course, had the Front in view. Field 3 was merely a pause along the line of march. Somebody had to command these different fields, and there were not many with the rank of captain. So, while a captain was at busy old Issoudun, he was placed in command of some school or squadron. It was a sort of way of making the higher-rankers earn their pay, I suppose.

Anyway, in the course of events, Captain Tony Janis came on over to Field 8. That is, each day he flew over for a few hours, which gave him ample time to fill the demands of the course. But it wasn't the captain's coming to Field 8 that concerns this story so much, but it was what the captain came in! He came in the most disreputable Nieuport-27 that could be found in all Issoudun. The 27 was monoplace.

THE FIRST day of Captain Tony Janis's course at 8, the field's engineering officer, Lieutenant Fish, came up to my test hangar with the captain in tow and introduced the old time pilot. Tony Janis, in spite of his two bars, was as easy to meet as a buck private. And, with captains and higher, this was not always the case.

"Sergeant," Lieutenant Fish said to me, "the captain flew his own 27 over from Field 3. He says—" and Fish kind of grinned at Tony Janis—"that it is right wing heavy and damned tail heavy. Will you see what can be done with it? The ship is 173, and you'll find it on the line near headquarters hangar. When can you get to it, Sergeant?"

"Right away, Lieutenant," I answered; and if it had been a major or a colonel—had colonels flown 27's—I'd have told Fish, "Well, Lieutenant, I'm rushed to hell. But I'll send a man down to look at the wreck as soon as we can get a breathing spell."

"There's no hurry, Sergeant," Captain Janis told me. "I'm going up in a few minutes, in one of your good Field 8 ships, for a combat with Austin. I won't be ready to start for my field for a couple of hours. Anyway, tomorrow will do if you're too busy now."

"I'll walk down that way with you two, Captain," I answered him. "Glad of a chance to get away from my own hangar for a few minutes. If there's anything that knocks the bottom out of me, Captain, it is this thing of working steady for minutes at a time. Lieutenant Fish, here, is a regular slave driver."

We walked down the line. Lieutenant Fish was grinning some more when he pointed to the captain's 27 and said:

"There she is, Sergeant. That ball of grease on two wheels. Look out it doesn't slip out of your hands. Isn't she a beauty?"

So help me Hannah, you never saw such a piece of wreckage. To think that an old airman would go up to the clouds in that!

Now, as a rule, the little Nieuport-27 was as trim and slick a ship as you'd ever care to see. Of course, after a few hours' flight, any rotary motored job will collect—on its surface—a fair amount of spent castor oil, but, withal, the average 27 had a way of retaining its maidenly beauty. This 173 ship, though, was a sight to behold. What an unsightly sight, too!

She was greased with discharged castor oil from propeller boss to rudder tip, and from wing end to wing end. Also, from the lower sides of her very much deflated tires to the upper surfaces of her superior wings. I took a peek into the cockpit, and that small cubby was just a smear of castor, too. Her struts were darkly coated. Her wires were half hidden by the stuff. But worst of all, every inch of her linen was so rotten that you could poke a finger through anywhere—and almost lose your hand up to the wrist, so doing.

"What on earth," I asked Captain Janis, "are you doing with a ship like this? Good Lord, Captain, your neck is worth something."

"Oh," he said, "I just use it to ferry over from Field 3, Sergeant. You see, the students are short of ships over there. They need every good 27 for regular first solo work. This ship wouldn't do it all. On the other hand, I can't take one of their good ships, you know."

Lieutenant Fish had stopped grinning. He was kicking stones and studying the ground. Now, a lieutenant can't always tell a captain what he thinks of this or that, but I have yet to see the Air Service

noncom who can't tell 'em all what he thinks of them, or those, or any thing else that pops up for a decision. So I told the captain.

"Captain," I said—and got away with it too—"count yourself! You're one, and you're one with the same right to live as the next guy. This crate is a death trap, a fire menace. She's oil soaked and gas soaked from end to end. Your macs over at 3 should be shoved in the coop for sending a ship like this into the air. If a Field 8 man did this thing, Lieutenant Fish, here, would have him on the carpet right away."

"Now, now!" Captain Janis laughed. "Easy on my mechanics, Sergeant. It isn't their fault. We're shy of men over at Field 3, and the crew chief understands that I expect no service on this ship."

"Well," I told the captain, "you surer'n hell get what's understood."

Just to satisfy myself that 173 was the worst piece of flying equipment in France, I swung the propeller over to a vertical, "six o'clock" position. And there was next to nothing in the line of cylinder compression: so little, in fact, that I had to stop the old whirling spray motor from spinning on past the vertical. Anyway, I took that propeller in both hands and worked it back and forth to see whether or not the motor was tight on its fixation plate. But the first thing that came to notice was the fact that the old greasy propeller was darned loose on its boss. Every one of the eight hub bolts was loose; and even the tightening and pulling nuts on the propeller shaft were slack. Why that stick ever stayed on its ship in flight was a mystery. Luck. The luck, maybe, that kept old-time flyers alive during those early, haywire days of aviation.

Well, after the slack on the hub was thoroughly understood, next came the slack on the motor's plateau-plate, where she was bolted to the ship, via the fixation plate. And was the motor loose! It was disgracefully loose. When it wiggled back and forth, and almost leaped out of the ship into my arms, Captain Janis laughed and said:

"Easy with the whip, Sergeant. I know she's a borrowed horse as well as you do, so let's not look her in the teeth."

"But she's all teeth, Captain," I objected. "Let's pull a few before your ten thousand bucks go home to the folks."

"Oh, well," the captain decided, "such is life. Anyhow, see what can be done about that wing and tail heaviness, Sergeant. Maybe I'll dig up another ferry ship over at Main Field. Guess this one is kind of all shot, eh?"

Then the captain and Lieutenant Fish strolled away, and I went to work. What a dirty job, too!

YOU DIDN'T have to be much of a rigger to see what was wrong with 173's balance. Right wing heavy, the captain said. Well, she should be! Her right wings, both superior and inferior, were washed out fully two degrees. And, to augment the condition, the left wings were drooped almost as much. This should have made a corkscrew of 173, and it's a wonder that she didn't go barrel-rolling through the sky. Well, with the washout taken out of those right wings, and the droop picked up on the left panals, the tail heaviness, too, should be taken out of the horrible wreck.

That's how rigging works. You can make more than one correction at a time. However, with a Nieuport-27, you were never sure that the treatment was going to correct the longitudinal trouble. Yes, sir, fore and aft those little babies were sure hellers. They gave all kinds of grief to good riggers. But, as far as the right wing heaviness went, I knew that I could knock 173 loose from that "lean" first time. Then, after a short hop, the captain could make a report on the tail heavy thing. That's what test hops were for.

I started to work 173's wires. Ye gods! There was so much slack on every cable that you could almost wrap a landing or

flying wire around your wrist without taking the end out of its turnbuckle. Talk about your suicide clubs! 173 was the Fool Killer's own sun chariot. They just didn't come worse, that's all you can say.

While I was breaking the few safety wires that 173 boasted, Sergeant Pat Maloney quit the circle and came over to sit on his heels and talk. The circle was just that—a circle of stones out front of the flying office. Inside this thirty-foot circle you could smoke, and there was plenty to pay if you were caught smoking any place else.

Sergeant Pat Maloney was in charge of headquarters hangar. He had a big black cigar palmed in his greasy mitt as he spoke.

"Who," he asked, "is this bird that comes over in 173? Hell of a crock, eh?"

"How do you mean—hell of a crock?" I repeated. "He seems to be a pretty good guy from what I've seen of him."

"You know what I mean, handshaker," Pat shot back. "Who's the captain, and where's he from?"

"Oh," I answered. "Why don't you say what you mean, or mean what you say, Irish? The captain is from 3. He's in command over there. Janis is his name."

"Janis?" Pat Maloney questioned. "I guessed that it was Santa Claus."

"What," I questioned, "has he been putting out round here?"

"Putting out is right," Pat Maloney was there to tell. "When he set down, about three-quarters of an hour ago, there wasn't an open place on the line. Two of my greaseballs—Jim Walsh and Cocky Webb—pulled that Spad back and made room here for the captain. Then I saw Jim and Cocky start getting clubby with the captain. Why, inside five minutes, them there ruddy moochers had put the bee on this new bird for ten francs. Now I'm two guys short in the hangar. Yeh, they jumped the first outgoing commissary truck for Issoudun.

"Well, 'bout fifteen minutes later, the captain came back to his ship to get something that he'd left in the cockpit. I went out and told him how he'd paid off two of my worst help, and shorthanded my crew. This man Janis just gave me the hoss laugh, and said, 'Keep it under your hat, Sergeant. A war is just what you make it. You and I would like to be in Issoudun right now, too; or in New York, Squeedunk or Podunk. Am I right?'

" 'Right you are, Captain,' is what I told him," Pat Maloney said. He added, "See this here swell Cuban rope?" He displayed the palmed cigar. "Well, boy, the captain slipped it to me. It's the first real smoke I've had in six long months. You know, this Janis is sort of different, eh, handshaker?"

"That's how he struck me, goldbrick." I told Pat. "Ain't it hell the way punk fields—like 3—get good C.O's, while swell posts like 8 draw such washouts as Captain Buck and Callbrook? What's the answer to that, Pat?"

"That's easy," Sergeant Pat Maloney made answer. "It's this way. There's not enough good men to go round. Every post has to have at least one good head. This Janis, I reckon, is the only good one at 3. And here at 8 there'll never be a good C.O. wasted because I'm here to handle things . . . Well, handshaker, guess I'll return to the ring and drag a few luxurious drags on this very luxurious cigar which the captain gave me for being a regular guy."

"Say, regular guy," I shot after his slow, circle-ward back, "why don't you open your great big royal American heart and put a couple of your useless greaseballs and a pail of hot water to work on this ship? It's a crime to send the damned thing back into the air."

"Yeh," Pat Maloney agreed, "and it's also a crime to do 3's work. The crew chief that sent this out should be detailed back to the garbage gang, and—"

"I covered that ground with the captain and Fish," I told Pat, "and you can't improve on what I said, either. But you're right for once, goldbrick. The crew chief should—unto him should be done whatever you were going to say . . . You know, goldbrick, even in

your hangar it would be hard to find a ship that's as rotten as this."

What Sergeant Pat Maloney said then is nobody's business. At least, nobody's but fellow soldiers. Yes, sir, he talked soldier!

Nevertheless, to shame Field 3 and the devil, Pat said:

"I'll do that little thing. Hey, Moody —and you Barcello! Come a-runnin'— and bring a nice, warm pail of loose and soapy water. Get the rags out!"

Then, with his slaves slinging water, Pat went back to the circle. Others in the circle were looking at, discussing, 173.

HOWEVER, the Field 8 swabs weren't so hot over the idea of putting out much labor on a Field 3 crock; so, at best, the job they did was nothing to boast about. The little bit of grease that their endeavors knocked off that ship didn't reduce the fire hazard by much. But they did this: When one of Pat's men removed a handhold cover that gave access to the "guts" of the ship—motor boards, rear of fixation plate, magneto and gas line—he discovered that there was a gasoline leak; and this gas dripped right on the breaker box of the single mag. That was plenty bad. The washer called Pat over and asked—

"Ain't that gas, Sergeant?"

"They ain't no such word as ain't, Barcello," Sergeant Pat Maloney told his dumb help. At the same time he passed an inspecting hand over the wet breaker box, and added, "But this ain't nothing else but gas! Oh, hell! And to think that a guy rode over in such a wreck."

Gasoline falling on a breaker box! You can't think of a worse thing than that— unless it is a thought of the second when that gasoline stops dripping, and blazes! Why it hadn't done that was beyond all understanding. But—and this here, brother, is cold fact—you can't get the heart chill of such a situation unless you have done some birding on your own part. And not even then unless you have seen fire in the air, or the terrible aftermath of fire in the air.

Fire in the air that has left one or more boys laying there in the charred débris, chests expanded, arms wide and fighting, partly burned boots still on their legs, and the whole body looking like seared beeves. Blackened, puffed mouths still wide open—mouths that had tried for one last breath of air, only to suck flame— and heads thrown back. Awful! Awful is a weak word here. You can't, with mere words, paint a picture of the hop that ended in fire. Fire is terrible. No airman deserves such an end.

I mention all this in order that you'll know what Captain Janis had escaped. Why he had escaped disaster, how he had escaped the visit in red—well, it was just one of those things; and there is no explanation. Call it flying luck if you believe in luck. Name it fortune of war. But at any rate, remember that the captain had made a game man's choice. He had chosen to use a rank ship, instead of compelling some poor buck cadet over at 3 to use it. That fact, even if nothing else were to enter, was enough to make Field 8 men turn to Captain Tony Janis with all the aid that they could put out. Captain Janis, and his swell sportsmanship, was the talk and the toast of the circle. As before hinted, Field 8 had always run short on good C.O's.

But there was work to be done at Field 8, so I put the finishing touches to that rigging job. When I finally quit, and went down the line toward my own hangar, Sergeant Pat Maloney was putting in a new copper gas lead. His two soap and water men, after a fairish burst of industry, had fallen asleep in the quiet shade of 173's lower left wing. She was sure a tough war for some guys!

Noon recall had sounded. I was on my way toward our 10th squadron barracks when I noticed Pat Maloney giving 173's pilot a throw on the prop. Captain Janis was ready to hop off for 3. I came alongside just as the rotary motor started to hit.

"About this rigging job, Captain," I said, leaning over the cockpit's edge to speak. "I'm pretty sure that the wing

heaviness will be knocked out, but we're never sure about the longitudinal thing. If you'll fly a turn of the field, then set down for a few minutes, I'll make whatever adjustments are needed."

"Never mind about that, Sergeant," the captain answered. "She looks fine. Many thanks. I'll hop right back to Field 3, for I'm in a hurry today. I'll tell you how she flies when I get back tomorrow. Much obliged, again—and thank the boys who washed her for me. So long."

The captain hit 173 with power, and the rambling wreck went away from that deadline with the speed and gay abandon of a regular ship. Well, new or old, good or bad, a Nieuport-27 was hard to beat.

Sergeant Pat Maloney and I turned and started for our barracks. In front of flying office we met a certain member of Field 8's official staff. This officer, still watching the departing Janis, said:

"That, men, is one hell of a disgraceful wreck, eh? If it was anybody but Captain Janis I'd be tempted to mark the thing out of commission, prevent it from flying off this field."

"Well," Pat Maloney suggested, "why the devil don't you, Captain? Do Janis a favor. He's his own worst enemy."

The certain member of Field 8's official family thought a bit on that suggestion, and smiled. He said:

"I'll take your order, Sergeant. When Captain Janis flies that ship in tomorrow, you call Sergeant Smith and have him condemn the plane. Have Smith send it to salvage. Then I'll see to it that Captain Janis gets an order to use one of our headquarters planes for his field-to-field ferry. However, Sergeant, don't you forget that you put me up to this."

"I'll stand behind you, Captain," Pat Maloney promised. "And see that they don't hang you with anything but a brand new rope."

We took up the march again toward our barracks. Pat Maloney was very happy.

"That surer'n hell will be rich!" he said, more than once. "Saving the captain's life, right over his own dead body, as you might say. Yes, sir, handshaker, she'll sure be rich."

ABOUT eight-thirty next morning I noticed 173 come in from the north. The captain passed over my hangar, hit the ground at mid-field, and taxied up to the deadline, 'way down near headquarters. We were having it kind of soft on the test-line that morning, so I guessed that I'd have time to run down the field and ask the captain how 173 flew now. I did that thing, glad of the rest. Ah, she was a tough war!

All along the line a flight of combat students were getting set to take off. Down at Sergeant Pat Maloney's hangar, waiting on the line, was a brand new 27. There was a group of pilots and macs there giving the new boat the once over. She was sure a pretty job, all new and clean. Only last evening was this ship delivered to 8. Even at 8, as good as our student boats were, new ships weren't any too plentiful. For a fact, new pieces of flying equipment were always hard to get. But this bus—444—was a darb. She had that swell French camouflage all over her. You know—soft green and yellow and blue and buff, all run together, puddled. Tell you what, that French camouflage was pretty.

"Hello, Pat," I said. "Seen Captain Janis?"

Pat Maloney pointed to where 173 had been dragged back behind the circle.

"Look," he said, "I've sent for Jack Smith. We'll surer'n hell hang a can on that wreck today . . . The captain?" he repeated. "I guess he's still in the flying office . . . See my new bus? Swell boat, what? Captain Janis is on my list for a ship this period, and I'm saving this 444 for him. For once, that *bon pilote* is going to have a swell ship. And you, handshaker, don't let me hear you make any more wisecracks about my culls being almost as dirty as 173."

"I'll take that back, goldbrick," I backed down. "And I'll give you credit

for being a fine, humane gentleman. This Janis rates a good ship, Pat. He's a white man. And, even here in air service, white men don't come too often. You're all right, Irish; and I hope to dance on your grave . . . Here comes the captain now."

Captain Janis walked around 444 a few times. You never saw a happier man. A good, airworthy ship at last! Chances are, the fine old time pilot had never flown a better airplane in his long career.

The captain swung aboard his small mount. I remember coming alongside and tossing the captain's shoulder straps over his back and into his hands. At the same time, I asked—

"How about 173, Captain?"

"Fine, Sergeant," he said. "She handles like a top now. Many thanks . . . By the way, will you get the cushion out of 173 for me? I'm always forgetting to bring the darned thing along when I climb into another ship." Captain Janis wasn't a tall man. And a man with short legs is more or less out of luck when it comes to reaching the rudder bar of the average craft. But, by placing an extra cushion at his back, the not-so-tall pilot can get himself forward—and be just as darned good on the rudder as is his taller brother. "I left 173 right over there," Captain Janis said. At the same time he turned in the seat of 444 and pointed to where he'd left his nasty Field 3 cull. "Why, she's gone, Sergeant," he said. "Now who do you suppose stole that fine ship?"

"Never mind 173," I said. "I'll rob one of these other ships. Maybe they've taken 173 down to one of the other hangars to wash it out, Captain."

"Wash it out?" he questioned, and half smiled. "Sergeant, that sounds like a nasty threat."

I took the topic off 173 by saying:

"You've sure got a swell job here, Captain. 444 is the newest bus on 8. She came over from Main Field last thing before quitting time yesterday. Lucky for you that the staff didn't grab her for headquarters hangar. They need good ships."

"She is good," Captain Janis agreed.

I watched his gaze as he looked down and studied the varnished inside of the cockpit. The linen was new and bright, no oil any place. The drip pan, under the gas and oil tank, was spick-and-span. It was a sight to make a pilot feel right, feel safe. And this pilot was in a position to appreciate the thing. "I'll take good care of this baby," he said. "I'll handle it careful as eggs." He wiggled his controls, kicking rudder and trying stick. "Everything snug," he added. "Feels like a real airplane."

You'd think that Field 8's flying office staff had built 444 with their own hands were you on the deadline when that brand new bus took the air. What's more, you'd also think that this field of fine ships had never seen a first rate piece of flying equipment before. Of course, getting right down to cases, it wasn't so much the ship as it was the welfare of the man who was piloting it. No use talking, this Field 3 captain, and his awful ship, had caused no little worry on our orderly, shipshape reservation.

Well—very well, if you should ask any Field 8 man—our post had done the right thing. All that could be given to this unobtrusive visitor had been given. And though the salvage gang had stolen his 173 they had done so in order that he might go on living. Everything was jake, and everybody was happy.

444 was the last of thirty-four Nieuport 27's to take the air for that period's work. Captain Janis, having spent so much time kidding his fellow officers and the Field 8 mechanics, hit her on the tail right from the deadline. Before the good ship had moved ahead ten feet its tail was up; and the small craft was in the air before fifty yards of the field had been used up. Then 444's pilot pulled back and zoomed. His zoom was better than vertical, so that made a *chandelle* of the climb; and Field 8's watchers looked up and during the seconds that 444 swept past overhead those bent necked watchers could see Captain Janis's hands and feet on the controls. And him hardly two

hundred feet in the air! Ah, brother, that there was great flying—and Field 8 knew plenty of it—but that there was also suicide stuff.

The captain kicked 444 out of that *chandelle*, off its back, and over on to an even, wheels down keel again. He was on his way, on his way to wherever he was booked to meet Austin or Osgood in combat. This practise combat would take place anywhere within a radius of many kilometers of 8. Each student was assigned a different spot in the sky.

Oh, well, now that all the goldbricks had managed to get that flight of ships into the air, what about putting out a wee bit of war winning work for Field 8? After all, a war is just what you make it; and if you make it too easy you're likely to loaf yourself out of whatever soft graft you're holding down. For my own part I'd worked my testline job up to a place where it amounted to a position. It's the truth. General Black Jack himself, in person, was trying to get my plum and I wouldn't swap with him. Back to the testline hangar I went, with the idea of acting important for a spell. If a noncom acted important enough he could always fool the best set of officers that ever staffed a flying field, for they could never guess just what he was really doing. Chances are, the noncom wasn't doing a thing. I know I wasn't, most of the time.

BUT THERE were other things at Field 8 besides one good looking Nieuport 27 with 444 on its sides. For instance, there were bad accidents and even killings, almost daily. And it wasn't half an hour after my return to the testline before the ambulance was going hell bent down the road to the west. Right after the old meat wagon, and making just as many miles per hour, went a field service Ford with trailer.

That was the usual order of things. If a crash report came in, flying office sent the meat wagon to bring back the boy who made the crash; also flying office sent the car and trailer to bring back what might be left of the ship. And, as a rule, there wasn't a whole heck of a lot left after a pursuit ship crashed. The little crates usually sat down hard and fast when they took the fall on a forced landing. And it wasn't all open field around Issoudun, so, in many cases, the *bon pilotes* were forced to wrap their out of luck buses around trees and vineyard stakes. And wrap they did! And a busy day for field service was when five or six Nieuports did this and came home thus.

You got kind of hardened to that sort of thing, too. I saw more than one ship crash and kill at 8, within a hundred yards of the long deadline, without causing the macs on that deadline to stop work and ask who got it. Perhaps it is that you grow less morbid with such killings all around you, and care to see no more of that. That's it, for who wanted to see a fellow Yank sent West? Life was good, even in the Army.

Maybe it was all of a half or three-quarters of an hour before the ambulance came back. And as one of my testline macs said—

"Here she comes a-hellin', gang!"

The old wagon was hi-balling, sure enough. That meant either one of two things. The crash victim was either dead, and beyond caring how fast and rough that ambulance rolled; or he wasn't aboard at all. That is, he had escaped entirely. Anyway, the thing passed from view behind the hangars, down the highway toward our main gate, and out of our minds.

But some twenty minutes after this another of the testline gang pointed to the highway, saying—

"That there looks like hell!"

That there sure did look, at least, like a small slice of hell. The field service trailer held what was left of a rotary motor, and an armful of twisted wires and charred bits of wood. The propeller end of the motor was facing up. About a foot of that propeller, to either side of the hub, still remained. And those stubbed

blades were still burning as the Ford and trailer swept past.

A burning! No Field 8 ship had ever burned before. Now, you take over at Main Field, and at Field 9, that's where you'd find the DeHaviland 4's going down in the red; or hitting, then burning. And take the Nieuport 28; the 28 would break its gas lead, and burn. But the 27—the Nieuport 27 was as near fireproof as you'd find 'em. And now the impossible, the unexpected, had happened—and a 27 at that! There'd be hell to pay. Some crew chief must have sent her up with a leaky gas tank, or oil soaked, or— At any rate, I was glad that I wasn't the hangar chief whose ship that was.

There was a Spad down in headquarters hangar that wasn't flying just right. They'd reported that it was tail heavy. This was as good a time as any to trot down there and see what could be done about the Spad's alignment. So thinking, I went down the line.

Down near the circle, in the drive between flying office and headquarters hangar, that field service Ford and its trailer stood, the center of a gloomy gathering. The propeller ends sent up thin risers of blue-white smoke. There wasn't a whole lot of talking going on. Flying officers, very wild cadets and mechanics simply stood there and gazed at something that was entirely new and very real.

At the edge of the watching group Sergeants Pat Maloney and Jack Smith—he of field inspection—were standing.

"Is she one of our Field 8 ships?" I asked.

"Uh-huh," Jack Smith said. He added, "She caught fire at five thousand. Burned all the way down. This is all that was left."

I turned to Sergeant Maloney, after half a minute.

"Your ship, Pat?"

"444," he said. "Just as Smithy tells, it burned down from four or five thousand feet. Fell on the north edge of Neuvy-Pillout. That's all we know. The Frenchmen couldn't tell how come, but the whole town saw it spin down; so we know that she was on fire in the air."

Lieutenant Fish and the captain who had made 444 possible for Captain Janis were there in the group. Together they turned away from the trailer and moved slowly toward flying office. And at that very minute a lone ship, jazzing its throttled motor in a landing glide, dropped down over the hangars and prepared to set its wheels on the ground.

Wheels! Everybody looked up, saw that ship, and realized that all was not right with its wheels. At least, with its left wheel.

The lone ship was dirty old 173—and its left wheel was all haywire. The wire wheel itself was bashed in; and the tire was clear off and draped around the axle. Obviously, the pilot—whoever he might be—didn't know this, for the ship was hell bent for its setdown.

And it did set down—in a cloud of dust and flying stones. And when it stopped setting down, after plowing up more than a few hundred feet of Field 8, that old 173 crock was no longer a problem. It was salvage. It was in half a dozen pieces not counting the great shower of small parts that had bounced off while the plowing was at its best, or worst. However, when things stopped flying and rolling and plowing, Field 8 went very quiet and all eyes watched. Also, all watchers wondered and waited.

UP FROM the wreckage he came—one wild and well known flying cadet who had been guilty of much aerial helling during his stay of nearly a week at 8. Best that I just call him a cadet, and refrain from using his name at this late date.

Anyway, the wild cadet was unhurt. Oh, he had a few small cuts and numerous large bruises, but what was that to a cadet?

Fish and the staff captain strolled out toward the wreck. And they alone went out, for it was at a time when Field 8 was

very carefully observing that rule which is supposed to be iron clad on all flying posts: All save ambulance attaches and officers in charge keep off the flying field when an accident occurs.

"What the devil happened?" the wild cadet asked, when the captain and Lieutenant Fish arrived at the point of débris. "Did I have both wheels on her when I came in over the hangars, Captain?"

"You did," the captain told him. And, lying a bit, the captain stalled a bit. "Yes, both wheels were there. See, they're still here. One here, and the other out there half a hundred feet."

The captain, going alone, went toward that wheel that had rolled far afield. Had you seen the captain, going alone, you might have noticed that he had the look of a man who expected to find something that he didn't want to find. Which, after all, doesn't make very good sense. But, presently, you'll see what the captain saw.

The captain saw that this was the left wheel. And the much battered tire, hanging by its inner tube, was still with the wheel. Standing there alone, the captain could see that the tire had been sliced three times. Those three slices were each about four inches apart. They were the kind of slices that a whirling propeller might put into any part of another ship, had the whirling propeller of one ship bit into another. This, too, is a thing that sometimes happens in air. And it's a very bad thing to have happen in air.

The captain came back to where Lieutenant Fish and the wild cadet were talking. Fish had just asked—

"What the devil were you doing with 173?"

"I got a flying slip from the clerk in flying office," the cadet explained. "You see, I wasn't flying a regular period. I'm all done here at 8, *lached*. I'm going out at noon, up to Orly. But I wanted one last hop and the clerk gave me a flying slip and told me to go out and dig up a bus. I found this 173 down the line, and a couple of my fellow cadets, being close at hand, gave me a start on the motor. That was all jake, wasn't it, Lieutenant?"

"Yes and no," Lieutenant Fish answered. "173 was marked out of commission just before you took her, Cadet."

That wild young flying man laughed.

"Well," he said, "she's surer'n hell out of commission now, Lieutenant. No harm done, eh?"

"No harm done," Fish agreed.

The captain asked the wild cadet a few questions. He wanted to know how long 173 had been in the air. Also whether it had been over Neuvy-Pillout.

"Let's see," the cadet speculated, and took a peek at his Army issue wrist watch. "Hell! I'll have to hurry. It's close on to noon, and my train pulls out of Issoudun shortly after one . . . Neuvy-Pillout, you say, Captain? That's that little burg over there, isn't it?"

The cadet was pointing in the wrong direction, off to the east, where you could see the roof tops of Saint Valentine among the trees. The captain corrected the cadet and added—

"Neuvy-Pillout is west, over on the river."

"Oh, yeh," the cadet chirped. "I flew all over that neck of the woods, and beyond. It's nearly an hour and a half since I was over Neuvy. I remember, now. There was a large order of heavy clouds right above that little burg on the river. Those clouds were at five thousand feet. I stopped off for awhile to combat my ship's shadow and do a few dives. Captain, them there were clouds, what I mean! I flew back and forth through the mess two or three times just to see how good I was at the blind flying stuff. And, being a cadet, I was good. Very good. Never had so much fun since the medical examiners made their big mistake and gave my eyes a 20-20 rating."

"See any other ships over near Neuvy-Pillout?" the captain wanted to know.

"No," the cadet answered. "I had the whole sky to myself."

The captain studied his watch, and suggested:

"Guess you'd best be shaking a leg, Cadet, if you're going to make that outgoing truck and train. Good luck to you, and always watch the sky you're flying in, above, both sides—and below."

The cadet, before starting, took one last look at the ship he had just set down. He laughed, and said:

"She was a hard looking wreck, anyhow, Captain. This 173, I mean."

"She was a hard looking wreck," the captain agreed. But, chances are, the captain was thinking more of 444.

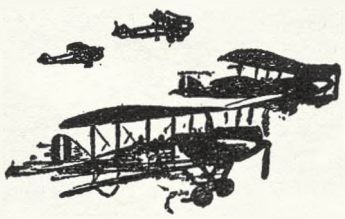
When the cadet had departed the captain said:

"I'm satisfied," he told Lieutenant Fish, "that the cadet saw no other ship above Neuvy-Pillout. The way he came in for this landing proved that. And, as I see the thing, it is only fair that we let him go up the line with a song in his heart. A wild cadet, as a rule, makes a good front line pilot; and knowing too much about a thing like this might break the best airman in the game. Also, Fish, the benzine board is a dumb thing; and the Lord only knows what they would do to this boy. So we'll forget that the cadet's left wheel appears to have met something hard and cutting in flight."

Lieutenant Fish looked away to where that left wheel still rested, and asked—

"They were both in the clouds over Neuvy-Pillout?"

