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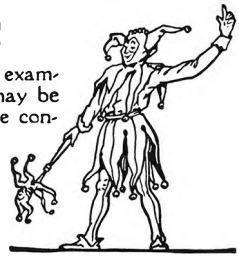

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for December 15th

1931
VOL. LXXXI No. 1

A. A. Proctor
EDITOR

Cover Design by Gerard C. Delano *Headings by V. E. Pyles*

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

The Web of Gold

By

DIOMEDES DE PEREYRA

CHAPTER I

THE DUEL

I WAS born in Bolivia, on the sugar plantation of Judge Mateo de Olivares, a landowner or *patrón* of Santa Cruz. According to an old custom established by the rich for their *colonos*—workers settled on their domains—I was part of the judge's possessions as long as my parents worked for him. When I reached my sixteenth birthday, I left for the neighboring city of Santa Cruz, the home of the judge, and reported at his pretentious *casa*. He told me I was to receive from him the proper training to become later his valet and bodyguard. This, he explained, was due to my very promising physique.

The judge was a tall, austere man. If he had worn a beard, he would have resembled the image of Saint Ignatius of Loyola which I was taught to revere in church. His eyes were habitually serene and gray and hazy like a rain cloud. His voice was terse, like the grating of sandpaper. When he lost his temper, he had the fixed look of a madman and his words flowed like the hissing of a boa, which made him as redoubtable among his fellow beings as is that reptile in his kingdom. To his childless wife he gave everything but affection. She remained secluded in the left wing of his immense mansion as though she were a prisoner. The rest of the rooms he reserved for himself, his friends and his eight servants.

A Complete Novel of the South American Jungles

His callers were numerous. Everybody in town—prominent civilians, army officers, police officials—came to pay him homage. Many hailed from a distance; these were rubber men for the most part and called themselves *caucheros.* Though haughty, they were crude in manner and speech and ignorant of everything but their grim trade. Fallen prey to the lure of the *gomales*—rubber forests where workers are merely slaves—they were devils incarnate, thriving on the ruthless exploitation of countless Indians and white profligates.

A mistrustful lot, they avoided strangers, seldom venturing out of the judge's house during the day and traveling under assumed names which were never the same when they returned.

They would leave the house as suddenly as they had come, after making life miserable for the servants. They were evil men who had strange dealings with my master, before whom they cringed and quailed. They either wanted to defraud some rival of his concessions or sought to avoid prosecution for having killed some one.

When the *caucheros* arrived, the house would become still, the dogs would howl and creep to their corners in a resentful mood, and when spoken to by those men would crouch and slink away like whipped curs with tails between their legs.

One day after an old *cauchero* had argued long and loudly with my master and threatened to expose him if he was

not handed some decision he claimed had been stipulated, I was sent on my first errand. It was to a green house in the Plaza Mayor with word for the *amo*—master—to come and meet the judge at his gate that evening after dark. I left the message with a negro whose ebony hue nearly scared me away, for he was the first one I had ever seen. The next day the body of the *cauchero* was found hanging from a rafter in his room. As this happened in the judge's house, the police quickly declared it suicide.

Some time later, upon notice of another arrival, I was sent again to the green house with a similar message. Becoming suspicious, I decided to investigate the nature of these appointments, so at dusk I hid myself in a tree whose overhanging branches fell on both sides of the wall near the gate. When the shadows of the night were thick, my master came to wait there at the bolted gate. Soon after, a man wrapped in a cape appeared. Quickly he approached the judge, who said immediately:

"Son, Boca Negra is coming to town. He writes me that he does not believe his partner hanged himself in my house and he wants me to wait for him with those deeds for the Riberalta property which I was to award them. He is a daring *cauchero,* and is due to arrive early tomorrow on horseback by the Beni Road. If you wish to keep that property, you'd better attend to him."

"I'm glad you told me, father—I'll give instructions to Vasquez right away," said the cloaked man, speaking in a peculiar, sibilant whisper. When he turned to go, the judge stopped him.

"Wait! I must now ask you to start for the Madera at once. At last your sister has consented to come back to stay with you and we mustn't keep her waiting. You know how impatient she is."

"She'll wait this time, father. I can not leave immediately as you suggest."

"What is there to prevent you? I fear that any delay on your part will furnish her another pretext to break her promise and go for more thrills into the jungle. Is it so important that you must disappoint me after all I'm doing for you? It's a month now since I saw that daughter of mine last—this never happened before and I'm worried."

"Well, for your peace of mind I'll tell you, father, that she herself has asked me to stay."

"What? Did she write to you then? Why didn't you tell me you two were on good terms again? And did she mention any love affair of hers in her letter to you? Explain yourself!"

"I should like to, but I can not say any more."

As my master harshly voiced his disapproval of this reticence, the other, looking at his watch and always speaking in a muffled voice, droned with alarm that he had but a few minutes to catch his men at the tavern and departed.

SHRUGGING his shoulders ill humoredly, the judge mumbled that both this son of his and his sister had inherited the confounded secretiveness of their mother, then returned to his house. I surmised that these were the children often alluded to by my mistress whenever she had a reproach to make to her husband. The story was whispered among the servants that after her marriage she had been surprised by the judge with the disclosure that early in his career, while he was a diplomat in Austria, he had had two children—a boy and girl.

Although he did not wish any one outside his own family to know of the relationship, he had decided to have them come to live near him in Santa Cruz. My mistress, who was very proud, had been so affected by this revelation and then so humiliated by her husband's decision to flaunt them before her, that she had almost become insane. Later, upon learning that these

illegitimate children had arrived and were living in a house which she owned, she had gone to see them, but had returned fearing and despising them both. Probably because of this outcome, they had never visited her, so they remained unknown even to the servants, although Ushpa, the ex-*cauchero* coachman who enjoyed the absolute confidence of my master, seemed to know who they were.

I slid down the trunk of the tree where I had hidden and ran to my room, lest my master, needing something, should ring for me. I was not thrilled by the conversation as much as I had anticipated, probably because it was no news to me that the judge had children and I had expected something far more sensational. Yet much had really been said, for the night had barely passed when the words I had heard developed into deeds pregnant with staggering meaning.

No later than the following morning, the Guardia Civil found on the outskirts of the city the body of a murdered *cauchero* with his horse standing nearby. My mistress spoke of the crime at dinner. From the account in the paper, she had recognized the deceased as Boca Negra, another former visitor to the house. This put the judge out of countenance.

"How many times," he told his wife sharply, "must I tell you that you don't know anything? Keep out of this!"

"Since your daughter who is not *my* daughter has left Santa Cruz and gone into the jungle," she cried hysterically, "there is no living with you. Why don't you have your son who is not *my* son go after her?"

Her voice had risen to a scream and she was quickly taken to her room, for occasionally, if she was allowed to stay, she wrangled with the judge until she became waspish and hysterical.

The incident of the murder of the *cauchero* revealed the sinister meaning of my errands to the green house, and I no longer regarded myself as Bernardo the servant. Instead I saw myself as Bernardo the go-between in mysterious murder plots. Not only was I a miserable slave, but also an irresponsible tool —something like the trigger of a gun that sets the deadly missile on its way.

This realization made me feel abject and loathe my master. I wanted to escape from his influence and to live free from his terrifying shadow. But how could I, when my parents depended on my loyalty to him to enable them to eke out their existence on the plantation?

The next morning at breakfast everything was peaceful again between my master and his wife. He quoted to her a passage from a letter which he had just received from Don Arthur Mortimer, an American and a former college chum who had become a famous explorer. He was coming to see him on business, probably accompanied by a friend, and would be their guest for his stay.

She recalled that some months before the Beni papers had reported that Don Arthur had discovered conclusive evidence of a sensational hidden treasure in the jungle. Did he by any chance want to interest the judge in a treasure hunting venture?

My master explained that Don Arthur had never needed his friends for his undertakings and, what was more, he had repeatedly turned down their offers to cooperate with money for his famous explorations. Moreover, he was a scientist solely interested in Indian lore and natural history. He would not think of wasting his time chasing fortunes.

"But you just said he was coming to see you on business," his wife replied.

"That's just it—business, not gambling," the judge retorted. "He wants me to look after some property for his nephew while he is gone on a long expedition." Reflecting a moment, he added in a bad temper, "Forget the gabble of the papers and be careful of what you say when he comes."

The news of Don Arthur's arrival stuck in my thoughts. His prowess as an explorer was known by even the

humblest in tropical Bolivia. People said that he had been conquered by the jungle and he in turn had tamed it, because never, it was claimed, had he been sick or hungry in the many years he had been living in it.

Once he had been captured by savages, but the sorcerer of the tribe, impressed by his marvelous coolness, had set him free, believing that no foe had any chance against him and that if harmed or kept prisoner, nature, whose semblance of calmness he wore, would avenge him. This incident had emboldened the great explorer—it had trebled his discoveries.

THE morning passed and the afternoon had begun to wear itself away, when a blast of moist air suddenly swooped down on the house. Running out to the patio, I was thrilled by the swift change that had taken place overhead. The sky, covered by swelling clouds of lead intermittently rent by vivid flashes of light, looked like a marble dome.

A storm was so rare in sunbaked Santa Cruz, it was always welcome. The soil, the trees, the very stones would quench their thirst.

The first bolt of lightning cracked the marble sky and hail spattered on the stones of the patio. Immediately the dogs came out of their kennels and turned their muzzles upward. They loved those heavenly beads and they whined and fretted as the hailstones, inciting them to frolic, escaped like cotton balls and went skimming, forming billows on the sweltering ground. Rain followed to their greater merriment. One could see the water trickle down their shaggy loins and go up in steam from their hot sides. Tense, they stayed a long time under the heavy downpour.

A tilbury entering the patio demanded my immediate attention. Two men alighted and I led them into the hall. One was tawny, green eyed, bushy bearded, an army officer, lithe and of medium height; the other a virile blond, clean shaven, huge, muscular, with frank, smiling eyes and serene expression. I was drawn at once to the latter, yet I refrained from making this too apparent. My timidity prevented me from being demonstrative in my impulses.

They were not given time to announce themselves; the judge had hastened to welcome them with unusual courtesy. Ordinarily he received his guests as a master to whom all must render honor, but now his attitude was very different.

"Mateo, how are you!" said Don Arthur, looking around gaily. "It's been years since I've seen you. You look fine. Have you ever been back to New York since you left the university?" Remembering that he had not said anything as yet about the army officer, he proceeded to make his presentation. "I'm sorry, Don Mateo—my friend. Colonel Llanos, the military governor of the Beni—Don Mateo de Olivares, chief justice of Santa Cruz . . . The colonel is also an old friend of mine and I told him he'd have to stay with you. I knew you wouldn't listen to anything else. You can put him up, can't you? He's come all the way from Trinidad on a personal matter."

The judge bowed.

"This probably means bad news for some *cauchero* here, Colonel Llanos? I hear you make it your business sometimes to pursue malefactors even outside of your territory."

"He may be a *cauchero*," the colonel answered perfunctorily. Then, wrinkling his brow, he added curtly, "But I'm not after any felon this time. A personal matter with some one I don't even know has brought me here. It is all so absurd! Don Arthur will explain to you."

The colonel was an interesting man to watch—wiry, with a quick glance and most restless and abrupt in his movements. He left my master and Don Arthur and began to pace meditatively in the spacious hall.

My master appeared deeply affected

by the military governor's presence, but he continued to talk with Don Arthur about their friends in the United States and what happened since they had last seen each other.

For the first time since I had come to the judge's house, I eagerly observed everything and listened to all that was said. Never before had visitors intrigued me as much as these did. One thing was evident: They were the very reverse of the kind I was familiar with. They immediately placed themselves in a different class from the *caucheros* with all their wild chatter and rough behavior. As I came to this conclusion and observed more of the details, my fondness for both of them grew by leaps and bounds—especially for Don Arthur, who seemed always so gay and full of life, making me wish I were like him. He was certainly a man after my own heart and the first one I had ever seen who talked and joked with the judge without fear.

The colonel left the house shortly after, in spite of the pouring rain, and later sent for his baggage. He had not returned by dinner time. While waiting for him, my master introduced Don Arthur to his wife as the great explorer who had conquered the wild, trackless wastes of the Chaco.

"That deed has stamped you as a brave and great man," said the judge, "and your investigations on the culture of the Incas and their descendants, the Quechuas, are adding much to your fame."

"No, no," said Don Arthur, laughing. "Not all that. It is a hard job, but I'm not the only one who is doing it."

"No other man since Pizarro's pioneers has accomplished as much as you," insisted my master admiringly.

"The greenhorns don't always go about it right," explained Don Arthur, walking about as if to get away from this praise. "All you have to do is to start right and have a little luck, and the first thing you know you're there and the next thing you know you're back in civilization again."

"I'm sure it is not that easy," said my mistress. "Your explorations in the Chaco were a dreadful experience. Yet they seem to have been child's play compared with the work you have undertaken in the Beni, I've heard."

"I'm going back in again," said Don Arthur, "just as soon as I've finished seeing the judge. The minute I settle with him about some business having to do with a nephew of mine, I'll start for the Manso River, which is a small tributary of the Guaporé, and build a house—a real *barraca*—as my base of operations. I'm having a gang of laborers come over from Trinidad to do the work and I'll get it up in a hurry. You'd like it out there, Mateo. You had better come along."

He laughed aloud as my master shook his head almost fiercely in refusal.

"You're getting soft, Matty."

The judge winced.

"Our name for Don Mateo in college," explained Don Arthur to my mistress. "He was a pretty tough fellow in those days and that was only a score and ten years ago. I try hard, but I can't feel old."

"That may be because you're a scientist with no responsibilities, and I am a judge with many," said my master.

"There may be something to that," conceded Don Arthur, "but a few months at my cabin on the Manso River would make a new man of you. You'd better take me up on that."

THE mention of the house in the jungle thrilled me through and through, especially after my mistress showed she would like to hear the details of the marvelous discoveries Don Arthur was reported to have made in that section. But the judge, quickly interposing, inquired about Colonel Llanos' mission, which seemed to preoccupy him, and his wife, rather than show her vexation, found a pretext to leave.

Don Arthur answered my master

very reluctantly. It had to do with a girl, he said. Colonel Llanos had courted her and then there had been differences which led to a separation—differences of such a personal nature that Colonel Llanos was here to fight a duel with a champion who had arisen to defend the honor of the young lady.

"From what I know of Llanos, there is some mistake," said Don Arthur. "He is incapable of doing a dishonorable thing, but matters have reached this pass. He is accused, his own honor is involved, and a duel it will be, regardless of anything I say. I've tried, but you know how it is. I think the whole thing is silly, but since customs are as they are, the least I can do is come along and help the little I can."

He shrugged his shoulders and started to speak of something else, but my master was far from satisfied. He returned persistently to the subject.

"But who is this mysterious young lady?"

Don Arthur was on the point of speaking when a hotel page was admitted, bringing him a note. Glancing at it, he frowned and rose, begging to be excused.

"Nothing unpleasant, I hope?" asked the judge.

"It's the duel—tonight," Don Arthur answered, getting ready to go. "I may be late in getting back. Don't worry about it."

"I wish I could go with you," my master said, more and more preoccupied. "You may need some assistance, but it would not do for a judge to be a witness to an act that is forbidden by law."

"No, don't bother—I'm afraid you couldn't do anything," agreed Don Arthur, adding, as he looked toward me, "I'd like to take that boy. He knows how to get around in this town, doesn't he?"

"Wouldn't you rather take one of my huskies?" my master suggested. "Ushpa, my best man—"

But the explorer, glancing a second time at me, decided that I would do; and my master, who had to have a servant always at hand, ordered me to leave Ramón in my place and, contending that he had to telephone to a friend, went into the library.