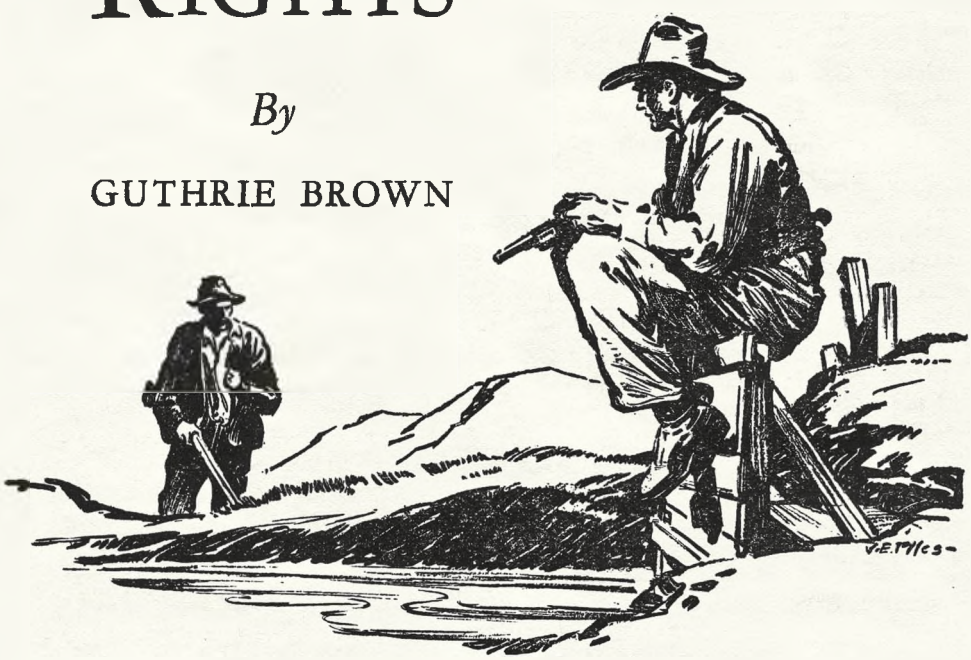
"Yes," the captain answered. "And at the same time. It was just a matter of inches, Fish. You understand. The propeller of 444 just barely bit 173's wheel. But that propeller broke. And because he was in the clouds, and couldn't see, Captain Janis, no doubt, never guessed. Then, before he had time to cut his motor, the hellish vibration broke his gasoline pipe. Fire—that's all. It has happened before, and it'll happen again. Perhaps for you, perhaps for me."



RIGHTS

By

GUTHRIE BROWN



A Story of the Southwest

"WHO IS HE?" Lew Pace put the question to the storekeeper.

"Who you mean?"

"That feller by the post office window."

"Him? Why, he's been here nigh a month!"

"Well, I been away two months. Never saw him till tonight. Who is he?"

"Name's Lloyd Wallace."

"Yes, but who is he?"

"Why, he's a young man."

"Oh," retorted Pace with heavy sarcasm. "I hadn't noticed that. Are you gonna tell me or—"

Just then Al Barnes spoke.

"Good run of water, ain't there?"

The question was directed at Wallace. He turned with a smile. Pace liked his wide set eyes and direct, friendly glance as he answered Barnes.

"First rate. Does it ever get short in here?"

"Well," Barnes drawled, "you got all A stock, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, the owners of B stock sometimes run short in the fall, but there's always plenty of A water. You oughtn't to be short."

The room had grown oddly quiet and every eye was fixed on Wallace. He looked from face to face. He realized that something was in the air and he waited attentively for the next move. Pace glanced about in manifest astonishment and broke out:

"What the hell you driving at, Al? There ain't but one place in the Lonesome Valley where A water ever gets short—"

"Shut up!" warned a loud whisper near the door. "Here he comes!"

A tall, lean old man entered the doorway and, in dead silence, walked the

length of the building to the post office window and asked for his mail. When he turned he encountered the gaze of Wallace, who spoke and made a friendly remark or two. The old man responded jerkily but not uncivilly and stalked out into the night. Not a sound was made in the store until the noise of his horse's hoofs was lost.

Then Al Barnes jerked a thumb toward Wallace and answered Pace.

"He bought the old Atherton place."

"*Bought* it?"

"Yeh."

"Hell!" Both voice and manner were full of dismay as Pace turned to Wallace. "Who sold it to you?"

"Orville Carter."

Pace nodded slowly with a wry mouth.

"He would, the —"

The epithet dropped into the stillness with judicious deliberation and an affirmative nod ran about the room. Pace appeared to meditate and Wallace waited, his steady glance on the other's face.

"You farmed much?" the older man asked at last.

"No."

"Been cowboyin' and decided you'd like a ranch of your own?"

"Something like that."

"You can shoot, I 'spose?" came next.

Wallace did not resent the questioning. He understood that in some way these men were concerned for him.

"Well—yes."

"You've learned enough since you been here, ain't you, to know that water is what we live by, the water in our ditches?"

"Yes."

"Well, you're gonna be short of water."

"How's that?"

Pace did not answer but returned to his former point.

"Are you a good shot?"

No man quite controlled a gasp at Wallace's reply to that question. Pace found himself looking into the speaking end of a six-shooter while the owner's eyes smiled above it.

"Where," demanded Pace forcefully, "did you get that damn thing?"

For answer Wallace returned the gun slowly to the holster under his arm and Pace heaved a sigh of relief.

"I never did tote one of 'em. Always hated 'em worse'n poison. But, yes, I guess you can take care of yourself, all right. There's only one place around here, though, that you'll need that shootin' iron."

"Where's that?"

"On your own ranch."

"Yes?"

"Boy, you bought the Atherton place!"

"Well?" Wallace could not help smiling a little at the heavy solemnity of the other.

"Every fall," explained Pace, "old Maitland steals the water from that place to irrigate his bottom land. I wouldn't just exactly fancy you're the man to take that sittin' down."

"Maitland? The man who was just in here?"

"Him. Boy—" Pace leaned forward earnestly—"he has five little notches on the barrel of his old rifle, and each of them notches stands for a man he's killed."

"Am I supposed to ask why he killed them?"

But Pace was in no mood for levity.

"You gotta know why he killed 'em. One of 'em was a ditch rider who tried to make Maitland keep his hands off the division boxes, and two of 'em was men who've owned the Atherton place, and two of 'em was deputy sheriffs sent to arrest him."

There was a long silence while Wallace considered this information. Finally he asked—

"Doesn't he have enough water of his own?"

"He has only a little A water," replied Pace. "It cost a good deal more than B stock when the ditch was built, so he bought the cheaper water, 'sposin', I guess, that there'd always be plenty of it. But the country's filled up faster than the ditch has growed. When the B water is shut off in late summer, just as the crops are beginnin' to fill good, Maitland is short and takes what he wants at the division box."

"Does he figure it's his?"

"That's just what he does figger. He's one of the three charter members, now alive, who built the ditch, and he says he has a right to what he needs. He's put five men underground to point his argument."

"H-m-m. Did anybody ever try to reason with him?"

"Yeh. The ditch rider and one of the sheriffs."

Wallace gravely digested this and asked:

"Carter got along all right, didn't he? He told me he had lived on the place three years."

"Yes!" exploded Pace with his favorite expletive. "Blast his yellow hide! He got along by lettin' Maitland have his way, and two years Carter's crops shriveled in the field."

The smooth brow of the young man had acquired a deep furrow above the eyes.

"But Maitland has been a good neighbor to me—given me advice about my planting, and loaned me machinery—"

"Then you're the only man he's ever done if for."

"Well, maybe I could talk to him."

"I tell you," Pace declared, "you can't change that old bird's convictions with anything less 'n a bullet. He goes plumb loco if anybody tries to talk to him about it. I tried once, after he'd killed his second man. Never moved faster in my life than when he told me to get off the ranch."

"But," said Wallace, "I ought to be able—you know, if one is neighborly there isn't much chance for trouble."

"Don't you go entertainin' no such disastrous notions," warned Pace seriously. "You can't dodge trouble that way with old Maitland. He may soften a little on the outside, but the inside is rock."

Now other men lent their weight to the warning, expanding upon the different killings until Wallace demanded, laughing—

"You fellows trying to scare me out of the country?"

Pace looked at him and grunted.

"Scare you? Huh!" Then he added in a different tone, "But just keep in mind that it's you or him."

Wallace looked at him and Pace suddenly saw that the evening's effort had not been wasted. He saw that Wallace comprehended the situation. Something in the young man's eyes—what was it? Pace saw trouble.

IT WAS not until a week later that he got an answer to the astonished query that leaped to mind at that moment. He had been riding by Wallace's house on Sunday afternoon and thought he'd just drop in and visit a little.

The old Atherton place occupied a couple of mesas above the Lonesome River, and Maitland's farm lay below, most of it bottom land.

Pace walked around Wallace's house to find old Maitland sitting on the back step. The two men looked at each other for a long minute, and inside the house a woman's gay voice demanded, in mock horror—

"Haven't you a flour-sifter?"

Pace felt suddenly weak in the legs and sat down on the step himself. He had heard that Lois Maitland was at home, that she was going to stay this year with her father instead of going back to Hartstown to work. Pace sunk his head dejectedly in his hands.

Lois Maitland! Probably better than any one else in the valley, Pace understood the shadow that had always overhung the girl. People were not so unfriendly as she imagined, however they hated and feared her father, but she had always held herself aloof, nevertheless. And here those two kids—Wallace and Lois—had probably gone and fallen in love! And old Maitland—

Wallace came out at this juncture and expressed his pleasure at seeing Pace and insisted that he stay for the dinner Lois was getting ready.

When he entered the house, Pace knew that his worst surmises were correct.

Lois had always carried herself with a straightforward dignity. But added to that today was a deep glow in her eyes and a genuinely gay smile as she gave Pace her hand. She and the big-brotherly, very profane Pace had always been tacit friends. She had never held him off as she had the others.

Maitland, as was his habit, said nothing during the meal, but the others talked and laughed together for an hour. Pace could not remember when he had more thoroughly enjoyed himself. But as he rode home his heart was heavy with foreboding. For he knew old Maitland.

Wallace had felt from his first acquaintance with Lois Maitland some element about her which he had not been able to define. After the talk in the store he understood it, understood also what the comradeship with himself meant to the proud and lonely girl.

The girl was frontier born and not a poor judge of character. She knew that Wallace was a man of unusual quality and she appreciated his feeling for her accordingly. As for Wallace, he had not supposed it possible for a heart to hold so much of happiness as his did.

From the first the relationship between Lois and her father had been a source of wonder to Wallace. He understood it little better after the skeleton—or skeletons—in the Maitland closet had been revealed. He could not fathom the attitude of those two toward each other. They rarely spoke; they never looked each other in the eyes; and yet they certainly didn't avoid each other.

The difficulty of understanding that relationship lay in its extreme simplicity. Maitland and his daughter were absolutely loyal to each other, and they left each other strictly alone. There were never any passages of affection between them, and yet Wallace felt that the father knew and approved of the tie between the two young people. And that was not all. Maitland responded to Wallace's friendliness in a manner that left no doubt of his feelings. Sometimes he would ascend the hill in the evening and smoke a pipe on Wallace's doorstep and discuss crops in jerky sentences, like a man unused to conversation. Most of Maitland's bottom land was planted to corn and Wallace saw his pride in the field. Then the old man would tap his briar on the stone and walk away after an abrupt and husky goodnight.

Wallace was remodeling the old ranchhouse in his spare time. Some days Lois would bring up a lunch and help him a few hours. What had he lived for, he wondered, before he knew her? For Lois grew upon him, even when, as the summer wore to a close, he began to sense something not quite right. At times a shadow appeared to draw across her mind and she was silent, almost moody.

Wallace's habit was to take any problem into the open with himself and, if it concerned another, to talk it over. But he saw that it was hard for Lois to be frank concerning her own difficulties.

One night they returned from a moonlight ramble along the river after Maitland had gone to bed. They entered the house in the dark and Wallace felt in his pocket for matches while Lois looked for a lamp. Suddenly he heard her draw a quick, sobbing breath. He asked the trouble, but could get no answer. He struck a match and saw Maitland's rifle leaning against the wall. Even in the brief flare Wallace glimpsed the notches along the barrel. He understood that it was this which the girl had touched in the dark.

"Lois," Wallace said, "it would do you good to talk to some one. If you keep such things bottled up too long, they can turn to poison in you."

She only shook her head to all his earnest pleading.

In the days that followed the shadow appeared to deepen over her. Wallace, of course, guessed that she feared trouble between himself and her father. For all his own ease of mind on that matter, there was still something about her which forbade his assuring her that there was no danger. He could not mention the subject if she did not.

For Wallace had, inevitably, got to entertaining those disastrous notions against which Pace had warned him. The young man knew that old Maitland liked him very much. It was ridiculous to think that the old man wouldn't respect Wallace's rights. He was a queer, hard-shelled old fellow but, aside from the real neighborliness he had shown the younger man, he compelled Wallace's respect by a certain rough strength and an unacknowledged idealism—that combination of iron and fire that marked the best type of the pioneer. Wallace himself was of the stuff of the pioneers and such men drew him with the force of a magnet. Pace was another, different, but of the same enduring quality.

He met Pace on the road and they stopped to talk, Pace knowing that it was getting about the time of year for trouble. He opened the subject obliquely under a discussion of crops.

"The rains are about due."

"Does it rain very much here?"

"Apt to. Pretty dry last season, and when it comes this year we'll likely get a lot more than we want. Then the Lonesome will get up and raise particular hell from the Lizard Head to where it empties into the Dolorosa."

"The crops need a good rain," said Wallace.

"Yours will."

Wallace turned his head slowly and looked at the other.

"I'm not looking for trouble."

Pace sighed patiently.

"Of course," he admitted, "there's a chance in ten thousand that you may be right. But it's a mighty slim chance, even at them odds. Just look where you're goin', boy. Just look almighty close where you set your feet these days."

TWO MORNINGS later Wallace found his water shut off. He investigated and found the entire head going down Maitland's ditch.

Wallace sat down on the ditch bank. It had come. The thing was perfectly incredible, but it had come. His first sensation was more astonishment than anger —that and a secret hurt. He did not really need the water for a few days and he left the box as it was for the present. He wanted to do some clear thinking, if that were possible.

Pace, who had been rounding up a few stray steers, rode by and saw the water going down Maitland's ditch. He rode into Wallace's barnyard and asked directly if the old man had shut it off. Wallace nodded.

"Gonna let him have his way?" asked Pace, gazing noncommittally into distance.

Wallace glanced sharply at him.

"That tone is not fair, and you know it."

Pace looked into the troubled eyes and his voice softened as he acknowledged—

"It ain't." He knew that Wallace was thinking of the girl and he added, "Boy, you're in a devil of a jackpot." After a long silence, he suggested, "Can't Lois do anything with him?"

"A man doesn't put his trouble up to a woman . . . "

Wallace put the division board back in place that evening. With his whole being he longed for Lois, but some instinct told him to stay away from her and to avoid a meeting with Maitland until it was forced upon him.

He spent two utterly unhappy days, and found the water shut off again. Maitland must have come at daylight. There was no hesitation this time about resetting the box. Wallace drove a nail through the cross piece and into the division board, making it impossible to move it again without tearing it to pieces.

He walked to the edge of the mesa and stood for a time watching Maitland cultivating corn in the bottom. The old man trudged stolidly behind his team, his tall form bent over the handles of the cultivator. The field lay along the high south bank of the Lonesome River. It was the deepest and richest soil in the valley.

A feeling of helpless pity took possession of Wallace as he looked down. He

picked out each detail of the picture that lay spread at his feet under the blazing August sun—the stubborn old man and the corn of which he was so proud; the rude log ranch buildings, erected slowly through the years; the long lines of barbed wire fence, wire that had been paid for with the minted gold of a man's unflagging toil; the elm at the corner of the house, the only tree of its kind in the country, which Maitland had told him was planted when Lois was a baby. These the young man saw as symbols of that spirit which he honored and for which he himself stood. Old Maitland was a lonely figure as he plodded over the brown earth through the snapping leaves of the corn—lonely as the turgid mountain stream that fed his land . . .

Wallace was aghast at the issue which was being forced upon him. His thought turned to Lois and he faced himself squarely. There could be no real question of where he was to stand in this matter. Wallace's code was simple. A man defended his natural rights or he was less than a man. Maybe Lois understood that. But why wouldn't she talk to him? Didn't she see that it was not a condition of choice between himself and her father? It was simply a question of recognizing a principle and the necessity of standing by it.

What Wallace did not fathom was that the matter of those five notches on an old rifle barrel had never been mentioned between Maitland and his daughter. Always Lois looked at her father through a thin haze of horror; but that had no influence upon her sense of duty.

Neither he nor Wallace had any guess as to the state of her mind now. She knew that her father was taking Wallace's water and she understood her lover well enough to know that he would not tolerate such a situation. Neither man could know with what desperate terror she watched them. At times she longed to talk with Wallace, but that would mean the mentioning of unpleasant things. Each morning, when her father went out at daylight to set his water, she crept into the alder thicket behind the house and crouched and listened with her heart in her throat and her nails digging into her palms.

WALLACE sat on a board laid across the top of the division box and watched the crimsoning sky and listened to those early morning sounds that the earth can offer to an appreciative ear—the first low song of birds, the stir of the wind in the sage, the slipping of a clod from the ditch bank into the water.

He saw Maitland come up over the edge of the mesa and advance steadily. The old man's rifle lay in the crotch of his arm. Wallace sat with his hands clasped loosely between his knees. It did not seem thinkable, he reflected, that possible death lurked in the rosy light of the spreading dawn.

If Maitland found any difficulty in facing the other, he did not show it when he spoke.

"You will have to leave that division board where I set it after this."

"But you don't set it where it belongs."

Maitland's face tightened and his voice lost a little of its steadiness.

"I say for you to let it alone."

Wallace looked into the flint-like face from which every trace of friendliness had vanished, and knew that there was no use in delay.

"You can't take my water, Mr. Maitland."

"It is my water," replied the old man coldly.

"How do you make that out?"

"I came into this valley," Maitland told him, "before any one else who is here now. I started this ditch and kept it going when other men fell down on the job. I put hundreds of dollars' worth of work in here that I never got a cent for. I have a right to what I need."

Wallace was silent before this amazing creed. Maitland went on.

"You don't seem to realize that I have given you more leeway than any other

man. The others only moved my division board once—just once."

"And I," retorted Wallace quietly, "will put it back where it belongs just so often as you take what is mine."

A slight convulsion marked Maitland's thin features for a moment. He lifted the rifle from his arm as if it were heavy, and deliberately raised it to position, pointing at Wallace's breast.

The young man did not move. He looked into the black hole of the barrel, not able to make the thing seem real. Such absurdities didn't happen at sunrise with birds singing overhead and water gurgling underfoot.

"Do you realize," he asked, in a low voice, "what we are doing to Lois?"

Maitland's gaze wavered for an instant. When he brought it back, Wallace held his revolver in a loose grasp at his knee. For a moment Maitland was too amazed to move. Wallace spoke in that astounded interval.

"Pull back your hammer."

Maitland obeyed. Both guns seemed to speak at once. Wallace moved as he fired, but it was not necessary, for the ball whistled wide as the rifle fell clattering to the ground.

Maitland stood a second in wordless astonishment and Wallace, looking, uttered a low cry of dismay. He had meant only to knock the gun from the old man's grasp, but the bullet had traveled along the steel instead of glancing upward as it should have done from Wallace's position. What dangled from the end of Maitland's left arm was much less than a hand.

Maitland swayed and toppled before Wallace could reach him.

A liberal application of water brought him back to consciousness and he sat up dazedly, pushing away Wallace's supporting arm. Again he looked at his shattered hand and got unsteadily to his feet. He walked away, waveringly at first, then more firmly as he moved straight toward home.

Wallace followed to the edge of the mesa and watched until he entered the house. Then he ran back, caught a horse and rode quickly to Pace's ranch. Pace gave one look at his face and asked—

"Kill him?"

"No, but I hurt him, Pace, and I didn't mean to. You know something about remedies. Come with me and see his hand is dressed properly, so there won't be any chance of blood poisoning."

"You ain't goin' down with me," Pace announced when they came to the corner of Wallace's field.

"Well, rather. I did it."

"Boy, just listen to me one piece of a minute. That girl will be damn near wild. You're the last person on earth she wants to or should see now."

Wallace looked at him with patent unbelief.

"It's a fact," insisted Pace. "You're goin' to be almighty sorry if you don't do as I say." He saw he had not persuaded Wallace and added. "I'll sure tell you if she wants you. You know I will."

"But, why shouldn't she—?"

Pace sighed.

"You're a babe in arms when it comes to women, son. This time you take my word. You never have, you know. Try it once and see how good it is."

Pace rode down the hillside alone and Wallace, only half convinced, went back at the division box. He stood gazing down at the rifle lying on the ditch bank, the notches on the barrel looking like bared teeth. He picked up the gun and, whirling it above his head, sent it far out into the sage brush above the ditch.

But that brief violence did not long relieve the tightening band about his heart. He had not meant to hurt Maitland. His remorse was not lightened by the knowledge that the old man had fully intended killing him. Wallace did not often miscalculate the course of a bullet, but he had done so this time.

Pace returned in an hour to say that the wound was clean and that there seemed no danger of infection. But he did not mention Lois. He could not. Lois had frightened Pace. No human being, he felt, could long cover a raging

furnace of pain with a coat of ice like that. Something had to happen. He didn't know what it would be, for the girl seemed made of iron.

Wallace stood it until the middle of the afternoon, then he went down the hill, helpless to stay away any longer. There was no answer to his knock, and he pushed open the kitchen door. Lois stood alone in the middle of the room. He started toward her and stopped. After a minute of silence he asked gently,

"How is he?"

"What is that to you?"

Wallace's heart sank. Pace had been right, and yet he had to explain to her, some way.

"Lois, what could I do? What could I do?" As she did not answer, he went on, "You surely see that if a man doesn't stand up to his rights in this world—"

Her face had turned white so suddenly that he stopped. Her eyes flashed with an expression he could not have believed possible from her—and to him.

"Will you go?" she said thickly. "And don't come back."

Wallace could have no key to the horror darkened confusion of her mind, her helpless hate of the primitive forces that moved men. He turned blindly from the house and for days could not square his sense of reality with the facts. He moved in a fog of pain, where everything was touched with a nightmarish impossibility.

He could not seem to rouse and fight until the afternoon that he saw Lois in her father's field, setting water. The rainy season had held off and crops were drooping everywhere. The sight of the girl in the hot sun, working with her shovel to spread the scanty stream as far as possible, brought Wallace to himself with a stab sharper than any he had yet known. Maitland was with her, his arm in a sling. He was trying to help her with a broken handled hoe.

Wallace strode across the field, rebellion and resolution topping his despair like the torn crest of a wave. He took the shovel from her hands before Lois had fully comprehended his presence. She looked at him a second, then her eyes closed and she sank quietly to the ground.

For an instant Wallace was stupefied and Maitland started forward with a low, inarticulate cry. The young man bent swiftly to lift her and bathe her face in the water from the ditch. He saw how thin she had grown, and knew that the heat, coupled with the shock of finding him so near, had used up the last of her resources.

When she recovered she freed herself and sat on the ditch bank too weak to rise.

"Lois, we're going to get this straight."

She looked at him and looked up at her father, her eyes hard and bitter.

"Straight? How can anything ever be straight when people keep insisting on their rights? Neither one of you seems to think of anything else. He has a right to take what he thinks is his, and you have a right to keep what you think is yours. And where has it got you—this laying claim to your sacred privileges?" Her voice rose and threatened to break and she controlled it with a fierce effort. "*Rights!* Just an easy word for one's own selfish ends, without regard to the—" She had to stop.

Neither man moved. The eyes of both were lowered. Both seemed mute before her furious scorn. Then Wallace raised his head.

"Lois," he said, "aren't you claiming the right to judge?"

The girl had started to rise. She sank back and stared at him. Never had Wallace appreciated her strength as he did then. Almost as if it were an objective thing, he saw her mind pause and turn to meet the question with honesty. Her eyes widened as she took it in. She pondered, her gaze downcast.

Wallace felt a touch, the lightest possible touch on his shoulder, and Maitland walked away through the corn.

Lois looked up slowly, her expression a mixture of tenderest humility and heart swelling relief.

OLD CHAN CHAN

By

EDGAR YOUNG

A FEW miles north of Trujillo, Peru, on a desert plain overlooking the Pacific lie the ruins of a city that once sheltered a hundred thousand souls. This is Chan Chan, or Sun Sun, ancient capital of the realm of Chimu-cancha, Chimu the Great, El Gran Chimu, whose empire comprised the six hundred miles of rainless littoral from Tumbez at the north to Supe on the south and who became a vassal of the Inca Pachacutec, king of the Quichuas, four hundred years before the advent of the Spaniards.

Already the city was deserted and the people lapsing into barbarism when Pizarro, the erstwhile swineherd, landed to make his march over the range to Cajamarca. Had he known what was contained in and hidden beneath those buildings he would probably have remained to root among them for many months.

The amount of gold recovered by treasure hunters since that time is in excess of $15,000,000, one individual grave or *huaca*, yielding to its finder, Garcia Gutierrez de Toledo, gold which he disposed of for $4,500,000. The ransom Pizarro extorted from the Quichuas before garroting Atahualpa was slightly less than $17,000,000 and his method of obtaining it is harrowing in the extreme.

The ancient city of Chan Chan occupied more than sixty square miles. A double wall protected it on the land side; the Pacific guarded it on the west. The fertile plains behind were irrigated by a remarkable system of canals and aqueducts, three rivers being tapped and connected far back in the Andes. The aqueduct tapping the Muchi carried the water across the valley on top of an arched wall which averaged sixty feet high for miles. The main reservoir whose retaining walls excite comment from modern engineers has a capacity of more than two billion cubic feet.

Among the huge ruined temples and palaces of the ancient city are artificial mounds measuring five hundred feet long by a hundred and fifty feet high and it is from graves in the sides of these that much of the treasure and relics have been taken. Mummies have been taken from a well defined cemetery and also from niches in the houses and temples. Some eighty thousand graves have already been opened. A Maiden Lane gemcutter who attempted to polish some of the artificial eyes taken from the heads of the mummies almost lost his sight from the dust. These eyes appear to be those of some marine creature artificially petrified by an injected solution.

Near the center of the city is the temple of Mama-cocha, Mother Lake, or Sea. At the south is the one to Si An, the moon goddess. Many of the buildings yet standing are of adobe and the larger stone buildings have in many cases been adorned with stucco work and arabesques of wonderful design, which, due to the rainless climate and absence of frost, are in excellent state of preservation where they have escaped the picks and drills of *huaqueros* in their search for *tapadas*, or treasures. The rich colors upon the walls

of the rooms are almost as bright as they were the day they were applied.

Buried with the mummies are garments of cotton, ornaments, silver and gold fish, golden birds and fowls, mats, work baskets, balls of thread, spindles, toys, finger rings, bracelets, necklaces, pins and earrings, headdresses of gold and feathers, tapestry, embroidery, copper ax heads, lances, star shaped club heads, golden cups and goblets, plates, pots and pans.

Over a million exquisitely ornamented vases and finely modeled articles of ceramic ware have been dug up and sold. One museum recently bought forty thousand. They are ornamented with paintings of fish, birds, mammals, and groups of persons engaged in various pursuits both in reality and in grotesque cartoon. The fish is a constantly recurring symbolic figure.

The rich *huaca* Garcia Gutierrez de Toledo unearthed years ago was found under peculiar circumstances. Antonio Chayhuac, petty Indian chief of a nearby village, came to Toledo while he was engaged in digging and asked him whether he would devote some of the money derived from a big *huaca* to the betterment of the Mansiche Indians if he would show him where it was buried. Toledo agreed.

The Indian led him to a spot near the palace of Chimu the Great and told him to dig there. Toledo opened the grave and immediately brought to light the gold which netted him millions. The scoundrel refused to allot one penny to the aid of the poor Indians. A year later Chayhuac returned. He told Toledo that what he had shown him was only the *peje chico*—little fish—and that he knew where the *peje grande*—big fish—was buried. Toledo thereupon donated $40,000 for the use of Chayhuac's Indians. Chayhuac took him to the edge of town and showed him where to dig. He unearthed nothing.

Hundreds of others have dug and tunneled in search of the "big fish" treasure but it has never been found to this day. While searching for it Escovar Corchuelo found a small one which netted him $500,000. It is barely possible that none have dug deep enough to encounter the "big fish" treasure, provided Chayhuac was not having revenge in his own way.

A German who came there to dig for treasure wandered up the valley and discovered the ancient reservoir and aqueducts. Seeing that the irrigation system could be revived with but a small expenditure of money, he kept quiet until he bought up all the land in the vicinity for a song and then amazed everybody by suddenly making the desert bloom like a rose. He has been producing more sugar than the entire island of Porto Rico for the past ten years. His plant at Casa Grande, one hour by rail from Trujillo, is one of the largest and most modern in the world. His cane runs twenty-five per cent. sugar and produces seven tons to the acre. He puts a hundred thousand tons of refined sugar on the Salaverry wharf at a cost to him of one cent a pound He did not find the *peje grande* but what he did find was worth much more.

TURKISH SKETCHES

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

Author of "Four Years Beneath the Crescent"

PERHAPS battles are not always won by efficient soldiers. Consider, for instance, our attack on the Suez Canal in January, 1915. That affair turned out to be a failure because two of our *Takaut* reserve officers of the "old Hamidian school" were carrying concealed in their saddlebags several chickens and a rooster. The enemy never suspected our presence on the eastern shore of the canal until dawn—when the blessed rooster suddenly stuck its head out of the saddlebag and let out a sonorous cock-a-doodle-doo which put the wary Britishers wise to our scheme.

If it had not been for that confounded rooster we would probably have won the World War for, with Egypt and the Suez Canal in our hands, we could easily have cut England off from India and Australia, and France from her North and Central African colonies: But for that rooster two hundred and fifty million True Believers would be free today, because our occupation of Egypt would undoubtedly have had as a consequence a general revolt of Islam against Occidental world supremacy.

Sir Archibald Murray, the "saviour of Egypt" during that occasion, would carry, if I had it my way, the image of a crowing rooster on his coat of arms in memory of that droll yet historical incident.

Speaking of efficient soldiers, the effectiveness of the Turkish army during the World War (in spite of the damaged reputation it gained during the Balkan Wars) should be attributed to the fact that the services Field Marshal von der Goltz rendered for thirty years as the instructor of the Ottoman army were used only in an advisory capacity; he had not been, therefore, in a position to build up the army in the way he would have desired. But he left the terrain prepared so that when Liman von Sanders, the hero of the Dardanelles, was appointed director of the German military mission in Turkey, in

1912, with executive powers, all he had to do was build the structure on the ground already prepared for him by Von der Goltz.

The Turks were excellent artillerymen and machine gunners. During the Gallipoli campaign those two arms of our Ottoman army sent to the bottom of the Mediterranean some of the mightiest battleships the world has ever known, and filled the sixty or seventy thousand graves which the Allies left on the golden shores and historic battlefields of ancient Troy.

During that fearful struggle good old Allah stood faithfully by us. He even "threw sand," as the Arabs say, into our enemies' eyes on a certain occasion in order to prevent Constantinople from falling into their hands. This happened one day after two tremendous attacks which cost the British and French fleets several of their most powerful battleships and sundry minor craft; a loss which caused the Allies to withdraw, temporarily, in order to smooth down their ruffled feathers after the terrible beating they had suffered.

If instead of withdrawing the Allies had ventured a third attack that day they could easily have forced the entrance of the Dardanelles, because when they showed us their heels we did not have a single heavy artillery shell left. That was the time when Allah gave us a helping hand by "throwing sand" into our enemies' eyes, for by the time the Allies had recovered from their panic, had rubbed the sand out of their eyes and renewed their attack, several trainloads of heavy artillery ammunition which had arrived in the meantime from Constantinople enabled us to shut the entrance of the Dardanelles tighter than a Scotsman's purse.

That's why, though a Christian, I have always felt a great regard for Allah; because he never forsook us: because he always behaved toward us like a gentleman and a real sport.

Our machine gunners and artillerymen, however, were not the only *bravos* in our Ottoman army; even our auxiliary troops, for instance our sappers, were endowed with extraordinary *sang-froid* and determination. During our attack on the Suez Canal, in January, 1915, one of the outstanding events was the voluntary sacrifice, not to say suicide, of a company of Ottoman sappers who, after crossing the canal by means of a hastily constructed pontoon bridge, let themselves be killed to the last man rather than surrender.

Our cavalrymen were also excellent soldiers; but they did not seem to husband their mounts the way they ought to have done, probably on account of their Tartar descent. It should not be forgotten that centuries ago the Mongolians, like their pupils, the Cossacks, used their horses not only for warfare but as beasts of burden, to transport their troops across the steppes and deserts between Turkestan and India, China and Hungary.

Each warrior of those long Kalmuck raids used to take along ten or more tough, frugal little ponies, which maintained themselves all the year round on moss and natural pasturage, requiring no care from their master. Only in this way could the Turkomen have made seventy or eighty kilometers a day, day after day, month after month, without losing their mounts. The Tartar's attitude toward his horse, as a creature requiring neither food nor care from him, persists with the Turk today. That is why the Ottoman cavalry, which approximated an army corps at the beginning of the World War, had become reduced at the end of it to almost nothing.

The only blot on the Turkish army was the *Takaut* officers. I still remember with consternation the various months when I had to deal with them while I held the position of *mufetish*, or inspector of the service of supplies, in Mamou-reh-Kadme, northern Syria, in 1915.

The majority of those *Takauts* belonged to the retired officers' corps of Ex-Sultan Abd-Ul-Hamid's régime; that is to say, they had been recruited from among the sergeants and corporals for fear that graduate officers, if given the command

of troops, might organize a revolution, Those "regimentaires," or "old régime reserve officers," were as a rule abhorred throughout the country because of their rapacity and rascally instincts.

They were only employed in the commissary departments. They represented in my opinion the greatest plague that devastated Turkey during the World War, because locusts, although voracious, usually destroyed nothing except harvests and pastures; while those inveterate parasites sold the medicines and rations of man and beast and, had they found a buyer, would probably have sold the locomotives of our Bagdad Railroad.

That is why the officers' corps of the Young Turks who dethroned Sultan Abd-Ul-Hamid was composed almost entirely of regular army officers, that is to say, not of officers who had risen from the ranks like Abd-Ul-Hamid's *Takauts*, but of military academy graduates belonging in many cases to the most aristocratic families of the empire.

The most efficient arm was represented in our Ottoman army by the infantry; by those fierce *askars* who once laid the banners of over a hundred conquered nations at the feet of their mighty Sultans.

While fighting and running alternately on our various fronts I had opportunity to observe our Turkish soldiers rather closely. We hardly ever dared to order them to attack with the bayonet for we had no way of recalling them after they had started to charge. We did not use bugles in action, only whistles.

As soon as the command to attack was given, off they went, shouting "Allah, Allah," to die to the last man beneath the concentrated enemy artillery and machine gun fire. Those *askars* never looked back, only forward.

In the Bukowina, in northern Rumania for instance, we had two or three Turkish divisions helping the Germans and Austrians stem the Russians' advance. Every time the *mujiks* attacked the Austrians our Turks had invariably to rescue Emperor Joseph's soldiers and drive back the enemy. So much so that finally orders were given that the Austrians' military activities should be limited to digging trenches and to preparing food for the Turks who, in exchange for the Austrians' menial work, would do all the fighting alone.

One day the Turks were not satisfied with the way the Austrians had dug out a new set of trenches and went on a strike: They attacked the Russians without orders and refused to return unless the Austrians were ordered to rebuild their trenches in a proper way.

Whenever I entered one of our barracks and watched our soldiers fixing up their beds, mending their uniforms, or squatting crosslegged on the floor, reading their prayer books, I could not help feeling as if I had entered a cage full of tame lions and Bengal tigers.

I will cite my chief orderly, Tasim Chavush, as an example. He had served for twelve years in the cavalry and was generally known as a "son of Satan" until I got hold of him and tamed him properly. From then on he became my shadow. He used to spend the night wrapped in a blanket in front of my tent or sleeping room, in full war regalia: bayonet, rifle, cartridge belt, etc. Several enemy spies and sundry other vermin who tried to "intrude" had been quietly buried in our courtyard without my ever knowing anything about it.

That spurred, rosy checked Albanian giant, with his short sandy mustache and the boyish look in his light blue eyes, was usually silent as the grave; but he was awake to everything that was going on—ever ready to attend to everybody in the proper way when necessity forced him to do so.

My few earthly possessions were in his hands. He bossed my household like a born *major-domo*. Whenever he referred to anything—my clothes, my horses or the beautiful greyhounds which a Kurdish sheik had given me—he would invariably refer to them as "ours." For instance—"Beym, I wonder what ever became of that little pair of scissors of ours which we bought in Erzeroum two years

ago?" He had the keys to my luggage; he carried my purse and tasted every drop of coffee, liquor or food before it was served to me because—*L'Orient c'est l'Orient!*

In spite of the cavalry escort which accompanied me everywhere, Tasim never lost sight of me. He always kept close to my heels. Whenever the enemy opened fire on us unexpectedly he would ride up immediately, apparently for the purpose of asking for orders but, in reality, to protect me with his body from the enemy bullets. As soon as we had passed the danger line he would fall back at once and follow me as before, at regulation distance.

THE TURK reveals plainly his Tartar descent during theatrical performances when, as among the Chinese, male actors substitute for female actresses. He is also like a Tartar in his way of dressing. Most of our soldiers, like the average Kalmuck of Central Asia, were of the opinion that heavy clothing protects one not only from cold but also from heat. I have frequently seen some of our *Takaut* reserve officers take off their military tunics and then peel from their bodies, as from an onion, one layer after another; first, two or three fancy waists with gaudy designs—birds, flowers, etc.; next, three or four striped or polka dotted shirts and, finally, maybe half a dozen woolen undershirts, before they struck bedrock.

Some of the old-timers among the civilian population of Asia Minor used to wear even in midsummer, on top of all that paraphernalia, also a silken *kaftan*, or a sort of nightgown entwined around their waists by a ten yard long silken or woolen scarf, and a heavy fur lined overcoat; not to mention their big white turbans.

Those old fellows seemed to enjoy their wardrobes immensely. Many of our soldiers wore, seemingly without discomfort, even in the heart of the desert, the same heavy woolen uniforms which they used among the eternal snows of the Caucasus.

Another of the peculiarities of the Turks was their preference for bread. They ate as a rule very little meat or vegetables; but bread, no matter whether fresh, stale, black or white, they would eat by the bushel, probably on account of their Koran, which like the Bible speaks feelingly about "our daily bread."

Our soldiers were always buried lying sidewise, with their faces turned south, in the direction of Mecca and Medina, the Holy Cities of Islam. The feathers of their religious sentiment were frequently ruffled by the thoughtlessness of some of their German instructors, as happened once in our military camp of Baalbeck, in central Syria, where Major X had two parallel rows of new baths constructed for the convenience of his men. The latter, however, to his great disappointment, bluntly refused to make use of those comfortable newly dug baths. Luckily, after awhile, some friendly soul whispered into the major's ear—

"Don't you see that those baths have been dug with their entrances toward the north instead of the south, in the direction of Mecca and Medina?"

Only then did the major understand. Naturally, no True Believer would ever turn his back on the Holy Cities while taking a bath. That would be rank sacrilege. So he had the baths reconstructed, facing south; whereupon his *askars* blessed Allah for having enlightened him. They reverently bowed toward Mecca and Medina every time they took a bath.

I could not help admiring the religious sentiment of our Turkish soldiers, a sentiment which was usually kept alive by the presence of numerous priests in their ranks.

"Come over here," I barked once at a black bearded, white turbaned soldier who was busily engaged sweeping the floor of one of our barracks at Jerusalem; whereupon the bowlegged *askar* in his baggy olive green uniform shouldered his broom, waddled clumsily, like a fat pelican, in my direction, came to a halt with much shuffling of his trailing, yellow morocco

slippers, and finally managed to stand at attention in front of me.

I had to smile inwardly as I riveted a stern look on the stolid faced, comical creature who kept eyeing me wistfully—with almost a scared look in his eyes. His left instead of his right hand was respectfully raised to his bat-like ear which the heavy turban was causing to stand out at a forty-five degree angle. He was a typical *hodcha-effendi*, or clergyman; for in Turkey even the clergymen had to don the Sultan's uniform during the World War and fight for the glory of the Caliphate. One of our crack regiments on the Sinai Front, was, for instance, that of the "Howling Dervishes," which suffered heavy casualties and finally had to be withdrawn because those holy men stubbornly refused to take off, while in action, their two-foot tubular *fezes* which used to betray them to the enemy sharpshooters every time they rose over the trenches.

The only distinction between our priest-warriors was that the "seculars", or ordained priests, as well as the students of the Mohammedan seminaries, were classed as "*officiers aspirants*," or acting lieutenants, whereas the laymen, or brothers of the monasteries—that is to say the *hodcha-effendis*—had to serve in the ranks as privates or non-commissioned officers. The one I had summoned was a layman and, therefore, a plain soldier. I always felt sorry for those poor fellows and generally maneuvered around until I managed to get them a decent job, usually as clerks in our commissary department.

After sizing up our priest for awhile I asked him gruffly—

"What was your occupation before the war?"

"A clerical layman, Beym," he answered meekly and shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

"Can you write and read? Do you know anything about arithmetic?" I continued questioning him while I pulled nervously at my short clipped mustache.

"Yes, Beym," he answered. "I used to help keep the books in our monastery at Konia."

"In that case," I said, "you report at once to the *capudan-effendi* of our service of supplies and tell him to put you to work in his office right away. You get me? And now, beat it—*haidi*, git!"

Though the face of our *hodcha-effendi* remained inscrutable I could not help noticing in his deep set eyes a look of sincere gratitude as he turned around slowly and waddled awkwardly off in the direction of our *Intendence*, whose low, dark gray buildings must have looked at that moment to the poor humiliated sky pilot like heaven itself.

In such a manner I became, little by little, the protecting angel of every *hodcha-effendi* who had the misfortune of falling into my clutches, and I must confess that *giaur*—Christian dog—though I was, those poor grateful wretches always stood by me faithfully and obeyed my orders implicitly even under the most trying circumstances. Through them I acquired much valuable information about the inner political conditions in Turkey during the World War, and about the soul of the Orient, which will always remain a mystery to most Gentiles, no matter how long they may have lived in Asia.

ON THE first of January, 1917, occurred an incident which might have precipitated our loss of Palestine but for the valor and cold bloodedness of an *hodcha-effendi* whom I had befriended and appointed chief accountant of our 12th Infantry Regiment. His name was Suleiman Effendi. At daybreak of that date a veritable cyclone broke loose over Es-Salt, capital of Transjordania, accompanied by torrential rains which totally destroyed our military automobile road to Jerusalem, bridges and all. Almost simultaneously with this disaster came the news that the English had passed beyond El-Arrish and were at the gates of Gaza; also that our troops stationed there

were barely sufficient to check the enemy's advance.

One hour later an aerogram arrived from Colonel von Kress Bey, commander in chief of our expeditionary army in Egypt, ordering our garrison to march forth at once to reenforce the battle line on the Gaza front.

Half an hour later our four thousand *askars* set out for Jerusalem with no other equipment than their arms, while I remained behind, in Es-Salt, with barely a hundred or so picked men to guard our stores of guns and ammunition which would have been sufficient to make the Arabs masters of Palestine could they have got hold of them. And, to make matters worse, it seems that the English advance had electrified and galvanized into revolt the twenty thousand inhabitants of Es-Salt, who immediately armed themselves to the teeth and prepared to besiege us in the massive old Catholic church, in which we had hurriedly entrenched ourselves and in whose interior were piled up, sky high, thousands of boxes with rifles and countless kegs of powder and dynamite.

The church was situated in the center of the town, at the bottom of a steep cañon through which ran the main thoroughfare of the city. If our powder magazine had blown up, the whole town, which rose in terraces on both sides of the cañon, would have collapsed as if struck by an earthquake, and tumbled like a landslide into the bottom of the valley.

Five minutes after our troops had left, the flat roofs of the surrounding buildings were covered with thousands of howling, shrieking and gesticulating armed Arab tribesmen, who demanded that we surrender or face extermination. Foreseeing all that, I had ordered Suleiman Effendi, the *hodcha-effendi* of the 12th Regiment to invite the three sheiks or clan chiefs of the town to have tea with me, while we discussed the matter of surrender.

As soon as we had finished our unsuccessful *pour-parler* and the sheiks had stepped out, haughtily, through the main entrance of the church into the street, Sulciman Effendi arrested them in the midst of the excited townspeople, then hog tied and threw them into our powder magazine with the warning that "no quarter would be given" and that the minute any tribesman or citizen should fire a shot at us, I would order Suleiman to "press the button" and blow the sheiks, ourselves and the city of Es-Salt with every living soul in it, into the blue sky.

Three days and three nights Suleiman Effendi sat on top of that mountain of explosives ready to "press the button", while the twenty thousand inhabitants of Es-Salt howled bloody murder without daring, however, to fire a shot at us. Finally, during the afternoon of the third day, a message from Colonel von Kress announced the definite withdrawal of the enemy from Gaza, whereupon the Arabs quickly hid their guns, cheered and blessed our crimson crescent and welcomed with tears in their eyes their three lost sheep, who probably had never gone through such a harrowing experience before in their lives.

After our evacuation of Bir-Es-Sabah and the retreat of its garrison to Jerusalem, the three regiments of the 3rd Imperial Lancers kept defending the rear of our troops against practically the whole of the enemy cavalry, which did not give them a minute's rest. At Daharie, where the Bir-Es-Sabah-Hebron military road entered the foothills of southern Palestine, our 3rd Imperial Lancers stopped suddenly, faced about, deployed in battle formation and, protected on both flanks by their divisional field artillery and machine gun sections, made ready to fight back the thirteen or more British and Australian cavalry regiments which were pursuing them.

The Britishers prudently stopped at a safe distance, suspiciously eyeing the wily Turks. How was it possible—they probably asked themselves—that three tattered, starving Turkish cavalry regiments should dare to defy in the open thirteen or more well fed and spendidly equipped British and Australian regi-

ments? Of all the impudence! Such a thing had never happened before! Still, it had happened before, less than a year previously, during the Second Battle of Gaza, when that same tattered and starving 3rd Cavalry Division of ours had raised havoc with practically the whole of the British mounted contingents and carried off, as a souvenir, some of their handsomest tail feathers.

While the Britishers sat tight, trying to find out what it was all about, one of our regiments, the 6th, finally got tired of waiting, rode forth with raised lances and challenged an enemy regiment to single combat. Seeing that its challenge was not accepted, the 3rd Squadron of our 6th then sallied forth alone and defied single handed a whole British or Australian regiment.

That was a little too much even for the phlegmatic Britishers. A squadron of Australians picked up the glove. The Cross and the Crescent clashed amid a cloud of dust. After the fight was called off only three dozen Australians and Turks remained standing in their stirrups. Not a rifle, machine gun or fieldpiece cracked or thundered on either side until that handful of Knights of St. George and Paladins of Allah had safely retreated to their respective lines. *El-Hand-Ul-Illah!*

While speaking about the Turkish soldier I can not help remembering Enver Pasha, the greatest man that Turkey produced for many a generation. He was a soldier, a statesman and a patriot. It was on a sunny morning of January, 1915, that we met; a day which I will never forget because that morning I felt as if I had discovered America. It all seemed so strange to me; especially after I had donned my first Turkish uniform and walked up the broad marble staircase of the war department to report to his Excellency, Col. Enver Bey (later Enver Pasha) Secretary of War and Vice Generalissimo of the Ottoman Empire.

When I stepped out of the auto at the main entrance of the enormous, rectangular four-story high *Ministère de la Guerre*, which stood solitary in the center of an empty *maidan* surrounded by kiosks and a tall iron railing, a military band, dressed in historical uniforms, was playing a weird, wild march such as the janissaries used to play long ago, while besieging Budapest or charging Napoleon's Old Guard at the foot of the Pyramids.

I felt a real thrill as I crossed and recrossed the beautifully decorated reception halls before I was finally ushered into Enver's office. The minute I entered he rose, smiled affably, shook hands with me cordially, invited me to sit down and, after we had smoked a cigaret and enjoyed a thimbleful of black coffee *à la Turca*, we parted the best of friends. He was about forty or forty-two at that time, medium sized, slender, extremely good looking, wore a mustache *à la Kaiser* and had a charming personality.

He never used his official titles.

"I am Enver; glad to meet you," was the way he introduced himself.

Being the First A.D.C. to the Sultan he naturally wore an A.D.C's uniform, but only a plain one, like that of any of his own A.D.C's.

Once, in the spring of 1918, one of our former Austrian officers on the Sinai Front, a captain of artillery, wanted to meet Enver very badly before he returned to Austria. He had been proposed for a war medal which only Enver could confer. So he begged me to secure him an audience with "*Seiner Exzellenz!*" I got it for him, naturally. He was to be received on Tuesday at 2 P.M. sharp. His audience was to last *five minutes*, which means two minutes more than was usually granted to subaltern officers.

After a few days I met our captain again. He had got his medal all right, but there was a story attached to it. After being ushered through four different reception rooms and, after having been asked by four different A.D.C's whom he wanted to see, he entered a fifth *salon* where another A.D.C, dressed exactly like the others, addressed him with a courteous—

"Anything I can do for you, sir?"

"Do what?" the captain snarled angrily. "Of course you can; I have got to meet Enver Pasha at 2 P.M. sharp. Through all of those blooming delays I have lost already three of the precious five minutes which my audience is supposed to last!"

Instead of getting angry, the A.D.C. smiled affably and replied—

"Please, don't worry, Captain. I am Enver." He immediately granted the captain's request.

Unlike other Young Turk leaders, as Djemal and Khalil Pashas, who owed their ascendency only to influence and intrigue, Enver was a man who rose by his own strength. He was the hero of the Tripolis campaign, during the Italo-Turkish conflict in 1910-11, and it was he who turned the tide in favor of the Turkish army during the Second Balkan War.

After the fall of Adrianople the Turkish Cabinet which was then in power had assembled in the palace of the Sublime Porte for the purpose of signing an armistice by means of which Turkey ceded not only Adrianople, but practically the whole of Thrace to the Bulgars. A few minutes before those worthies could affix their seals to the proposed treaty, Enver and two other Young Turk army officers presented themselves, unexpectedly, and demanded that the cabinet immediately sign its resignation. The secretary of war was the only member of the council of state who refused to sign, whereupon Enver shot him down and, assuming the supreme command of the Turkish army, reconquered Adrianople from the Bulgars and built up, with the help of Marshall Liman von Sanders' German Military Mission, a modern Turkish army.

This not only withstood the Allies during the World War, but finally freed the Ottoman Empire from the humiliating "extraterritorial rights," or capitulations, by means of which the imperialistic European nations had kept Turkey in bondage for over half a century.

Enver died during the Greek conflict in 1923, while he rushed at the head of several thousand Turkomen to the aid of Mustapha-Kemal, who had begged him to come to his rescue. He shot his way through the Bolshevik troops which tried to block his way, but ran out of ammunition and, when he charged again, at the bayonet, at the head of his tribesmen, a Red soldier pumped a machine gun load into him, at five yards distance, which tore him to pieces.

Thus died Enver Pasha, the biggest Young Turk and the real protagonist of modern Turkey.

THE INDOMITABLE courage—or fanaticism; call it what you will—and the traditional boldness of the Osmanlis, frequently during the World War offered examples of that ferocious endurance which, from time immemorial, has made them famed as one of the most valiant and warlike nations of the Old World.

During our Caucasus campaign I repeatedly ran across trenches filled with corpses—the frozen bodies of our *askars*, both officers and men—who had frozen to death rather than budge from the positions they had been ordered to hold at any price. During those dreadful months among the eternal snows of the Caucasus the Muscovite high command had ordered its Russian divisions to be replaced by the Siberian Iron Legions, because even the Russian *mujiks* could not withstand any longer the terrible cold.

We were fighting most of the time up to our necks in the snow, at an altitude anywhere from ten to twelve thousand feet above sea level. Nevertheless the Turks, who had been rushed to the front with hardly any preparations at all, or even an adequate service of supplies, owing to the rapidity with which things had happened, stood their ground wonderfully well; sometimes even without overcoats or proper footwear; in many cases without the necessary medical attention and, most of the time, with hardly anything to eat except a crust of bread. Those were

men who knew how to fight and die without a sound, without ever showing the slightest sign of insubordination.

During our miscarried offensive of Sari-Kamish, near Erzeroum, in 1915, for instance, we lost thirty thousand men in less than two days, mostly frozen to death. Nevertheless, in spite of that drawback, our 3rd Caucasus army kept fighting the Russians and driving them back at the point of its bayonets with more pep than ever.

A far greater toll than by bullets and cold was exacted from us by the terrible typhus epidemic which broke out in Turkey almost immediately after the beginning of the World War. On our Caucasus Front, where we were separated from the rest of the world by a roadless barrier of two hundred miles of mountainous frozen wilderness, hundreds and even thousands of our wounded and typhus stricken *askars*, for whom there was no room left in our Erzeroum lazarets, were handed some money and a knapsack full of food and allowed to trek back across the howling wilderness in search of Erzindjan, Trebizond or Sivas, which were the only three towns provided with hospitals within a radius of two hundred miles.

I met hundreds of those poor dying wretches along the goat trails which crossed those snowy wastes. Most of them were already on their way to the great beyond. Living skeletons were dragging themselves by the dozen on hands and knees over the frozen snow fields, closely followed by ravenous bands of wolves which were waiting only for the night to set in. I remember a wounded soldier who had bandaged a fresh saber cut on his arm with some filthy rags which which he had torn from the wounds of a dead comrade.

I mention the foregoing examples only to support my contention that the Turk is one of the most enduring, best disciplined of soldiers. I would pity the European officers who should try to submit their troops to the hardships and misery which the Turkish soldier suffered during the war. Yet our *askars* never uttered a word of complaint but stumbled along starving and fighting for the glory of the crimson crescent and the cause of the Mohammedan world until merciful death finally put an end to their sufferings.

I remember well how one afternoon, while we were fighting the Siberian Iron Legions in the heart of wild Kurdistan, my horse was shot and I landed knee deep in the snow. As I protected my face with one hand from the raging blizzard and fought off with the other a Cossack, I felt some one pulling at the hem of my long military coat. It was Hussein Effendi, one of our squadron commanders, who lay half buried beneath the snow. One of his eyes had been put out by a deep sword thrust. His violet, trembling lips were muttering feebly, as if in a dream—

"*Nogales Beym, bir limonade, reya-ederim,*" which means "please get me a lemonade, Nogales Bey." At that moment I managed to get clear of my Cossack assailant with a well aimed saber cut and, bending down, I lifted Hussein's head carefully and whispered into his ear—

"Right away, brother, right away."

He stretched out his weary limbs, trembled slightly and smiled happily as he passed the threshold of Paradise.

To show the devotion of the Turkish *askar* to his officers I will cite the following example:

At dawn of April 25, 1915, during the siege of Van, capital of Armenia, which I was conducting, our artillery opened fire by sections, and the thunder of musketry, which had been diminishing during the night, recommenced emphatically. Wherever our shells fell walls and roofs crumbled to the ground, raising columns of smoke and dust intermingled with showers of sparks which, scattering, poured down like lava torrents upon the combatants.

While inspecting our eastern sector I noticed a commotion. Bayonets flashed. Wild Kurdish tribesmen with drawn *yataghans* poured by the dozen from a neighboring building like rats fleeing from

a sinking ship. A concussion shook the building in which some of our artillerymen had placed a fieldpiece for the purpose of breaking through the walls which separated them from the enemy. As a result of the repeated discharges of the gun the roof had caved in with a crash, burying beneath its débris and cutting off a part of the gun crew who ran the risk of falling into the hands of the Armenian *comitadchis*. These had not been loath in taking advantage of the general confusion in order to invade the burning building. Having made up my mind to save our gun and its crew at all costs, I rushed into the midst of the ruin, followed by a sergeant and a corporal who had joined me voluntarily.

I soon got sight of the crimson fezes of the Armenians. They were yelling and rushing hither and thither, like giant bats, across the thick smoke screen and the clouds of dust which the crumbling walls kept kicking up as they toppled over and hit the ground with a crash that could be heard for blocks around. They fired their Mauser pistols point blank at us and occasionally slashed at our faces with their long, curved, razor-like *yataghans*.

Though half blinded by the flash of the shots and volleys which illuminated fantastically the surrounding twilight, the sergeant and I continued to repulse the Armenians. They kept pressing us from the front and both sides. Finally, the corporal succeeded in fastening a rope to the gun carriage of the fieldpiece and the rest of the crew began to pull it hurriedly from the smoldering ruin. The salvage of that gun cost us five lives and a number of wounded, the corporal among the latter, as a bullet had ploughed through his cheek at the last minute.

AFTER the siege of Van we decided to retreat with our expeditionary army across Kurdistan for the purpose of entrenching ourselves around Bitlis, in western Armenia. Our Van Gendarmery Division, composed of twelve veteran battalions, was to form the vanguard; and, after picking up some reenforcements at the *kasaba* of Shaghmanis, it was to continue in the direction of Vastan, followed closely by the rest of our expeditionary forces.

Our unexpected retreat did not fail to alarm the Russians, who immediately turned all their artillery loose on us and launched a vigorous bayonet charge against our rear guard. Nevertheless, their efforts to keep us penned up along the Persian-Turkish frontier proved in vain, for we broke through their lines and beat it for the mountain regions of Bervar and Nordoz, with Vastan as our destination.

Our situation was extremely difficult and the worst might have befallen us but for the prompt arrival of a Kurdish bandit by the name of Noro who, in exchange of the commutation of the death sentence hanging over him, engaged himself to lead our thirty-thousand men across the snows and ice covered wastes of the upper Bohtan-Su and Mount Djahydi. Governor Djevded Bey, the Vali of Van, assured me that I was the first foreigner to visit those regions. It was the second time in my life that I found myself traveling across geographically unexplored lands. At first the Russian cavalry followed us, though at a safe distance; but noticing that we paid no attention to them, they finally turned back, perhaps fearing an ambuscade.

On the following day we ascended a snow covered range, craggy and threatening, whose silvery summits arched from peak to peak and from crest to crest until they melted into the white pinnacles of the Hartosh, neighbors of the clouds. We were in the midst of an absolutely unknown land, in the heart of wild Kurdistan.

After crossing a divide which was covered with a fifteen foot layer of hard packed snow we descended the almost perpendicular face of that harsh and beetling range by following the wild mountain streams whose reddish boiling waters thundered over rocks and cliffs, dragging along huge blocks of ice and forming

cataracts which dashed against the depths of the precipices with a deafening roar.

We were so short of food that during the following three days we had to subsist almost entirely on wild onion-like herbs which the Kurds used in the preparation of cheese. However, vegetation increased as we descended, so that about sunset of the fourth day our thirty thousand soldiers were comfortably camping around mighty fires from which sparks showered amid the scarlet flames. As I lay somewhere in the shadows, wrapped in my heavy overcoat, listening to the whisperings of the night and watching the neighboring cliffs, tinged with purple by the glare of our fires, the uncanny silence of the night was every now and then rent by a strident howl or weird, long drawn moan which seemed to descend from the shadowy summits of the silver hillocks which surrounded us in every direction.

As soon as our Kurds, who were crouching in circles around their campfires, heard that dreadful moan, they immediately murmured verses from the Koran so as to be delivered from the devil of those mountain wastes.

That infernal moan and the distant howling of the hunting pack reminded me occasionally that we were in the heart of the Keliehan, which was not man's dominion but the exclusive kingdom of *djinns*, or spirits of the wilderness.

After picking up our reenforcements at Shanghmanis, near where I spent the night among the ruins of an ancient castle which was said to have been inhabited once by Tamerlane, we continued our advance on Vastan. This fair-sized *kasaba* was situated south of Lake Van. We had it occupied the previous night by a detachment of two or three hundred *askars* for the purpose of protecting our right flank. I was leading the vanguard. As we approached the hamlet of Kasrik we heard the incessant *rat-tat-tat* of machine guns and after awhile the ever increasing rumble of artillery fire.

That *kalabalik*, or messed up affair, was due to the fact that our two or three hundred *askars* who had been ordered to hold the Vastan divide at all costs had just been attacked by the Russians and the Armenian volunteers from Van whose combined force was not less than three or four thousand foot soldiers and about eight hundred Siberian Cossacks, with two or three batteries of mountain artillery.

Our situation was serious; in fact, extremely serious, for if the enemy managed to sweep our handful of *bravos* off the Vastan divide it could crush our right flank and cut us off from our main force which was following us at a distance of several miles. Therefore the defile had to be held!

With that in mind I galloped away toward Kasrick, at the head of our vanguard cavalry, while my A.D.C. hastened back to summon our Erzeroum and Mussul battalions.

As we raced over the dusty, rock strewn Valley of Kasrick, which rose gradually until it reached the Vastan divide, the enemy shells started ploughing up the ground all around us. My orderly's mount went down with a crash, but he jumped deftly on the rump of the nearest soldier's horse and, when my horse stumbled over a boulder and fell, I did likewise because we did not have a minute to lose.

I could see our *askars* lying in rows and firing at top speed from behind some hastily thrown up stone breastworks. Some of them were moving about like ants, carrying off the wounded or filling in the gaps which were widening rapidly; while silhouetted on the turquoise sky, amid a cloud of powder smoke, our crimson crescent fluttered proudly, as if beckoning to us and urging us to take a hand in the fray.

Finally, after minutes which seemed an eternity, we jumped off our horses and raced to the top of the divide at the very moment when the Russians and the Armenian *comitadchis* were reaching also the top from the opposite direction.

Then we clashed. It was a fight to the knife: no quarter was given, no quarter

was asked for—*l'Orient c'est l'Orient!* A tall gray haired, bare headed *comitadchi* in a flowing *kaftan* made a lunge at me with his long curved *yataghan*, only to crumple up in a heap as a soldier placed a bullet right between his eyes.

Though the clash of steel, the roar of volleys at short range and the yelping and howling of the storming enemy kept me busy trying to keep my soul and body together—for one's skin does not grow but once—I could not help admiring the utter disregard for life of our grim faced *askars* who kept shooting and hacking away all around me, with only a subdued "Allah" passing now and then through their tightly pressed lips, or a low moan when an enemy bullet, bayonet or *yataghan*, found its mark.