Ramón was a Quechua Indian about my own age. He happened to be feeding the dogs in the patio when I received the order and I called him. Now, Don Arthur had hardly noticed me since his arrival or, rather, he had remained indifferent toward me in spite of the fact that I had been following him like his shadow all the afternoon in order to engage his attention, for such was my admiration of him that he had already become my hero, and I wanted to be his friend. I thought here was my chance to make him take an interest in me, so I spoke to Ramón in his native Quechuan, which up to this time was commonly used by the whites of certain districts of Peru and Bolivia for their dealings with his people, who numbered several millions. I reckoned that Don Arthur, as a student of the Incas, had also learned this beautiful language

He proved he could speak it as fluently as I.

"Where did you learn Quechua?" he addressed me in the same tongue, clearly impressed by my accomplishment, for it was almost unknown in Santa Cruz, the Indians there being very few and belonging to the wild tribes for the most part.

Pleased at having at last ingratiated myself with Don Arthur, I explained—

"Ramón's mother, who cooks for the hands at my master's plantation, is a Quechuan, señor, and I was practically reared by her because nothing could keep me away from the kitchen, where she kept too many good things to eat."

By the way the explorer now smiled at me, I knew that my sympathy for him was no longer one sided.

A moment later, hardly conscious of the heavy rain, I was leading Don Arthur through the dark, narrow streets

of Santa Cruz to a *posada* frequented by low *caucheros* just outside the city limits. To our surprise, we found the vast adobe building steeped in darkness and with the door bolted. Suddenly a dim light trickled out from the tap-room, and Colonel Llanos himself admitted us.

"Thank you for coming," he said to Don Arthur. "You are in time."

In a corner of the saloon, braced along the crude stairs leading to the *azotea* and keeping watch over a round table on which lay conspicuously a new deck of playing cards beside a glistening dagger, stood six lusty *caucheros*, glaring venomously at our group.

The colonel turned to them.

"Gentlemen, I'm ready now. Which of you am I to meet?"

As he spoke, he glanced over the slouching *caucheros*, none of whom appeared of the mettle to fight the army officer.

The owner of the *posada*—an ex-*caucchero*—sitting silently at his counter behind us, rang a bell, then spoke sourly—

"Your opponent will be here in a minute, Colonel Llanos."

A moment later a slender person of medium height, elegantly dressed in black, with face masked, descended the stairs. Obviously intent on keeping his incognito, he took one of the two chairs that were pulled to the round table and the *caucheros* immediately shuffled to his side.

THE colonel, amused, began to smile, but quickly changed his expression when the masked man said incisively in lowered tones:

"Colonel Llanos, it is my prerogative to choose weapons and here they are. Take your seat; we'll have a game."

I became transfixed. The voice, sibilant and frenzied, seemed to be that of the cloaked man from the green house. Wishing to be reassured, I approached the table until I was only a few feet away from the speaker.

Colonel Llanos evidently was not prepared for this turn of affairs. Nevertheless, he kept cool and, agreeing to the form of dueling often practised in the *gomales*, inquired—

"The winner, I suppose, takes the life of the loser?"

"No, Colonel Llanos!" came the strangely tuned voice of his contender, but this time he had spoken loudly and his accent did not impress me as before. "I don't want your life, for which the devil alone may care. I take you for a scoundrel, and all I want is to carve a warning stigma on your face to keep every one, even your friends, away from you."

Only refraining by the greatest effort from drawing his sword, Colonel Llanos walked to the empty chair.

"You have said the one thing which makes me accept your proposition gladly. Now tell me—what kind of a slashing will you take?"

The masked man laughed derisively as he crossed his arms. One felt he was not in the least worried.

"I'll take the chin strap, which is the one I have designed for you," he said calmly.

"The scoundrel!" rapped out Don Arthur, tensely under his breath, but he was heard, for the masked figure turned a moment to stare at him evilly.

However, his resentment did not last long, for a few seconds later he was again as calm as if he were meeting a group of friends for dinner.

"Pancho," he called to the proprietor of the *posada*, "get ready that first aid kit of yours, as there'll be a very sick man here soon."

Of Colonel Llanos it might have been said that he also was unmoved, although by watching him closely I could see his agitation.

Don Arthur could hardly hide his misgivings.

Again the masked one spoke.

"If it is agreeable to you, we'll make it short. High wins. We'll each draw once."

To Don Arthur he said—

"Will you examine the cards on behalf of your friend?"

"Never mind," said Colonel Llanos at once, almost roughly. "We have confidence in the honesty of the cards."

"You flatter yourself," said the masked man, his teeth showing in a smile.

Grimly Colonel Llanos took the cards and shuffled them. A dead silence descended on the room. The *caucheros* crouched in the corner and never once took their eyes off the duelists. The whisk of the cards as the colonel flipped them back and forth in his hands came like the flapping of wings against the window panes. Suddenly he stopped shuffling and faced his opponent. For a moment he seemed to hesitate. Then he presented the deck to the other who immediately drew a card and held it up for all to see. It was the king of spades.

His laugh rang out and shattered the silence which had been so tense it had seemed impossible to continue longer without an explosion.

The laugh and the result of the draw obviously upset Colonel Llanos. His face seemed to draw up in a knot and his hand went to his chin as if in involuntary fear of that black faced card.

The masked one again laughed aloud.

"Courage—courage, Colonel. Don't tell me you are afraid. After all it is only the king of spades. You have a card to draw."

He threw back his head and laughed in a way which goaded even Don Arthur, who stood by my side and seemed to hold himself in with difficulty.

"You have had your say," the colonel said. He then drew his card.

It was the ace of diamonds.

Grabbing the dagger, he sprang to his feet, straightway making a thrust at the face of his rival, who craned forward his head to meet the blow unflinchingly.

With one impulse, the six brawny men surrounded the colonel, but the masked man, though bleeding profusely from his lower jaw, roared at them to withdraw, even before Don Arthur had realized the danger of his friend.

"Get back!" he ordered. "This was on the level—let him alone!"

Colonel Llanos made a wry face.

"I'm sorry," he said. "In spite of my action I hardly expected this to happen—I only intended to unmask you. Who are you?" and he eagerly offered his open hand to his foe, who was now being assisted by the ex-*cauchero* at the counter. The wounded man drew back as though struck.

"You fool," he said tensely. "Do you think this is to end as if it were a duel in a play? It's but the beginning of a fight to the finish. The first act is over —my turn will come later!"

"My mistake!" said Colonel Llanos. "I forgot that one can not be both a gentleman and a *cauchero*. But now it's my turn to choose arms. Let me warn you that I will shoot you on sight. That's my way with vipers."

"That is your right, Colonel Llanos," the other snarled, "but you must not be surprised when I strike suddenly with my poison."

"I *must* know who you are! Show me your face!" the colonel commanded, frantically stepping forward.

"At the proper time," the beaten man flashed, drawing back. "But when you next see me, be prepared to defend yourself. It will not be drawing cards!"

This time he beckoned to the ruffians to prevent any attempt of the colonel to identify him. With faces set and hands twitching, they rallied closer to their master's side, glancing menacingly at the three of us.

COLONEL LLANOS, glaring fiercely at his challenger, turned on his heel and strode away, accompanied by Don Arthur. I was so excited that although I was dying to tell them my suspicions, I could not find words to express myself. It was still raining and the night was pitch-black. Walking beside the

explorer, who placed his arm over my shoulders, I led the way to the hotel where the colonel had spent the afternoon. He took us to his room, where he preferred to stay, declaring bluntly, in his soldierly way, that he did not like the judge "because he looked as crooked as the man he had had recently appointed prefect of Trinidad."

"People say many unkind things about my friend," Don Arthur put in. "But it is all nonsense. I knew him at college, and he is straight as a die."

Colonel Llanos did not hear him.

"*Dios!* I would give anything to know who that *hombre* is!" he exclaimed, meaning the duelist.

"Didn't the young lady ever speak to you of some one else—who cared for her?" Don Arthur asked. Then he commented, "This fellow must be either a relative of hers or some one in love with her. Nobody else would go through an ordeal like that."

"She never spoke to me of any one except her brother and mother. She was deadly afraid of him; she considered that he was possessed by a murderous lust due to an insane desire for riches and power. She told me she ran away from him some months ago, when they were living together, lest she succumb to his influence. He planned to return to his country after he amassed a fortune. She hoped he would die before as there would be no limit to his excesses if he got what he wanted."

"Is she a Bolivian?"

"No. She is an European, like her mother. When the latter died, the girl came with her brother to America, where their father also was."

"Oh! So her father is here?"

"I inferred from what she told me and the fact that she is living in this country, that he is in Bolivia. I tried to learn who he was, but she invariably refused to give me this information, even though I told her that I wanted to meet him as I wished to marry her."

"Marry her!"

"Yes. I was serious about it. If I had been sure that her father was an honorable man, and not a *cauchero* as he probably was, I would have made her my wife long ago. But she laughed at me. 'Aren't you satisfied that we are already united by our vow to live only for each other?' she told me. Curiously enough, her greatest love is the jungle, where she feels perfectly at home, as though she had been born and reared there."

"You still love her?"

The colonel did not answer.

"What was her name?"

"To me she was just Diana, because I met her in the forest, hunting marsh-deer with a savage mastiff. She had on men's clothing, which, I soon learned, Diana wore everywhere most of the time, lest if she changed to feminine garments she should be considered a weak woman. Later I had to kill her dog because he hated even my horse when she grew to love me. Finally we quarreled because I objected to her frequent disappearances. She would absent herself suddenly for several days, and as I loved her madly, I became jealous, especially as she never offered any explanation except that she would say, 'Trust me; don't you realize how much I love you?'

"Tired of her behavior, after what I decided was our last quarrel, I went to Tarija and, out of spite for what I believed were Diana's trysts, I married a former sweetheart. But I regretted this step as soon as I understood how much Diana meant to me. Soon I returned to see her again. Well—never as long as I live will I forget her words and the change that her hatred had wrought. She acted as though she had never loved me and ended by saying that without realizing it she had been worshiping a devil—me! In retaliation she forced me to fight this duel."

"Did you tell her why you had married?"

"I did, believing that because it was a consequence of her escapades she would forgive me. But she revealed only

then that she often had to see her father."

"Hmm! Did you believe that?"

"Yes, because if she had been up to what I thought, she would gladly have admitted her guilt in order to humiliate me. But—" the colonel broke down—"better drop the subject now, and please don't say anything to any one . . . Can we trust this boy to keep his mouth shut?"

"What about it, Bernardo?" Don Arthur asked me and, without giving me time to answer, he put his hand in a kindly way on my shoulder. "Don't worry about Bernardo," he said. "He knows what a faithful servant is expected to do."

"He knows what a faithful servant is expected to do," I repeated to myself.

So Don Arthur did not want me to be a tattle-tale—and he trusted the judge . . .

I remained thoughtful. My first impulse had been to reveal right then and there the grave suspicions that had crept into my brain, but now I decided to say nothing until I could be sure, and had had a talk with my parents. A word from me, then, might turn them adrift, practically destitute.

The colonel had ordered dinner for three in his room. We stayed a moment longer and departed.

CHAPTER II

ESCAPE

WHEN Don Arthur and I reached home, only my master was there. He came forward eagerly when he saw us.

"Where is the colonel?" he asked in a voice which had a rasping sound from the rush of words. More and more I was thinking of his conversation with his son at the gate.

"He sends his regards," said Don Arthur, "and asks you to excuse him. He has decided to stay at the hotel because of some other business that he must attend to while he is here."

"And the duel?" asked the judge in an agitated half whisper.

Don Arthur gave a brief and vague account of it, and then went on to talk of his anxiety about building his *barraca* in the jungle, and of his servant, Sara—a *chola,* or woman of mixed blood—whom he had left alone and rather sick. But the judge doggedly persisted—

"Who was the second duelist?"

"He was masked," said Don Arthur.

"Couldn't you tell anything by his manner?"

"All I could say for sure is that he is a brave man—one I wouldn't care to meet on a lone jungle trail. I've never come across such a combination of suppressed and intense malevolence."

"And nobody mentioned his name?" asked the judge, growing excited.

"If he wanted to be mysterious, he made a good job of it. I haven't the slightest idea who he was. Even with his chin dripping blood, he never forgot the mask." He turned to me, "You didn't guess who he was, did you, Bernardo?"

Although I had expected this question, my knees knocked from the force of my agitation as I answered tremblingly that I did not.

"And, Mateo, while I'm on the subject, I wish you'd let this boy look after me while I'm here. He's the first servant I've come across in months who knows how to serve coffee. And then I want to practise Quechua with him."

My master, obligingly, attached me to Don Arthur's personal service.

The novelty of having witnessed so thrilling an episode at the *posada,* and of believing myself in possession of the clue needed to identify the masked challenger, kept me in a ferment of excitement all night. This, and my strong dislike for the judge, led to my sudden decision to desert my post in order to follow Don Arthur. Such a resolution shattered my habitual calm, making me zealous and eager to please.

This was so apparent the next day

that my master, who always had found me just a sulking scamp, made to his guest at breakfast his first remark in my favor. But Don Arthur went further. Commenting on my alertness, he cited me as an example of a jungle minded youth "whose mind and body," he said, "are strung to outstrip the wind." Then he gave me a silver peso, the first I had ever possessed.

I learned that very evening what the nature of Don Arthur's discovery in the jungle was.

The day had been extremely hot, as is always the case in torrid climates after a rain. Don Arthur, puffing on a long Santa Cruz cigaret rolled in sweet cornleaf, sipped his coffee, as I kept assiduously filling his cup. The judge's gaze was lost in space. I would have sworn his evil mind was threading through some dark path. Early in the afternoon the negro from the green house had brought him a message, after which he had questioned Don Arthur more closely about the duel. As he had gained no further information, he still remained in a maze. Later he approached me on the subject, but I pretended to have seen little of what had taken place.

He then telephoned to the hotel where the colonel had passed the night, and was keenly annoyed when told that he had departed for the Beni at dawn. News that one of his friends, a wealthy farmer settled down near his fort, had been kidnaped and held for ransom by a notorious bandit the night of his duel in Santa Cruz, had precipitated his return. Doubtless the judge had wanted to get the facts from the colonel himself.

His unflagging persistence kept me thinking of his son—the duelist?—and of Diana, the strange woman who, dressed as a man, hunted deer with wild dogs. The mere knowledge that such a creature existed had also thrilled me. But I was now asking myself if she were not the judge's daughter. This new suspicion fired my imagination.

Suddenly the judge broke the silence with a question relating to a remark which Don Arthur had made at the table.

"So you want to make your nephew your sole heir, my dear Arthur?"

"Yes, *amigo,*" came the answer immediately. "He is the orphan of my sister who mothered me and my brothers. My own son couldn't be dearer to me. He's going to school up in the States—studying to be an engineer. You'll probably see him down here some day. When I go into the jungle, I may or may not come out alive. If I don't, I want you to notify him of my will, which I'll have typed tomorrow. I'll leave it here with you."

"I'll be happy to take care of that," replied the judge, "but while we are about it, won't you tell me exactly of what your legacy consists? I know your indifference to money and have never seen you strive to make any. Surely your wanderings in the jungle could not have made you rich—unless it is that find of yours which you promised last night to disclose."

DON ARTHUR calmly produced some papers, yellow with age, which he unfolded and placed on the table in front of him. Then to my intense wonder he smilingly said:

"These papers constitute my legacy to my nephew. They were released from their cache by the worst storm I have ever witnessed in the jungle, and they were put into my hands by the waters of the quietest little river I know of. Now wait till I show you!"