They, or we, rather, were doomed and they knew it. Nevertheless they continued fighting savagely, in an almost suicidal manner, against that avalanche of fur capped *mujiks* whom the Russian officers kept driving against us before their whips like sheep—much the same as had happened during the famous battle of Thermopylæ almost twenty-five hundred years before.

In the meantime things had happened in our rear. Our Erzeroum Battalion had advanced on the double quick and hurled itself suddenly against the enemy's right flank, while our Mussul Battalion had taken possession of a series of heights from which it could sweep the enemy artillery with its rifle and machine gun fire; so that in less than an hour we found ourselves once more the sole possessors of the Vastan divide and, a little before nightfall, also the absolute masters of the situation. *Allah akbar! Allah kerim!*

YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN THESE THINGS

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

THERE were just three of them under the awnings that night, going down from Aden to Zanzibar. Captain Thomas was to tranship for Beira to take the *Willapa* home, since her master and mate were both dead of cholera; McGilvry had business in Madagascar; and little Bobby Towns was eventually to land at Mauritius to work for the sugar people.

There were other passengers on board, of course, but they were sweating in their bunks, cursing the heat and cockroaches and keeping the steward busy making iced Tom Collinses.

The sea was dark velvet, flat as a table, and the big stars were so close they sent reflections across the water as do the lights of London River. Not even the creaking progress of the ship seemed able to create a wind, and the three men under the awnings sprawled in long cane chairs felt their whites settle stickily against them, clinging unpleasantly to their limbs as they moved uncomfortably from one position to another:

"And there you are," said McGilvry. "It was nothing but luck. If we'd sailed on time we'd have been in the channel when she blew up. Never had a chance. As it was the explosion flattened houses miles away. Imagine! A thousand tons of TNT. We dodged it only because a drunken man broke his leg and we were held up until the ambulance came. Delayed us half an hour. You can't explain these things."

"I remember the affair," said little Bobby, who was six feet four and drank more than was good for him. "In Halifax, wasn't it? In '16. Ship carrying explosives collided in the harbor."

"That's right," agreed McGilvry. "And we were to follow her out. Had five hundred tons of the stuff aboard ourselves. As it was we were still behind the headlands when things busted. Nothing but luck."

"Luck's right," said Captain Thomas. "And that reminds me of something that happened in '17, during the war, too. An odd thing—"

He unfastened another button of his shirt and clasped his hands over his ample stomach. A round little man he was, with a sandy walrus mustache and mild blue eyes. Tubby Thomas they called him, and the younger men laughed behind his back. Yet it was curious the Line always sent him to take over when there was trouble —always, without fail.

"I was younger in '17," he said reflec-

tively. "And a bit thinner. They hauled me into the naval reserve and stuck me aboard a light cruiser so I could take orders from little boys of the regulars and show them how to navigate through ice . . . . No matter—it's a long, long time ago."

He sighed and flicked the sweat from the end of his nose.

"Not that it's much of a story," he apologized, "but you were talking of luck. Anyway, we were on the Greenland patrol, looking for subs and one thing and the other, and coming south for home. The skipper was an old man, raised in the days when the navy still had square-riggers and they were still debating the practicability of ironclads. Old shellback type. You know. Rather do anything than sail on Friday. Throw a fit if he saw St. Elmo's fire at his trucks. Like an old woman. Superstitious." Captain Thomas laughed as if the word reminded him of something else.

"Well, we had a black cat on board, donated by Lady-something-or-other. The skipper got the willies over it but the lady was a personal friend of his and he didn't like to throw it overboard, or lose it when we were in dock. He'd never allow it on the bridge though, and if it happened to wander up there he'd chase it down himself. He did just that the day before we expected to get home. Kicked it off the bridge so it went chasing for'ard. I suppose the poor beast was scared. Anyway, the men were busy with something or other, and they had a hawser leading through a snatchblock on the deck. Just taking a strain, you know, and vibrating a lot. That fool cat made a dive to get under instead of going over, and just then the hawser jumped and caught it. Flattened it against the deck and broke its back.

"The skipper never said a word. Just turned and went below and when I followed him down a few minutes later he was lighting a stick of incense before a carved joss he'd brought from China when he was on station there. Big, grinning thing. He always figured it brought him luck. And so there he was lighting incense in front of it because the black cat was gone. He looked serious too, frowning and worried.

"I asked him if I shouldn't set the clocks ahead an hour that noon. It was early summer and they had the daylight saving system in England. We'd been keeping Greenwich time all the way down and I thought it'd save a lot of confusion if we went into port with the clocks corrected to the shore. We had only about an eighteen hour run left.

" 'We'll do nothing further,' he snapped at me. 'Too many new-fangled ideas already. Leave the clocks alone until we dock.'

"I could see he was upset about the cat, and it may be he thought that to change the time would be bad luck too. Anyway, you can't argue with your skipper. So the clocks remained just as they were.

We went ahead through the rest of the afternoon, and the night, never sighting a thing though we were right in the submarine zone; and then, just about seven-thirty the next morning, we got it, smack, right in the quarter. It didn't sink us but it blew the wardroom all to splinters; wiped it out. Killed a steward, and that was all. We limped into port six hours late and with a list that gave you a crick in the neck."

Captain Thomas paused and flicked the sweat from his nose again.

"And what's the point?" asked little Bobby Towns. McGilvry grunted agreement and fumbled for a cigar.

"It's the time element," said Captain Thomas patiently. "If the skipper had let me set the clocks ahead it would have been eight-thirty instead of seven-thirty when we caught that torpedo. As it happened the wardroom was empty. Had it been eight-thirty, every officer not on duty would have been eating his last breakfast.

"Now would you call that luck or superstition? Personally, I've always felt rather grateful toward that black cat—yes," he added softly, "quite."

The MAN WHO CALLED

CLAYVILLE was a cow town, built up with ramshackle haste in the boom days of the railroad's coming, and the stockyards opened funnel shaped arms a mile wide to take in the beef cuts that came with slow plod across the low sand hills, up from the valleys of the Tahzo, down from the upland ranges of the Cleeko.

Before the railroad thrust its magic rails two hundred miles cross-country and with prod of iron jabbed the town into wakefulness, this had been a Mexican village, languid and peaceable, called Los Flores.

But gringo railroaders are practical folk, shy of the poetical; besides, except in the quick colorful flush of springtime, there were no flowers, while all the year round John W. Clay was a man of power in the land. So the railroad called Los Flores, Clayville; and Clayville became the county seat, capital of the cow country.

Shacks of rough sawed lumber rose up beside the old thick walls of adobe; and some of these shacks ambitiously stood two stories high and were called hotels and office buildings; but mostly they had false fronts to make them look tall, and the whooping spring winds often rocked them until bottles trembled nervously on the shelves and canned goods toppled and fell.

Mild voiced Mexicans with a sort of dazed gentleness loitered in sunny door-

HIMSELF BLAKE

A Novelette of the Old West

By

GORDON YOUNG

ways and looked with mystified uneasiness upon the mad gringos who clattered about noisily, drinking, singing, swearing, all with a kind of meaningless good nature, and often shot one another as if for sport.

Pop Murdock was the head bartender in the Spread Eagle.

He was old, fat, nearly bald, slow spoken, slow of movement, with a steadfast, blank, incurious poker face sort of expression that concealed his watchfulness; and he was as watchful as a horse-thief. He had put in nearly all of his life walking up and down behind bars, some mere barrels on boards where tin cups clanked, some of mahogany with plate glass at his back, sometimes as owner, sometimes as bartender, but nearly always in cow towns, mining camps, or on waterfronts.

The Spread Eagle was one big room with no partition except at the back, where the Boss had rather a fine office for such a town.

It was mid-afternoon and hot. A few idlers were mumbling drowsily at the bar, trying to be a little excited over the oft discussed report that Old Joe Richards of Tahzo was going to buy the 44 outfit, which would bring him right into the lower Cleeko country, plumb up against the holdings of Senator John W. Clay and his associates.

Old Richards and old Senator Clay were enemies. Years and years before, Joe Richards, old then, had accused John Clay, a powerful cattleman, of being a damn cow thief and hiring rustlers. When the smoke cleared away both men were down, and it was some weeks before their

relatives began to be sure that neither would die.

Richards of Tahzo had trailed his beef cut south, far south, losing weight and dollars rather than come north to the nearer railroad. But the Clayville railroad wanted shipping, coaxed, offered inducements, made promises; and it had been said for a long time that Richards was going to move into the Cleeko country and take over the 44, lock, stock and barrel.

Pop Murdock was tired of listening to men guess that this meant trouble and lots of it. He guessed the same thing, but made no comment. Pop Murdock, being watchful, hearing much and saying little, had a pretty good understanding of men and conditions.

Trade being slack, Murdock took a cigar out of his private box, got a bottle of beer off the ice and, carrying the Clayville *Weekly*, left the bar to his helper and started toward a table at the rear of the room where he often sat on idle afternoons.

On his way he paused before a table where two youngsters of the Dot-Circle—Senator Clay's outfit—dawdled over a poker game for imaginary stakes in the hope of making themselves think they were having a good time. They had yesterday turned their pockets inside out and in very short order flung the money away.

They asked Murdock to lend them some money until next pay day, and he eyed them with inscrutable calm. For thirty years or more he had stood behind bars, watching men, all sorts of men and a certain sort of women. Fun loving kids, these; reckless harebrained boys; not bad, not good, just turbulent youngsters: they might grow up to be honest sheriffs, or—Murdock mused—the sort that sheriffs chased.

He allowed them to coax out of him a small gold piece and went on, far back at the end of the room, where, seated at a table, he lighted his cigar, poured out the beer and opened the *Weekly* to the local news page.

MURDOCK'S bottle was empty, his cigar smoked, the paper read; but as yet there were only a few men about the bar, so he sat back restfully and idled.

A man came in through the broad front doorway. The bright hot sunlight struck slantingly at the doorway, and the man's figure was cast in sharp silhouette against the light as he paused for a moment, running his eyes over the faces of the men at the bar.

He went to the bar, and the bartender pointed toward the rear. Murdock idly supposed that it was somebody looking for the Boss; but the man stopped short before the table with—

"You Mr. Murdock?"

Old Murdock eyed him, making sure that they were strangers, yet there was something oddly familiar about the man.

A young one, but range born. There was a kind of rippling softness in his voice, and a certain cold blue look deep down in his eyes.

For thirty years old Pop Murdock had been looking into men's eyes from across bars, and better than most persons he understood what he saw.

And now he sized up this nice looking, pleasant young fellow, muscled with rawhide and carrying himself with a lithe ease that hinted at a bat-like quickness. Brown as sunburned cowhide, alert, not uneasy like most of the younger men who had that same half hidden fierceness deep down in their eyes.

Both hands were black, which meant that he went gloveless; and to an honest, watchful old fellow like Murdock, that seemed a bad sign. Men who might have to reach for a gun at any time never wore gloves. And though now there was but one gun slung low on his thigh and tied down, Murdock noted the rubbed place on his chaps that told a second gun was often worn there.

Five seconds, not more, may have passed from the time he asked, "You Mr. Murdock?" during which old Pop made a

comprehensive scrutiny, then sluggishly replied—

"So folks say."

The young fellow smiled and, with as mild a voice as Murdock had heard a man use in many a day, said—

"Where I come from there are some folks that think a lot of you, Pop."

"You come from south?"

"I've been as far north as Denver, too."

"Tahzo way?"

"San Arnaz Basin, too."

"On down to the Border?" Murdock inquired blandly.

"An' 'cross it more than once, Pop."

"Yeah." Murdock nodded. "I crossed a couple o' times too in right smart of a hurry when I was near your age, son."

"My name—so folks say—is Jack Blake."

He smiled, but Murdock nodded, accepting the name as if he believed it.

"Set down, Mr. Blake. I see now what it is about your voice. Lots of folks up here speak Spanish some. But you learned it young. Have a drink?"

Blake leaned forward and said quietly—

"Pop, sometimes I have some trouble making some folks understand that I don't drink."

Murdock, with a bland glance, again scrutinized him carefully. For all his wisdom in the ways of men he was having difficulty in adjusting that fact to what he had seen in this young man's face. He asked—

"Learn your lesson young, eh?"

Again the quick and really pleasant smile.

"Pop, I learned from looking on."

"Most fellows have to have some fun now an' again, 'specially if—"

"'Specially if what, Pop?"

"They work hard," said Murdock blandly; but behind his mask of a face he was wondering just how this young man could stand the strain, not weaken, never drink, or somehow play the fool.

Men that had his kind of look deep down in their eyes had got it from the strain of leaning forward to peer through smoke.

"I work some, at times."

Murdock grunted, glanced toward the doorway and said:

"Folks are beginning to thicken up at the bar. Did you want to see me about something particular?"

"Pop, there was a little Mexican girl working here in this Eagle about two months back—name of Juanita, wasn't there?"

Murdock's sleeves were rolled up. He pulled down one of the sleeves and began carefully to reroll it and, without looking toward Blake, said in a casual sort of way:

"They come an' go. I think there's a Nita or two comes in right along now."

"Yeah?" Blake rolled a cigaret and, talking as he watched his fingers, explained, "You see, Pop, Juanita's folks—they live down where I just come from awhile back. An' one of her brothers, when he heard I was coming up this way, he asked me to sort of stop in an' say—" Blake finished in Spanish, conveying a courteous and slightly formal appreciation of the kindness of Señor Murdock.

But old Murdock, though he spoke it with a thick lipped sluggishness, understood Spanish and Spanish blood too well not to know that a sinister and merciless anger lay in the hearts of one or more of the dark eyed men to whom the pretty Juanita had told her story of how she had been swindled by Big Bill Bosham, boss and owner of the Spread Eagle. But she remembered Murdock as a friend.

He had finished with one sleeve, then pulled down and began to roll the other, saying quietly in a deep, slow voice—

"She was lonesome for to go home."

"An' you helped her. Pop," Blake went on softly and with an intonation that made Murdock look up. "I've heard your name spoke a good many times, here an' there, an' always with a heap of respect."

"I allus pay back what I borrow," Murdock said sluggishly.

"Now Jake Spencer of down San Arnaz way is a friend of yours, I believe?"

"He is," Murdock answered with a steady look and some emphasis.

"Well, Mr. Spencer is quite some friend of some friends of mine. He said that when I got here I could ask you about some things an' you would give me facts."

"Did he say it to you, personal?"

Blake hesitated. Their glances met in a sustained scrutiny, each of the other; then:

"Yes, Pop. To me."

"Then just what was you wanting to know?"

"Who 's the biggest man in these here parts?"

"Why," said Murdock, who had not been expecting such an easy question when the look that accompanied it was so sharp, "old Senator Clay."

"No, Pop. You know better. Now just who is?"

Murdock grunted, but there was not an eyelash's flickering change of expression:

"Me, son, I'm a barkeep. All I know about what goes on is what folks say up there to the bar. Being busy, I can't allus listen close. Now there's the editor o' this here paper—" Murdock held out the Clayville *Weekly*—"he ought to be able to give you some facts."

Blake glanced at the paper but, attracted by a headline on the front page paused, took it and read rapidly. Murdock, with bland watchfulness, noted that it was the story, very short but prominently placed, about the Senator's granddaughter, who was coming home from the East, where she had been in school.

Blake laid the paper aside, but his eyes followed it; then:

"Pop, a couple of years back I was up to Denver. Just by happen-so I met a fellow who'd been Senator Clay's secretary. He was full of woe with some whisky on top of it. He told me things. I wasn't much interested then, but listened. Somehow I never forgot what he said. An' I'm wondering if maybe it wasn't so. I got so curious I thought maybe I'd ride in an' have a look."

"Yeah?"

"Yes." Blake leaned forward and put a forefinger on the item that had interested him. "Who do folks say she is going to marry?"

"Eh? Why, I have heard some talk about how the old Senator's superintendent an' her was engaged."

"Jefferson Clinton?"

"Yeah. That's right."

"Who come into this country about a dozen years ago with one shirt on his back, an' that none too clean, an' now folks say he's most near as well off as the Senator himself!"

"Do they?"

"Him an' some other folks whose first names you know have built up a big cow outfit right under the Senator's nose, an'—"

"Folks they say that Jeff Clinton is a mighty smart man."

"They say the same of old Pop Murdock, too."

"Yeah? But folks is easy mistook, you know."

"Come, Pop. Play your friend Jake Spencer is asking this question, personal, or near so." Blake paused and Murdock watched expectantly. Blake glanced about, then asked softly, "If you was looking for cow thieves up in this part of the country, would you ask the sheriff to join in?"

Murdock's face remained as expressionless as the palm of his hand, but his thoughts were jumping about at a lively clip.

"Or his deputy?" Blake added mildly.

"Umm," said Murdock calmly. "Me, being born an' near raised down on the Border, son, I've sorta got the old-timer's prejudice against askin' sheriffs an' such to catch rustlers. Why, Jake Spencer ought to know that."

Blake eyed him carefully, smiled, nodded.

"I understand. Thanks. So long, Pop."

Murdock watched him go, and was not at all sure of what to think. For all of his big slow bulk and bland mask of a face, Murdock was sensitive and wary. Jeff

Clinton—the sheriff— Deputy Spike . . . Those names meant that Big Bill Bosham, who owned the Spread Eagle, probably hadn't been overlooked.

As Murdock came to the bar he saw Blake standing there with the two Dot-Circle youngsters, listening with amused interest and holding a glass of whisky. The little glass was cupped about in his fingers in a way that concealed whatever was—or was not—in it. A moment later he tossed the glass to his mouth.

"Pretty cute at it," Murdock thought as he looked at the floor where lay a moist trickle of whisky that had been surreptitiously spilled against the side of the bar.

Presently in came the sheriff and Big Bill Bosham, and with them was a big, fat, cheerful, well dressed gentleman who represented the railroad and its politics; also the cross-eyed deputy sheriff, known as Spike—a big, dangerous fellow who carried two guns and had been seen using both at the same time right in the streets of Clayville.

Spike put a hand on one of the Dot-Circle youngsters, jerked him around, fastened that crosseyed oblique stare off in space and said—

"What you galoots yappin' about?"

"We 're just talkin'."

"Don't make so much noise at it."

Then Spike shifted his gaze and examined Blake, who found it a queer sensation to be stared at by a man who did not seem to be looking at him. Something about the way Blake stared back did not seem pleasing to Deputy Spike. Without shifting his glance, he, asked the nearest Dot-Circle boy—

"Friend o' yourn, George?"

"Yes," said George with boyish insolence, not liking Spike anyhow.

"Murdock," Spike remarked, pitching his voice just a little bit louder than was necessary, "we hear some road agents is driftin' up this way for to see if we can't find 'em some nice spots to be buried in!"

Spike was in one of his sour moods, perhaps not exactly looking for trouble but ready to make people think he was. He was a gunman and everybody knew it, and it pleased Spike that it should be kept in mind.

"Yeah, Pop," Spike went on, "suspicious characters. They have been seen riding around out in the Cleeko Hills. If they come to town they 'll get their funerals free."

Again he fixed his gaze somewhere near Blake's head.

"Yeah?" Pop answered indifferently as with a dexterous push of practised fingers he sent a whisky glass scooting along the bar.

He felt that Spike was pretty likely to have more trouble on his hands than he knew what to do with if the conversation didn't take another turn. So he grunted as a fat man does when about something that isn't easy, stooped slightly, took up a sawed-off shot gun from under the bar, broke it, looked to see if it was loaded, and returned it under the bar; and all without seeming to notice that everybody had paused in their talk to watch him.

"What's that thing for, Pop?" Spike asked with a touch of jeering.

"Spike," said Murdock impassively, with a straight look, "that there is to make a noise with in case somebody don't hear me tell 'em to be quiet. I'm gettin' too old an' slow to duck easy, so if folks want to make some gun play they'd better get out o' this here saloon to do it. Besides, it makes business bad, having folks quarrel an' scaring ever'body."

Some men smiled, and Spike overheard one or two low comments such as, "That's tellin' it to 'im!" So, feeling a bit sensitive over the way Murdock eyed him, he said with some anger—

"See here, you gettin' personal?"

"You asked the question, Spike. You're gettin' the answer."

The sheriff laughed good naturedly, others joined in; Spike grinned a bit sheepishly and admitted—

"That 's a hoss on me!"

Buzz of tongues started up again, about this, that, and anything at all.

Blake seemed curiously pleased with the two young Dot-Circle punchers who

told that him they had come to town to meet Miss Janet, the old Senator's granddaughter, who would arrive on the night train. Just why such a man as he would take up with two wild headed kids, Murdock could not quite make out.

After they had another drink or two Blake said—

"Let 's go eat." And off they went together.

Spike turned to watch them, looking after Blake, and asked questions.

Murdock answered:

"Says his name is Blake. Says he knows a man down in the San Arnaz that knows me. But just the same, so far, he's paid for all he's drunk—same as other folks."

A HALF hour later the bar boy put whisky, glasses and cigars on a tray and when it was fixed, old Murdock nudged him to one side, saying—

"I'll take it."

With slow, almost stately, plod he walked back to the private office and knocked.

"Come in," said Bosham, who was sitting in shirt sleeves with his feet on a table.

Spike, also in shirt sleeves, sat on a bunk. Old Murdock knew that something by way of deviltry was up, they were so pleased with themselves.

Big Bill Bosham was a fine looking man if you did not look too close. He had the saloon keeper's affability and greed. He was a good politician, which, in those times, meant that he was a bad one. He dressed, talked and acted in a way that gave the impression that he was a cowman who had gone into the saloon business.

"Pop, do you reckon the old Senator is as big a fool as he looks an' acts?" Bosham asked, amused, poking an unlighted cigar far into his mouth and offering the box to Spike.

"How 's he act?"

"Honest!" said Bosham, slapping his leg. Spike chuckled.

"Yeah?"

"This afternoon over to the sheriff's he walked up an' down with his coattails flyin' an' orated. He come to town to meet that girl an' found some mail. Somebody who knows this country mighty blame well had a long piece in a Kansas City paper, saying as how we were all thieves, an' intimatin' he was the biggest o' the lot, an' et out of the railroad's hand. Somebody'd sent it to 'im!"

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. An' he said he was an honest man. An' if he didn't think we was honest too, he'd have nothing to do with us. The sheriff he set solemn an' nodded, approvin'. Spike here he got out o' the room. Me, I just had to snicker. A lot o' things does go on, right under his nose, right on his own range, that he don't know about, an' that's a fact; but—"

"One's goin' to go on right soon, too," said Spike with enigmatic humor.

Both of them seemed to think that was a fine joke; and, as if one caught laughter from the other, they leaned back and chortled hoarsely.

"He was hot under the collar anyway, before he saw that piece in the paper. "The Richards-ezs *are* coming up into this country. An' that girl, she wrote the old Senator she'd come home, but—well, Jeff's going to have to do some coaxin' before he gets into a corral sign painted, 'Home Sweet Home.' Though the Senator does want 'im for a grandson-in-law."

"Leave it to Jeff," said Spike. Then added with mysterious significance, "An' leave him to me!"

Murdock had stood stolidly with almost incurious attention, and now that there was a pause, he spoke.

"I'm gettin' old an' heavy on my feet. So I think as how you'd better get somebody as can hustle. I'm quittin' just—"

"But, Pop—hell!"

"—just as soon as you can get somebody."

"Aw now listen, Pop. Things never run so smooth as since you come. How about a little raise?"

"No. The wages is good. But my feet get tired. Fall's comin' on. That means a big time an' lots of work. Me, I'm an old man."

"We'll talk that over later," said Bosham with the air of one who meant to be persuasive and unexpectedly generous.

As Murdock turned to the door Spike asked:

"About that fellow Blake. I don't like his looks. An' are you sure, Murdock, that you don't know anything about him?"

Murdock faced about slowly and eyed Spike with a look that could not have been more hard and direct if it had come over the top of a gun—

"Just what do you mean, Spike?"

"Oh, nothin'—nothin' like that, Pop. I was just wondering if anybody knew anything about 'im. Hard lookin' character, y' know. May be up to something. An' if anything happens, why of course it's these hard lookin' strangers we go after first."

Murdock looked at him with impassive scrutiny, then grunted and turned slowly with flat footed heaviness. Without replying he walked out and closed the door quietly.

Spike gazed at the closed door. A little ruffled but with a conscious air of tolerance, he said—

"Put him an' a sore tailed bear in the same room, I'm bettin' the bear would get et up first!"

"Or die of cramps afterwards!"

"But if he keeps on asking me for trouble, he's liable to get it."

"I hear as how them as has asked him for it, has got it, plenty," said Bosham.

"Ha-ha!" said Spike. "But he's allus sort of hintin' at me, special. Like up there at the bar over that shotgun. I ain't used to bein' checked up, sharp. An' as for that fellow Blake, I *don't* like his looks. But mostly, I was just plantin' some hints so there's be somebody, an' him a stranger, for folks to suspect a little after tomorrow."

"I know," said Bosham, opening the bottle. "Here."

They drank, then Bosham hitched his chair a bit nearer to Spike and said in a lowered voice—

"Jeff won't suspect nothin'?"

"Listen. Jeff won't. But if he does, what of it? I've got him, Bill, right like this—" Spike very slowly put the flat of his thumb down on the table, intimating that Mr. Jefferson Clinton was under the thumb. "Why else, do you think, a smart feller like Jeff would let me an' my friends in on the way he hornswoggles the old Senator?"

"What you got on him, Spike?"

"Yeah? I'm tellin', ain't I? I just go round blabbin', don't I?"

"All right, all right. We'll know to the dollar how much them fellows get. So they'd better see that they do split fair and square, eh?"

"They'd better. It's us, you an' me, that has to look out. The sheriff's easy going, but he wouldn't stand for *that*. An' Jeff don't want nothing stole from the old Senator unless he does it hisself. An' he does it neat, that's sure. But hell, this is easy money—an' who's to know?"

THE TWO Dot-Circle boys came from the washroom of the Empire Hotel with faces moist and hair wet, all slicked up, ready to eat. Blake was at a corner table, waiting for them.

"Now I've got a kid brother," said Blake. "You both look like him. He's always hungry. So I've ordered something a little special . . . You were saying something about Miss Janet a while ago. Just what did you say the color of her hair was?"

They had told him the color of her hair at least three times, of her eyes, too; but Blake seemed to have a poor memory for a fellow that listened so attentively when they talked of her.

A tall man in a black frock coat came into the dining room with the railroad's "fixer"—Mr. Robinson.

"There's the Senator," said young Jim.

"A great man an' looks it," said George.

John Clay was a cowman who late in life had begun to dip into the flesh pots of politics. He was rather conscious of being a great statesman, though certain among the rag tailed press yapped at him and at the railroad. He liked being important and looking it, so his long gray hair was brushed back over his forehead and he wore square cut, long tailed black coats. He called the people of Clayville his fellow townsmen, though his home ranch was fifty miles away; and he was seldom at home, but traveled much and left his affairs in the hands of his capable superintendent, Mr. Jefferson Clinton.

While they were eating, Ferris, the editor of the Clayville *Weekly*, a tired shabby man with the seamed, slightly cynical face of an intelligent man who has gone to seed and likes whisky, came in and spoke to the Senator.

"The 6:30 is late, as always. Won't get here till between eight and nine."

Mr. Robinson, the railroad man, smiled smoothly. As fixer, he knew that broken down country editors were galled by the railroad's yoke, and kicked a little, but on the whole were glad to wear it.

"Sit down, Ferris," said the Senator.

Ferris sat down, a bit uneasily. He was tired, always tired. His hands were inky, for he set his own type; his hair was greasy because alkali water was bad for hair and he did not want to be bald, and was beginning to be so. He was never hungry because tobacco, whisky, and the nervous strain of running the *Weekly*, made him dyspeptic.

"Ferris," said the Senator, clearing his throat and reaching into his inside coat pocket for a large wallet. "There's been a piece in a Kansas City paper. Most dastardly, sir! Here it is. I'd like you to answer it in the Clayville *Weekly*. It makes me out—why, it makes me out, Ferris—it makes me out—"

The Senator choked. Even to refute the charge, he could not bring himself to repeat the statement that he was a frock coated flunky, bought and bossed by the railroad.

Ferris dropped his hat on the floor beside his chair, sat down, took up the clipping eagerly, ran his eye down its half column length, and felt a little irritated at the cutting that had been done.

Ferris was honest; a failure, therefore discontented; but he had to eat. He had sent the article to the Kansas City newspaper in the vague hope that it would stir things up, open people's eyes. He had asked that his statements be investigated. Instead of investigating, the editor—as editors have a way of doing—had chopped out the best parts; that is, those nearest to libel.

It was Ferris's recurrent angered opinion that he was a fool, that all newspapermen were fools—otherwise they wouldn't be newspapermen. He had two toddlers and a fading wife in a shack out on the edge of town. She was soured, sharp of tongue, exasperated that her prettiness was melting in this hot, sand swept town as a wax doll fades in the sun.

"Written by somebody who knows the country, don't you think, Ferris?" Robinson asked smoothly. "Knew facts well enough to distort 'em. But you can call him every kind of a damn liar, and show him up, can't you? We'll want a thousand copies."

That was Robinson's way. Never bribed outright, but bestowed favors.

"I'll lambast this fellow all right," said Ferris, shaking the clipping. Then to the waitress, "Just some prunes. I'm not hungry. It's the heat."

Mr. Robinson, moving aside the quart bottle of beer and gazing with satisfaction at his thick, underdone beefsteak, nodded.

"Has been a little warm, but man must eat, Ferris—man must eat, eh?"

Ferris saw, or imagined, that there was something just a little mocking in Mr. Robinson's tone and lifted glance.

BLAKE apparently had nothing better to do than stay with the young Dot-Circle boys, who, whenever that tardy train came in, were going down to the station to meet Miss Janet.

"I'm sort of her special pet—" George

patted his chest, half mocking his own pride but nevertheless being proud— "and this here piece of dried mud that's learnt how to walk—" he gave Jim a shove as if to dismiss an inferior associate from his presence— "he tries to horn in on my privileges."

"Say, listen, Mr. Blake. If any man ever says she ain't the prettiest girl in the world, I'll shoot 'im! That's how much I don't like liars!"

"I believe you," said Blake.

It had grown dark while they were at supper. Blake seemed willing to stay in the hotel, sit in a chair and talk, or rather listen; but they wanted to go back over to the Spread Eagle. Fiddlers played over there at night. Things were livelier.

Blake then suggested in a mild, cautious tone, as if aware that he was speaking on a delicate subject—

"Now just supposing we all drink soda pop till after the train comes in?"

"Soda pop! We'd get run out!"

"Some galoot would make remarks."

"We'll all drink pop together," Blake explained.

"We ask for pop, old Pop'll pull that shotgun an' tell us to git!"

"All right. If he does, we'll git," said Blake.

"Gee!" said both boys at once. Then George asked, "You'll stand right up to the bar and ask for pop? Plain pop?"

"With everybody lookin' on?" Jim added.

So together they went up the street to the Spread Eagle. It was still early, but people were gathering. The fiddlers had come, but their unopened cases lay on a table. The faro game had not yet opened, and the girl who sat as lookout, a vain and spoiled woman, with a weak spot for Deputy Spike, stood talking with friends.

She saw Spike enter and made for him, with—

"Come on, you leading citizen of Bitter Creek—buy me that drink." She pulled him toward the bar.

"Aw, Gertie," Spike protested, "you know Pop Murdock won't sell you a drink over the bar. That's one of his rules."

"He won't, won't he? Well he just better had! I'll tell him something. More'n he thinks I know. Come on." She patted his breast, fingering the badge. "Nice to be able to shoot legal! Come on. I'll show you he won't refuse me. Better not!"

They went to the bar.

"Whisky," said Spike.

Pop Murdock, with a slow steady glance at Gertie, lifted the whisky bottle and one glass, then barely shook his head with a faint nod toward the girl.

She did not notice, but was leaning forward and staring along the bar at the men beside her; then she clutched at Spike's arm and stepped aside so he could see too as she said:

"Would you look! Three men in leather pants, drinkin' pop!"

Spike grinned. He tapped young George on the arm and as the boy looked up uneasily, said:

"What's that stuff? You disgracin' of a good cow outfit. You an' Jim there. Here—" Spike slid his filled glass of whisky along the bar— "down this! *Pronto!* Hear me?"

Young George's mouth suddenly went dry and his lips trembled, but he looked up with hot eyed stubbornness. Then he was pushed away from the bar, and Blake, with one step, moved to where George had stood. Blake smiled in a queer twisted way as he peered into Deputy Spike's face.

Old Pop Murdock, suddenly unobserving, moved away off down to the end of the bar and, stooping, seemed to have a little difficulty in finding just what he was looking for.

"He's asking for it, Spike!" said the girl, who liked excitement. "Make *him* drink it!"

"What'd you want?" Spike growled, frowning, letting a hand drop, palm backward, at his side.

They stood within arm's reach, each of the other.

"Guess," said Blake so softly that men six feet away could not hear it.

But they could see, and moved uneasily, standing clear. This stranger, Blake, was asking for trouble, and asking of the man who was known to be most willing to furnish it.

But there was something that made Spike less eager than usual, for usually his bluff carried him through. This fellow's eyes had a kind of glitter in them that Spike had not noticed before, and he did not seem to be forcing the smile that pulled with shadowy amusement at his lips.

Spike, who was neither a coward nor a fool, suddenly realized just as if some friend had whispered to him that this man was a killer; the look of it was there, sparkling deep in his eyes.

"Aw," Spike growled, explaining but still trying not to knuckle under, "I was just joshin' the kid."

"In that case—" Blake's right hand reached up and back along the bar, felt for the glass of soda pop, pushed it forward right up before Spike—"let's go through with the joke. Drink it!"

Blake's voice was smooth as a whisper; his smile deepened, but a peering frown gathered over his eyes.

"I'll see you in hell fir—"

Spike's hand twitched backward, then fell away.

Blake's gun had seemed to hop right out of the holster and hang motionless, muzzle on and hip high, in the hand that had waited there for it.

"Drink it!"

"You'll pay for this!" said Spike, between set jaws.

"It's all paid for."

"You know what I mean!"

"And you know what I mean. Drink it!"

Spike lifted the glass, hesitated, then with sudden jerk lifted it to his mouth and swallowed. He spilled much of it, threw the glass on the bar and spit.

Blake's gun slipped into its holster. His hand dropped, and he moved one step back as if offering Spike a fair chance and inviting him to try the draw again. But Spike turned his back, took up the glass of whisky, threw it to his open mouth and turned away, going with clattering stride straight for the door.

Pop Murdock, having finished with whatever he was doing at the end of the bar, asked in a heavy, uninterested voice—

"What's been going on up here?"

Many voices told him.

"Well," said Murdock indifferently. "I don't think soda pop'll hurt Spike, or any other man."

"Buy me a drink, mister?" said Gertie to Blake, ready to give her smiles to the best gunman.

Blake edged off behind young Jim who had his mouth still half open.

"Gertie," said Murdock firmly, "keep away from this bar. You know you don't get no drink up here."

"I don't, don't I? Give me that drink, or I'll show you! I know some things! I'll go right back an' tell Bosham how you doublecrossed 'im!"

"If you can make any man as knows me think that, go to it," said Murdock, and turned away.

Gertie hesitated, but she saw how people eyed her.

"I'll do it!" she cried out. "I'll show you!"

She ran toward the office at the back of the saloon.

"Good gosh!" said young George, pulling a little timidly at Blake's arm. "Do you know who that was?"

"Sure. He's deputy sheriff. Had it pinned on his vest. But drinking soda pop is not against the law."

"Let's have some more," said Jim. Soda water had been dignified as a man's drink. "If fellows like Spike drink it, must be all right for galoots like me!"

GERTIE came back, flushed with triumph. Bosham was walking right behind her with a long stride and dark scowl. They came to the end of the bar. Gertie leaned on it with both arms and announced to the surprised onlookers—

"I'll show him!"

"Pop," said Bosham, speaking shortly. "Give her a drink. Then I want to have a talk with you."

"Come round to this side of the bar an' give it to her yourself, if you want; I won't." Murdock's voice was not low and mild, but it was calm and easily heard.

"No, you don't, Bill Bosham!" Gertie squawked. "Make *him* give it to me. You said you would if I told you!"

"An' what's more," said Murdock, taking off his apron and laying it on the bar, and beginning to roll down his sleeves, "if it's what she told you about Juanita that you want to talk about, we'll talk right out here in the open. She—" he glanced toward Gertie—"knows what I done, an' other folks is going to know—"

"Here, Pop! That's no way—" Bosham was finding it unpleasant to have so many listeners crowding up close.

"That's the way I'm going to talk, anyhow. I've quit." The old man pointed with a backhand gesture toward the apron. "And when that gambler Lucky Thompson slipped little Nita the money to pay what you said she owed, you took it, then got your friend Deputy Spike to throw a scare into her, sayin' she'd be arrested if she—well you know what he told her! I speak some Spanish. She told me all about it. I helped her get away. An' there's something on my mind I've been feeling like sayin' for a long time, the same being that you, Bosham, are lower than a cross between a sheep-herder's dog an' a chicken stealin' coyote!"

As he said it, Murdock was calmly fastening the buttons on his vest.

Bosham swore. His dark face flushed. He was furious.

"No man can talk like that to me and—" He reached toward his hip.

Murdock looked up, unexcited. He was not armed. He did not need to be armed to say what he pleased to such men as Bosham. He had the courage of honesty and a profound judgment of men.

"Go up there an' count out my wages," said Murdock and, passing within two feet of Bosham, did not look at him as he went to the peg where his hat and coat were hanging.

He put them on, slowly, carefully, then went to the front of the bar and waited.

Bosham swore, hesitated, said he would be damned first, but went to the cash box and after fingering the money flung it on the bar.

"You're a damn dirty thief!" Bosham shouted, so full of wrath that he had to say something.

"An' you're a liar!" George yelled shrilly.

"Damn right you are!" Jim echoed at the top of his voice.

Blake reached out with one hand, then the other, pulling down the guns of the harebrained Dot-Circle kids who with tugging yank had dragged out their long barreled .45's.

"Let go me, Pop's square!"

"He'll eat them words!"

There was hum and buzz through the saloon.

Murdock seemed the only calm person. After an interested look toward Blake who had half persuaded, half forced, George and Jim to put away their guns, Murdock went on counting his money. He put it into a buckskin pouch, patted the pouch down into his pocket, pushed up his hat and said:

"Now, Bosham, it's bread and butter to me to be trusted in handlin' money. I'm a barkeep. So unless you tell folks that you was a little bit hasty in that there remark, I'll go down the street a piece, borrow me a gun an' come back."

"Well, maybe so," Bosham admitted grudgingly. "I was hot under the collar. I still am."

"Maybe is too slippery a word. Sort of vague. Did you ever know me to take a dime that wasn't mine?"

"No," Bosham answered, his back turned.

"Did you ever even suspect I took a dime that wasn't mine?" Murdock went on calmly. "Did you?"

A mumbled sound came faintly from

Bosham, but he was busy with the cash box.

"Turn around where folks can hear, like you spoke when you was unfavorable to me."

Murdock was sluggishly calm, but somehow that calm deep voice was hard with menace. Bosham jerked his head around over his shoulder, said:

"No, I told you. Now get out and leave me alone."

GEORGE, Jim and Blake sat in the starlit darkness on the edge of the station platform, with their feet dangling, waiting for the train.

The boys felt warmly attached to Blake. He, a full grown man, did not scorn their sixteen years or thereabout, though he was a fellow that had made Deputy Spike knuckle under, and plainly was somebody that old Pop Murdock liked.

They were curious about him, and though they had too good manners to ask direct questions, they nudged him with hints as to where he came from and what he was going to do, and whether he and Murdock were old friends.

"I'm something of what you call a stranger in these parts," said Blake, amused at the way these admiring kids were trying to pump him. "And the fact is, I'm no top hand at cow work. I know which end wears horns and some other things similar, so I was thinking some of riding out to the 44 outfit and see if I couldn't go to work—"

"Why that there scrubby outfit? An' them Richards-ezs is maybe goin' to buy it. If they ain't already!"

"How'd you ever get such a fool notion as to want to work for the 44?"

"Oh," Blake explained. "I sort of know a fellow that's kind of foreman or something out there."

"Mr. Clinton—out to our place—he's super'tendent. He'll put you to work. You come on out with us."

"Yeah?"

"Sure will. We'll get Miss Janet to ask the Senator to tell Mr. Clinton to give you a job. Sure!"

Far off in the distance they saw a gleam of light, and a few minutes later the empty echoing shriek of the train whistle floated down upon them.

Many people, as usual, had drifted to the station and stood about idly to see the train come in. The Senator stood tall and important within a circle of men who listened respectfully to him.

The great eye of the headlight swept down the track, the whistle shrieked, the bell clanged, and with hiss of steam and rattling grind of brakes the train slowed down. The bell continued to ring with a tolling clang.

The telegraph operator, who was also station master and baggage man, ticket seller and his own janitor, hurried along toward the engine with his lantern dangling and a wisp of thin paper fluttering in his hand.

The idlers sauntered along the small platform, peering just to see if they couldn't find somebody they knew. George and Jim broke into a run up along the track. The Senator followed with sedate haste.

The boys stopped suddenly, embarrassed into a kind of awkward happiness, as they saw a young girl in the vestibule. She, with the watchfulness of one who had traveled much, was making sure that the porter was taking off all of her bags.

"'Lo, Miss Janet!"

She glanced down quickly, recognizing the voices, dimly seeing the upturned faces, and waved her hand, calling them by name. Even then they noticed that she did not seem as happy and merry as usual.

With a predatory snatch they took the bags away from the porter, who turned to help her down. The Senator was there, with his arms out, and the inevitable questions about the trip.

"Dead tired," she said briefly.

George and Jim swayed along in a kind of race and, as the carriers of Miss Janet's baggage, importantly bumped against

anybody that did not step aside, and passed on toward the hotel followed by the doubtful benediction of being "them young Dot-Circle galoots!"

Some one called:

"Oh, Senator—just a minute. I want to tell you—"

The Senator stopped, turned back in a moment, half forgetful of Janet, stood talking politics with a man who had just got off the train.

Janet stopped in the light of the telegraph window, vaguely, without encouragement, answering such as spoke to her in passing. She felt that she did not want to see any one, or talk. This was the unhappiest homecoming of her life. She had a struggle on her hands, but being the granddaughter of old Senator Clay—stubbornness ran in the family—it was not likely that she could be pulled and pushed about into a marriage more pleasing to others than herself.

She glanced up a little impatiently toward the shadowed doorway where the Senator stood; then her eyes shifted slightly and she stared, for an instant not at all sure that she wasn't imagining things.

"You?" she asked in soft voiced anxiety.

"You bet!" said Blake.

"Oh, Dick, dear, I hate you! If they see—if they know— Go! You shouldn't have—"

"Me, I sort of try to keep promises. I said I'd be right here, waiting."

"But if anybody knows you! Oh, this is terrible—and nice! You're a darling, but I think it dreadful! Don't stand there talking to me or— But tell me, Dick, are you really trying to find out if—if—"

"I've learned a lot. Been out on the range with some fellows for most a month, snoopin'."

"Oh, go quick—he's coming!"

The man who had called himself Jack Blake moved aside unhurriedly and Janet turned to the Senator. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes bright, but in the dim light this change was unnoticed. She began to talk, gaily. She had the Senator laughing in another moment. She asked about the ranch, about the dogs, the pet horses, about this man and that, how was feed and the price of beef, were the servants all well. But neither of them mentioned the name uppermost in their thoughts—Mr. Jefferson Clinton . . .

BLAKE stood off in the shadows near the hotel doorway to watch Miss Janet Clay and the Senator go in. He was unnoticed in the group of loungers.

Blake stood smoking a cigaret until a woman with lamp in hand led the way for Janet up the stairs, then he debated indecisively as to whether to go to his room, or to go into the bar and from afar listen to the Senator talk politics.

A woman brushed by him, hurriedly. He looked after her and watched through the window as she went up to Peters, the hotel proprietor. Blake, rather used to watching people and telling something from their expression, knew that this girl was anxious and seemed in trouble. Presently he saw Peters start upstairs, showing her the way. Blake turned toward the hotel's saloon entrance.

Near the top of the stairs Peters knocked on a door, and a deep slow voice answered—

"Who is it?"

"A lady for to see you, Mr. Murdock."

"It's me, Pop. Jess, from the restaurant. I just got to see you, alone!" Her voice was a little hysterical.

Murdock moved about slowly within the room, then opened the door. He had been in bed in his underwear, reading an old newspaper, and dressed unhurriedly.

Jessie, almost as if fleeing from somebody, pushed through the door and shut it behind her, standing against it. She stared a little wildly, and listened until she heard Peters moving off down the hall.

"Pop—" she clutched at his arm—"I've got to tell you!" Her voice dropped into a furtive, tense whisper. "Bosham an' Spike have put Curly Bob an' two other fellows up to— The Senator, he's

taking gold out to the ranch tomorrow!"

"Yeah?"

"Yes, Pop. That's straight, so help me."

"Umm."

"You know, Pop, about Curly. He likes me, and—and Pop, I've sort of liked him, b-but he's just scairt me! He's been asking me to marry him, and he asked me to go with him after the—the holdup. Said he'd slope, him an' his friends, without whacking with Spike an' Bosham if I'd go and marry him. Pop, I'm a fool lots of ways, but I don't throw in with no holdups. Oh, I've begged him not to do it, but he says he's got to. Spike's got something on him!"

"Curly Bob, eh?" Pop Murdock meditated. "Then that means the other two fellows are Shorty an' Jones."

"That's them, Pop. They know they won't be nobody along with the Senator but the girl, them Dot-Circle kids and the Mexican driver."

"But why'd you come to me, Jessie?"

"My Lord, Pop! Who else is square in this old town? The sheriff ain't an'—"

"The sheriff's not in on stickups. He don't steal his money thataway."

"But he wouldn't believe anything against Spike, or Bosham either."

"You're right. Umm."

"And I don't want Curly Bob to get hurt. He's not real bad, Pop. Just—you know—"

"Yeah, I know. Sort o' lazy-like. Where is he now?"

"Over to Frank's place, playin' poker. Least he said he was going there when I made out that I had an awful headache, so he'd leave me. Then I come here. What you going to do, Pop?"

"Do? What can I do? Seems to me Spike got something or other on a lot of people in this neck of the woods."

"You mustn't let on that I told you. You won't, will you? I'm doing it for Curly. What you going to do?"

"Jess, I don't know, yet. Only I'll tell you this. You got no cause to worry. Curly Bob ain't going to take part in no holdup tomorrow. Now you get along downstairs an' don't open your mouth to nobody. I've got to set an' think."

MURDOCK lighted a cigar, puffed slowly, eyeing the smoke with a bland look of pleasure; but inwardly he was much troubled. This was to be ticklish work. He would have to move carefully.

The Senator was in the hotel bar, talking. His voice could be overheard through the swinging doors. A stubborn and impulsive man, the old Senator . . .

Murdock walked in slowly and looked about. Blake sat off in a corner at a table, idling over a newspaper, weeks old. Murdock went over and sat down without a word.

"Well, Pop, I thought you'd rolled in."

"I rolled out for to take a little walk. Not used to going to bed early. Nice night. Could I interest you in going out to look at some stars?"

Blake held a cigaret. He put it near his lips and paused, watching Murdock's bland mask of a face. A moment later he drew heavily on the cigaret and tossed it aside, folded the newspaper, laid it by and stood up.

"I like looking at stars, Pop. Such pretty little things, stars."

They went out together. It was almost eleven o'clock, and the dusty streets of Clayville were quite deserted, though here and there light showed through the windows of a saloon.

Murdock, with a slow plod and in silence, led the way down near the Clayville Stage & Livery Company's corral, then sat down on the tongue of a teamster's wagon, leaned back and looked up at the sky.

"Son, usually I mind my own business—but I'm gettin' old an' meddlesome. And I was just wondering if maybe I could cross my fingers and ask a question, personal?"

"Sure. But sometimes I don't hear well, Pop. One ear is sort of stopped up."

"That's fair enough. Well, then, son, supposin' you knew that some fellows was going to rob somebody, an' being old and

slow an' fat, like me—what'd you do?"

"The sheriff?"

"He's not easy convinced."

"There's the Senator, Pop."

"He'd kick up a rumpus. The fellows would set pat, say I was a liar. There'd be no robbery. I'd have to put my tail between my legs and leave town."

"Well, Pop, once upon a time down where I come from, a sheriff who liked my folks pinned a little button on my vest and he said, 'If you hear of anybody that's doing what they oughtn't, just fetch 'em along into me so I can read 'em a piece out of the Bible.' Somewhere I've still got that little badge, and the sheriff he still thinks well of my folks. So my instincts they are not what you call favorable to fellows that monkey with other folks' brands."

"Umm." Murdock paused thoughtfully. "I begin to see some daylight. I've been thoughtful as to why I sort of liked you special, son, when you showed symptoms I don't much approve of."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"The which being what, Pop?"

"There's such a thing as being better with a gun than an honest man ought to be. It's a powerful temptin' weakness."

"I've got a poor memory, but seems like I've heard a couple of folks express sentiments similar," said Blake quietly.

"There's Deputy Spike. He's got a failing thataway too."

"I don't like him, Pop."

"I know, son. A gunman, he's got instincts like a woman for spottin' a rival."

"It's more than that, Pop."

"Yeah?"

"Maybe, Pop, I ain't mentioned before, me being sort of absent-minded like, that your friend Jake Spencer he's been put in as a sort of foreman, superintendent, or something, of the 44 outfit."

Murdock rose right up off the wagon tongue the better to listen, but stood solemn and quiet, peering in the starlight at Blake's face.

"And Mr. Spencer he's sort of been smelling around, suspicious-like. And he appears to have got a kind of notion that Spike and some fellows that are smarter than him wouldn't like for everybody to know just what they do, at times."

"How long's Jake been out there?"

"Quite a spell, now. He's not a noisy fellow at all."

"An' the J-R? I thought they was buying the 44?"

"I *have* heard some talk thataway. But Mr. Spencer he's kept all the old hands ridin' for him. And he's not talkative."

"Son, me an' Jake Spencer was hatched about the same day, same town, nigh sixty years ago, down near the Border. And we've been friends ever since. So if he trusts you enough to give you reasons for not liking Spike, I don't need to hesitate. So now listen. Here goes . . ."

MURDOCK and Blake walked into Frank's place, a small saloon that did not have girls, music, or any other gambling layout than poker tables. A drowsy bartender was playing solitaire on the bar. At one table two men were playing cribbage, at another three, with very little interest in the game, played poker. One was Curly Bob; the other two were clerks in the town stores.

"Hello, Pop," said the bartender respectfully, putting out glasses and lifting the bottle to the bar. "Have one with me. I hear tell that Bosham is still talkin' to himself, sad-like."

"Thanks. Here's how. You've got a room that's sort of private, out back? I wonder could we use it for awhile, for a word private with Curly there?"

"Sure, Pop. I'll go light the lamp."

Blake went along back with the bartender, and Murdock paused by the poker table, nodding to each of the men who looked up; then:

"Curly, I wonder could you and me have a word private. There's something a little special I think maybe you ought to know."

"Surest thing, Pop. Glad for to quit. These here poker sharps have took four bits away from me," he said pleasantly.

Curly Bob was a cheerful, easy going, rather worthless young fellow, quite good looking and with something of a weakness for range finery. He followed Murdock back to the private poker room, but paused as Murdock stepped aside for him to enter first.

"Who's he?" Curly asked sharply.

"Friend of mine."

"Yeah?"

"Yes. Mr. Blake."

Curly stepped inside. Murdock closed the door.

"Set down, Curly. Mr. Blake, he wants to tell you something." Curly, rather tense with caution, sat down looking steadily toward Blake. "You see, Curly," Murdock went on, moving back a chair and settling himself heavily, "there's come a chance for me to do you a little favor. And as I don't think you're really a bad sort of boy, I'm doin' it. Go ahead, Mr. Blake."

Curly felt a little more at ease as Blake leaned forward with both elbows on the table, smiled pleasantly and asked—

"Curly, I wonder if you could guess why somebody has told some friends of mine that you and Shorty and a man named Jones were going to hold up the Senator's buckboard tomorrow on the way out to his ranch?"

Curly came up out of his chair with his hand on his gun, but Blake did not move because, as all planned before hand, Murdock was sitting to the right of Curly and so reached out and closed on his wrist.

"Curly, Mr. Blake here he has asked you a question."

"That's plum insultin'!" said Curly in a loud, frightened voice. "Who told you them lies?"

"The party who told me," said Blake with deceptive truthfulness, "is a fellow that knew you, Shorty and Jones was most likely to get hurt bad if you stopped the Senator's buckboard tomorrow. With me and another fellow in the back seat with Winchesters on our knees, Curly, you boys wouldn't 've had much show."

Curly sat down, but looked at Blake sullenly—

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Now, Curly, that's no way to act. Maybe I'd better mention, Curly, that for some years off an' on I've drawed some wages for talking persuasive-like to rustlers, horsethieves, an' such fellows. My job it was to go about an' ask 'em not to do things they oughtn't. An' for some little time now, me an' some other fellows have been poking about up in this country, listening an' talking to folks. An', Curly, I happen to know that this little crooked deal you—an' some fellows that are not so much your friends as you think—fixed up for the Senator, is nothing more than stealing some chips out of the big game that is being played. I've got the facts, or know where I can get 'em. An' you, Curly, you are one of my facts."

"I'm settin' pretty an' standin' pat!" Curly tried to be emphatic and appear at ease.

"Yeah. I know just where you're settin' an' what you're standing on. You don't. I come to town just oozin' peaceful intentions because I'd promised quite some time ago to meet a party. I wasn't meaning to kick up much of a ruckus, but when I learned that Spike an' Bosham was sending you out to get shot down—"

Curly rose right up out of his chair again, but this time not clawing at his gun. He was amazed and frightened.

"—I thought maybe you might object to having your mouth shut, just thataway."

"You mean they wanted me killed?"

"You're a smart boy, Curly. An' Mr. Murdock, here, has spoke up an' told me you wasn't really a bad sort of fellow, so I thought maybe you might like to know just how the cards were falling."

"I'm not goin' to have my mouth shut thataway! Who told you? You tell me that!"

"It come straight, but way around indirect."

"Why, they put me up to it! Me an' Shorty an' Jones!"

"Of course. An' Curly, I'm just curious for to hear you guess as to how Mr. Jeff Clinton, who come into this country some fifteen years ago with nothing much that couldn't be poked into a saddle bag, an' has never drawed more than three thousand dollars a year wages, is now ridin' high an'—"

"I don't know nothin' about that," said Curly, "but I know that Spike an' Bosham, an' that banker, Shaw, an' the sheriff, too, are friendlier than fleas on the same dog with Jeff Clinton!"

"You are an observing boy, Curly. An' I wonder, since I'm likely to forget that you have told me an' so not mention it to you again—I wonder if you'd mind telling me, Curly, if you an' some of your friends along in the spring each year or so, haven't done a little rustling? Branded a few Dot-Circle calves with the Double A? Or the Lazy A? Or the Upside-down A?"

"No, no," said Curly quickly. "Not me."

"You never worked for none of the A outfits?"

"I have worked for 'em, but—I wouldn't steal no cows!"

"We're talkin' about calves, Curly. An' we're not talking about you stealing. But didn't some of the boys ride around with running irons? Did you ever drag a calf off up to that big box cañon over north of the Speckled Hogback?"

"No, no, not me!" Curly was uneasy. "I don't know anything about that!"

"Well, I know a lot about it," said Blake. "I'm so full of knowledge that I'm all swelled up like a poisoned pup. I'll tell you some things an' maybe your memory will wake up. All the A outfits are registered to the Cleeko Cattle Company. An' they run mostly with the Dot-Circles, on the range between the Dot-Circle an' the 44. That banker, Shaw, Sheriff Hudson, some other of the county officials, Spike, Bosham, an' even the old Senator himself, own some shares in this Cleeko Cattle Company. They started mighty small some years back, but prospered a heap. They ship with the Dot-Circle an' get the same rebate from the railroad. Now, Curly, you are a smart boy, an' maybe you can help me guess why Senator Clay would own some shares in an outfit that steals a lot of its calves from his own cows?"

Curly meditated, honestly puzzled, an' at last said—

"Must be he don't know what's goin' on."

"Curly, you an' me have notions similar. The Senator owns every hair of a Dot-Circle calf. But when it gets an A on its hide, he owns about one-twentieth of it. Him being all absorbed in politics, he don't know anything of what goes on except what Jeff Clinton tells him. He's most blind an' trusting in his friends, an' so he thinks because the A outfits belong to him an' his friends that everything is all right. Personally, Curly, I don't believe that half the men who own some little stock in the A outfits know what's going on. But it's funny, Curly, that the man who's most interested in these A outfits, attends to all the shipping an' keeps books, don't appear to own a dollar's worth of stock."

"You mean Jeff Clinton?"

"You are a wide awake boy, Curly."

But that was as far as Curly could go. He was beginning rather to admire this man Blake who was mild and friendly, and would have liked to make other helpful guesses. Murdock, who had been listening with much interest and some amazement, suddenly nodded his head, understanding more clearly.

"Now, Curly, some of the A boys, sort of getting in the habit of stealing Dot-Circle calves, the habit growed on 'em, didn't it? They reached out for calves of other outfits, too, such as the 44, which was handy?"

"I don't know nothing about that." Curly was stubborn, even if perhaps not wholly innocent, on the matter of rustling.

"An' some of the 44 boys, didn't they sort of chip in an' shoo a cow an' calf now an' then over toward the A riders?"

"I have heard some talk, but I don't know nothing!"

"Then why—" Blake's smile was pleasant, his tone enticingly mild—"would Spike and Bosham be so pleased with themselves if you was to get plugged an' couldn't tell what you know?"

"You're right. I'll tell you, but you got to believe me. Spike did send me an' Shorty an' Jones out last spring to Jeff Clinton. But we didn't know we was rustling!"

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Mr. Clinton he said that since the Senator owned both outfits, it wasn't wrong to put any brand he wanted on his calves. He said it was done for business reasons, an' he didn't want folks to know."

"An' you believe it?"

"We didn't ask questions."

"An' you never got overzealous an' burnt a 44 calf?"

"Spike he come out an' told us to take what we found. Said other outfits done it to the A's, so it was the only way to even up on 'em."

"Spike's got queer notions for a deputy sheriff."

"You're right he has," Curly admitted angrily. "Give us fellows the doublecross thataway!"

"Where's Shorty an' Jones?"

"I'm to meet 'em tomorrow on the road. Gallop on ahead after I've seen the Senator make a start."

"How much is he taking?"

"About five thousand dollars."

"An' you fell into the trap, Curly, because you thought there would be nobody along but the two Dot-Circle kids?"

"Looks thataway, sure." Then, suddenly, with rather belated suspicion, "Was it a woman told you?"

"No, it was a man. An' Mr. Murdock, here, being a sort of friend of mine, we talked it over. He thought it might be worthwhile to do you a favor by talking to you straight. An' I suggest, Curly, that you an' Mr. Murdock here get some horses an' strike out for the 44. Spike may get rambunctious when he sees he hasn't been able to make a fool out of you. Mr. Murdock here has got a friend out there, an' if you want to settle down an' work steady I think maybe you can have the chance."

"You're not going to hold nothing against me?"

"Not if you kick in, play fair, go straight. There's going to be a big change out to the 44 pretty soon. Right soon."

"Them Richards-ezs, you mean?"

"You sure know things about what's going on, Curly," Blake said approvingly. "An' maybe I'll come to you again an' ask some questions. But do your work and your job's steady. How's that?"

THEY went down to the Clayville Stage & Livery Company and roused up the barn boss, who was a bit curious as to why Pop Murdock should be riding out of town with a fellow like Curly, although he asked no questions. Curly's horse was already stabled there.

Murdock, old and clumsy and heavy, was helped into the saddle.

"Goodby, son," said Murdock to Blake. "Take care of yourself."

Off he went at a jog trot, with Curly at his side, already asking questions about that fellow Blake. Murdock's answers were impressive, even if vague.

It was near sixty miles to the 44 ranch-house, a full two-day trip for an old man, not much used to riding. But they moved along easily, stopping the next night with a fellow who sold a little whisky and sometimes laid down a pallet for such wayfarers as drifted in.

Late the following afternoon they rode up to the ranch-house. Murdock was sore and stiff, and got off his horse with the help of the corral fence. He gave the horses to Curly to water and turn loose, then walked up to the house where a small man with a bristling mustache and sharp goatee waited.

Jake Spencer was a little man, wiry, tough, honest, and without fear, respected by men who knew him or knew of him.

The meeting was undemonstrative.

"'Lo," said Jake.

"'Lo," Murdock answered.

"You walk like you needed some liniment," said Jake.

"I do," Murdock answered, rubbing at the inside of his thighs.

"Come in an' set," Jake said; then, "Who's that you rode in with?"

"Curly Bob," Murdock told him, adding, "Used to ride for the A's."

"Why'd you bring him?" Jake snapped.

"A fellow named Blake there in town, he sent 'im," said Murdock.

Jake grinned with much the same expression as if his face had suddenly cracked, and he asked—

"What you think of my boss anyhow?"

"Your boss?"

"Come on in an' set. You can have my rockin' chair. I brought it along up with me."

They sat down, Murdock squirming gently and with twinges of pain as he eased himself into the narrow rocker. He was choking with curiosity, but remained expressionless, waiting.

Jake called to a Mexican, who came languidly with whisky and glasses. They drank, with the gesture of touching their glasses.

"Did he tell you who he was?" Jake asked.

"Not right straight out, no."

"It's going to be well knowed in a mighty little while. You going to stay out here with me awhile?"

"Till somebody drives me to town in a wagon, or puts a chair instead of a saddle on a horse."