He paused to glance in my direction, and I trembled for fear that I would not be permitted to remain, especially when the judge gazed mistrustfully at me. But Don Arthur instructed me to fill his cup oftener with fresh coffee from the kettle nearby so as to keep it hot. He then proceeded:

"Although this amazing document reads more like fiction than a narrative of actual experiences, it is a true story

written by a Spanish lieutenant in the army of Pizarro. Listen, *amigo*—"

As Don Arthur read, the usually unemotional judge once more grew excited, while I became overwhelmed with interest. The story revealed the romantic and fascinating adventure of one Santiago Lemos, sent to Cuzco, the Incan capital in 1596, in search of any treasures that might still be left after the ransom had been paid for the release of the pretender to the throne of the empire, Atahualpa. He had met with no success until, quite by accident, he saw a company of *yanacunas,* or cargo carriers, accompanied by high priests, leaving a temple in the outskirts of the city.

Disguised as an Indian, Lemos managed to approach close enough to discover that each of the carriers was laden with golden idols and ceremonial objects of incalculable value. Fearful that if he returned to his fellow Spaniards for help in order to seize the treasure the little company might vanish, and realizing the hopelessness of trying to overcome the Incas single handed, Lemos determined upon the wild scheme of following the party to learn of the hiding place of the gold. He thought, moreover, that in all probability it was being moved only a short distance.

As it turned out, the journey lasted weeks. Over mountains and through rivers and jungles the priests and *yanacunas* kept on their way, until finally they reached a mountainside honeycombed with caves, in one of which they deposited their burden.

Sustained by the lure of gold and eating scraps of food occasionally thrown away by the Amautas, Lemos barely managed to trail the party throughout the terrible journey. On seeing the Incas depart, he approached the caves by way of the strangest jungle fastness he had known and, in spite of monsters that seemed to guard the Indians, drew a rough plan of the hiding place, and also a crude but fairly accurate map of a second approach to the caves and the landmarks he had passed. He then started to return to Cuzco to report his discovery. But he was fated never again to see the city or his fellow Spaniards.

Surprised by the priests who discovered him bathing in a river, he was captured. Though he managed to escape, he dared not follow the trail, so tried to find his way back through the jungle. It was a mad attempt, a hopeless undertaking. Even if well fed and unwearied, it is doubtful that he would have succeeded; but in his half famished state, racked with fever, in rags, bruised and weary, with vitality sapped, he had no chance.

Finally despairing of ever reaching civilization, he made up his mind to live in the jungle and end his days as a good Christian. In a pleasant spot he came upon a deep but small river—Río Manso, or gently flowing stream—and there decided to build a hut and carry on life as best he could. Then, to his utter amazement, he discovered that the bed of the river was paved with gold nuggets.

It was the irony of fate. Alone in the jungle, hundreds of leagues from his companions, gold was of no more value to Lemos than the pebbles on the beach. Yet so strong was the temptation of gold that he daily gathered up the dull yellow metal and, as if fearing some one might surprise him with his hoard, stored it in a cavern.

Then as age overcame him, realizing he had but a short time to live, he placed his maps and plans with his treasure. Finally, having with great difficulty set down the story of his adventures, he added a clause to the effect that both the Incan treasures and his hidden gold should be the property of whoever found it, provided that one-fifth of all should be given as the royal *quinta* to his Majesty the King of Spain, and that the finder should transport Lemos' bones to Valencia where they were to be interred with due solemnity.

"*Dios,* what a picture! With monsters and all the other familiar essentials necessary for such tales!" exclaimed the

judge, as Don Arthur laid aside the document. "But," he added slyly, "no more than a fairy tale, I'm afraid, as far as its value matters. I don't say that none of it is true—I don't doubt the man Lemos found some treasure and gold—but even so, it would be a hopeless waste of time and money to search for it. I mean—"

"Just a minute, *amigo*," interrupted Don Arthur good naturedly. "Wait until I tell you all. It might perhaps be a long search, but the cache of the Spaniard, judging by the quantity of gold that even now is to be found in the river, must be of great value. And it should not be far from the place I found this document."

"How did you find it?" asked the judge.

"It was sealed in a tapir's thighbone, and was in all probability washed away by the storm along with the Spaniard's hut into the Manso River. Now look at these maps and plans I have to go by—"

"What?" ejaculated the judge, leaning forward eagerly on the paper which Don Arthur displayed. Examining it carefully, he began to sputter. "You say—Oh, yes! Now I understand—the hoard of nuggets and the maps leading to the Incan treasures seemed to be—in the cave . . . Bah!" He cackled nervously and proceeded with affected incredulity, "But no, *amigo* Arthur, I wouldn't waste my time if I were you. Four hundred years have passed since the Teniente Lemos breathed his last, and the jungle changes vastly in much less time than that. You could not now recognize the landmarks he mentions—no one could. It would be as hopeless as searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack." With a shrug of his shoulders, he returned the sheet to his friend.

"The River Manso, today," asserted Don Arthur confidently, "is exactly as Lemos describes it in one of his passages. It is hardly six miles long and, what is more, its bed is rocky enough to resist even the changing influences of the jungle for another thousand years. Besides, the plan shows a fair approach from either end. It's a good even chance I'll find the cave." Smiling, he replaced the documents in his pocketbook.

The judge was now trembling with excitement.

"I congratulate you then," he stammered, "and I only hope you will not have to wait long to see the happy culmination of your good fortune."

Suddenly remembering my presence, he could not avoid a gesture of uneasiness, upon which Don Arthur rose, beaming with smiles.

"You must teach bright boys like Bernardo to be discreet by trusting them," he said reassuringly, as he came and slapped my shoulder. "You won't say anything about this, will you, my boy?" he cautioned me and retired to his room.

The judge remained seated, nervously twitching his watch chain. After pondering awhile, he went to his study and rang for me. With a sinister light in his eyes and anxiety in his voice, he then said to me:

"You remember the message I gave you for the green house at the Plaza Mayor? Go tell the negro the same thing. I'll be waiting outside the gate tomorrow night after dark. But mind, you must not repeat anything of what has been said here to any one. Now hurry!"

I looked up in surprise. Could this mean harm to Don Arthur?

"What—what for, master?" I dared ask in an agony of indecision.

The judge sprang to his feet and violently shoved me off on my way.

I was racked with fear over what might occur to Don Arthur. Did this errand mean his death? Did my master covet the plans for himself? I knew by now that he was capable of any villainy for money. But if anything happened to Don Arthur, I would denounce the man to whom I had already

twice taken the same ill omened message as being a criminal in league with his father—the judge.

SUDDENLY, as I ran, I crashed into a rotund stomach. Thinking only of reaching the Plaza Mayor, I had forgotten that there were other people occasionally walking in the streets of Santa Cruz, and in the dusk had not seen the Jesuit, Padre Antonio, coming my way.

"Forgive me, Padre," I faltered, falling on my knees.

"Well, if it isn't Bernardo!" the padre exclaimed, groping for the crucifix hanging from a rosary attached to his waist and pressing it to my lips. Three years before he had seen me in the canefields where he had gone to preach, and then recently at my master's. "My, but you are growing!" he went on, with a gesture bidding me to rise, and throwing his head back to take a good look at me. "What a giant you are going to be! Tell the judge to send you to Sunday school. You must also learn how to become a good Christian."

The padre kept looking at me in mild surprise.

"But where were you going in such a hurry at this time of the night?"

"To the green house in the Plaza Mayor, Padre."

"The green house! Child! Who—who's sending you there?" The good padre was so startled that I did not answer immediately. "Who?" he repeated, gravely raising his arm and pointing his finger high to warn me against lying.

"My master, Padre," I was glad to tell him; and then explained my fears and the predicament I was in.

When I finished, the padre was staring at me pityingly.

"Your master," he said, "is wrong in sending you with messages to a godless man whom every one accuses of innumerable crimes. Child, did you talk to him the times you went there?"

"No, I didn't, and I don't even know his name," I declared. "I have only been at the door and seen his negro servant to whom I deliver the messages."

"Have you heard of El Duende?" the padre asked me pointblank, and I almost dropped to the ground.

"The Ghost!" I whispered.

"You have . . . Well, don't lose your head, child. But he is the man to whom you are taking those messages. Tell your father about it the next time you see him. Tell him that I, in the name of God, command him to take you away from the judge's house and that I will advise him further if he comes to see me. You might also ask your mistress for advice. Explain to her everything when she is alone. She's a good woman and might help you."

"But, Padre!" I exclaimed. "Why don't you turn him over to the police? There's a large reward offered for his capture. Only last week I heard—"

But the padre cut me short.

"I am a minister of God—my mission is to pray and save souls, but never to seek the punishment of men, not even criminals like the Ghost. And you must not say anything either, because the judge being his father, he could not be convicted. Now go and carry out your master's order. Though you may have been an innocent tool before, no sin can result this time from mere suspicions, so your duty just now is obedience."

He bade me kiss the crucifix again and, crossing himself, he departed.

The Ghost! I was left awestruck. He was notorious as the most gold lustful and cold blooded murderer in the *siringueras*—the rubber forests under exploitation—but nobody had ever actually seen his face because he always went masked.

A fugitive of dubious nationality, he lived a wandering life mostly in the jungle; occasionally he was reported hiding in the city of Santa Cruz where a protecting hand—now I knew it to be his father's—shielded him, but everywhere evincing a wanton ferocity

whetted by his rapacity.

Assassination, highway robbery, kidnaping and even capturing and delivering to the police other bandits for a prize—all means suited him. He was not known to have any fixed abode, nor was it possible to tell when and where he would appear next. The Ghost! And I had been going to his house!

Without realizing what I was doing, I retraced my steps home. Desperately I climbed the stairs to the second floor and walked straight into my master's study. At sight of him, fear overpowered me. I fell on my knees.

Grimly he stalked over to within a pace of me.

"Did you deliver my message?" he shoved my head with his foot.

"No, master," I said, unable to lie to him.

"Why?" he demanded peremptorily.

"Master, master!" I implored, embracing his feet. "Spare Don Arthur—I learned it was the Ghost you sent me to!"

I could not see the judge's expression when I spoke, for my eyes were blinded with tears, but I felt his foot stiffen under my grasp. Then his voice almost choked with rage as he ordered—

"Go back and do as I said before I kill you!" A command he repeated again with terrible calmness as, instead of obeying, I tightened my hold of his feet.

What seemed an eternity passed, during which I went through the emotions of hope for clemency and hellish fear, while my master remained immobile, hard as steel and ominously silent. Suddenly he freed himself and stamped his feet on my hands, head and body, with maniacal fury. When the paroxysm of this violent explosion subsided, he commanded me to call Ushpa, his coachman.

Stunned as I then was by his blows, I had lost all sense of fear. This caused me to disregard his order.

"Why do you want him?" I cried. "Do you persist in making away with Don Arthur? I'll go and put him on his guard."

My master jumped to a corner of the room and came at me armed with a sword cane.

"Whelp!" he panted with fury. "If I had time I would cut out your tongue. You have said enough. Pray for your soul!"

I was overwhelmed with fear and almost paralyzed on the spot by the turn of events. I could not move. With all the instincts of my condition as a waif, I was impelled to remain kneeling and repentant, hoping only that my life might be spared.

A BLOW of the flat of the sword on my shoulder suddenly changed everything. A boiling fury arose in me. The months of rebellion against my servitude and my loathing of the judge seemed to meet at this moment in one surging flood within me. I drew away from him, squirming and falling back along the floor with the cat-like agility a boy learns who grows up in contact with the jungle. My mind was burning with a mixture of fear, horror and determination. My one aim was to keep alive long enough to get to Don Arthur and tell him what I knew about the judge, his son—the Ghost—and the green house.

These thoughts ran through my head more rapidly than I can tell. I had scurried out of reach of the sword, but I was far from being safe. There was only one exit and the judge stood between me and safety. His face was livid with rage as he advanced on me, seeking to pin me against the wall, never once forgetting the door and bellowing in his rasping voice:

"Knave! Dog! Prepare to die!"

As he came near, I jumped over a table and swung around with my back to the far wall.

"Ushpa!" he howled. "Ushpa! *A mi!*"

I knew what that meant—the coming of Ushpa, the giant coachman whose

mere presence was enough to frighten any one. One blow from his bare hand was enough to stun the strongest man.

The judge again charged at me and again I frantically dodged to one side, overturning tables, using each one as a temporary barricade, while working desperately to get around him to the door. But my frantic efforts were useless. In all his rage and fury, he never gave me a chance to escape.

His outcries grew louder and at last I could hear scurrying feet coming through the corridor. At that very moment the judge succeeded in cornering me. His sword was raised aloft ready for the thrust that would dispatch me. Suddenly I reached down and jerked the straw mat from under him. It was an act entirely unplanned, nor had I even thought of it while I scrambled about the room in desperation.

The judge's feet flew up, and he fell heavily on his sword. The only noise was a dull groan as its point pierced his stomach. Immediately the blood spurted forth. Curling up with pain, my master fixed his terrible stare on me.

"I'll have your tongue cut out for your treachery!" he roared. "Ushpa—Ushpa! *A mí!*"

Moved by sudden terror, I fumbled for words and groped for his hand. It was cold as ice. Was he dying? No—it could not be that. I remembered what the maid had told me once. All the servants knew and dreaded his clammy touch, for none had escaped having his ears boxed by him. But then I again looked at his eyes and what I saw there told the tale. He had the look of a man mortally wounded. In a panic I dropped the hand and bolted for the door.

As I got outside, I encountered the monstrous Ushpa, the one contingency I had most feared. He was an unseemly character—a repulsive, hideous creature who might well have been the incarnate evil spirit of the *gomales*. While his chest and shoulders were enormous, from the waist down he was puny, almost a dwarf. His bushy, tousled hair was only a shade darker than his skin—an ashy gray. This and his fiery temper had given him his Quechuan name meaning cinders, but he was an Aymara —that is an Indian of the truculent tribe inhabiting a section of the Bolivian highland.

"My son! Call my son!" groaned the judge, dimly perceiving his squire.

The mongrel stopped me. Luckily there was no blood on my hands or clothes and everything had happened too quickly for my courage to leave me entirely. Thus I had enough sense to whisper:

"I'm on my way to the green house, Ushpa! The master wants him . . . "

The ruse worked. He quickly stepped aside to allow me to continue on my errand and rushed in to his master. As I ran down the hall, I heard his roar of wrath. It had only taken him a moment to discover the truth.

Attracted by the commotion, my mistress was on one landing and Don Arthur and two servants were on another. At the top of my voice I now yelled:

"Help! Help! Doctor! The master is hurt!"

My cries succeeded in covering up Ushpa's yells. In a minute, which seemed a lifetime, I reached the street. It was pitch-dark, so no one saw me run. I started on my way to the judge's canefields where my parents lived, certain that there was no need to warn Don Arthur. My only wish now was that I might join him at his cabin on the Río Manso. Then I could explain the night's events, but there being no one to corroborate my story, would I be able to convince him of my innocence?

Tortured by the thought that I would be regarded even by him in the light of a murderer, some three hours later I arrived all out of breath at my parents' shack. It was so late that everybody was asleep. I was afraid that my father, whose position I had made

so precarious that he would be forced to leave the plantation, would blame me, so I managed to rouse only my mother to whom I told everything.

Appreciating the gravity of my predicament, she decided there was no time to be lost.

"With such eyes as the judge had, I always felt he was a criminal," she muttered as she proceeded toward one of the huts occupied by the Indian hands. "But never would I have imagined the Ghost was his ill-begotten son!" And she crossed herself.