"Well, Pop, his name is Joseph Richard Richards, No. 3. For a long time now his granddad, Old Joe, an' his dad, Mr. Joe, have tried to get him to settle down an' be a cowman. He's notionate, that boy. Cows don't interest him. At sixteen he rowed with Old Joe an' left home. Got himself appointed deputy sheriff—at sixteen. Old Joe raised hell with the sheriff, so the boy stopped bein' deputy sheriff for a spell. Then he went down South an' joined the Rangers. Then for a time he worked for the Cattlemen's Association. After that a railroad got him to come up to Colorado to help look for some train robbers. He's traveled a lot, an' much of the time he was going through smoke. He likes it, an' that's bad. He's never goin' be as he ought till somebody beats him on the draw, fair an' square, an' plugs 'im. Which is a mighty risky sort of cure. He's a nice fellow, an' soft spoken, but he's so full of the notion that no man is faster than him with a gun that he's near worthless. I've told him so. He's honest because he's a Richards, but he's a killer because he likes it.

"Now about two years ago he come down from Denver with his pockets full of reward money, an' he appeared changed, some. Seems like he'd met a girl. But you can't get nothin' out of him if he don't want to tell you. Anyhow, ever since then, Old Joe tells me letters have been comin' regular-like from back East.

"He finally said if they would buy him an outfit all his own, an' let him run it, he'd settle down. The Richards-ezs, they stick together like glue an' paper. An' they was willing until they heard it was this here 44—right up against old Clay's range. They smelt a rat. If he was going to settle down he was making sure that it would be where there would be trouble a-plenty. In spite of all their fussin', Old Joe liked him almost better than any of his other grandchildren. Only been in late years that Old Joe himself has quit enjoyin' trouble.

"Well, Pop, for almost two years now, the Richards-ezs have talked about buyin' this 44. Dick was plum full of argument. He's nobody's fool. Good range, handy to the railroad. The J-R could work their cows up on to the 44 range, keep 'em fat, then push 'em over to the railroad. Good thing, make money. So at last Old Joe an' Dick's dad agreed if he'd let me be manager up here. He was a good enough kid to say he wouldn't have nobody but me. So, sort of secret-like, they bought this outfit, an' I come up to look things over an' do nothin' for a

time. He an' a couple o' Mexican boys have been scoutin' around, mostly among Mexicans up here, pickin' up information. Mexicans always know a lot about what goes on in a country, an' he learned the lingo before he could speak English. Same as all the Richards do.

"I reckon there's only one man left on earth that Old Joe hates the same as he used to hate Indians. That's old Senator Clay. An' it's my opinion, personal, that Old Joe has got a sneakin' hope down in the bottom of his heart that Dick, being some experienced thataway, will show folks that Clay is, and always has been, a cow thief, an' that the railroad owns him from heels to hair."

AS MURDOCK and Curly rode off, Blake looked after them until they became hazy figures bobbing along the dusty road in the starlight, then he went along back toward the hotel. The lights were out in the hotel bar. A lamp, turned low, was burning near the stairs. Everybody had gone to bed.

Blake went up to his room. He picked up a rifle that was standing in a scabbard in the corner, opened it up, throwing a shell into the barrel, then put it back. He turned down the bed and took out a second .45 and belt filled with cartridges that he had poked away, out of sight, after coming to town. It was not good taste for a stranger to be seen wearing two guns. His own father never wore any in town.

Blake hung up both belts and guns on the back of the one chair in his room and smiled as he thought of the two Dot-Circle boys who went about with heavy guns on their hips that they had to tug at and yank as if lifting a crowbar to get out. He wondered which room Janet was in. He would liked to have listened at the door, just to hear her breathe. He grinned, in his imagination listening to the roar that Old Joe, his grandfather, would make when he learned that her name was Janet Clay. In his mind's ear he heard also another roar, that of Senator Clay, when he learned that Mr. Blake was a Richards.

Even Janet's uncle, who was somebody or other in a bank up in Denver, had not known who Mr. John Blake really was when he introduced him to the girl as the man who had recovered some stuff train robbers had taken from an express car.

It was at this time that the old Senator's discharged secretary was, so to speak, tugging at the uncle's coat-tails, trying to get him to listen to stories about Mr. Jefferson Clinton; but the secretary's breath smelled of whisky, his tongue was a bit thick, and he did not succeed in trying not to cry. He seemed to want a neck to lean on while he told his woes. The uncle distrusted and avoided him. Blake had listened, simply because he was rather good at listening. What the fuddled secretary said did not seem important at the time. He had meddlesomely poked his nose into Mr. Jefferson Clinton's account books and, having been detected, was fired. As was right and proper. Blake had not realized at the time that this Jeff Clinton had his eye on Miss Janet's hand, or it would have been a sobered secretary who put his story down in writing.

Figures and account books? Blake sat down on the edge of his bed, put his elbows on his knees and held his head. He did not know about such things. He had some cousins who did because they had gone back East and studied. They had returned to the J-R ranch and shaken things up, overhauling the books of the bank in which Old Joe was a stockholder.

Blake rubbed his head with his knuckles. Education must be a fine thing. Jeff Clinton had some of it. Figures and account books . . . Mr. Jeff Clinton was smooth, polite and plausible. Blake had to scratch his head, bite on a pencil and count on his fingers when doing sums. He might get one of the fellows from the bank to help him. But he was cautious and distrusted this Clayville bank. That banker, Shaw, was in cahoots with Jeff Clinton . . .

Blake blew out the lamp and went to bed. It was well after midnight, but he awoke before sun-up and splashed about in the dusty wash bowl. He took his guns and went downstairs. A woman with a towel tied about her head to keep off dust was sweeping, but he saw no one else. She glanced with a kind of incurious stare at the guns and answered without interest when he spoke. He went over to the stage company, fastened the rifle to his saddle and put one gun and belt into a saddle bag. A man, stiff legged and sleepy, was hustling about. Blake brought in his horse, took brush and curry comb, and worked for twenty minutes, affectionately insulting the horse with various defamatory remarks. The horse, with ears perked forward alertly, nuzzled the feed box, chewing oats, now and then swishing its tail about Blake's neck under the doubtful pretense of striking at flies.

The barn boss hurried up with a bunch of hay on a pitchfork.

"Tell me, boss," Blake said, "who do you allow is the best man with figures in this here town?"

"Dunno. I ain't, that's certain."

When Blake returned to the hotel Peters, in shirt sleeves and with slippers on his feet, was replacing spittoons that had been cleaned.

"Mornin', Mr. Blake. Want a drink? I'll open up for you if you do."

"Who do you allow is the best man with figures in this here town?"

"Yeah?" Peters paused to grin. "I ain't heard that one. Go on, I'll bite."

"No joking."

"Well," Peters replied cautiously, a little afraid that he was about to be trapped in a joke, "I suppose Mr. Shaw, of the bank."

Blake sat about looking at an old newspaper until the dining room was opened. He was among the first that went in. Presently with great clatter of boots and spurs George and Jim, with swollen eyes and wet hair, came in and made for his table.

"Next time I have to sleep with somebody," said Jim, staring reproachfully at his friend, "I'll get me a wet dog!"

"I woke up," said George, "layin' over on a half-inch of the bed I'd paid the most for. Some fellows is hogs, even in their sleep!"

The Senator and Janet came in. The boys bobbed their heads and mumbled.

"Good morning, boys," said the Senator absent mindedly. Janet smiled toward them, with just a flicker of pause as her eyes passed Blake's face.

"Now," George whispered, "ain't she purty?"

"That's right!"

"You goin' come on out home with us an' get a job?" Jim asked.

"I may ride out a piece with you. I was thinkin' some of going that way."

Later, Ferris, the newspaperman, came into the hotel bar. Blake watched his chance, began to talk with Ferris, bought a drink, and asked—

"Who's the best man with figures in this town?"

"Old Cooney, over to the Emporium. He used to be a top hole bookkeeper, but his wife died, his daughter went to smash, the company he was with in K. C. failed, and he took to whisky. He's told it to me, a dozen times. Were you wanting some work done?"

"Maybe. Is he easy scairt?"

"I don't know. He's showed me his books. They're neat as printing. Sometimes he helps me read proof. He's a lonesome old fellow."

"Let's set down over here to a table. Yesterday, sort of offhand-like, Mr. Murdock recommended you as a man who could give a fellow some information. Are *you* easy scairt?"

"That depends. Sometimes I step cautiously."

"Well, supposing I paid you some money. Then one day I sent for you to come out to a place with Cooney an' look at some books? Would you bring 'im?"

"I think so. How much money?"

"Fifty dollars now, as what they call a retainer. Then a hundred."

"We could come on a Sunday."

"You'd have to light out ten minutes after I sent in word."

"Where to?"

"To wherever I said; but it won't be outside the county."

"This is a big county."

"An' you'll have a big piece for your paper, maybe."

"Can't you give me a hint of what it is about?"

"No; all I can give—" Blake took some gold pieces out of his pocket—"is fifty dollars."

"I'll have to ask Cooney."

"Here's the money. Go ask him. If he says no, you can bring it back. If he says yes, come back anyhow—to ease my mind. Tell him he won't be asked to do nothing but say if the books are honest, an' if not, what's wrong with 'em."

Ferris went away and returned presently, looking rather down at the mouth. With labored slowness he put the gold pieces on the table.

"Cooney says he won't go unless he knows where and what for."

"You'd think—" Blake returned the money to his pocket—"this was the North Pole from the way folks have cold feet."

Ferris' sickly face flushed. He reached into his inside coat pocket, saying—"There seems to be somebody down in this country that hasn't cold feet!"

He handed over the clipping Senator Clay had given him to condemn and refute.

Blake read it carefully, shook his head and handed it back.

"No. The fellow that wrote it was careful not to say what he meant. All vague. Scairt of what they call libel."

"The editor cut it," said Ferris, irritated; then as he noticed Blake's quick look, added hastily, "I mean as a newspaperman I can tell. Spot the earmarks. Of course I don't actually know, but—experience—understand libel, of course."

Blake looked at him for a long time, then reached into his pocket, took out the gold pieces, gently laid them down on the table, and said:

"I'm wondering if you could fill in the spots that you say have been cut? An' instead of where this says a 'certain official,' I wonder if you could spell his name? Just what little cow outfits have been squeezed till they had to sell to the big cowmen who got rebates? The part about taxes is interesting, but vague. I like facts in my reading. An' nobody will ever know."

Ferris fingered the money uneasily.

"I've got something I wrote once—just boiled over and wrote it. Everything in it. You'll never tell? And—will you tear it up? Burn it?"

"Does it mention a fellow named Jefferson Clinton?"

"Yes. But if he ever knew—"

"I don't want folks to know you told me," said Blake. "I want 'em to think I am such a bright fellow I can find out things for myself!"

BLAKE told the Dot-Circle boys that he was having to stop in town a little while on business, but would soon overtake them on the road; then he sat down on a backless chair out behind the Stage & Livery Company office to read what Ferris had given him.

This was not at all what Blake had hoped for, being mostly the gossip, the guesses, and scraps of tittle-tattle about the county officials; and such charges as were made took the oblique form of questions: Who got the $600 appropriated for the Pico Flat bridge when there wasn't even a new nail put into the old timber? Why did Sheriff Hudson collect $1530 last year for the board and keep of prisoners when there were not twenty men spent that many days in jail? Is it true that certain men voted five and ten times at the last election while Deputy Spike sat outside the voting place? Who is the liar? Mr. Railroad Robinson who says that the Dot-Circle, or nobody else, gets a rebate from the railroad, or Mr. Banker Shaw who has been heard to say that the A outfits get the same rebates as Senator Clay? Why did Jefferson Clinton get so excited one day in town about

three years ago when a stranger called him Mr. Taylor? Wasn't it queer that the stranger should be shot a few hours later by Deputy Spike for resisting arrest?

There were three or four pages of such questions. As Blake folded the papers into his pocket he meditated:

"Mostly, like now, when fellows make you think they're going to tell you something that'll split the town wide open, it boils down to a little of nothing. Taylor, hmm? We'll see. Taylor? I'd better be riding."

He overtook the Dot-Circle boys some three or four miles out of town jogging along behind the buckboard. The back curtains were down so that no one in the buckboard knew that he had come up.

There was not much conversation as they jogged on. The sun was warm. The boys were drowsy. Blake kept his eyes open, and now and then a little furtively loosened the .45's in their holsters. Jogging made them settle, but his gesture of loosening them was largely unconscious. He had a bit of wadding down in the nose of each holster which kept the guns from jamming.

He might meet Shorty and Jones anywhere, riding along, or not meet them at all. Before he had let Curly go he had learned all the details of the proposed holdup. It had been planned on the upgrade curve of a steep hill known as Lookout Point, which the Senator's buckboard would likely reach shortly before noon. From the cover of the mesquite covered bluff they, without showing more than masked faces and guns, were to make the Dot-Circle kids pitch away their guns and the Senator drop his sack of gold into the road, then send the boys and the buckboard on up over the grade while Curly and his friends came down the hill, turned off into an arroyo and set off across country, so as to come into town from the north instead of from along the Pico Flat road.

As planned, it was as simple and easy as falling down stairs. However, as Curly was not to show up, Shorty and Jones might not try it by themselves; yet Blake guessed that whether or not they tried it they were pretty sure to ride toward town to find out what had become of Curly.

As the buckboard came to the foot of the long grade and the Mexican driver let the horses have their heads and go nodding up at a walk, Blake swung off his horse and scattered a handful of silver in the dust.

George and Jim stopped too and, looking down curiously, saw Blake pick up a half-dollar.

"Somebody's sure spilt money here!" he said.

The boys came off their horses in a hurry and began nosing about in the dust.

"Few things is more fun than findin' money," said Jim.

"Spendin' is," said George.

Blake looked ahead. The buckboard had disappeared around a curve. Now and then he furtively planted a quarter or dime to keep the boys searching; but after about twenty minutes he got on his horse again and kept his eyes lifting up along the road. The youngsters tramped about, stooping now and them to poke a finger into the dust.

Blake heard the clatter of hoofs and, a moment later, two men, riding fast, came around the curve ahead.

"They've done it!" Blake guessed.

Blake's horse stood near the middle of the road. He had both hands lightly on the horn. The boys looked up and the horsemen, seeing three men at the foot of the grade, pulled down their horses, seemed to hesitate, but came on. There was a fixed, suspicious stare in their eyes, and they meant to ride by with merely a passing greeting.

When they were so near as to be about to pull aside to ride by him, Blake said—

"If your name is Shorty and Jones, I've got a message from Curly."

"Yeah?" said one, pulling at the reins.

The other stopped his horse too, eyed Blake, glanced toward the dusty kids, then said cautiously—

"That's our names."

"Good!"

Blake's hands left the saddle horn and, as he gave a sidelong lurch in the saddle, he, with shadow-like swiftness, whipped both guns out and up. A curiously unpleasant smile was on his lips and his eyes had the bright gleaming look of a gambler who taps a crooked dealer's bank.

Shorty's hands rose as if jerked. There was a flicker of hesitancy in Jones' narrowed eyes, then up went his hands.

The Dot-Circle boys stood with their mouths open, wondering what it was all about.

"Things sure do happen sudden when you're around!" said one of them.

"What they done?" the other asked.

"Jones, hook your right knee round the horn, an' lean over—but keep your hands up. That's the way . . . I'm awful when it comes to taking a gun off a man on horse back. An', Shorty, you turn your head and look the other way. I don't like for a man's pardner to watch me too close."

At a glance Blake had seen that Jones was the dangerous man of this pair. He disarmed them, ramming their guns into his saddle bags.

"Cut thongs off their saddles," Blake told the boys. "Tie their hands behind 'em. Put a rope on their horses. Then we'll strike out. An' when we catch up with the Senator, I want you, Shorty, an' Jones, here, to explain just why you've been branding Dot-Circle cows with all sorts of A's!"

Jones and Shorty exchanged astonished glances.

The excited youngsters paused in the cutting of the saddle thongs to gape at Blake.

"Is that what all this is about?" Shorty asked.

"Where I come from it's enough to make most folks unhappy."

"You're in for some trouble, Mr. Whoever-you-are," said Jones.

"I don't want to make no mistakes," Blake replied mildly.

"Didn't Curly tell you?" Jones said, just as if about to burst with honest anger. "Didn't he tell you who put us to work?"

"He did say something that was mighty hard to believe."

"You turn us loose! We don't do no rustlin'! Jeff Clinton he hired us to brand some Dot calves for the A's."

"Yeah? But will you ride along up to the Senator and tell him so?"

"You're damn tootin' we will!" said Shorty. Then, "Is that what all this is about, sure?"

"You turn us loose an' we'll go along an' tell him," Jones offered.

"I turn you loose, an' there'd be nothing but some dust an' smoke to show which way you had gone. No, sir. I'm what they call a skeptic. But you make Jeff Clinton admit he told you to switch them brands, an' I guess you'll be right, Jones, about me being in for some trouble."

Jones and Shorty meditated, eyeing Blake. They were guiltily mystified. Not a word about their having just held up the Senator. The gold was in Jones' saddle bag. They did not want to face the Senator. He had not seen anything much but faces masked with red handkerchiefs, yet when he knew where Blake had stopped them he would jump at them suspiciously.

"Yeah, just as I thought," said Blake. "You won't tell the Senator. An' you won't tell Jeff Clinton so to his face. An' of course, Mr. Clinton will say he told you to do nothing of the kind. Accusing a man like him of a thing like that! You boys have funny notions about what folks will believe!"

As they rode along the Dot-Circle boys asked questions of Blake; and Jones and Shorty, knee to knee, talked together in an undertone.

"Say you," Jones called. "If we tell the Senator, will you let us go?"

"If after the Senator hears everything, he wants to let you go, yes. I'll be willin'."

Jones and Shorty then talked together some more and meditated, very curious as to who Blake could be and staring toward him distrustfully.

Shortly after they rode over the hill, they saw in the distance where the buck-

board had been driven off to one side of the road. The Senator, Janet and the driver had got out and were watching anxiously, wondering what had become of the Dot-Circle boys, and waiting for them.

Blake spurred well ahead, dismounted and, without paying any attention to the Senator's hasty questions, said respectfully—

"Senator, I am pretty well known some places as John Blake, an'—"

"Are those the men that just held me up?" said the Senator, stormily. "Outrage, sir!"

"—an' having worked some for the Cowman's Association down South I'm—"

"Did those good youngsters of mine watch them?"

"—I'm some interested in rustlers; an' this fellow Shorty an' Jones admit burning a lot of your Dot-Circle calves—"

"But I've just been held up! On the road, up there!"

"—an' I thought you might like to ask 'em some questions. Here they are now. Rustlers," finished Blake, lifting his voice accusingly.

"We ain't!" Shorty almost shouted. "Jeff Clinton hired us to put A's on your calves. Said you owned both outfits, so—"

"What's that? What's that you're saying?" The Senator was shocked and amazed. "What outfits?"

"The truth, ever' word of it," Jones put in. He sat tense and watchful. "Dot-Circle an' them A's."

"Hired you to—Jeff? I don't believe it!" the Senator shouted.

"Wasn't it that Deputy Sheriff Spike that took you out to Mr. Clinton an' said you were good men?" Blake asked. "Curly said something like that there in town."

"It was Spike—an' him a deputy sheriff, we thought it was all right."

The lament in Shorty's voice seemed to convey that he would rather starve than do anything he knew was wrong.

"That's right," said Jones. "We're honest punchers. We wouldn't rustle no cows for anybody."

"I'd trust Jefferson Clinton as I would my own son!" the Senator announced, as if telling it to a big audience.

"An' I'm sure you should," said Jones. "Mr. Clinton, he can explain it. It's this nosey fellow here. He's makin' all the trouble. Who is he, anyhow?"

"Maybe I have made a mistake," Blake admitted. "You've explained fine how you come to scorch the hide of the Senator's calves. But I'm going to make sure you're not carrying a running iron in that saddle bag of yours. It's got a bulge in it that's—"

Jones almost reached out to keep the bag from being opened. He had tugged and squirmed at the buckskin thongs until his wrists were loose, or could, in a moment, be shaken free.

He knew that Blake had trapped him into admitting what Clinton and Spike had made him promise never to tell; and it seemed now plain to him that the weak kneed Curly had told about the holdup.

"Is this here what Clinton paid you as wages?" Blake inquired.

"My money!" said the Senator, recognizing the bank's canvas bag. "You fellows—I'll see you hanged!" With the gold in his hand he added, "But it's what you say of Jeff that troubles me more than this. I can't believe it."

The Senator turned away, handed the sack indifferently to the Mexican driver to put into the buckboard, then called to Blake and walked aside with him, asking questions. Janet came too.

"You mustn't listen," said the Senator, "because it's not true about Jeff; but I wanted to ask—"

"I *will* listen!" said Janet, lifting her head and looking with flashing eyes at her grandfather.

Jones slyly looked about. Blake's horse, a good one, with reins trailing, stood not more than two good jumps away. Shorty sat nearby, but Shorty did not count for much. Besides, there was only one horse on which to get away. His own was on a rope that the boy George held. There was a Winchester on

Blake's saddle, and that was something to try for; but Jones wanted a .45, too. Blake was about thirty feet away, and would be on top of him, shooting, before he could jump from his saddle, climb the other horse and be off.

Jones saw that no one was watching him. The boys sat looking toward Blake, the Senator, and the girl. Jones leaned forward against the saddle horn and loosened his hat on his head. He saw that no one noticed. Then he leaned over slightly and let the hat fall almost plumb with his stirrup to the ground.

"Oh, son," he said quietly to George. "My hat fell off. Will you hand it up to me?"

"Sure," said George.

He dismounted, came over and reached down for the hat; and as he stooped, Jones leaned out of the saddle, then with almost one motion jerked the boy's gun from its holster and swung the long barrel against the startled youngster's head, knocking him unconscious.

Jones leaped from the saddle and with galloping lunge snatched at the reins of Blake's horse, then jerked the horse about so that the near side would not be exposed to gun fire as he was climbing into the saddle.

Janet, the first to notice, had cried out warningly. Blake, with hasty push to right and left to send her and the Senator out of the line of bullets that might come toward him, reached for his guns—both guns; but a quick glance noted that Shorty was still in the saddle, with hands behind him, and so he drew but one.

"Not a chance, Jones! Halt!" Blake shouted.

But Jones had got to the other side of the horse. He had one hand, with the reins in it, on the horn, and leveled the gun across the saddle.

Janet called at Blake:

"Don't—don't shoot! Let him go, Dick! Let him!"

"Let me go or I'll—" Jones began.

Their guns went off together. Blake's hat flew from his head as if snatched away by an angry, invisible hand, but Jones was hit almost squarely between the eyes which had peered across the saddle.

The horse, trained to stand though bullets whizzed about its ears, stiffened its legs and threw up its head as Jones fell.

"Excellent shot! Excellent!" the Senator exclaimed. Scarcely more than the top of Jones' head had been visible.

"Oh, you *are* a brute!" Janet cried at Blake. "I told you to let him go! You like to kill! You *like* it! He wouldn't have shot but he saw you would!"

"Let a fellow like him ride off on my horse?" Blake answered angrily.

"But you promised me you wouldn't shoot—"

"Unless I had to. This was a case of have to."

"It wasn't! It wouldn't have hurt you to let him go."

"It'd hurt awful. I'd been sick for a month!"

"Oh, I hate you!" said Janet, looking toward where Jones lay almost under the feet of the horse; then she turned away, shivering.

"Oh, don't be like a woman!" Blake protested.

"Here! Here! What's this? What's all this mean?" the old Senator gasped. "You know her? Janet, you know this man?"

"Oh, I hate him!" she said. "Uncle Freemont told me in Denver that he was a killer—liked to kill, and I—I hoped it wasn't so. But—"

"Freemont? Denver?" the Senator exclaimed. "You, sir! Who are you?"

"Joe Dick Richards, Senator. Grandson of Old Joe Richards of Tahzo—"

The Senator began to swell and glare, speechless.

"—but for the Cowmen's Association an' the railroad I worked mostly under the name of Blake. Recent I sort of took over the 44 an', in nosing around, I found it was pretty much of a habit for A riders to borrow 44 calves. That was interesting, so I looked some more an' found they borrowed your calves too. Jeff Clinton hired 'em, an' made 'em

halfway think you wanted it done. I didn't believe it—don't believe it, Senator. Fact is, I just sent word down to Old Joe some days back that he'd better get all set to ride in up here an' offer you some apology for hasty words spoke some years ago—about the time a fellow named Jefferson Clinton went to work for you!"

"You—you've been prying into my business!" the Senator shouted.

"You're damned right I have! You need somebody to poke into it. You're too honest an' trusting a man for this country. That fellow over there can't speak, but this one up there—" Blake pointed at Shorty—"can. Now you listen to what he says. Who was it, Shorty, sent you, Jones there, an' Curly, out to hold up the Senator? Don't stutter none."

Shorty did stutter, but at last he admitted that Spike and Bosham had planned it, and sent them out.

Jim had got off his horse, found George coming to with a bump of his head, and with rapid incoherency had tried to tell him what he had just missed by being knocked unconscious; then half led, half pulled the dazed boy over to where the Senator and Blake stood.

Janet anxiously examined George's head. The heavy Stetson had kept the scalp from being cut, but his nose was bleeding.

"Why you fuss at him for shootin' that fellow?" Jim protested.

"Oh, you don't understand," she said in exasperation.

Old Senator Clay was swollen with stubbornness and anger. He glared, tried to look firmly dignified and unconvinced, but sweat poured off his face. Blake told things, things he had learned out on the range; rattled off some of the questions he had got from Ferris' article; and asked the Senator to account for the fact that Dot-Circle's profits had been decreasing while the A's, beginning with nothing, on almost the same range, had grown steadily.

"If you want to poke your head in the sand like they say an ostrich does, an' let things go on, all right; me, I'll strike out for the 44 an' set tight. Or if you want, I'll go on in with you to your ranch. We'll ask this Jeff Clinton some questions, then you pile all his account books an' records into a sack, bring 'em to town, an' let a fellow named Cooney go through 'em. If every'thing is straight an' aboveboard, I'll get out of the country."

"Umm," said the Senator, glaring. "If Jeff Clinton can explain everything to *my* satisfaction, will you be satisfied, sir?"

"Providing you let me do the talking!"

The Senator wiped his face, cleared his throat.

"I warn you in advance that I trust Jeff Clinton as I would a brother, sir."

THEY moved on. The Senator tried to ask questions of Janet, but she would not answer. When they came to the Pico Flat roadhouse where the Senator had intended to spend the night, he ordered an early supper, changed horses on the buckboard and went on. Blake, the boys and Shorty stayed behind to watch a couple of Mexicans dig a hole in a clear space out in the cactus, a hundred yards or so from the house; and the body of Jones, which had been brought along over his saddle, was put there.

They rode on, Blake close beside Shorty, talking to him, and George and Jim listened. Nearly everything that Blake had to say was summed up in:

"I'm not asking you to say anything that ain't so. Just that. But talk fluent. An' when you face Jeff Clinton, don't be scairt to tell the truth."

He cut the thongs on Shorty's wrists, but Jim still held the lead rope of the horse.

"Come along now. Let's catch up."

It was after eleven o'clock when they reached the ranch. The dogs came tearing down the road in the moonlight, yapping; but soon stopped barking and began to run about, leaping and sniffing, and running back and forth ahead of the horses as the buckboard drove up before

the wide, low, rambling house. Lights began to appear at the windows.

Two or three servants, one holding a lamp, came out of the house with a tall, rather fine looking man.

"Ah, Senator, we waited up until we thought you weren't coming! And Janet! Now the old ranch will seem like home again!" His voice was pleasant. "Ah, I see you've changed horses. No trouble, I hope?"

He helped the Senator out, helped Janet, and with a quiet air of attentiveness told the servants to get out the bags, light the lamp in Miss Janet's room which was all ready for her, and to start a fire in the kitchen and heat water to wash up with.

The Senator barely spoke; Janet said almost nothing. Clinton thought they had lost their tempers on the way out; he pretended not to notice their silence, said it was a long hard trip, called familiarly to George and Jim, but paid no particular attention to Blake and Shorty, who sat in their saddles some fifty feet off. It was nothing uncommon for men to ride in and stop overnight, or longer, at the Dot-Circle.

As Clinton followed the Senator and Janet into the house, Blake said:

"Now for it, Shorty. Come along."

George and Jim jumped from their horses and followed a little timidly, but overpoweringly curious.

JANET turned into the unlighted living room; the Senator followed. Clinton at once scratched a match, lighted the lamp on the mantel and looked quickly over his shoulder. They must have had a big quarrel . . .

"Would you like a little coffee or something?" he asked, as he turned to a second lamp.

Janet sat down in a big chair, but did not lean back. The Senator, with his arms behind him, stood before the huge fireplace, now empty, and watched Clinton.

There was the tramp of peg heels, the clatter of spurs, in the hall, and Shorty, slightly pushed, came through the doorway, hat in hand.

Clinton looked about, surprised.

"Oh, Shorty?" he said, doubtfully, then gazed at Blake who stood in the doorway eying him with unfriendly steadiness.

"Why, what's wrong?" Clinton asked vaguely; then he saw Blake's face break into a pleased smile as he tossed his hat to the floor, took another step forward and said almost cheerfully:

"Well, well. Hello there, Taylor!"

Clinton drew back slightly, with a hint of crouching in his tense muscles. The good nature disappeared from his face as if wiped away.

"W-who are you?"

"Well, sir," said Blake, smiling, "I think under the circumstances, Taylor, it would be better for you to tell the Senator who *you* are! An' why you've never told him your name was Taylor!"

Clinton's breath came hard; he glared at Blake, who said nothing, merely smiled and waited. Then:

"After almost eighteen years of being an honest man—" he was telling it to Blake, but the words were groping frantically for the Senator's sympathy— "and working hard and faithfully, then this!"

"What's the meaning of this?" said the astounded Senator.

"As a young man I made the wrong kind of friends. Prison—I was innocent. Before God, Senator Clay!"

"Yeah, maybe so," said Blake. "I come up here to ask some questions about a little rustling that's been going on—an' found you, Taylor. I'm mighty suspicious you've still got some of them wrong kind of friends, such as Bosham and Spike, an' other fellows in the Cleeko Cattle Company, the which is to say the A brands. Here's Shorty. We've buried Jones, but not till after he talked some. Curly's been put where it's easy to find him. An' the Senator, here, he is going to take you an' your books into town an' have 'em looked over, careful. Now, Taylor, listen close. Banker Shaw, Sheriff Hudson, an' all them other fellows,

they are going to be plumb full of explanation when we come ridin' in. But you've got a chance to explain first; that is, if you want to explain to the Senator here just how it happened."

"How'd you know I was Taylor? You ever see me before? Who told you I was here?"

"Now, Taylor, one thing at a time. When you get done explaining to the Senator, I'll answer any an' all questions, truthful!"

So with much hasty shuffling of the blame, with an almost suave and even slightly convincing air of truthfulness, combined with his rich voice's notes of repentance, Jefferson Clinton-Taylor told a rather garbled story, affirming over and over his loyalty to the Senator, pointing out how well things were managed, that at first he hadn't really meant to steal more than some money he needed to pay off a few debts, and that he meant to repay the Senator.