My mother awoke Mandinga, and begged him to take me to his tribe in the forest. The fellow, a Canichana, consented, and we fled without waiting for daylight.

CHAPTER III

THE GOMALES

I LOVED the forest and would have lived there contentedly had I not yearned to be with Don Arthur. I thought more and more of the explorer, whose personality had so won me to him, and of his wonderful adventure. How I wished to take part in it—to be an explorer like him—to follow him whatever the risks and wherever he went as his servant and as his companion.

But I was afraid of being sent away if I went to him, because of his former friendship with the judge. Yet so strong was my ambition to live in his company in order to become like him, that I finally decided to go to the Río Manso, which he had said was a branch of the Guaporé and where he was probably building his cabin. But as I started to gather information for the trip, I learned from a chieftain warrior that a constabulary officer who had trailed me to the tribe was waiting an opportunity to seize me and bring me back to Santa Cruz charged with murder. The chieftain advised me to take to the woods, or else to see a certain agent from Peru who had come in search of strong men for employment in the *gomales,* the domain of the *caucheros* where, according to all reports, crimes became virtues and all men were classed alike while none was free.

Knowing that no one would ever think of following me there, and planning to start my search for Don Arthur later from the *gomales,* I went with the Peruvian to the Putumayu—the English rubber concession on the frontier of Colombia. Only then did I discover that I had been betrayed, for there I was sold for a slave. The Peruvian, a trusted agent of the Putumayu, earned his living that way.

As I spoke several native dialects besides Spanish and was sufficiently strong to command respect, they decided to make me a *capataz,* so I was placed in charge of a gang. A *mayordomo,* or boss, took me to an *estrada.*

On the way I had my first glimpse of the infernal life in the *gomales.* Alongside a bridge that was being repaired were several *balsas* manned by slaves—ragged filthy Indians chained together at their waists. They were mostly Pacras—prisoners rounded up by the *caucheros,* no doubt—and were hard at work accumulating logs which floated down the river from a nearby lumber camp. The *capataz,* a gigantic, lean halfbreed, with a huge shaggy jowl, shaven head and long massive neck, cringed servilely at a word from the *mayordomo.*

"Show us what fine discipline you have in this gang, André," he demanded.

Overjoyed at the opportunity to initiate a newcomer in his despicable occupation, the *capataz* hustled about dexterously brandishing the long, heavy lash of his whip.

"Lay on, you dogs!" he thundered hoarsely. "Lay on before the rains come!"

Cries of pain tinged with accents of hatred showed a degree of submission which angered the ferocious *capataz,* whose heart, nevertheless, was filled with pride when by dint of lashings he

extinguished the voices until one could hear only the tuneful rattling of the chains as with redoubled activity the wretched victims rolled the logs to the riverbank.

"That's what we call a good *capataz!*" concluded the *mayordomo* as we renewed our march. "You must try to be even better than him!"

At the next bend it was worse. Lumpish savages with furtive eyes crawled on the ground like armadillos, gathering firewood and stacking it along the edge of the clearing. Near the river, grouped in circles, were large earthern tanks containing the precious rubber latex, resembling the whitest milk, to be curdled over smoking stone braziers. A double line of halfbreeds stretched from the circles of fire far into the jungle, hour after hour passing the liquid in pails from hand to hand and returning them as soon as emptied.

The men in both lines, all roped by the ankles to stakes planted in the ground at intervals of two yards, were of various races: The Brazilian *caboclo* with negroid features; the insipid, lazy and unprepossessing Peruvian *cholo;* the game, nervous and resolute *colla* of the Bolivian lowlands; the raw Indian or *bronco,* whose stubborn savagery manifested itself by the snarling wariness of a jaguar ready to claw; the nondescripts from the Mamoré and Amazon valleys—all were forced to strain every nerve at these tasks which they detested from their very souls, but which they, like flies caught in a spider's web, were powerless to evade.

I was put in charge of a gang of chained Indians who were allotted a hundred—sometimes even more than a hundred—rubber trees to tap every day. For a time there were not nearly enough men to supply the demand.

Under the pretext that they were lazy and required severity, I was urged to flog them like the other overseers to make them complete their allotted task early and leave time for more work. Those who could not do their quota had to report to an inspector and were punished. After their usual twelve hours of hard labor during which they had only been fed the regular half day's bowl of tasteless porridge and a glass of rum diluted with water, the workers were imprisoned for the night without any more food in a dungeon where many became infected with contagious diseases. As there were no doctors or medicines for the Indians, the only treatment was to kill them. They were marched away to moats dug on the fringe of the *gomales* with their hands tied behind them as high as possible about their shoulder blades and with ropes looped around their necks. A blow on the head with a cudgel—since it was needless to waste powder and shot on those dogs—and in they went, never to come out again.

SOME were not even dead, but fell stunned only, and when they came to their senses went raving mad and were supposed to be *revenants*—and who cared about *revenants?* Howling with thirst, hunger and terror, half strangled by their ropes and devouring the flesh of rotting corpses, they were slowly baked dry by the tropical sun. Such a practise so frightened the other slaves that they exhausted every ounce of their energy before they slackened in their work and thus gave cause to be shoved into the dungeon.

Fortunately I was a *capataz,* so my lot was less hard, but I always helped those who could not do their quota of work, since I was determined I never would become a tormentor or a murderer. Months later my kindness was remarked by one of the owners of the *gomales,* who then warned me that if I did not show more backbone and did not obtain better results from my gang, they would send me to the chains.

By this time I preferred to face a hundred constabularies rather than stay another week where I was, especially since my exalted position now

meant that I must under compulsion become an executioner, the thought of which I could not bear. But my primary motive for wanting to get away was my anxiety to see Don Arthur. Nearly a year had elapsed since I had left Santa Cruz and I greatly feared that having found the cache of the Spaniard, he had already left in quest of the Inca gold relics. Whatever had happened, I wanted to go to the Río Manso, so I made up my mind to escape.

A Canichana in my gang had been contaminated on the occasion of the payday feast, which always fell on the last Sunday of the month. The Indian, whom I had befriended, begged me to shoot him before he was sent to the moats. This was, however, strictly forbidden. There were no bullets except for fugitives, but the request put into my head the idea which enabled me to escape. I gave the Indian an old sardine can with which to saw the rope securing him to his bunk, and told him to take to the jungle after midnight. The guard would not discover his absence until next morning when it would be my duty to recapture him, then I would be at liberty to shoot him.

I took good care not to let him know of my own plans of escape, because the denunciation of a *capataz* planning flight was the one thing which the management rewarded with money and freedom. In the *gomales* a son would betray his own father for such inducements.

Nobody suspected me. The Canichana had got away and then been reported missing as I had planned. They gave me a rifle and two bloodhounds to go after him.

These dogs are trained to be extremely ferocious and can not tell the hunter from the hunted if they are not brought to sniff the bunk of their prey. Then they know what to do. As they are very fast, they go in leash. If the fugitive refuses to surrender, he is either shot or allowed to be killed and eaten by the hounds. If he gives himself up, he is taken back and sold as a *chuño*—convict for desertion—to some remote and smaller *gomal*.

The whites generally gain by the change; they give up the idea of escaping and become the most cruel and relentless of *capatazes*. Their own experiences make them tyrants and they want others to suffer as they did themselves. The Indians quickly succumb to the harder hours of toil and to their despair at being taken farther away than ever from their tribes.

At sunrise I left in pursuit of my friend with two dogs, and at ten o'clock they began to bark. Hearing them, he had climbed a tree, without noticing that a full grown boa was coiled in the upper branches. I had only one cartridge, which I had been given with directions to return the empty shell. The company does not issue more than one at a time except in the case of a round-up of Indians for the purpose of capturing slaves or women, for whom the *caucheros* drawing salary can be induced to spend what little money they may have left after paying for their food and outfits.

I was in doubt whether to shoot him or to let the snake get the Canichana, and so save the cartridge which might become useful later on. I also was thinking of taking him along with me. There might be a guard in the vicinity and I dared not attract his attention either then, or later, with a shot. I feared that if this happened, my own plans would be frustrated.

Gangmen were punished for attempting to break away, as I have said before, but *capatazes* had their hands and feet cut off and were permitted to live as an example for the others in a condition worse than that of the lowest animals. I knew two. They were chained by the waist to poles in the plaza in front of the paymaster's office together with an old ape. These men at one time had been *estrictos*, that is to say, stern and loyal *capatazes* of the company, but they had finally attempted to escape and were captured. One of them

had been tracked to Eastern Brazil by articles he had written for the newspapers denouncing the *gomales*. He was brought back after three years. The company had spent a fortune to punish him.

THOSE who had worked under their orders, and others as well, now had the right to kick them and spit in their faces, and did so every day. Any man who is in chains long enough will act cruelly to others because he has learned to hate mankind. Some threw bananas for amusement, since this led to a struggle for possession of the fruit between the man and the ape, which was vicious and malevolent. The beast, having hands and feet, was always the winner.

One of the condemned, who no longer resembled a human being, and who had learned to move about on his four stumps and growl like an animal, waited patiently for the ape to eat the banana, contenting himself with the skin.

Finally I ordered the Canichana to come down from his precarious retreat in the tree, but he eyed me terrified and pointed to the snarling dogs, which, however, were more concerned with the snake, at which they were staring.

"Come down!" I shouted. "Come down before the boa gets you!"

He hesitated, then asked—

"Why don't you shoot me?"

"Come down," I repeated. "I might miss you from here."

"You won't let the dogs touch me?"

He was more afraid of them than of the snake, and most Indians would feel the same way.

"No, come down or I'll leave you where you are." I then tied the dogs to a nearby tree.

It was just in time. The Canichana dropped to my side. I took him by the arm and pulled him some distance away. The boa had followed in pursuit, but, as I had expected, turned toward the dogs rather than after us.

I had left for her a sure prey, but not an easy one. She hissed furiously because she tangled herself up in the chain which held the dogs fastened to the tree; thus she could not even swallow them.

I was intently watching the fight when the Canichana treacherously turned on me and snatched at my rifle. Quickly I killed him with a stroke of my *machete*. It was plainly written that he was not to die of a bullet and that I was to slay my man like any other *capataz* in the *gomales*.

Suddenly, while I was wiping my *machete*, the boa made a dash in my direction. By great good luck the body of the Canichana saved me. The smell of hot blood, still oozing from his cut, must have convinced the serpent that I was not worth the one farther lunge necessary to get me.

Guiding myself by the sun, I then proceeded south, still hoping to reach Don Arthur before he had left the Manso River.

No more adventures happened to me in my attempt to get away from the baneful Putumayu until I came to a river bordering the *gomales* and saw a canoe with three men in it. Two were guards who were cautiously paddling upstream along the bank where I was. The one seated in the bow was armed with a rifle. The paddler in the middle was a slave strapped to his seat. The guard in the stern turned frequently to look behind.

I still think God sent me this chance of salvation, otherwise I doubt if I had been able to escape so easily. As they stopped to rest in a cove, I stalked close up on them; then, shouting at the top of my voice, I fell on the armed man who lost his nerve and, abandoning his gun in my grasp, jumped ashore and disappeared in the woods. The other had been stunned by the slave with a blow of his paddle. I threw him on the bank and as I triumphantly took his place, I realized I was free!

The slave, a wild Indian, spoke first

a dialect I did not know. I tried him with several until at last he made me understand in broken Quechua that if I wished to avoid falling prisoner to the *caucheros*, I had better turn about and go downstream. He explained there were more guards farther along and I took his advice.

We had paddled less than half an hour when some twenty canoes, which I had first taken for floating islands, shed their green camouflage, and a large number of war-like Indians, armed with clubs and lances, surrounded us in the twinkling of an eye. One of them must have leaped into our canoe, as it rolled violently and I almost fell into the river. Before I could look around, I felt a terrific blow on the back of my neck.

When I came to I was no longer on the river but in a clearing in the jungle. On all sides of me were tall, thin *bravos*, wild Indians with long, straight hair falling to their buttocks. A strip of cobweb mesh covered their loins. The sorcerer of the tribe was reciting incantations and anointing me with what I learned later was the warm mixed blood of a freshly killed owl and bat so that their spirits would drive my soul out of the limbo whither it had taken flight and bring me back to life.

Seeing me open my eyes, the sorcerer hastily beat a drum, and soon after several chiefs appeared on the scene. These were distinguished by long necklaces of toucan beaks and enormous aquamarines, which hung in looped festoons from their breastbones to their thighs.

Great was my surprise to recognize among them the slave I had rescued when he was strapped to the canoe. He proved to be Tumba, son of the *casique* of the Pacras. He ran up to me and spoke. The day we had met, his warriors, perceiving that I was white and unaware that I had saved him, had wounded me dangerously, but had since then worked ceaselessly day and night to revive me.

"How long," I asked in the Quechua language, "have I been here?"

"Oh!" Tumba reckoned for a moment. "Since we first saw you the sun has risen as many times as you have joints on three long fingers. You have had fever." Then he added, "You are my savior. When you recover I will have you taken home. How many wives have you?"

"I have none," I replied. "And you?"

"I had one," answered the Pacra, with tears running down his cheeks, "but the *cauchero* men captured her and, devastating her body like ants, finally killed her. We were surrounded in the forest and they smote our warriors, sons and old men with their thunder and lightning. Many were so fortunate as to escape, but I made no attempt to do so, sacrificing my liberty in order to protect the infant son I had obtained by grace of Pacra and who was still within his mother."

I asked who Pacra was. I learned that he is the star god, whose name the tribe bears. He may be seen at night shooting across the firmament, leaving in his wake the precious pollen of light which fertilizes the earth and other female stars. When a man marries and desires a son he leads his squaw to an open space in the forest and there prays as the god shoots through the sky—

"I beseech thee, Pacra, give me thy image child!"

But this petition must be made before Pacra is re-engaged with another star, or it will be unanswered.

It was weeks before I became completely normal again, for the blow had affected my brain. Tumba and I had become good friends and I informed him of my quest. He told me that his father, fearing another raid of the *caucheros*, had decided to move the tribe to the banks of a great river far to the south.

As this was the direction I wanted to take, I went with them. We had traveled twenty days and were probably at the Guaporé, which was where I expected to find Don Arthur. While

fording the river, Tumba's father was drowned. My friend could not succeed him because he was incapacitated from having progeny by a cruel mutilation inflicted by his former captors—the wild Indians in the Putumayu were frequently subjected to this torture in order to free their minds from the lusts of the flesh and thus make them concentrate solely on their work.

A warrior who was not even of the same family was made chief. This served to intensify the hatred of Tumba's friends of the whites, so I hastened my departure and set about exploring with great zest for the whereabouts of Don Arthur.

Two days later I met Mandinga, the Canichana whom my mother had entrusted with my flight. Since my sudden disappearance from the tribe—fourteen months ago—he had given me up for dead. He was engaged in a new occupation and traveled long distances selling drugs concocted by the Carijona sorcerers, who are famous for their knowledge of native herbs and poisons.

I asked him if he knew the Río Manso. He had never learned to recognize the rivers by their Spanish names, so he could not tell. After hesitating a long time, before we separated, he told me that the Ghost had gone to the plantation of the Santa Cruz judge and had had both my mother and father tortured and then killed in order to find out where I was hiding.

The news distressed me beyond words, especially as I was given the details of the crime, which were so horrible that I still try to believe they were false.

I solemnly swore I would exact vengeance when the time came. Indeed, I would make it my sacred duty to seek the fiend and make him die a worse death.

Mandinga also informed me that two white men, well armed—probably *caucheros*—were established in a *barraca* on the bank of a river nearby.