He piled the blame high on Mr. Railroad Robinson and especially on Banker Shaw, who had helped him manipulate the business part of the A's and held his shares in the Cleeko Company. He had the grace, or honesty, to say that the sheriff may have suspected, but did not actually know what was going on; and wound up by hoping that Miss Janet would think as well of him as she could, and that the Senator would realize how badly he felt. He would—in the effort to do the honorable thing—assign all of his property and holdings over to Senator Clay.

The Senator paced up and down before the fireplace, swearing. His pride was hurt, his dignity, his faith in human nature. He said if he had stayed out of politics and minded his own business that he would have been wiser. With a roar as if in pain he said that Old Joe Richards had been almost right in calling him a cow thief fifteen years ago! The old Senator was furious. He said everybody in the country but himself knew that he had been associating with rascals; there had even been a piece in a Kansas City paper saying that almost in plain words.

"Damn you, sir! Damn you!" he shouted in one breath at the unctiously abject Clinton-Taylor; then in the next, "But damn me! I should have kept my eyes open! Except for this boy here—" he flourished his hand with an oratorical gesture at Blake— "I never would have known! And you, Janet, will you forgive me for—for—" Without looking he waved toward Clinton-Taylor.

"No," said Janet, who for some vague reason felt unhappy. "I won't forgive you. I wouldn't have married him anyhow, never! I shall never marry!" She said it with a rising tone, making the last words very clear and distinct, and fastened her gaze fixedly on a bundle of Indian arrows, high up on the wall.

"You—" Clinton-Taylor spoke to Blake— "you said you would tell me. How did you know—know my name was Taylor, and—"

"I didn't. I just heard that in town some years ago a fellow called you Taylor, then got shot soon afterwards. So I thought I'd try it just to see what'd happen."

Clinton-Taylor seemed to grow limp; he looked down, up, did not seem to know where to look and, backing slightly, sat down in a chair and held his head.

The Senator gazed with a kind of slow understanding at Blake; even Janet, forgetful of her disdain, looked toward him with interest. Shorty stood solemn and mystified. From the shadowed doorway there was the confused sound of two excited boys trying not to giggle, then:

"Mr. Blake, I sure don't wanta play no poker with you. Bluff like that!"

THE SENATOR spent two days riding about the range with Blake and Shorty, asking questions, visiting places, particularly the famous Box Cañon where so many Dot-Circle calves had called for their mammas and bellowed because their hides were burned with A's.

Then the Senator put all of the account books into a sack, put the sack into the

buckboard along with Clinton-Taylor, who had been kept under guard, and started for town, riding in the saddle, accompanied by Blake and Shorty.

A few miles out they were overtaken by Janet, George and Jim.

"Go back," said the Senator. "You can't come. And what for?"

"I need some ribbon," said Janet with serene impudence. "I can't trust any man to bring the shade I want. And I have brought the boys because the roads are not safe. You know we were held up the other day."

They rode along, mile after mile. Blake thought she was never going to speak to him again and, having some stubbornness of his own, pretended not to care.

At last she rode near him and said:

"My cinch is loose. Will you fix it, please?"

They dismounted and the others went on. The cinch was not loose but he fixed it anyhow, very carefully, taking a long time.

"Thank you," she said, and put her foot in his hands in remounting. They rode side by side. Then she asked, "Why haven't you spoken to me? For three days?" He was trying to think of what to say, when she added, "Will you promise me something—again?"

"Sure."

"You won't ever again shoot another man?"

"Not even if he throws a gun across my saddle an' tries to steal my horse? An' you were born on a cow ranch!"

"I know, but you are different. It makes me afraid. Afraid for you—and afraid *of* you! It is terrible because y-you —oh, I hate to say it—but you are a killer. I told you at the time what my uncle said in Denver, and you promised then."

"'Less I couldn't help it. An' I did go home an' try to be a regular cow hand, an' peaceable. But when that fellow whacked George over the head an' tried to steal my horse—why, a fellow's gun just naturally jumps up an' goes off!"

"It wouldn't have hurt anything but your pride if he had escaped! I'll overlook that, this time. But, Dick, if you don't stop carrying guns, I won't speak to you. Ever. I mean that! So there!"

She spurred ahead and left him.

BEFORE they reached town the Senator heard some news from a couple of men met with on the road . . .

Bosham was dead, having been shot out in front of his saloon just about sundown two nights before. A young Mexican waiting there, holding a horse, had said something, and was distinctly heard twice telling him to draw. Bosham had a gun on him and would not reach for it, but the boy shot him anyhow, jumped to his horse and rode off. Spike and some men were riding about the country looking for the Mexican.

Blake listened in silence and afterward made no comment.

There was more news too. Old Joe Richards, king cowman of the Tahzo, was in town, and had ten men with him who stood about, walked about, keeping pretty much to themselves, as if waiting for something.

Blake explained that.

"He's waiting to hear from me. Then he's coming out to ride around on the 44 an' have a look at things. The fellows with him, they've come up to go to work for me. I'll just ride along in and say hello."

Old Joe Richards was close to seventy, smooth shaven, a muscular man, hard as a knotted fist and rather chunky; he was overbearing, coarsely blunt, honest, generous, with a clannish feeling toward all Richards and other men who worked for him. He rode hard, made money, and stood for no back talk from anybody but his grandchildren, some of whom were pretty girls and had been to school back East, where it appeared they were taught to wheedle and boss folks.

Railroad Robinson had a talk with Mr. Richards and departed feeling blue and discouraged, for he had been called a liar

three times in ten minutes, and was mystified as to how Mr. Richards could have such accurate information. He took the first train out of town. Eventually he learned that one of Mr. Richards' grandsons was so well thought of by certain officials because of the detective work done for the company up in Colorado, that they had given him confidential information about rebates.

Blake found his grandfather with Sheriff Hudson in the hotel bar, talking of cows and old times. The newspaperman, Ferris, looked on from a distance and listened as well as he could.

"Ha, here's my boy!" said Old Joe, putting out a hand. "How are you, son? Meet the sheriff."

"Have a drink?" said the sheriff.

"He don't drink. But I'll take it for him. Every'thing going as you want it, son?"

"When you tell the old Senator you guessed wrong."

"I won't," said Old Joe. "When I call a man a cow thief he's a cow thief till hell freezes!"

"In that case it's froze," said Blake. "The Senator's square. But he's got a lot of dog eared friends. An' I don't know whether us Richards ought to move in an' pay taxes to this county or not. Spend money for bridges an' never build 'em. Let folks vote five an' six times at election. The sheriff here collects for the board an' keep of prisoners that don't get caught. An' the deputy sheriff stands in with rustlers an' sends 'em out to hold up—"

Ferris was the first to duck because he could make the best guess as to what was coming, so he was around the end of the bar before the sheriff's ears got stung. The bartender was down with his eyes showing over the top of the bar, trying to be safe and yet look on. Some other fellows got down on their hands and knees to crawl under tables.

The sheriff reached for a gun, but changed his mind, and lifted both hands chin high. Old Joe stepped back and eyed the sheriff good naturedly.

"Just what," Blake asked, "have I said that wasn't so?"

"That my office stands in with rustlers an' road agents! Damn lie!"

"I didn't say you or your office. I said the deputy, an' meant Spike. You may never believe he sent some men out the other day to hold up the Senator, but he did. But you are going to believe, right *pronto*, that he an' Jeff Clinton are in with rustlers. The Senator's on his way to town to tell you so—you an' some other folks. An' Jeff Clinton's coming along, with arms tied behind him, to admit it!"

"Put that thing away," said Old Joe to Blake. "An' now, Sheriff, don't get no wrong notions. This kid is the damnedest trouble hunter in ten States. But count on it, when he tells you something it's so. An—"

"Then you apologize to the Senator," said Blake, putting away his gun.

"Shut up. I'm talkin'. An' now, Sheriff, I suggest that you swear him in an' send him out to fetch in this Mr. Deputy."

"If you'll apologize to the Senator," said Blake.

"I don't know whether Spike's back to town yet or not," said the sheriff sourly. "If I thought—rustlers—I don't believe it! But as for him bringing in Spike—it's nothing much to beat me on the draw, but Spike is fast an' sure. You want to go up against him?" The sheriff asked it warningly of Blake, yet seemed a little hopeful that he would try it and get hurt.

"Try it!" said Old Joe. "He'll jump for it!"

"If you'll apologize to the Senator!"

"The man don't live that can beat him on the draw!" Old Joe went on.

"It's your turn to shut up!" said Blake angrily.

Old Joe was a bit coarse and erratic; and if Blake liked the gambling thrill of gunplay he did not like talking about it.

"Well, I'll go so far as to say I honestly thought he was a cow thief," Old Joe agreed. "An' maybe sometimes, but not often, I'm wrong!"

Twenty minutes later the Senator came hurrying from the hotel into the bar,

looking for the sheriff. He stopped short, with upward toss of head as a horse does when jerked, at the sight of Old Joe Richards, who threw back his muscular shoulders, ready for trouble.

"Mr. Richards," said the Senator, clearing his throat. "I—umm—I—"

"Senator," said Old Joe. "I—my boy—you—"

The two old men, powerful men in their country, stared, grew red, stammered; then the Senator asked—

"You've heard?"

"Senator," said Old Joe, "have a drink!"

"Joe," said the Senator, "I'll be happy!"

Blake laughed. Both turned on him, and Old Joe shouted:

"What you laughing at?" Then to the sheriff, "Hudson, swear him in. Give him something real amusing to laugh at!"

The sheriff pulled a wallet from his hip pocket, put it down on the bar, opened it up and took out a badge carried for just such emergencies.

"Raise your hand," said the sheriff.

The good people of Clayville had very little sleep that night. The town hummed with excitement. Peters, after supper, had given his dining room over to old Cooney of the Emporium, who spread out Mr. Jefferson Clinton's books and papers, and Clinton tried most helpfully to explain things, much to the exasperation of Banker Shaw, who fretted and mopped his face. Old Joe Richards and Senator Clay sat side by side, listening and asking questions. Old Joe was a hard headed business man, shrewd and blunt, much coarser than the Senator, much more careless about hurting people's feelings. Banker Shaw did not like him, and at last asked angrily—

"What right have you got to meddle in this?"

"The right of a cowman to hang a rustler!" said Old Joe, and Banker Shaw asked no more questions.

It was not easy to explain things and coax the Senator with promises when Old Joe sat there.

"I've helped build up this country. But I'm going to leave it!" said Banker Shaw.

"You are!" said Old Joe. "You and him there—" with a backhanded flip toward Jefferson Clinton— "are goin' together. To prison. Bankers, being so much smarter than other folks, I know it's hard for 'em to be honest. County officers have the same weakness, too."

JANET, with her eyes on Blake's vest, came up close to him, asking—

"What does this mean, Dick?"

"I've promised to bring in a man for the sheriff."

"Who?"

"Spike."

"Take it off!" Her fingers began to unpin the badge.

"No, I can't." He clapped a hand there, holding it.

"I know what it means! And, Dick, only today you promised me—again!"

"Well, it sort of worked around so that I had to promise Old Joe to do it to get him to apologize to the Senator."

"Well, he needn't have apologized! They've lived without speaking for fifteen years, and could go on. Besides, the Senator had no right to expect an apology. And if you don't take that off, right this minute, I'll never speak to you again!"

"If I do, Old Joe'll never speak to me again. An' that's a fact."

"You think more of your grandfather than you do of me?"

"I've got to go through with this, Janet."

"And I—" she turned away— "am through with you, forever!" But she turned toward him again, pleading, "Unless, Dick, you arrest Spike some way so that there is no shooting. Will you? You can do that—for me?"

"Yeah, sneak up on him from behind an' say hands up! Who'd ever speak to me again?"

"I would."

"You wouldn't."

"I would! And I won't unless you do!"

"Then don't," he said, being stubborn himself.

"I won't—ever! You'll see, and I mean it." She started off, but again stopped, turned. Her cheeks were red and her eyes flashed. "I never liked you much anyhow. I was just curious about you because you were a Richards!"

"Mighty nice folks, the Richards. They don't let no ex-convicts keep books for 'em!"

She gasped, hurt, astonished, indignant, and went away.

Blake could have bitten off the tip of his tongue with regret at having said it; but it was said. Besides, an unreasonable girl like that—what could a fellow do?

Shortly before ten o'clock that night George, out of breath and with eyes popping, came from the Spread Eagle where he and Jim had been waiting to bring word.

He found Blake in the hotel bar talking to some of the J-R men, pulled at his arm and, under the impresssion that he was whispering, almost shouted:

"Spike's just rode in, an' been told! He's over there now, waitin'!"

Blake pulled at his vest, fastening the bottom button, absently touched his guns, pulled at his hat, then tipped the brim, and said quietly—

"I've got to go see a fellow."

He walked out. George came at his side.

"Go back," said Blake.

"Can't I come?"

"Not with me, no. If I'd wanted company, I'd have brought some of them boys along that I was talking to."

George almost wept in his disappointment.

"After me comin' to tell you, then I don't get to see nothin'!"

"This here is business," said Blake and went on, alone.

At the Spread Eagle door Blake did not pause, but pushed it wide and walked in, then stopped. Men who were grouped at the bar scattered, standing well to the other side of the room, leaving Spike alone with a glass of whisky in his hand. Spike calmly put down the glass, moved a few inches from the bar, rested his hands palm down on his hips and waited.

"Spike, the sheriff wants to have a talk with you."

"I'll stay here till he comes."

"He's asked me to come an' tell you."

Blake, with a short, quick movement of thumb indicated the badge on his vest. It gave him a curious and unfamiliar sensation to be stared at by a crosseyed man, and Blake understood then one reason at least why Spike was so dangerous a man to draw against: it was the look in a man's eyes, and not by watching his hands, that gave you the cue of what was coming and when. And it was hard to get a focus on that oblique stare of Spike's.

When Blake had said, "He's asked me to come and tell you," Spike hesitated a moment, then quietly answered:

"All right. You've told me."

"Well, then, come along, Spike."

"Do what?"

"You heard!"

Without warning Spike drew and shot with his left hand, hip low, and Blake, hard hit, spun about with a drunken stagger; but both guns were blazing. He lurched forward, swayed unsteadily, and looked down with blurred, hazy eyes. The smoke sifted about with misty swirl and upward drift. Men and girls came from against the walls and under tables cautiously.

"Good man," Blake mumbled vaguely, still looking down at the outflung body.

With a kind of drunken fumbling he pushed his guns up and down, trying to replace them in their holsters; then the guns dropped and Blake reeled, falling.

Jim of the Dot-Circle caught him and, half crying as he swore, let Blake slip gently to the floor.

Blake had been hit once, but Spike, as men said afterward, was "plumb full of lead". Spike, caught in a jam, had trickily, though fairly enough, used his left hand; Blake, though half knocked from his feet, was a true two-gun man and had used both.

A few days later Blake lay back on a heap of pillows in the front room of Peter's Hotel while the Senator, Old Joe Richards, Pop Murdock and Jake Spencer, stood and sat about, smoking, talking good humoredly, all feeling quite cheerful because, no doubt about it, the boy was coming through in fine shape.

The door opened; Janet looked through, then pushed the door wide, stepped in and glanced quickly at the men. They looked much like boys caught stealing apples.

"I have told each and every one of you to keep away from this room! The doctor said so. Now go!"

"He's my grandson," said Old Joe, trying to bristle.

"He's my boss," said Jake Spencer—but getting off his chair.

"We was just askin' how he felt," Murdock put in mildly, moving nearer the door.

"And I believe," said the Senator solemnly as he arose and edged toward the door, "that before long he is going to be some kin to me. So naturally I'm interes—"

Janet sent the door to with a bang. Then she pulled at the pillows, poked them, patted them, straightened the sheets, adjusted the coverlet and, stepping back, asked—

"How do you feel?"

"I don't know yet. Am I forgiven?"

"No, you're not. I don't want you to die, of course. But after you are well, I'll never speak to you again!"

"Then," said Blake as he reached toward her hand, "I'm going to be sickly all my life!"

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

ONE of you wrote to George Surdez asking him whether he could substantiate the episode in which ice was dropped from airplane into the beleaguered blockhouse ("Taboo", October 15th issue). Thinking that possibly other readers may have wondered about this, the author asked me if I'd like to have his reply for these columns. Here it is:

Brooklyn, New York

The statement made in my story "Taboo" is correct. Ice was dropped by airplanes into beleaguered blockhouses during the Riff campaign. Knowing that this would arouse wonder, I made a point of ascertaining the truth, going so far as to discover that the ice thus dropped was the same sort of ice which military circulars in calmer times recommend to be used "only on the exteriors of vessels containing fluids; not to be mixed into the liquids as it is unhealthy." The blocks of ice shattered, but the fragments could be used. My informers were men of various units and various ranks who served in the Riff; I heard of another case in the Mid-Atlas.

If the belief in newspaper fabrication lingers, consult official records on the defense of the blockhouses as a whole, and on that of Post Bibane in particular, commanded by Sergeant Bernez-Cambot of the Infanterie de Marine. I have seen mention of the stunt in the logs of aviators, but those documents are not readily available here.—GEORGES SURDEZ

WELL, maybe buzzards are strictly carrion eaters. And then again, maybe make their own kill occasionally. From readers' letters, opinion is quite

evenly divided. One thing is certain: if this question isn't soon decisively settled, it will merit inclusion among such classic and probably eternal controveries as those about the reality of the hoop snake, the deadliness of the Gila monster and the existence of a tailed man in Borneo. Here is a communication that holds with the second view above stated:

Phoenix, Arizona

Apropos of buzzards: I was born in Tennessee and recall many instances where buzzards would attack and kill new-born lambs and pigs, and once they succeeded in killing a new-born calf; but I am of the opinion that it was the presence of the afterbirth that attracted them at first. Another contributing factor and probably the strongest one was the scarcity of food in such a thickly settled community.

As you probably know, Mexico has thousands of zopilotes of several varieties, as well as the white headed carrion hawks. These birds, both hawks and buzzards, will attack and kill fowls and animals if opportunity offers, though generally it is the weak or infirm animal that succumbs. In and near Culiacan small boys watch the herds to scare away the birds that are especially numerous and bold. I recall an instance where an old woman was dressing an ancient *gallo* for a feast the next day. A dog fight engaged her attention for a few minutes, and while she was belaboring the curs with a club, a carrion hawk swooped down from a neighboring cactus and carried away the fowl. If I could put on paper the language that old woman used it would be amusing to you, but peon Spanish is largely idiomatic and impossible to translate with the telling effect of the original.

SET deep in the mountains in the southwestern part of Arizona is a tiny valley where live four families of Yaquis and a white man, one of the most unusual and interesting characters I have ever encountered. They have transformed this tiny pocket into a veritable paradise, and they have the most remarkable collections of pets, none of which are confined but all free to come and go. Five varieties of quails, the olive green chachalacas from Tamaulipas, wild turkeys from Baja California, half a dozen varieties of doves, roadrunners, three javelins or peccaries, a ten foot bull snake, seven coons, parrots and macaws, golden and Lady Amherst pheasants. The valley is a long oval with the houses of the owners at the northern end against the high cliffs. The only entrance is through a narrow cañon at the southern end. A graded and surfaced road leads from the entrance to the small park wherein are set the stone houses. The avenue is shaded with date and fan palms, olives, oranges, sophoras, bottle trees and acacias; orchards and fields are on either side and everywhere serene and unafraid are birds and birds and birds.

I have known the white man for nearly twenty years but have made but two visits to his home, one of them but lately. He has one pet, the like of which I venture to say is unparallelled. Fifteen years ago my friend had occasion to be in Peru on business and while there purchased a fledgling condor from a Quichua herder. We arrived late in the afternoon and as soon as we entered the valley he gave a peculiar whistle, not loud but of a peculiar carrying quality. A minute later there was a sound of rushing wings and an immense bird dropped to the drive and came forward to meet him with every sign of pleasure. Tall, he reaches well above my waist when he stands near and has a wing spread of better than ten feet. Taloned and with a heavy hooked beak, he seems capable of easily taking care of himself in an emergency. He kept step with us as we walked slowly toward the house. Halfway up, my friend whistled again, a different call this time, and out of the shade of a great clump of bamboos a mountain cat came on silent feet. Purring like forty tomcats all at once, he slipped under his master's hand on the side opposite from the condor, rubbing lightly against his leg, his long tail moving slowly from side to side. I have a healthy respect for cats of his size and made no motion to touch or caress him. He too was captured when quite small by a Navajo in Utah and brought by the Indian to Phoenix, wrapped in a bit of blanket, a gift to his friend.

THE valley is sided with cliffs on two sides that form natural barriers of protection. The steep slopes have been planted with a wicked form of cactus and now are absolutely impenetrable to anything larger than lizards. The cañon is closed by an iron gate. This effectually prevents the depredations of coyotes and bobcats which otherwise would wreak havoc on the birds. There are no rabbits at large, but in a confined place many are raised as food for the condor and Don Tomás Escalante, the lion. Methuselah, the bull snake, is given one occasionally. He spends most of his time on the stone terrace in front of the house of the Yaqui foreman.

My visit was in late January, consequently there was little food for the birds in the fields, and the sight that greeted my eyes when my friend scattered grain for them on the drive was amazing. From every direction, on wings or running feet, the feathered beauties came even to his feet to eat the cracked wheat, millet and hemp seed. A javelin came and rubbed against me, begging to have me scratch his back. Tomás Escalante was rolling in enjoyment on the velvety lawn while the condor was preening his sail-like wings on the terrace wall. The cock pheasants are quarrelsome, especially the goldens. Only for the gobblers will they give ground and then reluctantly. From the trees came scarlet cardinals, green jays and blue, a pair of yellow headed blackbirds, unexpected here, and many quiet colored birds that frequent the deserts hereabouts. The cardinals and green jays were brought from south Texas, and even my friend is unable to explain why the cardinals have given over the idea of migration. It is known

however that cardinals are residents of the Lower Rio Grande valley the entire year, nesting there and often raising two broods.

Most of the time the coons run loose but when the birds are nesting they are confined because of their unbreakable propensity for robbing the nests, even though not hungry. After supper they came, all seven of 'em, and climbed up on my lap and his, wanting to be played with. Four little boys came in the dusk and sat on the stone steps, and at once the coons left us to go to them.

—M. A. KLATCHEO

A FEW words from Victor Shaw relative to his story, "The Frost Master", in this issue:

Loring, Alaska

"The Frost Master" is a reminiscence of an Arctic expedition, though not one of my own. It happened just north from where I was on my Baffinland trip—where you must look *south* for the aurora. A tale of fact, with some small holes chinked with the moss from my own knowledge of the region, and the amazing thing about it is that I haven't deviated from truth in any essential. You see, I got it from the man himself—a real master of the frosts.

The damned thing has been waiting in my system for twenty years. To me, it has always been a tale of stark heroism—sheer guts, that has been approached but never equaled by the best of them. For John Wayne is a portrait. I've drawn him as I've known him, in appearance, manner, deed and matchless spirit. Of course, I can't anywhere near do it justice, but if I've managed to give an inkling of what Wayne faced and overcame with quiet strength and no heroics, it's been worth while to try.

THE man of whom Wayne is the prototype came from that experience to New York City. In the furore of acclaim given his *work* when his story was released to the press, the public may be pardoned for overlooking the laconic reference to his retreat from the north. For he merely said—

" . . . having lost our outfit in the breakup of the pack ice, we were forced to live on the country, thus delaying our return a whole year."

—VICTOR SHAW

A PHILIPPINES reader tells us more about South Seas *praus*.

Zamboanga, Philippine Islands

In recent issues of *Adventure* there has been some discussion of South Seas *praus*. A letter by Mr. P. J. Searles states that the old *praus* of the Marianas made 20 knots. I spent a couple of years in Guam, and from stories and old Spanish records it seems that those old *praus* were very seaworthy and fast, but nothing indicates 20 knots.

He also states that "the modern *praus* of the Philippines and Borneo are clumsy, slow craft." I shall have to take issue there too.

THE sailing craft of the Sulu Moros, *sapas*, *lipas* and *vintas*, are not "modern" but just about as seaworthy and fast as they were hundreds of years ago, particularly the Samal *vintas*. These people used to raid from Borneo to Northern Philippines and from the Malacca Straits to New Guinea. Wallace the naturalist in his accounts of exploration in the South Seas tell of a raid by "Sulus" in the Aru Islands. One reason why the Spanish never conquered the Moros was that the *vintas* could usually outsail the Spanish boats.

As to actual speed record: I came down the west coast of Mindanao a few years ago in a 20 foot Samal *vinta;* sailing distance 90 miles, time 6 hours. During the first hour we had only light breeze, so during the greater part of the trip we must have made better than 15 miles per hour. This was a medium sized *vinta*. A larger one will make better time.

THERE'S a reason for speed. The Samal *vinta* is rigged to sail best before the wind and will hardly sail into the wind at all. They are a narrow knife-like dugout with wide spread double outrig which reach a third of the boat length beyond the bow. They carry a tremendous spread of sail in proportion to displacement. The small craft is able to stand comparatively great strain because it is all put together with wooden pegs and rattan. Likewise the mast is not a single stick but a tripod.

The sail is practically a square sail, and when furled is rolled up on the lower boom. In setting, sail is canted by fastening one clew to the bow and hauling short on the brace on the same side.

Samals always have feathery tassels of buri-leaf or something similar at tips of booms, which besides as adornment serve to indicate slight changes in the wind.

—R. F. WENDOVER

A NOTE from Harold Lamb in connection with his Crusades narrative, "The Walls of Acre", in this issue:

New York. N. Y.

We are all beginning to understand after the last show in France that wars are not decided by grand strategy alone, in spite of what the brass hats say. We have been realizing it more and more after each war. The strategists and disciplinarians point to Austerlitz as the perfect battle; but Austerlitz was fought on terrian like a parade ground—and strategy and tactics alike went by the board when Napoleon's *grande armée* was confronted by the bare plains of Russia in early winter a little later.

Weapons and ground, and the thing called morale —the character and feelings of the men themselves— are apt to settle things once the actual fighting has begun. Genghis Khan rather than Napoleon gives

us our best example of a strategist who was supremely successful. Napoleon's plans usually went astray when his armies maneuvered outside the familiar and easy terrain of middle Europe—failed, for instance, in Syria, Russia, and Spain. While the plans of the Mongol conqueror stood the real test—they worked.

Genghis Khan won his campaigns upon every kind of ground, under all conditions. But we are apt to forget that his Mongol horsemen, believing him invincible after the first years, had what might be called a trouble-proof morale, and their bows outranged and outhit any opposing weapons. Fra Carpini, one of the first Europeans to journey to the court of the Mongol Kha Khans, said emphatically that the Mongol mounted archers were so destructive that they would cut the enemy forces to pieces before the "battle" began.

TAKE the late war, the Gallipoli campaign. The Allies had all the odds but one in their favor, and a strong fleet to back their landing. They had numbers, morale on their side, and the element of surprise. Military critics say the strategy of the landing was perfect. For nearly two days the detachments landed had only a few battalions of Turks, badly bewildered, and still fewer machine guns concealed in higher ground, to oppose them.

What happened is familiar enough. The detachments lost touch, and proved again what the Allied higher command proved so often—that riflemen in the open can not advance against concealed machine guns.

LEAVING Constantinople the last time, I passed over the Gallipoli peninsular in a seaplane, and saw only sheep moving on the shore where the Australians and the others had landed. There was also a gray stone monument of some kind on the tip of the land. A Greek captain of aviation was with me, and writing in French on some unused vomit bags in the plane, he pointed out to me the gray tracery of trenches still visible, and a cemetery enclosure. Those trenches and the cemetery were the real monument—to the men who carried rifles against machine guns. And there are plenty of similar monuments around northern France.

Weapons, ground and morale have all been used to the last, ultimate advantage by the great captains of history. It may be heresy to say it, but it does not look now as if the Germans were beaten in the last war until the advantage in weapons and morale passed over to us, and they were driven out of their prepared strong points. Even at the last, in Palestine, Allenby's fine sweep up to Damascus—strategy that really worked—only took place when the British and Arabs had enormous superiority in weapons and transport—in such things as motors and planes—and when the Turko-German morale was about broken.

THIS is rambling off the subject. What I'm getting at is the odds faced by the Crusaders. We are accustomed to think of them as men physically stronger than the Arabs and Turks, and wearing heavy armor, equipped with much heavier weapons. That is mostly wrong.

The Crusaders had heavier shields and lances—those who *had* lances. The Moslem shield of the time was usually leather strengthened by metal, small and round—shaped to the forearm of the riders. Not at all lance-proof. The Arabs and Turks relied on their agility and the speed of their horses to avoid the long, massive lances. And it seems that the Crusaders did most of their fighting with their swords and short axes. Lighter Moslem lances, with six to eight foot bamboo shafts, were handier than the long ash weapons of the Crusaders.

CRUSADERS' swords were shorter and heavier than the Moslem curved sabers, had more iron in them. But the long blades of the Moslems met the Crusaders' weapons on even terms, by and large. The Moslem horsemen also used javelins and the short, curved *khanjar* and *yataghans* with considerable effect, while the Crusaders did not. Nobles and knights who came out of Europe had more complete body armor (link or chain mail) than the average Moslem horseman. But the Christian archers and miscellaneous soldiery did not.

This was before the day of plate armor, long bows and closed helms with visors. By 1220, in the later stages of the Crusades, the closed helm came into use, gradually, among the Christians. The Moslems never did take to it kindly, favoring light helmets with chain mail drops, and nasal and sometimes cheek pieces. The English long bow with the cloth-yard arrow only reached its great power a century later.

ABOUT the time of the siege of Acre the Crusaders were beginning to bring in crossbows, which did a lot of execution in close siege fighting and little elsewhere. Coeur de Lion was the first king to use the crossbow—the French chivalry always looked on it as unsportsmanlike, and the Popes banned it until about 1210.

This was about the only weapon the Moslems adapted from the Crusaders, and they never liked it very much because it was clumsy to handle on a horse. The same applied to the long two-handed sword that some Crusaders, mostly Germans, carried in the thirteenth century and later.

IT IS clear that in arms and armor, the Moslems were on even terms with the Crusaders. In other matters, they usually held the advantage. They had better horses, bred in the country, and greater strength in mounted men. The Christian archers were usually on foot. The Moslems had more serviceable kits for carrying water and rations; they were adept at scouting and maneuvering. Saladin had a portable siege train and a pigeon post as well as a pony express to carry messages.

Zangi, Saladin and Baibars were much better strategists than the leaders of the Crusaders, and were of course more familiar with the terrain.

ONE advantage the Moslems always held: flame weapons. The Arabs were as skilled as the Greeks of Constantinople in the use of the mysterious flame that the Crusaders called "Greek fire" or "wild fire," and sometimes "sea fire" because it burned on the water. It was made variously out of naphtha or the ingredients of gunpowder. The Crusaders never learned the secret of it, and were besides unwilling to use it, looking upon it as black magic. The church forbade its use.

The Moslems employed it in siege warfare, beginning with Acre, and also in hand grenades and "fire-maces." In time they learned to cast barrages of it, and smoke screens, before or into an attack. It gave them a decisive advantage for generations—until serviceable firearms were in use.