As the Pacras had thrown away my gun and as the bow they had given me at parting was split, I made up my mind to help myself to a good rifle at the camp of the two men. I might have to shed blood in doing so, but if they were *caucheros* this was not an insurmountable barrier, for their law was "might is right". However, I could not stomach killing even criminals in cold blood. It was because of this reluctance that I nearly lost my life again. But I give thanks to God for what happened then.

CHAPTER IV

THE RÍO MANSO

IN A forest clearing I saw a man of fine height and build, but this did not deter me—I had grown both in size and strength and was afraid of no one. I pounced on him from behind, attempting to stun him and then get his gun. But I slipped and in a moment he was master of the situation. Catching me by the throat, he was preparing to kill me with his hunting knife.

"Don Arthur!" I cried, not frightened, but exultant as I saw his face. Instantly Don Arthur Mortimer recognized me.

"So it's you!" he exclaimed sternly. Standing me, watchfully, against a tree, he then demanded, "Well, what have you to say for yourself, young fellow? Have you not benefited by your experience with the judge?"

Resenting that he should, as I had feared, be under the impression that I had killed his friend, I told him exactly what had happened on the fateful night on which I had fled from Santa Cruz, of what had gone before, and then of my adventures culminating in our meeting.

My statements about the judge greatly surprised Don Arthur. He was loath to see treachery in the conduct of his friend, and I realized that only in time could I hope to convince him of my sincerity.

"That's very interesting about the masked duelist having the voice of the

cloaked man whom you heard talking with your master at the gate, about the Ghost, Diana and the green house," he commented briefly, "and I will write to Colonel Llanos, who is still in the Beni, by the first messenger that comes along. I have not seen him since Santa Cruz and it's most important that he should know of these things. The Ghost, according to the newspapers I have been receiving, is wreaking havoc among the wealthy settlers in the vicinity of Fort Santa Isabel, the headquarters of the colonel. These activities are probably a snare, for, as you must remember, he promised a 'second act' in which he would exact revenge. I wish we had seen his face!"

"Didn't you see it that night?" I asked. "The judge was calling for his son when I left. I rather expected to hear that Ushpa had sent for him."

"Your master died as we reached his room, accusing you," said Don Arthur. "That's why it is so hard for me to accept your story at its face value, for it seems to me that a dying man always tells the truth. Ushpa left the house soon after that and eventually disappeared, for I learned that he was never seen again in Santa Cruz. This your mistress wrote me. If I could rely on what Padre Antonio told you, I would say he's with the Ghost." He pondered a moment, then exclaimed, "I'm sorry you didn't tell us after the duel of your suspicions."

"I was cowed by your remark about the silence that was expected of a faithful servant. And then I was afraid of depriving my parents of their livelihood in case the colonel took action and I was called to testify," I said. "But if I had had more time to think, I would certainly have put you on your guard."

"Whatever the case, I'm convinced that you like me, Bernardo," said Don Arthur, patting me on my shoulder; and before he would say anything more about me, for I could not stand compliments, I started to look around.

In the center of the clearing was the *barraca* of which Mandinga had spoken. It was a large, two-story structure with a saddle shaped roof and with a lean-to addition on one end. This side faced the west and since it was exposed to the attacks of savages from the adjoining forest, it was provided with loopholes near the roof. The door, a massive wooden slab, opened on the east and looked toward the river. A narrow window above this entrance and a larger one embracing both sides of the southern front corner, were protected by heavy iron bars.

"I had almost fifty men over here from Trinidad building this place," Don Arthur explained. "I've called it La Esmeralda, both because it's such a pretty place and has cost me so much money."

I asked him if he would let me stay.

"If you didn't, I'd shoot you as you tried to get out of the clearing," he said jocularly. "You stay right here and settle down."

He laughed and patted me again on the shoulder, as he always did to show his approval. Thus once more I became his devoted servant. It was up to me now to show myself worthy of becoming his disciple and companion. I would study his science, I would try to be in every way like him and, without ever mentioning my aspiration, I would make him take notice of my real worth in due time.

"Mandinga saw you with another man," I said. "Where is he?"

"Somewhere nearby, excavating the ground," he answered. "We have been trying to locate that cave, and also prospecting in the river for nuggets to pay expenses."

As he spoke he took me to a brook a short distance from the clearing, midway between the *barraca* and the Manso River. He then described the layout of the land and the work he and his companion had accomplished within a radius of three miles, where Lemos' cave was supposed to be. He said that three-fifths of this territory had been

methodically and painstakingly prodded and that the end of their search could not be very far off, especially as I too could help them now.

Returning to the clearing, he cautioned me, saying:

"By the way, we must keep your identity from my companion. He is an odd, temperamental man—a foreigner. As there is a reward posted for your capture, he might make it his business to turn you over to the police. For the next ten years they'll be searching for you."

"Might I ask who this gringo is?" I ventured, with misgivings.

"His name is Carl Ritter, and he is an Austrian," said Don Arthur.

I could not restrain a start.

"An Austrian!" I exclaimed. "Strange that the judge's son should also be an Austrian!"

"You certainly are suspecting everybody!" Don Arthur laughed, with the supreme confidence of one accustomed to brave all dangers in the jungle, and added, "There are many Austrians in this country and this one has never—he tells me—even been to Santa Cruz, so don't let anything worry you. He heard about my prospective expedition through the prefect of Trinidad, who can vouch for him, and wrote asking to be taken on. He wanted the chance to earn, as he put it, enough money to start exploiting a *gomal* he has discovered. I decided to wait a few days before answering, but in the meantime he showed up here.

"Well, he came just as I had had to ship off my servant, Sara, to Cochabamba. She fell ill with *terciana* and there was nothing to do but get her out of the jungle—perhaps she will come back. That left me all alone and Ritter arrived at the right time. He's not much company to me, but he is very sharp and a fine searcher. His ambition to become rich is such that I'm sure he'll be the one to find the cache of the Spaniard if he does not get too impatient."

PRESENTLY he took me into La Esmeralda. Though roughly furnished, it represented for that region the acme of comfort and refinement. A large upholstered chest which made a convenient lounge had been fitted into the angle of the windowed corner. Diagonally opposite, at the far ends of the room, were the doors leading to the lean-to and the stairs to the second floor bedrooms.

"You'll sleep on the lounge," Don Arthur told me, and proceeded to the lean-to, which was the kitchen. "Ritter will be glad to see you," he said as we entered. "He doesn't like to cook or wash the dishes, which we have been doing by turns. Being the youngest of the three of us, you might as well accept these responsibilities as your immediate duties."

The lean-to was capacious and well stocked with provisions. Here one trod on hard packed earth, level with the wooden flooring of the main room which had been laid on stone pillars rising three feet above the ground, to prevent its rotting when it rained.

I considered myself lucky in arriving when I did, though my feelings of uneasiness when I learned of the gringo, Ritter, chilled my enthusiasm. In spite of the fact that my master had shown his confidence in this man, I determined to watch him closely. But I did not know what a task I had set for myself!

He returned in the evening as I was cooking dinner. He had a luxuriant auburn beard and strange yellowish eyes, ablaze, as it were, by pinpoints of fire around his black pupils. From the moment he fastened his gaze on me I, who after my experiences in the *gomales,* had thought myself no longer capable of fearing any one, felt utterly disconcerted.

Appearing not even surprised, he muttered:

"Good! At last a servant!"

At the words a dart of horror pierced me. It was the hushed voice of the

cloaked man of Santa Cruz again. He asked me where I had come from, and a dish I was wiping fell from my hands. Remembering my master's warning and making an effort, I said I was a Paraguayan.

"I'm Master Ritter to you," he informed me. "What's your name?"

"Pepe," I stammered.

I had trembled so violently that my voice was barely audible and was having a difficult time keeping my hands from revealing my condition. Ritter noticed, nevertheless, and proceeded to watch me with a leering smile, as if he were looking through me and reading everything in my mind. I could not face him and prayed that he would soon go away. I then noticed he was holding his right hand tightly over his left leg, as if in pain. This told me he must have been stung by a poisonous insect.

"Since you are a peasant of Paraguay, you must know of some remedy to cure me," he said. "I've just been bitten in the leg."

He spoke broken Spanish, which the mysterious man of Santa Cruz did not. This reassured me to a certain extent, but I was dismayed to detect also a slight hissing in his accent reminiscent of my old master, the judge—or was I merely the victim of some strange hallucination?

As I had learned at the sugar plantation of Indian medicines that were good for insect stings, I said I would try to help him and, joining action to the words, I went to gather the leaves of certain herbs common in the tropics. Returning, I set to work, crushing and mixing the ones I could find around the house, and then applied them to the wound.

"Your remedy better be good or I'll flay you," the gringo said, tossing ominously in his chair when I finished. He settled to sulk and to follow me with his stare.

A little later, as I felt the glint of his eyes boring into me, I turned on him. Ritter declared that the herbs had only made the bite worse, for his foot too had begun to swell; then, becoming unduly angry, he unfastened the heavy strap which he carried hanging from his waist like a sword and, without warning, began to flog me with it.

I backed away and he followed me, indignant at my refusal to submit meekly. At the height of his fury, he again reminded me of the judge and I felt sure that his next move would be to strangle me. Just then Don Arthur came from out of the house and interfered.

"Now, really, Ritter," he said, "it can't be as bad as all that."

"He plastered my leg with poisons, probably intending to kill me," yelled Ritter. "I'll pound the dirty pup's head off!"

"No you won't," said my master, politely. "The jungle has gone to your head. You need a change of territory. When a man goes off the handle like that, it's time for him to get out for awhile."

"I suppose you know everything!" sneered Ritter.

"I've known men who were in your mood," said Don Arthur, "and I've seen it growing on you for several weeks, Ritter. Your impatience about striking a find has finally gotten the better of you. You go on down to Trinidad for a month. Bernardo and I can look after things here till you get back."

Ritter broke into laughter.

"Bernardo, eh? I thought his name was Pepe! Now I recognize him!"

"You what?" exclaimed my master, unable to hide his confusion at having called me by my real name when he himself had warned me against discovery.

"He's the valet who murdered a Santa Cruz judge."

"How do you know he murdered the judge?"

"All I know is that his picture is posted everywhere for having committed that crime and that there's a good reward for his capture. He's changed a

little, but it's him, all right."

"Well—he did not commit that crime and he is my protégé."

"Oh! If you have taken him under your wing . . ." Ritter bowed, regaining with no apparent effort his composure, then tried to laugh off the incident. "No ill feelings, of course?"

"No ill feelings, Bernardo?" asked my master, and I did not know what reply to make.

MY ASSAILANT glared at me from behind my master with eyes whose brilliancy intensified until they acquired a sinister gleam. But as Don Arthur turned on him, he smilingly said:

"I could not think of quitting at this stage when any day, now, we are bound to stumble on the cave with Lemos' hoard. You know that's the reason for my working with you without pay. Then as you promised to take me in on the long quest if we also found the chart to the Incasic treasure, I have the right to—"

"Just the same I've got to prescribe for you," my master interrupted him. "You'll go on down to Trinidad as I suggested. The way you are now you're worthless; I wouldn't trust you in the jungle. If I find the Spaniard's hoard during your absence, I'll see that you get your share."

Ritter, becoming pale, seemed on the point of exploding, but suddenly a smile brightened his face again and blandly he yielded to Don Arthur's decision.

"Well!" he said. "Expect me back then—in a month. I'll spend this forced vacation with my brother who has been asking me to visit him in Trinidad. Thus we'll owe you the pleasure of reuniting us sooner than I expected." And he laughed again.

His brother? Who knew but that he had thought of going to seek aid against Don Arthur! Utterly miserable, I slunk into the lean-to, jarred by that laugh which was benumbing as a puma's. But a moment later I found myself more rational. If Ritter were the Ghost, why should I be so afraid of him? I decided to undergo his abuses in order to ascertain who he was. Armed with this resolution, I concentrated on preparing dinner.

That night, before retiring, my master spoke to me alone.

"I'm sorry I gave you away to Ritter, Bernardo," he said. "Now I shall have to bear with him, or the first thing we know he'll be collecting that reward."

The next morning, while I was alone in the kitchen, Ritter stalked in.

"I'm leaving after breakfast," he said. "Your medicine, after all, was good. If you'll follow me, I will make your fortune. I need a boy of your accomplishments."

More afraid of him and his jaguar eyes than ever, I cried out to my master that breakfast was ready.

"You damned rascal," Ritter grated scathingly. "The next time we meet I'll cut out your tongue, then you'll not squeal."

I recalled that the judge had also threatened to cut out my tongue. Well, I would not be the one to try to stop my master from taking him back, as, reversing my first resolution and in consideration of Don Arthur, even at the risk of capture, I had thought of doing. On the contrary, I now wished he were back already for the chance to ascertain his identity. Once in possession of this knowledge, I would know exactly what to do.

When he left, while I was chopping wood outside, he caught me alone as before. Under his blighting glance I felt even more keenly the need of evading him; nothing seemed sufficient to overcome my fear of this man; I myself could not believe it. In spite of myself, I warily began to withdraw toward the house, but just then an Indian emerging from the fringe of the forest into the clearing eased the situation for me. Seeing Ritter, he produced a bundle of letters and newspapers from a pouch he was carrying.

"Mail, Master Ritter!" he announced.

"Give me mine only—I'm leaving," said Ritter curtly.

"Then there's nothing for you, I'm sorry," apologized the postman, as if it were his fault.

Meanwhile my master had come to the door and hailed the polite Indian, who soon departed with Don Arthur's letter to Colonel Llanos.

"I hope our warning, if well founded, is not too late. I'll await the answer anxiously," said my master.

"How long must you wait?" I queried, inferring from his words that the letter contained my revelations about the Ghost and Diana.

"Though we are isolated by nearly six hundred miles from Fort Santa Isabel, we should hear from him in one month," said Don Arthur, wistfully. Then he added, "Now arm yourself with a pick-ax and come with me. It's up to us to find Lemos' cache."

CHAPTER V

THE SPANIARD'S HOARD

FOR three weeks Don Arthur and I worked along the river, prodding every mound capable of concealing any ruins. It looked to me like a hopeless undertaking, but Don Arthur never became discouraged.

"The treasure is around here somewhere," he said. "We'll find it."

Just as we were about to suspend our search because of darkness one day, Don Arthur struck the foundations of a stone house barely one mile north of La Esmeralda. I was back of him when he came upon it, but I knew instantly that something important had happened.

He suddenly disappeared from sight behind a knoll and just as abruptly came up again and looked around for me.

"I think we've found something," he shouted, and then disappeared again.

When I joined him on a run he was digging feverishly in a mass of fungi and tightly packed leaves.

"Be careful where you walk," he cautioned. Although there seemed no sign of excitement in his voice, I could see that he was highly wrought up.

After patient labor, he carefully brought up a corroded breastplate containing human bones.

"Don't touch it," he said exultantly. "No question but it's the bones of Lemos. This is the clue. The cave must be near."

I was too excited to do more than stand around and laugh, half hysterically.

"It should be easy now," said Don Arthur. "All we have to do is walk south two thousand, four hundred paces, then east five hundred and twelve. Then we'll find it."

It had turned dark quickly, and there was no time for exploration that night, so we marked the spot carefully and went back to the house, feverish with impatience.

Next morning we were out at the first light of dawn. We started pacing off the steps as outlined by Don Arthur. I remember the numbers so well because we counted the steps over and over until the figures were firmly fixed in my mind.

We tried with one stride, and when that did not bring the cave we tried another, either lengthening or shortening it. Don Arthur never lost patience.

"The only thing I would like to know," he said, "is how tall that man Lemos was. I could tell then how long a pace he was likely to take."

We went over the ground dozens of times in several days, from the break of dawn until the sudden dusk descended over the forest and caught us at the point farthest from the *barraca*.

The day that the long search ended remains clear in my memory. As the final paces brought us close to the house, I was much disappointed.

"It can't be in the *barraca*," I said, and proceeded to go back to the starting point.

"We might as well find out while we're here," said my master.

We tapped every irregularity in the ground to the right and left of the cabin. Then we investigated the clearing itself. Prodding there, we hit a rocky vein which, sinking deeper and deeper in its earthen bed, ran toward the river.

My master's excitement grew with every step.

"Great heavens!" he shouted to me. "I thought the cave was somewhere in this neighborhood, but who would have ever dreamed I was building my house over it!"

Then we came upon the entrance to the lean-to. It was almost level with the clay ground. I had been living practically all the time over the hidden hoard!

A mat of heavy branches and rubber latex mixed with pebbles covered the entrance, and a rope ladder of *caraná* fiber, solidly secured with spikes in the rock, led into the cave. Don Arthur shouted gleefully and pounded my back.

What we found was not merely a cave but a tunnel-like gallery. It was high and capacious, and though water seeped through crevices in the sloping walls and roof, it drained off through cracks in the smooth floor. So the place was dry and comfortable. In a corner were a crude table and two large baskets shaped like chests.

Don Arthur immediately took hold of one of the baskets. He was eager as he suggested by a nod that, while he investigated the contents of that basket, I should do likewise with the other. Both seemed to be full of sand, but when Don Arthur and I ran our hands into the mass and allowed the fine earth to trickle down through our fingers, there was the flash and glitter of a metallic substance.

The baskets were full of gold nuggets.

"This shows you how little gold can sometimes mean to a man," said my master.

There was also in a crude box in the cave a surprising variety of fire making contrivances and a tapir's thighbone similar to the first Don Arthur had found in the Manso River months before. Both ends were covered with beaten gold.

DON ARTHUR paid no more attention to the nuggets but sank to the ground near the light of the entrance where he could examine the thighbone. In its cavity were the papers he had been searching for, and a chart.

"These papers," said Don Arthur, "only tell where the other ones I discovered were to be found, and those I know by heart. But the chart— Do you know what this chart is, Bernardo? It is the map leading to the cave where the golden effigies of the Incas, taken from Cuzco as seen by Lemos, are hidden!"

He got up and walked about the cave in the excess of his emotion.

"The chart giving the route to the Incan gods!" he said again, stopping before me. "Do you understand why I say the money by itself is of small importance? I will use it however for a greater glory. With it I can furnish my expedition to the lake in Perú which this chart points out."

He gripped the paper in his hands, his face aglow with the fervor of his thoughts.

"The Incan idols, Bernardo," he said in a low, fluttering voice. "The greatest discovery left to mortal explorers!"

"But is it true, then," I asked, swayed by his infectious enthusiasm, "that the Incas were the possessors of untold wealth in gold?"

"Is it!" he exclaimed, and proceeded to explain. "Just think of the Inca Huayna Capac having a golden chain seven hundred feet long, to encircle the citadel where his son Huascar was born. Many doubt this, in spite of the assurances of Cieza de León himself, who was a faithful historian. He writes he was told by an Inca that all the gold seized

by the conquerors was but a drop in the bucket compared with the amount hidden before their arrival—to say nothing of the untouched sources of this vast treasure. Now you yourself must have learned at school how much of the precious metal was carried away by Pizarro, the conqueror of Perú."

I remembered that Atahualpa, the usurper king from Quito, had paid as ransom to the Spaniards so much gold that it filled a room nine feet deep, seventeen feet wide by twenty feet long, and in addition, double this amount in silver. Huascar, the legitimate Inca from Cuzco, had bid treble this ransom for his own freedom, stating that his brother Atahualpa, never having lived in the capital of the empire, was ignorant of the quantity of treasure there, or where it was deposited.

"Also imagine," Don Arthur went on, "the Incas using silver alloy mixed with clay as mortar! Think of what must have been the Sun Temple—the most colossal structure of the Inca empire: its entire walls were covered from top to bottom with plates of gold; its gigantic golden Sun clustered with sparkling gems while in a huge hall were ranged the mummified bodies of former kings in the golden thrones which they had occupied in life. All the temple doors were overlaid with gold or silver, and a strip of gold an inch thick, eight inches wide and surmounted by a golden cornice, encircled the entire temple.

"An adjoining structure was the Chapel of the Moon. Here the decorations were of silver, and along its walls were the mummies of the queens, each sitting upon her silver throne. Other temples dedicated to the Morning Star, to Thunder and Lightning, to the Rainbow, stored more treasures. In one of the sacred courts lay—"

"Ohé—los de casa!" shouted some one outside at that moment, interrupting his discourse and bringing me back to earth; for thanks to Don Arthur's dazzling description, I had even forgotten where we were.

"Not a word of this to anybody. We must keep it secret," he said, leaving the cave.

I followed him. It was a messenger from the Madera with Colonel Llanos' reply.

Eagerly my master read the letter and wrote a short answer before sending the messenger back. Then he pondered a long time, pacing up and down the main room.

"Bernardo," he asked presently, rather sternly, glancing a second time over certain passages of the letter he had received, "on the day of your arrival you said the cloaked man whom you heard talking with the judge at the gate was his son, and that he and the masked duelist had the same voice?"

Upon my assent he pondered again, and finally looked probingly into my eyes.

"I don't want to contradict you or the Jesuit padre," he then said, obviously dismissing my contention from his mind, "but I'm afraid it isn't so."

Clearly sensing that he was doubting more and more what I had told him, I reasserted firmly:

"All I know is that the masked man of the duel and the man who came to the judge's fence have the same voice when they speak softly. They both sort of half whistle—one would think it's the wind, and not a human that was articulating the words."

"That may be, but here's something that will surprise you. When Colonel Llanos got back to his fort, two hundred and fifty miles away from Santa Cruz, he learned that upon the very day that he had fought the duel a wealthy farmer, well known to him, had been kidnaped and held for ransom by a bandit. Investigation revealed that the outrage had been perpetrated by the Ghost.

"The farmer's wife sent the money demanded by the Ghost, yet her husband was not released. Evidently the rascal intended to trap the colonel—the first governor to use vigorous methods in stamping out banditry in the Beni—

should he lead an expedition to free his friend . . . Who was the man who fought the duel? The colonel does not know—has not seen or heard of him since."

I was thinking too hard to follow Don Arthur's deductions. Everything seemed now so confused to me. Nevertheless it occurred to me to ask:

"Then if the man of the green house —the judge's son—was not the Ghost, why did the latter torture my parents? Surely he must have had a strong motive to find me. Perhaps he intended to prevent me from telling you what I knew, or simply he wanted to avenge his father's death."

Once more Don Arthur looked deep into my eyes and becoming, I thought, reassured in regard to my sincerity, he had no trouble in explaining the reason.

"The Ghost is also, as you probably know, in the habit of capturing fugitives for rewards. Now that I think of it, I'm rather inclined to believe that the 'constabulary' reported to you by the Canichana chieftain, when you were hiding with his tribe, was the bandit himself."

This time I did not know what reply to make, especially as I knew now that my master was at a loss regarding whom to believe, for the colonel's letter had perforce left my statements open to doubt. But later I asked another question—

"Now that the treasure has been found, will you allow Ritter to come back, master?"

"Ah, Ritter! I mustn't forget him; he'll be here soon enough. When he comes, if you wish to say anything to me that you don't want him to know, speak in Quechua, which I'm sure he doesn't understand. I'll do likewise . . . But why did you ask? What's on your mind? Tell me."

To my great pleasure, Don Arthur was now solicitous. This meant he had become satisfied that I could not lie to him. But the fact still remained that he disbelieved the revelation of Padre Antonio.

Taking into consideration his doubts in that respect and because I was more intent than ever on enduring Ritter in the hope of eventually unmasking him, I did not want to commit myself any more by speaking of my apprehensions, so I said that I had just wanted to make sure that he was returning.

"I can't stop him—I promised him that he would form part of the Inca treasure expedition if ever it took place," said my master and, rummaging over my question a second time, he added, "You needn't be afraid of him. I'll see that he lets you alone."

I did not answer. I was thinking that if Ritter were the Ghost, he had given me another incentive to go with the expedition. For surely he would want to take my life to avenge his father. But his primary motive would be, of course, the treasure of the Incas, which he would want to get for himself; there could be no doubt of this. I was also thinking how strange it was that I alone should have noticed that the masked duelist and Ritter had the same accent —my master had passed superciliously this significant coincidence when I had hinted at it—and I still thought he was wrong.

But was he really? Were not the newspapers full of the atrocities of the Ghost in the vicinity of Fort Santa Isabel, hundreds of miles away, while Ritter was all the time engaged in a peaceful occupation at La Esmeralda? And had not Colonel Llanos written categorically that Padre Antonio was mistaken? If this proved that Ritter was not the Ghost, what was his purpose? A man does not work in the jungle for more than a year on just the chance that something will turn up to permit him to earn a good salary.

Delving deep into these arguments which only baffled me the more, making plain nevertheless that it was not so much that I was afraid of Ritter as of not knowing just who he was, I concluded that my life had clicked into a weird trend, and that my master and

I were destined to be towed in the grim wake of that night in Santa Cruz by the man of mystery, be he the son of the judge, the Ghost or—Ritter.

CHAPTER VI

EVIL OMENS

WE STAYED at La Esmeralda only long enough to wait for the next mail, meanwhile making a trapdoor for the cave. It consisted of a crib set bestride an axle, opened by a lever. We filled the crib with stones and clay and then, everything likely to deteriorate we wrapped in cloth and put into boxes.

Just as we had finished the postman arrived with two letters. One was from Ritter, announcing his return in the very near future, but requesting nevertheless an answer to Trinidad, where he would wait, as he intended to bring his brother along.

"Since that is where we are going, there's no need of an answer," said Don Arthur to the Indian, who had been asked to be sure to bring a reply.

He was a Carijona—an ex-rookie now employed by the state to deliver mail in the settlements all the way from the Madera River to the Guaporé. It was only through the friendship of Don Arthur with the military governor that he was permitted to come up to the Manso River, which, having been discovered only recently by my master, did not as yet appear on the official maps.

The second letter was from a hospital. Sara, the servant who had gone to Cochabamba for a cure, was returning. The splendid climate of that garden city had completely restored her health.

"This is good news," said Don Arthur. "I was worried about leaving La Esmeralda without a guardian. Sara, whom I promised the cabin when I left this country, will come and take good care of it during our absence."

So he answered this letter. The Carijona, after he had eaten to his heart's desire, as was his custom whenever he came, went away. Then we took out of Lemos' hoard plenty of gold for the expedition, and after making sure that the entrance to the cave was as secret as before we had found it, left the key in the hollow of a rock at the brook and said adios to La Esmeralda.

We reached the Río Manso by a short path, then came to Don Arthur's mooring place at which was his beautiful motorboat, *La Puma.* I jumped into the cockpit and my master took the wheel, then we drifted downstream, carried by the swift current of the river. On a wooded hill on the right bank were now visible the ruins of the stone hut erected some four centuries before by Lemos. Perched on a rock against a background of magnificent baobab trees, the ruins occupied a commanding position. Passing them, we uncovered our heads out of respect for the brave pioneer and—benefactor.

The sun was high, the heat infernal. And it became hotter at noon when the boat, leaving the Manso River behind, entered the waters of the Guaporé. Broad and swift during the entire year, this river was a torrent, tearing great trees from the edges of the jungle.

By four in the afternoon, as we came to the main river—the Mamoré—and were looking for a place to camp for the night, we noticed an unusually large island of flotsam emerging from the mouth of a side stream. Upon it were three jaguars—a mother and her two cubs. The island and the boat were rapidly drawing together and as we saw the mother cat crouch ready to spring, Don Arthur quickly started the motor to avoid the danger, while I seized his rifle, ready to fire. With a snarl the animal leaped—but too late to board us. She fell among the giant alligators that swarmed everywhere, somersaulted into the water and was lost.

During the three-day journey to Trinidad—the town where Ritter was waiting—my master was both excited and

restless; but no more so than I, who had been in that condition since the time of the preparations to depart at La Esmeralda. We were so anxious to get started on the big exploration, we could scarcely find time for meals and sleep on the way.

Arriving in town, Don Arthur inquired where Ritter was stopping, sent him a note, then we went to a hotel, where he remained the better part of a hot day, drawing up a list of necessary supplies for the expedition. When evening came we both went shopping. At a turn in the street we came upon Ritter, who greeted Don Arthur warmly, saying he had just received his note and was sorry not to have kept his appointment earlier.

Ritter was recovered from his jungle spleen, and was quite friendly with the world again. He was accompanied by his brother, José, a clean cut, beardless, rather delicate looking youth with the same odd eyes, aquiline nose and lithe body of his sturdier brother. I kept in the background.

Don Arthur at once told them of finding the cave at La Esmeralda, but did not reveal its location.

"I'll show it to you when we go back," he said, at which Ritter gave a start of surprise and disappointment, though quickly concealed it by saying exultantly—

"Then we are going on the greater expedition!"

"Just as soon as we can get outfitted here," said Don Arthur, "which ought not to be long."

"I'm delighted at this turn of events," declared Ritter. "We can leave any day you say, for as I told you in my letter, I was just waiting for your answer to go to La Esmeralda with my brother—you have no objection to José, I hope. His physical appearance does him little justice. But he is much better in the jungle than I and never gets the morbid moods which come over me. You'll find him a valuable member of the party."

DON ARTHUR responded courteously to this offer of reconciliation. He said that he needed their help and would be happy to have Don José go along, too. I could tell by his tone that back of his answer was partly the consideration of my safety which was now in the Ritters' hands. They had only to give my name to a *rurale* in the street to send me as a murderer to prison. But it was also a fact that Don Arthur, disregarding completely my suspicions of Carl, trusted them, although he did not seem to be so sure in one respect, for, looking full at his ex-companion, who was at once plunged into suspense, he said—

"Only one thing I must insist upon: I must be assured that you are more friendly to the boy."

Almost as surprised as I, Carl looked fretfully at his brother, then bowing before my master, suavely purred his answer—

"I would honor even a dog if you requested it!"

A moment later he grabbed my arm, which I could not have moved an inch, and raising it, gripped my limp hand.

"We'll get along, shall we not, *muchacho?*" he bantered.

The minute he touched me everything became blurred. His hand was clay-cold and my mind flashed back more than a year. Was the judge's ruthlessness haunting me? Was he to be revenged on me by stamping more and more of his traits on this man in order to drive me mad? Or was Ritter really his son? Terrified, I tried to speak but failed.

"Bernardo seems to have lost his tongue already," he said, angrily dropping my hand.

The remark had been his parting threat at the Río Manso, and also the judge's when he was dying . . .

"We'll consider the matter closed—I want no friction of any kind on the way," said Don Arthur.

Then, telling the Ritters of our er-

rand, he invited them to accompany him.

The store we visited was a trading post, or *pulpería,* owned by the prefect of the port and operated by a snaky Italian who was reputed to be either a powerful friend or a dangerous foe, according to whichever one cared to make him.

His son, an urchin endowed with the malice and mischievousness of a monkey, helped him by running a cranky phonograph which blared continually in the ears of customers the sentence—

"To become the friend of the first authority in this town, you need no other recommendation than to patronize this national store."

My master was annoyed by this noisy propaganda and the Ritters, who were treated with marked respect by the Italian and the many *caucheros* there, ordered it stopped.