THIS fact has escaped the notice of most historians. But it is clear enough when we read the accounts of men on both sides who were present at such events as the siege of Acre.

It is also clear that the Crusaders in their long conflict with the armies of Asia had only one real advantage—command of the sea at their backs. And in their morale. All the other advantages were on the side of the Moslems. —HAROLD LAMB

WILL a revolver, exposed for some time to salt water, discharge efficiently? This question came up again in connection with one of Bill Adam's stories, and we referred it to Donegan Wiggins of Ask Adventure. Avoiding snap judgment, Mr. Wiggins preferred to base his answer on a personal test. The results of his experiment follows:

Salem, Ore.

Regarding the firing of a revolver after submersion. I have been making tests, as far as I was able, to be in a position to give the desired information; here it is:

I soaked three factory loaded cartridges, .45 Colt, .44-40, and .38 Special, overnight, a little over twelve hours, in salt water. The .38 and .45 were smokeless with lead bullets, the .44-40 was a smokeless with softpoint metal cased bullet.

I fired the .38 and .45 in Colt single action revolvers from my arsenal. The .45 discharged, but very poorly, and I can't imagine it would have inflicted a serious wound, as the report was very faint and the bullet failed to even make a mark in a wooden block at which I fired at ten yards.

The .38 Special failed to discharge at all; I then soaked another .38 in water for five minutes, and it discharged readily.

The .44-40 was fired in a rifle, and discharged as well as ever. I may add that while the .44-40 is not as great a favorite today as it was some years since, I believe that for a revolver for general wandering around the out-of-the-way spots on the globe, I'd select it in preference to any other, as ammunition is so easy to secure in odd corners.

SO, I believe that if the revolver of the man in question was not too long submerged, the point is safe, provided, of course, that the story is not laid in the days of the cap-and-ball revolver, with its loose ammunition, and chambers so easily accessible to moisture. Later than 1870, say.

In this connection, I may venture to repeat my former letter to the old "Straight Goods" department of *Adventure:* I tested the "oil-proof" ammunition of the Remington Arms Company, by soaking a cartridge in light oil, heated to a degree of about 106 F, for a week, and found that it discharged perfectly, and operated the mechanism of my .380 Remington pistol perfectly. I carry nothing else in my pocket guns, although I handload my heavy ammunition myself for the military type revolvers.

Hence, I believe that a man carrying a revolver or pistol should always have it loaded with the Remington-UMC "oil-proof" cartridges, as at least one man is known to have been fatally wounded because the failure of the shells in his revolver permitted his adversary to draw a gun and fire on him. This happened to an officer in California, detailed to arrest a dangerous lunatic. —DONEGAN WIGGINS

NO MIRACLE after all. The clever and anonymous logging camp worker discussed recently in these columns apparently used the following simple process in straightening that mess of crooked ax handles.

San Diego, Cal.

In your last issue I read a letter from Jerald Hacomer about crooked ax handles which was interesting because I had at one time had a similar case with a lot of crooked sledge or, as the Miners would call them, "double-Jack" handles. And the handles were surely crooked. But in my case an old-timer told me how to straighten them.

The plan was to heat them over a blacksmith's fire or any other good hot fire of coals with no blaze. They had to be heated thoroughly throughout, care being taken to not burn them; and when properly heated they could be twisted or bent in any way desired. I tried this out and found it to work nicely. After being straightened you simply hung them up by one end with a weight at the lower end until they were again cooled off, when they would again be as good or actually better than before. Of course occasionally a handle would be scorched unless great care was used. But they must be heated thoroughly through and through. —F. A. FLEMING

A VERY common-sense letter from Raymond S. Spears, of our writers' brigade, on the subject of exceptions taken by readers to facts as presented in

stories. Being, as he says, himself a stickler for facts, his opinion about authenticity in general is especially worthwhile.

Inglewood, Cal.

Been following the fact-statement in fiction kicks. I'm a stickler but fiction is fiction. One of best trapping stories I ever read was technically all wrong. On analysis, we have two kinds of adventures—actual and imaginary. We tag along after champion authors not because they stick to dull reality but usually because they don't.

If one did not come to fiction ready to ride and romp, sit with hair on end and, gasping, gay with them, alive with them, jubilant with their success—what good is fiction?

To be expert does not always mean knowing just the truth, exact, scientific, unmistakable. In fiction it commonly means knowing local notions, superstitions, innumerable things that aren't so: When the moon shines on you as you sleep it makes you loony, don't it? And if you cain't see ghosts, what's the use of tripping lonely bends? Personally, I'd sure hate to get over being scairt of shadows in the swamp-brake glooms. And just imagine the innumerable miseries we can enjoy on account of what night air does to us!

I'D RATHER be wrong as Nature strikes me than right with some carper airing things he thinks he knows, yet absurdly often doesn't. I wonder how many writers have found the habit of truth telling a dad-blasted vice? A time comes, perchance, when one needs the courage to tell a lie—and stick to it! Not some picayune white one, but a genuine old whopper! Truth is sometimes brutal, cruel and shameful. A friend or lover on the witness stand may perjure his shame and black heart into the clean and glorious pink of the wild rose—don't you think, sometimes? Mere law-honesty has immeasurable idealism if it is setting an example of self-denial. But the human race has had its standards carried forward by men who damned torpedoes and put their spyglasses to their blinded eyes, dodging the orders of the meticulously accurate, time servers who hate those who take a hero's chance!

Did inspiration ever conform to rules and the known facts? Our country is carried forward in truth and spirit by those who use the national ideals as stepping stones to higher things—and if they lose their footing reaching to the stars, still we may profit by the purchase they missed, looking somewhere else. We take a chance in everything we believe, and I'd rather believe a lie than call an honest man a liar. —RAYMOND S. SPEARS

ONE of us in the office here wondered whether it was possible for two planes to approach each other as closely as they do in Andrew A. Caffrey's story, "It Happened in France", in this issue. Here is what the author has to say about it:

Los Angeles, Cal.

Yes, planes could, and can, be right there in the same sky without either pilot seeing the other. Here's a fine example: There were cases where pilots flying solo, in good skies, suddenly found themselves right in the middle of enemy formations. And until they looked around and found where they were, they had not seen those other ships. Nor had the formation men noticed the solo man join the flight. This happened to men of both sides, allied and enemy.

At Field 8, the scene of our yarn, there was a combat instructor, Lieutenant John Clayton, who came darned close to drawing down just such a death as in our story. Clayton, with his eyes wide open and in a good sky, had a student sneak up from the rear and take five bites, with his propeller, out of Clayton's left elevator before Clayton knew what was coming off. Now, Clayton had been looking for other ships, yet he did not see that one till almost too late.

There is another thing: With the other ship using the same type of motor as you—with the same volume of exhaust noise—you do not hear that other ship. Then again, in our story it is reasonable to believe that the student might have flown past from the captain's rear, or vice versa. In that case, and because the doomed pilot was underneath, it is very easy to believe that the top man never saw what was happening in his "blind spot". — A. A. CAFFREY

"ZAMBOANGA": Is this one of the versions?

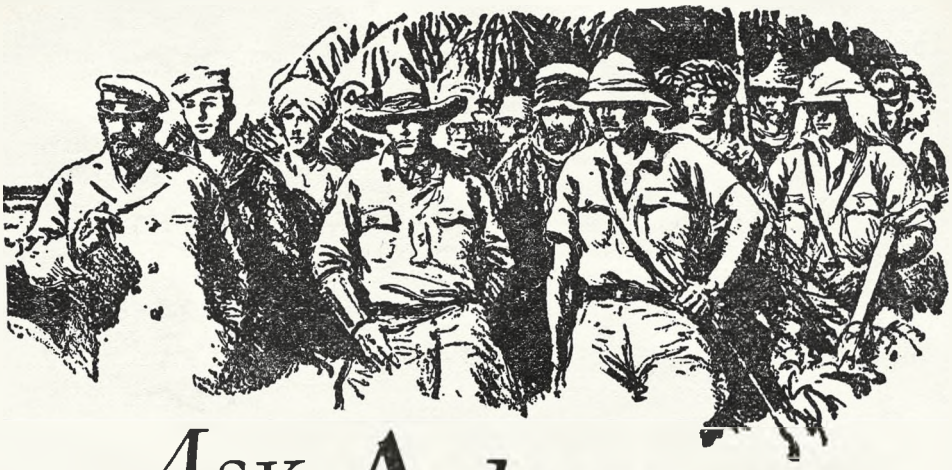
Rockwell Field, Coronado, Cal.

In the November 1, 1930, *Adventure* you ask for the words to "Zamboanga." While I was stationed at Corregidor Island (at the entrance to Manila Bay) in 1925-1926, there was a song which went something like this:

The monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga.
The monkeys have no tails.
They were bitten off by whales!
The monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga.
The birdies have no feet on Marvelas.
The birdies have no feet.
They were burnt off by the heat!
The birdies have no feet on Marvelas.

The carabaos have no hair in Mindanao.
The carabaos have no hair.
That's why they are so bare!
The carabaos have no hair in Mindanao!

Doubtless there are many more verses, but these are all I recall. Is this the "Zamboanga" of the 27th Infantry?—EUGENE W. MEAD, Staff Sgt., Med. Dept.



Ask Adventure

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Ship

FROM the engine room comes a question on paying out the anchor chain.

Request:—"The writer was at sea for many years, but in the engine room most of the time. I am hazy on the following, if I ever did know.

1. A ship paying out her anchor chain. As it slips past, what is the system of marking the links, so that it is known how many fathoms are out? Also, are there not shackles every so many links, that can be taken apart easily, allowing the chain to be slipped and a line bent on and a float attached—in the event of possible injury to the ship, requiring her to put to sea and every moment counted?

2. A ship at anchor attempts to heave up, but finds her chain has been fouled by another ship at anchor nearby. They are both in peril and every second is precious. One is a steamer of 12,000 tons and the other about half that. Would they not slip the chain and attach a float?"

—THOMAS LOCKEN, Elizabeth, New Jersey

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—1. Chain cables are usually divided into shots of fifteen fathoms each, with joiner shackles between each shot. Both in shots and swivels and markings of shackles, navy style differs a little from merchant fashion; but I suppose you have in mind the custom of the merchant marine. Cables are marked thus: The first shackle—fifteen fathoms—is marked by one turn of small wire put on the stud of the first link on either side of the shackle. The stud of course is the middle stiffening piece of the link. The second shackle—thirty fathoms—has two turns of wire on the stud of the second link each side of the shackle. So on by fifteen fathom lengths to ninety fathoms. The navy paints some of the links white in addition to the wiring.

2. As regards your question on foul anchors, it is not very likely that two steamers can get their hooks fouled without their coming together. If such should happen, and it is not clear which has the top anchor—in which case that ship by steaming ahead easy might carry clear—and both are in peril, naturally, since both are powered steamers, they would slip and move out. Without knowing more of the circumstances I would say they would certainly slip and buoy, or in grave need slip without buoying. Anyhow, get out at all costs.

Reptile

GILA monsters and rattlers. Finding a market for venom.

Request:—"For the following reasons I wish to receive some information. Recently an adult man was bitten by a Gila monster and died within two hours. A Mr. Bailey here, who is a professional snake catcher and goes about putting on fights between Gila monsters and rattlesnakes, informs that such battles always result in a quick death for the snake and the Gila monster suffers no ill effects from the rattlesnakes' bites. He uses the same Gila monsters over and over, but has to replenish his supply of rattlesnakes after each fight. One day

while he was handling a Gila monster it forcibly expelled its breath into his face at close quarters. He dropped senseless and seemed to be paralyzed for about a half hour. A dissection carried out on a Gila monster failed to disclose any fangs or poison sac.

1. Why is the Gila monster immune to rattlesnake venom?

2. Why is the bite of the Gila monster so quickly fatal to the rattlesnake? To man?

3. From what glands? Where situated? How expelled? What is the character of the Gila monster venom?

4. Where is the best market for Gila monsters? Rattlesnakes? Rattlesnake venom?"—H. E. PINKERTON, M. D., Coolidge, Arizona.

Reply, by Mr. Clifford H. Pope:—Your account of the promoter of Gila monster fights is interesting, but I should not depend too much upon his accuracy. However, knowing of no scientific experiments on the effects of Gila monster venom on rattlesnakes and vice versa, I am unable to either refute or confirm his contentions.

1. If he is right, no explanation can be given—all animals have varying degrees of resistance to different venoms and one can only experiment and record results.

2, 3. The venom of the Gila monster, though sufficiently toxic to produce death, is seldom fatal to man, because the lizard does not possess a very efficient injecting apparatus. The glands that secrete the venom are situated in the lower jaw. The teeth of this jaw are grooved in front and behind and it is along these grooves that the fluid is conducted into the wound. The venom primarily attacks the respiratory centers, first stimulating but finally paralyzing them. Secondarily, it causes relaxation of the walls of the blood vessels and weakening of heart action. It differs in no essential from certain snake poisons. Investigators generally agree that the bite of the Gila monster is seldom fatal to man—lay reports notwithstanding.

4. I do not know just what the best market for Gila monsters is, but I should advise you to write to the Antivenom Institute of America, Glenolden, Pennsylvania for information in regard to the sale of this venom and that of the rattlesnake.

Ranger

FORESTRY Service. Where and how to apply. Salary, duties and forage allowance.

Request:—"At the present time, and for another year I am and expect to be in the U. S. Army (Corps of Engineers). A battalion of us are here making a survey of a route for a proposed canal. The work is hard, interesting and, since the language here is a form of Spanish, not totally without romance.

I'd like to try the U. S. Forestry Service. Could you tell me: What are the qualifications, duties, the pay and living conditions?"

—WILLIAM G. KNAPP, Managua, Nicaragua

Reply, by Mr. Ernest Shaw:—For duties and qualifications of applicants write The Forester. Forest Service, Washington, D. C, for a copy of the Use Book published for public distribution. It will give you full details.

Appointment is made from a list of those eligibles who have taken and passed the Civil Service exam for ranger. This examination is held in late October of each year at all Forest headquarter towns and some other points. Write the U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C. for application blank and list of points where held.

The eligible list is usually segregated by States and appointments are made in that way. That is, those listed for any State are selected for appointment within that State. Therefore it is usually best to take the examination in the State in which you wish employment.

Salary has recently been raised to $2,000 per annum to start with. Promotion depends entirely on the individual, but in general is slow. Where the ranger lives out on the Forest unit of which he is in charge, quarters are furnished by the Service but a rental of $10 per month is deducted from the pay. Some are required to live in town and pay such rent as may be demanded. Rangers are furnished with a forage allowance sufficient to cover the number of horses listed as necessary for the work of each district. They are also given a travel allowance which is in the nature of reimbursement for money actually spent when away from their district.

Indian

MEXICO jealously guards its relics of the Aztecs; and Ohio allows no one except the State to excavate the ancient Mounds.

Request:—"As I am a collector of Indian relics, I would like to know where I can buy genuine Mound Builders' relics, also genuine Maya and Aztec relics?"
—FRANKLIN F. GATES, Johnson City, New York

Reply, by Mr. Arthur Woodward:—Sorry, but I am unable to advise you as to a possible source from which you might obtain either Mound Builder or ancient Mexican artifacts. Such items are rare and when offered for sale often run into quite large sums, especially the Mexican material. Of course, there are many imitations of ancient Mexican work floating around in curio stores but none that a collector would want. Occasionally some engineer, prospector or tourist comes out of Mexico with a few of the archaic *idolitos* or "little idols", mostly heads and fragments of torsos of the small pottery images that are so common to the earlier cultures of Mexico, but even such specimens are hard to obtain. Then too, the Mexican government has placed a ban on the exportation of *anteguedades*, which includes everything from Indian material to antique furniture, I understand.

Ohio has likewise placed a ban on outside excava-

tion within the State. No one save the State can explore the mounds and, since the center of the mound culture appears to fall within the boundaries of Ohio, naturally not many such artifacts are offered for sale. Some mounds are found in other places, of course—Wisconsin, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, etc. and occasionally collections made years ago are seen in the shops of curio dealers. But, if I were you, I wouldn't begin buying or collecting such material until I had a thorough understanding of the subject. Don't waste your money on doubtful material. Study first and collect afterwards. Visit all Museum collections possible. Go to Albany, Rochester, New York City, Washington, etc., study the collections, ground yourself first, then if you still have the urge to collect do it systematically.

Bowie Knife

A STOUT little souvenir of American history.

Request:—"Can you describe a Bowie knife and tell me where it might be possible to obtain one?"
—ROBERT McCREARY, La Canada, California

Reply, by Mr. Robert E. Gardner:—A Bowie knife has a slightly curved cutting edge, a thick back to the blade; a two-edged point and usually a simple cross hilted grip. I am enclosing a sketch of a Bowie.

I believe the Francis Bannerman Company, 501 Broadway, New York City, can supply such a knife.

Motor Camping

A KITCHENETTE and icebox for the tourist trails.

Request:—"I am building a kitchenette to place on the rear of an auto while touring.

1. As it must be as light as possible what wood could I use for the framework (2"x2") that would be light and yet durable and strong? I am going to use three-ply paneling for the sides, top and back. I wish to make the door on the front of the cabinet to let down for a table, but the bottom would have to be raised or else it would be too low to the ground.

2. Have you any suggestion for hardware for this purpose?

3. Also what would be the best material and insulation for an icebox in the cabinet?"
—JOHN W. WILLENBORG, Pawnee, Illinois

Reply, by Major Charles G. Percival:—1. You can buy a much lighter, more practical and sturdier kitchenette made of stamped steel, containing a 25 lb. capacity ice chest, a 2 gal. ice water tank with faucet and drawers for everything, etc. This comes in three sizes, for running board or trunk rack, and the door when down has folding leg and makes a very substantial table. It is enameled black on outside and white baked enamel inside. Address of manufacturer on request.

If you prefer to build of wood, use oak or ash for frame (1" by ½" strips, fastened with brass screws in white lead and three-ply panel board, 3/16". Personally I would advise Haskelite-Plymetal or Masonite boards—all special process boards, but light and strong. Fasten with brass screws in white lead.

2. The legs can be made of flat strips of 3/16" strap iron which can fold up on the outside of the door edge when closed.

3. The best insulation is mineral wool, ground cork, balsa wood or felt. Ground cork is the cheapest and easily procurable at any fruit store dealing in Malaga or Spanish grapes, which come packed in ground cork.

Brazilian Tea

ONE can live on a meat diet, drinking *herba maté* as a vegetable substitute. The holly-like leaves are smoked, and the beverage is brewed in a gourd and imbibed through a native reed.

Request:—"1. Is Brazilian *maté* a substitute in any way for alcohol? I noticed in one of the magazines it is advertised as a sort of substitute.

2. Is it a habit forming drug? What properties does it have? Is it a legal drug here in the U. S.?

3. Is it a tea or a dried leaf of some sort and is the plant it is derived from allied to China or India tea? Would it serve as a substitute for tea? How is it used in Brazil and Argentine—as a medicine or a drink?"—NELSON T. BROWN, Trenton, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—1. Brazilian tea, *maté* or *herba maté,* is in no way a substitute for alcohol, nor does it have in any manner the effect of alcohol. I have not seen the ad you mention.

2. It is not a habit forming drug, although people grow to like it as they grow to like coffee or tea as a drink. It contains a similar drug to caffeine or theobromine in small quantities. It also contains other balancing alkaloids. It is allied to the *coca* plant from which cocaine is extracted but, if I remember rightly, it contains no trace of this alkaloid. In general it is allied to the hollies, including our own prickly leafed holly, all of which are included under the generic name *Ilex.* It is a legal herb.

3. It is the dried and prepared leaf of a tree which attains about the size of our own holly here, but the leaves are quite a lot larger. It is dried on racks over smoking fires, a rather primitive and simple process. It is not allied to China or India tea in any way, but it serves as an excellent substitute for tea, having about the same effect and containing other elements which give it a mild laxative effect. In Argentina and Uruguay, also Paraguay and southern Brazil, it is used to furnish vegetable diet along with the pure meat diet of some of the gauchos, that is to say that one can eat meat alone with only *maté* in addition. In the southern countries it is made by putting a small quantity of the leaves into a small

gourd of the nest egg variety and pouring water on it. It is then sucked through a sort of pipestem of reed or nickel. Millions of pounds of it are used in southern South America annually.

Alaska

IF YOU are a real adventurer with five hundred dollars in your pocket, you can last out a season and try your luck. But the way of the chechako is hard.

Request:—"I have always wanted to go to Alaska, either to prospect, or hunt and trap, but never realized the ambition, for the chief reason I thought I never would make a go of it.

I have put one year in the Army on the Mexican Border, then wasted a few years at an art school. I now am twenty-eight.

I never have had any experience at either prospecting or trapping.

I would like your advice. Would it be possible for a novice to make a try at either in Alaska?"

—REIS JERMYNE, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—If you plan to enter Alaska to make a living (without experience) by either prospecting or trapping, the chances are mighty poor. Many prospectors who know the game make their grubstake by running a trapline during the winter, but to have any success with fur you must savvy how to do it. Like anything else. As to hunting, you get all that on the side and as fine as any locality that lies out of doors.

If you've a stake to carry you while learning, and if you are quick to pick up a new stunt and handy at taking care of yourself under new conditions and in any sort of possible tough luck, I'd say: go to it, old son, and more power to you. You might win out big. It's a good big gamble anyway, the prospecting part of it, I mean. We've the mineral here, lots of it, but it has an exasperating trick of hiding.

If you like adventure and can land on this coast with not less than $500 in your kick, you can last out a season and try it out. If you run shy of cash then, and like the game, there are many jobs of all sorts in the larger towns to enable you to carry on. In any case, if you like roughing it in strange places, like hunting and fishing, etc., you'll sure have a whale of a time; and as I've said, you might even be lucky. That's the kernel in the nut—luck and never knowing when you're licked. That is, keeping everlastingly at it. If you like it, fine and dandy; if you don't click here, why there are lots of boats going south every week. It's up to you.

To give you more of the lowdown on this stuff, I enclose my leaflets on prospecting, which cover the subject and give besides hints on the country, ways and means, and a list of books to help out. Until you wise up on this Alaskan game, I advise you to hug the tidewater at first; i. e. don't make a break for the interior, because it's a terror for the uninitiate. A chechako can lose his shirt the first day out, and then go bugs without half starting. I've seen 'em, brother. You see, there's no golden road to fortune here, it's a good tough job; but if you're built right and have the guts, there's a chance for big stuff. Wouldn't hurt to come and look it over, anyway.

Rainproofing

WHAT is good for a tent is not good for a shirt—and it's probably much wiser to take a wetting than to seal up the body too tightly.

Request:—"Can you give me a formula used in preparing a solution to waterproof cotton garments? I have used boiled linseed oil in waterproofing 'hickory' shirts and overalls and, while successful, it made a messy greasy garment and one unpleasantly odorous.

Such a formula appeared in 'Ask Adventure' in an issue of late '29 or early '30, but I have lost the magazine. The formula was to be used, I believe, in waterproofing tents.

I am a logger and work often in the rain. The work does not permit wearing the heavy waterproofs sold in the shops. I desire a waterproof I may carry in a bottle and by applying it frequently to light garments render them leak proof against rain and wet snow."

—C. P. TAYLOR, Wenatchee, Washington

Reply, by Mr. Horace Kephart:—I could give you a formula for making tents rainproof, but it would be useless for waterproofing clothing, because a tent is not subject to the friction that rubs water right through the fabric of any cloth that has not been treated with rubber or linseed oil or the modern cellulose method. None of the three processes here mentioned can be applied successfully by hand: they require machinery and expert handling also.

You can get good oilskins from almost any store. Of course a long slicker is not suitable for woods work. Get a short slicker jacket and pants. Such a suit will wear better than rubber.

I note that you say such heavy garments are not suitable for your work; but if that is the case you must take your wetting, at least so far as your legs are concerned. A good canvas hunting coat that has been cravenetted, such as Duxbak or any of the better grades of hunting coats in sporting goods catalogues, will shed a long, hard rain; but trousers or breeches of the same material will wet through to your skin as soon as you go thrashing through the underbrush after a rain or even a heavy dew. That won't hurt you if you can dry out at night. It is healthier and more comfortable than to wear heavy rubber or oilskin pants which would sweat you all the time.

For real cold, damp weather, the best grades of Mackinaw are good. A coat or shirt of that material is practically rainproof and very warm; but the breeches will wet through if you travel through brush where there is no open trail.

THE Caribbean territory and a section of the West are unrepresented in *Ask Adventure* at present. Vacancies to be filled on the staff:

West Indies (Cuba, Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups)

Central America (Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Guatemala)

Western U. S. Part 3 (Colorado and Wyoming. Homesteading. Sheep and cattle raising)

Readers who feel that they are qualified to serve as experts on these subjects are invited to state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure*, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

A Correction: "Tabloid—A Brief Medical Guide", published by Burroughs, Wellcome & Co., New York, is priced at 75c, instead of 50c as stated in the July first issue.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. DO NOT send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

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; equipment and accessories clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, Copeland Manor, Libertyville, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, New Jersey.

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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First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., 821 Elmswood Ave., Evanstown, Illinois.

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Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting; development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.* —VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystalography, color and chemical compositions.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

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Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care Tropical Plant Research Foundation, 312 14th St., S. W., Washington, D. C.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk, General Information.*—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; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Offices can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R., 333 Fifty-fourth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 507 No. Harper, Hollywood, 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, JR., care *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3758 81st Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.* —THOMAS H. DAMERON, 7 Block "S," 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 *General information about 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.*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

Ichthyology *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Stamps 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.

Linguistics and Ethnology (*a*) *Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology.* (*b*) *Languages and the problems of race migration.* (*c*) *Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Old Songs That Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON. *Archive of American Folk-Song; Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

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, 73 Farmington Ave., Longmeadow, Mass.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

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Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "Daniel," *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, 524 West 3rd St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Boxing CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH, 445 West 23rd St., New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

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The Sea Part 3 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 5 *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.* —CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean.* (*Siberian Waters*).—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventurer.*

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

South Sea Islands JAMES STANLEY MEAGHER, 4322 Pine Street, Inglewood, Calif.

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

Borneo CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★ **New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—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.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States; and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York.

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Europe Part 3 *Finland, Lapland and Russia.*—In the case of Russia, political topics outside of historical facts will not be discussed. ALEKO E. LILIUS, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 6 *Great Britain.* THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, W. C. 2, London, England.

Europe Part 7 *Denmark.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson Street, Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

Europe Part 9 *Belgium.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 10 *Switzerland.*—DR. ALBERT LEEMAN, Kramgasse, 82, Bern, Switzerland.

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Mexico Part 3 *Southeastern. Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Bonaventure Ave., 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 homesteading in Canada Part 1, and fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

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✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.* Trips for Sport and Adventure—big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts, Indian tribes and present conditions.—S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), Box 522, Gen. P. O., Toronto, Can.

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Middle Western U. S. Part 5 *Lower Mississippi River (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Middle Western U. S. Part 6 *Great Lakes.* Also seamanship, navigation, courses, distances, reefs and shoal lights, landmarks, charts; laws, penalties, river navigation.—H. C. GARDNER, 1863 E. 57th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 2 *Western Maine. For all territory west of the Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me.

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Eastern U. S. Part 7 *The Great Smokies and the Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

★*(Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.)*
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THE TRAIL AHEAD—THE NEXT ISSUE OF *ADVENTURE*, JANUARY 1st

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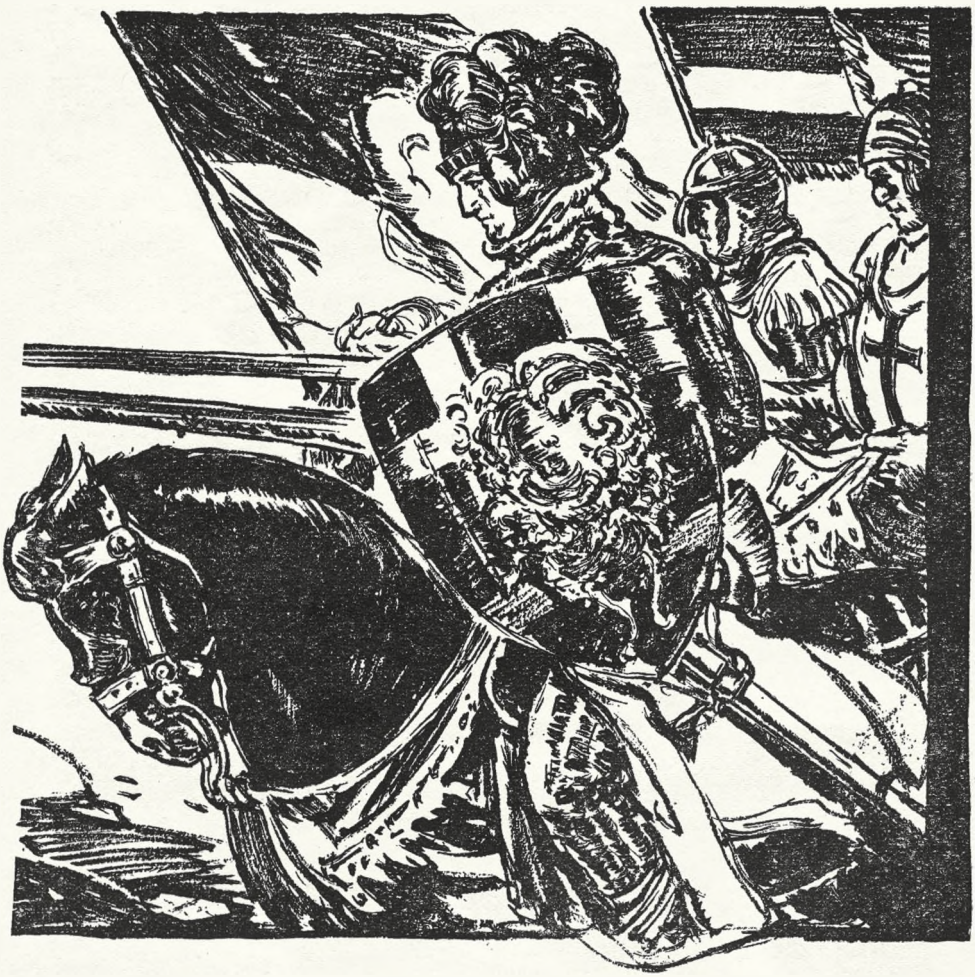

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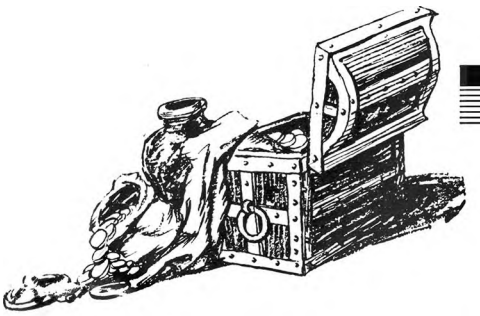

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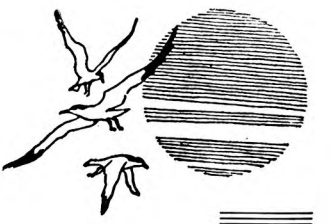

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