As Don Arthur proceeded to make his purchases, a man looked in our direction through a window and I almost shrieked from sheer surprise. Ushpa, the gargoyle of Santa Cruz was there—or, rather, had been there the moment before. Quite by chance our eyes had met for a second and he had disappeared. I turned to look at the Ritters and saw them subtly keeping a close watch on my master's transactions while furtively exchanging short remarks with the Italian storekeeper. Though they must have seen Ushpa, they gave no indication whatever that they recognized him.

Recovering from the shock I suffered from this encounter, I went outside and looked around, but the monstrous coachman of the judge had vanished. What was he doing there—and would he now denounce me to the police?

Filled with anxiety, I turned back to communicate my discovery to Don Arthur. But as I could not speak to him without being overheard by some Quechuan *caucheros* present, I decided to wait. He had completed his purchases, which ranged from a motor launch to tow the *balsas* with the men who were to come with us, to tents, drugs and victuals. When he paid his large bill with nuggets, there was great jubilation on the part of the Ritters.

"Congratulations, Don Arthur!" said Carl Ritter. "I'm now sure that cave was well worth looking for."

"It was a just reward for Don Arthur's perseverance," said José to his brother. "Had you stayed to continue the search you would not have missed the thrill that must have accompanied the discovery. This should teach you a lesson."

"The nuggets are only incidental," said my master, "and I'll give Carl some of it as his share for his cooperation in the past. But I must remind you that I am taking you both at a salary and under no other arrangement, for this is not a gold hunting expedition. I am going after historical relics. If I'm lucky enough to find any, they will go to a museum."

"Of course," said Carl, coolly. "We understand very well."

"Of course!" seconded his brother in his somewhat foppish manner.

However, despite the ready acquiescence, I felt that he showed flashes of his brother's malevolence, and my heart was heavy also on his account. My master, solely concerned with his purchases for the journey and always so confident of himself, failed to notice their actions.

AFTER this we all went together to the hotel. At the door the Ritters lingered and pressed my master for a definite arrangement.

"Before I do that," said my master, "I want you to understand that in case of disaster to either of you, you must not hold me responsible, and you must not delay my plans. Anything I say will be law. Nothing can stand in the way of this exploration."

"That is entirely agreeable to us, isn't it, José?" Carl turned to his brother.

"Yes," said that young man in a

throaty voice.

Although he tried to appear rude and aloof, oddly enough this added to his peculiar charm, setting him off as a proud aristocrat.

So Don Arthur appointed the elder brother his lieutenant and placed the younger in charge of the provisions.

"Won't you give me the chart and the documents explaining it?" Carl eagerly requested. "I might as well study them tonight so as to form myself an idea of what the trip is going to be like."

"Sorry I can not satisfy your curiosity," replied my master. "I left all the documents at La Esmeralda and brought only this—" and he showed a page in his notebook filled with cipher. "The description of the route to the place of the treasure." And he added, stressing the words, "I memorized them."

The faces of the Ritters had fallen abruptly.

"Well," said Carl to his brother, "this means that all we have to do is to fall in behind Don Arthur. Simple!"

"Fortunately we have every confidence in your leadership, Don Arthur," said José unctuously.

"There will be more than one opportunity to use also your judgment, so the trip will not be such a blind errand for you," answered my master.

We then separated until next morning when they were to come to live at our hotel in order to be able to take an active part in the preparations. This arrangement and the incidents preceding filled me with so much misgiving that I could not help saying to my master:

"We are entering that jungle with enemies who'll want that treasure for themselves. Something always seems to happen so that men like you may never come out alive."

Don Arthur was rather put out by this.

"I haven't discovered any designs by the Ritters—even against you," he remarked. "Although they could collect a tidy sum by merely pointing you out to the police, and still force me to live up to my agreement to take at least Carl with me. Incidentally your arrest would also strengthen their friendship with the prefect of this town, who is always being accused of never once yet having brought a criminal to justice; and I don't need to tell you that you would be considered a good catch, for the affair of Santa Cruz caused a great sensation. So your fears are unfounded. You are obsessed with the events of that night and you must try to forget them. Buck up! Where's your grit? In the jungle such thoughts may even impair your faculties."

This was just the moment to give him the information about Ushpa, so I brought it up, hoping that would subdue his dangerous optimism.

"Are you sure it was Ushpa?" he asked.

"Positive," I assured him. "I would know him in the dark."

"Well—there's nothing to do but wait until the police arrive," he said. "Ushpa will want to earn that money posted for your capture. But I think I'll be able to use the influence of gold to let you escape."

"Ushpa had plenty of time to have me arrested at the store," I pointed out, adding cryptically, "if he has not done so . . . Well, he has his own reasons, like Carl Ritter."

"Say rather that you did not see Ushpa at all, but some one resembling him," decided my master, looking at me worriedly.

Did he think by any chance that I was losing my mind? Well, I had warned him for the last time, and would let the mysterious complication of affairs work itself out during the trip.

As the town clock struck seven I reminded Don Arthur that he had to consult the captain of a trading boat whose letter he had found waiting for him at the post office. He was to steer us through dangerous narrows in the river.

"I had completely forgotten," said

my master. "Fortunately I have you. Remind me also tomorrow that I must lunch with the editor of *El Sol.* It's probably only an interview, but he is my friend and I must keep in his good graces. Besides, he's just the man to direct me to some reliable notary to look after my estate in case we don't come back from the expedition. I still have that will which I had intended leaving with Don Mateo de Olivares in Santa Cruz. Some one must take charge of it, too."

I noticed that he no longer called the judge his friend. Something of what I had told him seemed, after all, to have modified in part his opinions.

In a few minutes we reached the port and located the craft. The captain had been called away to take some one through the narrows, so only his son, a boy older than I, was aboard.

"What? Take some one through the narrows at this time of day?" My master laughed. "You mean to say that the captain is off on one of his sprees."

"Not this time, señor."

"But it's very dangerous navigation, at night."

"Oh, dad does miracles for good pay," answered the young man. "The passenger, a Quechuan Indian I believe, said he was obliged to go away tonight and my father asked a big price to get rid of him. But he got the surprise of his life when the Indian paid him on the spot, for he was the queerest creature —ugly as a *jacaré.*"

"Was his name Ushpa?" I asked, unable to restrain myself.

"I wish—" my master started to object, but the captain's son was already speaking.

"He did not give his name, but if it is Ushpa, he certainly looks the part. He's ashen, all right!" He then gave us a description, corresponding exactly with the sinister coachman's.

I looked at my master questioningly.

"You were right, sonny," he told me. "But, you see—he did not recognize you, and I'm glad."

Why could he not see that we were marching into a trap already yawning in our faces? And what were the Ritters' designs? To kill us now that they knew that the Spaniard's hoard and the chart leading to the Incan treasures were found? But would they want to take our lives not knowing where the chart and Lemos' nuggets were? Would they risk dispensing with Don Arthur's recognized flair for finding things, and with his genius to explore, not being sure that the treasures existed? It was not likely, so I decided we were safe for the present.

This fortunately restored my serenity. Nevertheless it was well to think about a method of dealing with future dangers. Under other circumstances I would have given the matter very little consideration, because I was sure that Don Arthur would arrive at our goal and come out of the adventure safely enough. But he trusted the Ritters implicitly.

Don Arthur now told the boy when and where we would meet on the river for our departure; then he inquired whether he knew anything about his friend, Colonel Llanos. Was he living with his wife?

No, she had never come to the Beni, nor had he gone to her since their marriage, said the young man, and commented:

"He's changed very much. Previously when we met on the river he would stop his launch to chat with my father. But now he is no longer sociable, not even when we are delivering provisions at his fort."

"The change in him must all have happened since that duel of his at Santa Cruz," said my master in Quechua, turning to me. He became thoughtful.

On our way back to the hotel we stopped at the telegraph office. Don Arthur sent a direct wire to the colonel. The fort answered that he was away on a tour of the settlements.

"He must be after the Ghost, master," I said, at the same time thinking with

dread of Carl Ritter.

"Or after Diana!" he answered. "For what else could have kept him away from his wife for so long?" He shook his head and remained preoccupied.

CHAPTER VII

THE EXPEDITION

WE LOST a few days in Trinidad trying to hire native *cholos*—men of mixed blood—to go with us; but the expedition seemed so dangerous and conditions in the settlements were so prosperous, they refused. The Ritters wished Don Arthur to engage *caucheros* and he refused, so he had to content himself with twelve *caboclos*—Brazilian halfbreeds—who, just arrived, were looking for work. This completed the preparations for the expedition.

One morning in August we started down the Mamoré River—sixteen men in two motorboats, one of which was my master's *La Puma*—and three large *balsas* with the tents and provisions.

Slowly we floated past Trinidad, which bore all the earmarks of a hybrid settlement. Flimsy *barracas*—cabins made of branches of trees, leafage and straw, which comprise most of the homes—clustered together on the sandy banks. Once in awhile a wooden or even a brick house peeped through some clearing in the jungle; more often a watch tower stood on four heavy poles against a background of dense vegetation, masking a *pulpería*—a store; or on a road to an *estrada*—a trading post where the *caucheros* go to barter their rubber for food or money, and occasionally for such coveted wares as firearms and women.

Leaving all this behind, we gained the middle of the great river and drifted north with the stream. Don Arthur, the Ritters and I went in the motorboat *La Puma*, each content to be on his way and fully alive to the scenery, as is usually the case at the beginning of a journey. Being so near my master, and the Austrians having consistently shown themselves circumspect in regard to me, I felt more tranquil than I had expected in their company—at least for the time being.

The familiar jungle scene unrolled itself ever interestingly before my eyes. The swish of the moaning, precipitous current against the sides of the speeding boat; the trill of insects pursuing us and the hum from the hot forests constantly droning in our ears; the myriad little mirrors spangling the waters—all induced languor. Now and then, starting from the banks dimmed by the dazzling rays of the sun, piercing cries startled us, notes so like a locomotive's whistle that I visioned rushing trains in their wake, although I was aware they were merely giant cicadas shooting across, rattling their bellowing lungs to scare away the birds preying on them.

Rounding a bend, we sighted the launch of the pilot who was now to get us safely through the narrows. He soon boarded the *Puma*, leaving his craft in charge of his son. The captain was a veteran soldier. Presented to the Ritters whom he said he knew as gold prospectors, he told them jovially that as he had lost an arm in a war against the Brazilians and recently his right leg to an alligator, he expected to drown soon and then fly to Vienna and Paris to realize a wish which, due to his lack of means, he could not satisfy in life. As he said this, he took the wheel, for soon we would be entering a dangerous zone with shoals which only very few pilots knew.

"If you go as a ghost, you'll miss the salt of those lands," my master said. "You must be rich after working here so many years. Better spend your money before you drown."

The old captain, who was a great talker, swore that all he had was his empty launch, a son to feed, a wife to overfeed and his thirst to satisfy. Then he proceeded to deplore the conditions in the Beni. It appeared that the rubber kings, who were doing more and

more as they pleased, had killed his trade.

"Because of the *caucheros,* I'm starving! Some one should write to the government to look into the situation here in order to bring about a change, Señor Don Arthur."

Carl Ritter, who had lighted a cigar, becoming interested in the conversation, amusedly replied—

"How can you possibly hope that the government will want to meddle with the *caucheros,* when today they are the only guards of the frontiers of the nation and the only ones who can handle these hybrid populations?"

To my surprise, my master agreed with him.

"Señor Ritter is right. The *caucheros* give no quarter and ask none when, by the rebellion of a slave, they themselves are forced to the chain gangs. We must let them be, Captain. Right now they are in their world."

"Evidently they are!" The old pilot yielded assent reluctantly. "How else could the Ghost, among others, continue at his bloodcurdling exploits even after his kidnaping of the military governor's best friend, the wealthy farmer?"

A thunderbolt falling in our midst from a clear sky could not have produced the silence that followed those words. Carl Ritter winced, and his brother, who had been standing collected and insouciant at his side, started, flushed with uncontrollable emotion.

"The Ghost, again?" my master exclaimed. "What has he been up to now? Tell me, where was he seen last?"

"His last crime took place only two weeks ago. The public doesn't know of it yet, for the Ghost succeeds in withholding all reports. Think of it, Señor Don Arthur—he does that too!" the captain raged.

Carl Ritter burst out laughing.

"That *is* serious," he granted; he then added in a casual tone, "I have heard of that crime—I know exactly what it is. It was the killing of Marco, the trader."

"What has happened to him?" my master asked, plainly worried. "I knew him—he was a good man."

"You know that the Ghost has been a long time fighting that no less notorious assassin, Rodillas, for the supremacy of banditry in the Beni," answered Ritter. "Marco, it seems, was very popular even with the outlaws because he was a sort of good Samaritan to all. But one day he made a mistake. He tipped off Rodillas about the approach of the Ghost, thus saving him from falling into the hands of his great enemy. The Ghost had never pardoned this deed. In a clearing in the jungle he recently found Marco camping with his two guides. To kill the trader in his friend Rodillas' own peculiar way—smashing the chest of his victim by gradually sinking his knees at the point of the sternum—was merely a matter of minutes."

He stopped to observe complacently the consternation of Don Arthur and the captain.

"How do you know so much about it?" asked the latter.

"From the prefect, who is my friend," answered the Austrian, unruffled. "Marco's guides came to the prefecture while I was there on official business and told the story. It shows that no one can, with impunity, interfere with the Ghost's schemes."

THE last remark aroused the captain.

"The prefect is accused of monopolizing the local trade in Trinidad for himself and his friends, thanks to being in league with some of the worst elements in the Beni. Maybe you also know who the Ghost is," he added sourly.

With perfect assurance the Austrian nodded, then shook his head as he drawled out:

"Yes and no. I saw him—soon after I left La Esmeralda. I was at the post office in Guayaramerín when he rushed into the place with his men—masked as usual—and got away with ten thousand pesos."

So unexpected was this reply that my master hesitated, but only for a second.

"Did you by any chance notice anything strange about him—about his chin, for instance?"

This question showed at least that my master had not abandoned entirely the possibility of the mysterious duelist of Santa Cruz and the Ghost being one and the same person.

As imperturbable as ever, Carl Ritter whisked up his beard, and although he did not give us time to see anything, he dramatized the moment even more by this dumbfounding revelation:

"He has a scar resembling mine, only his seemed to have been made with a knife, while mine is the claw mark of a puma."

The shock of this almost unnerved me; I was kept from crying out only by the look on my master's face. After the first moment's bewilderment, he however did not seem to see anything strange in the words. Ritter was protected by the very audacity of his action. My master's attitude toward his lieutenant became, if anything, more deferential.

"But have you any idea who the fellow is?"

Carl Ritter smiled.

"If I had, everybody else would have too, by this time. There's five thousand pesos posted for that particular information and I certainly wouldn't hesitate because of any such consideration as I have shown for Bernardo, for instance, to earn the prize."

"The scar ought to serve as a mark of identification," quickly interposed Don Arthur, so that the captain could not catch the meaning of Ritter's allusion to me.

"Then they would suspect me too—there are many with such scars!" contended the gringo, adding sardonically, "Fortunately, I would have you, Don Arthur, to testify that while we lived together at La Esmeralda, the Ghost, as now, went on doing as he pleased."

His serenity was unshakable. Perhaps, after all, my suspicions were based on merely an uncanny coincidence such as one reads about in police records every once in awhile.

"He must be rich after all these years—seven, to be exact—of looting this territory," said Don Arthur. "What need has he to be still so ruthless?"

"Many will tell you that the man is a demon, that he has a natural penchant for sheer cruelty which he must satisfy just like his greed for gold or his hunger," answered the captain. "All this may be true enough. But it is no less true that he is murdering and robbing more people than he ever did before, to compel Colonel Llanos to pursue him far enough into the jungle and there get him."

"But Colonel Llanos is not so utterly concerned with the Ghost as to make him deem it necessary to deprive the Beni of its governor," interposed my master skeptically. "There must be some other reason—"

The captain was fumbling for words, encouraged by the expectant look of Don Arthur. Finally he asked—

"You are a good friend of Colonel Llanos, Señor Don Arthur; do you know that he fought a duel over a woman in Santa Cruz about a year and a half ago?"

"Why—I thought that was a sealed secret," replied my master noncommittally.

"I think it still is a secret," Ritter intervened. "But I know of it too. My friend, the prefect, told me of the affair only the other day."

"And I thought I alone knew it outside of those who were at the duel!" The captain laughed, adding, "Well, personally I think the Ghost wants to kill the colonel because that Diana woman, whom he jilted, has joined with the bandit and is still trying to square old accounts."

"What are you telling us?" Don Arthur was startled.

"*Sí, señor.*" The captain was quite

positive. "I wouldn't speak of this if I did not know you so well, for I'm afraid of the Ghost's revenge. I happened to be at the Madera when Colonel Llanos returned from that dueling trip to Santa Cruz, while the kidnaping of the wealthy farmer was being carried out within the very shadows of the fort. I was getting ready to sail after having delivered the monthly shipment of provisions to the garrison, when a masked individual, wrapped in a cape which hid his features completely, came to my launch moored near the fort and handed me a note to deliver to the colonel. The paper contained these words: 'Act II. Some miles east of the fort your friend, the farmer, is awaiting death. Come to his rescue if you dare.' It was signed 'The Ghost'.

"The captive," went on the captain, "was a close friend of the colonel and the bandit was sure to get him where he wanted with that bait."

DON ARTHUR was bewildered, while Carl Ritter evinced a slightly amused attitude and José cleared his throat nervously and said something I could not understand.

"You mean to tell us that the Ghost was actually with you in your launch?" asked my master.

"I'm telling my experience exactly as it happened, Señor Don Arthur, and this is the first time I'm doing so since I told it to the colonel."

"Please proceed. What did you do?" broke in the youthful Ritter.

"Yes, what did you do?" repeated my master.

"Demanded my fee, which was paid royally, and promised that I would not speak of it to any one but the colonel."

"What did the colonel say?" Swift and snapping, the question came from José again.

"What happened next?" Carl Ritter interjected.

"The colonel received the note and explained to me the whole matter in order to be sure that I wouldn't speak of it if later I happened to hear some of the *caucheros* who had been at the duel talk about it. He was afraid his wife in Tarija would be ruined by the scandal."

"Did he then abandon his friend, the farmer, to his fate?" asked Ritter contemptuously.

"He did not abandon him," said the captain. "The governor was confident that the farmer would be returned to his home, as his family had paid the ransom which had been demanded for his release.

"I did not share his optimism and tried to convince him that Diana had sought the aid of the Ghost, but as the bandit had always avoided the Madera by reason of the proximity of the fort, deciding he was too cautious to meddle with his friends and to venture so near him, the colonel wouldn't listen. Besides he did not believe the woman capable of that. To prove it he allowed me to go with him for an explanation to her cabin, but she had gone away. I remember having told the colonel that he would probably find her waiting for him with the Ghost at the scene of the captivity of the farmer. He never forgave me for this suspicion, which was perhaps the truth, for Diana has disappeared to this day."

"He should have found her long ago and made sure," said my master.

"Of course; she is the clue to everything," concurred José, while his brother suggested phlegmatically—

"He should capture the Ghost, anyway."

"And hang him!" my master put in.

"That's easier said than done," observed the captain; adding humorously, "Capturing and hanging ghosts is generally conceded to be impossible." Then, seriously, "I believe the colonel's now trying to find the woman, though I really think he's afraid of meeting her —not through fear of harm, but because he still loves her."

This made José Ritter sit up.

"I've already suspected as much," commented my master pensively.

"That could be," said Carl, amused.

"You, who have been so often at the fort, must have seen the girl. What does she look like?" asked José.

"I never saw her!" cried the captain. "The colonel was very careful not to let any one see her because it is against the regulations to take even wives to the military posts."

Don Arthur brought the conversation to a close by ordering me to spread the tarpaulin, for the sun was high and the heat intense. Then he asked—

"Aren't we approaching the narrows, Captain?"

The old soldier laughed.

"We've passed them already! You must have been engrossed in the conversation not to have noticed the zigzag course I've been steering. Now you have a clear river ahead all the way to the Madera."

"We aren't going to the Madera; we're going to the Madre de Dios River," Carl Ritter informed him. For some reason he was unusually expansive.

"What is the object of this expedition, Señor Don Arthur?" The captain had risen, leaving the wheel to me.

"I'm after those famous golden effigies which were hidden by the Indians when the conquerors came to take possession of Cuzco, the Incan capital."

"Oh, Don Arthur!" the captain exclaimed in mild surprise. "How can you believe such a thing! I thought the Spanish conquerors, when they told that, had merely invented a cock and bull story to amuse their descendants."

"I'm not so sure about that," answered my master good naturedly. "The Incas had the Anti-Suyu province—the territory where we are going. Its rivers are still flowing with the gold that served to line their temples. That reminds me of a nugget found not so very long ago in the Chuquiaguillo River, whose sources are not far from here. It weighed no less than three hundred ounces. Somewhere in these jungles there must be another Potosí, bearing gold instead of silver. Potosí!" he exclaimed dreamily. "Here the Conquistadores literally stumbled upon rocks of this metal. One night they camped on its slopes and, as they were cooking their food, were dumbfounded to discover that the stones melted like tar under their pots. Nearly three thousand millions in silver had been lying there bare!

"And surely you have heard of the hanging gardens of Cuzco—the greatest marvel created by the Incan goldsmiths: A golden garden with its fauna and flora and golden columns. There silver bushes and trees rose as in real life, heads of maize with silver leaves and stalks bearing golden grain or pearls; on the branches golden birds; butterflies with sparkling gems hung by silver threads in the air, while, creeping along the ground, were all the animals of their jungle with eyes of precious stones. Wonderful, fantastic golden flowers studded with gems, mingled with natural plants; golden pipes carried water to the lawns and fed golden basins. With all this, what fairy tale could surpass reality in wealth of these lands?"

THE captain took time to make a slight change in the boat's course, then asked—

"But just what do you expect to find now?" Evidently he was dazed by the description.

"We may be the second white men, after the Conquistador, Lemos, to see the missing golden statue of the Huanqui, erected by the Incca Huayna Capac and which Hernando de Soto described as weighing more than one thousand pounds and being so wonderfully conceived, so awe inspiring, that it could well have been the soul of the Incas, which it purported to represent. Then we may gaze upon the life sized Napas, or sacred llamas of the emperors, all so beautifully carved that they also seemed real. Moreover I expect to find the busts of the most distinguished of the

Incas, their personal effects, and God knows what other unknown treasures which the Amautas, or wise men of ancient Perú, salvaged before Pizarro could commandeer them. Lemos' account, amply sustained by that of María de Esquivel, keeps up these hopes."

"And who was this María de Esquivel?" queried Carl Ritter, deeply absorbed in the topic.

"A Spanish woman of noble birth. She was given in marriage to Carlos Inca, who was the last possessor of the secrets of his empire, in order to ferret out these secrets. She had once complained to her husband of the stark misery in which they lived. The conquerors, you see, had deprived them of everything in order to force the Inca to spend his riches. He then led María blindfolded to a cave, which they reached after traveling many weeks. And there he showed her enough gold to buy a whole province in Spain.

"'Will this make you happy?' the Inca asked his wife.

"María only then understood the greatness of her consort. He preferred poverty rather than dissipate the sacred treasures of his fallen empire and she too gladly submitted to her privations, expressing the wish, years later when she was dying, that she hoped that cave would never be discovered, as no white man deserved such riches."

"Well," said the captain, "you are certainly a fortunate person to know all this, Señor Don Arthur, and as you are also the favorite son of the jungle gods, you'll succeed and come back, I know!"

"That's a good omen!" exclaimed Carl Ritter, and walked jauntily with his brother to the stern to watch the *caboclos* arrange themselves in the launch and *balsas* for the trip.

"Would you swear to that?" my master rallied.

"I would, Señor Don Arthur, but I never swear."

"Will you bet?"

"No, Señor Don Arthur, for I have nothing. But I can toast."

My master laughed and, lowering his voice, he presently asked:

"Tell me—who was the Indian you took through the narrows the other evening when we expected to meet at the docks? Do you know him?"

"I never saw him before," answered the captain, "and as he was so ugly and sullen, I didn't even inquire; but he surely kept me guessing, for even his boat was funny."

"His boat? Funny?"

"It was a new fangled idea—all painted so as to be perfectly undetectable; rushes, leaves and even a snake were painted in fast colors on it. Why, I could not see it from a distance of five feet against the jungle bank. Is the fellow any one you'd like to know about, Señor Don Arthur?"

"Yes," replied my master laconically. "But that's enough."

Calling the Ritters, who had not heard this conversation, Don Arthur ordered brandy to be served. Toasting the success of the expedition loudly enough to awake the dead, the old captain drank himself tipsy and returned to his launch, with more gold—he declared—than he had been able to collect from the *caucheros* during his lifetime.

Each minute the temperature was becoming more oppressive, and Carl Ritter, dropping into a chair, suddenly closed his eyes as if in sleep. His brother shifted to one of the *balsas* to arrange for lunch, while my master, after watching me approvingly at the wheel, settled down to read.

Soon the whole landscape was drowsing under the parching sun. The banks —two walls of dull brownish green, dimmed by the river mist—followed a meandering course on both sides and the horizon appeared almost one with the reverberating mirror which was the Summer sky. Not a breath was stirring in the great forest; the ground baked, the stones cracked, the trees twisted in suffocation with the steam

scorching their leaves and warping their branches. All the land that had been cleared by the last floods was now clogged with palms and clinging vines, weaving themselves into impassable nets, strongholds of lianas, reenforced by thorny plants and underbrush.

Before long, however, all would be changed. During our stay in Trinidad I had watched the freak performances of a great number of murky clouds parading martially at sunset. Soon these would again make their appearance, reflecting like a mirage the radiant colors of the landscape below.

It was already August. In September the storms feared most by all who have been in the jungle and initiating the rainy season would break out, striking terror in the hearts of men and beasts. Then, until March, rain, harassing to us, would deluge the forest. This would make it fruitful and green; it would give a new impetus to creation.

CHAPTER VIII

REVELATION

AFTER a voyage of three days on the seemingly endless and spanless Mamoré River, we arrived at Riberalta, another important rubber town which is the most westerly outpost of civilization in the Beni. It is situated at the confluence of two great rivers draining into the Mamoré: the Beni, which runs from south to north, and the Madre de Dios, from west to east. Beyond was the unknown—a dense and forbidding jungle teeming with wild Indians and beasts.

Here Don Arthur wanted to see a notary who had been recommended to him by the editor of *El Sol,* his friend of Trinidad, and suggested to the Ritters that they come along to arrange also for their wills, because our quest would take us so far into that dangerous territory that any mishap was possible. They declined the invitation, saying that they were sure of returning and jocularly complimenting him on his foresight.

My mistrust of them, far from being dispelled, had become a greater obsession than ever since that conversation with the captain who had steered us through the narrows: not because their attitude had changed—it remained as friendly as before and would remain so perhaps until the moment when they might decide to take my master by surprise—but simply because I had had time to grasp thoroughly the importance of the many incidents that had made me suspect them and that were to mar my trip. Whoever they were, I had the presentiment that they were seeking to defraud my master of the treasure, and as they could do this only by killing us off, the outlook, anyway I approached it, was depressing. Not even the crew we had hired was reliable. An undisciplined lot of mercenaries, the *caboclos* would not care to take sides in any emergency; considering only their own safety, they would probably desert the moment they saw trouble looming in our camp.

Fully aware of the situation, I keenly regretted that Don Arthur had stated so openly the object of his stop at the port, but now abstained from expressing this opinion. After my past warnings and his reluctance to withdraw his confidence from his companions, I feared to appear to be not only a coward, but envious. This consideration had strengthened my decision to add nothing more to what I had already said on the subject, more especially since the Trinidad editor himself, in the course of a conversation, had raised the baffling question that was driving me to distraction: Just who were the Ritters? They called themselves prospectors but were seen mostly with *caucheros,* and were good spenders. That was all that people knew about them. Did Don Arthur know them any better?

My master declared himself satisfied with the fact that they were excellent jungle men whose cooperation, he had

frankly admitted, assured him of the success of the expedition.

The editor had spoken of the Ghost. Behind this allusion Don Arthur had detected more than a mere casual remark. Demanding an explanation, the editor had suggested that Don Arthur ask the notary whom we were going to see for information regarding the bandit. He had intimated knowing something interesting to my master himself, but it was a secret affecting the good name of a very prominent matron and the notary alone was empowered to speak about it.

Leaving the Ritters in the boat, scanning for some reason with great attention the banks of the river, I went with Don Arthur.

Notary Antonio Parra, an old man with clear blue eyes and a dignified manner, had his office in the government house. Receiving Don Arthur with true Spanish cordiality, he bade me sit in the antechamber which, separated from his office only by a bookshelf, permitted me to follow their conversation and even to see what they were doing. An envelop which my master gave the notary contained his will, which I knew already was the same one he had intended leaving with the judge. If after a year he had not returned from the expedition, it was to be mailed to his nephew in the United States.

Don Antonio, who evidently had been expecting my master, assured him that his wish would be carried out verbatim and then asked politely if the newspapers' report sustained by a letter he had received from his friend, the editor of Trinidad, that the Ritters were going with Don Arthur was true.

"Yes," admitted my master. "Does it seem strange, by any chance?"

"Yes," said the notary quietly. "If you allow me, I will make myself clear."

"I demand it."

After a pause, the notary went with engaging simplicity and frankness into the root of the matter.

"Of course I have nothing for which to reproach these gentlemen, except their intimate friendship with the prefect of Trinidad, which as you can see is not a good recommendation."

Don Arthur shrugged his shoulders.

"I understand the prefect is severely criticized because he owns a trading post in the city where he holds office. If you are referring to this—"

"That's bad enough, señor," the notary hastened to explain. "But I'm not referring to that. Thanks to him, the whole province is still suffering from the depredations of the Ghost and his band. It is generally admitted that the prefect knows the bandits, but finds it more advantageous to work with them than to destroy them. Personally I suspect him of being the Ghost himself."

"And because it is generally admitted, you suspect him—"

"The prefect, Señor Mortimer, was appointed by the late judge of Santa Cruz, Don Mateo de Olivares, whom I believe to be the father of the Ghost."

"But how, may I ask, did you come upon this startling discovery that the judge was the father of the Ghost?"

"I'll tell you, Señor Mortimer, because I would be sorry if anything happened to you through lack of warning, but since it entails breaking a professional secret, I must ask you to view my revelation in the light of an imperative duty, and furthermore to promise to consider this as strictly confidential."

"I will not repeat anything, Señor Parra."

At that the notary cleared his throat and began:

"ABOUT two years ago, upon the late judge's death, I was called by his widow to Santa Cruz and made her will. She was afraid of being murdered for her money by the Ghost—not *her* son. He had been born in Austria of another woman.

"Long before her husband's tragic end, my client had discovered through some letters her stepson's identity and

had gone to ask him to move out of her house—the judge had established him in the same town, in a property belonging to her. The bandit, warned by his father of her visit and intentions, had received her masked and so frightened her that after that he remained in her house undisturbed."

Don Arthur was flabbergasted.

"But—but—why did she, or you, not have him arrested?"

"In this country," said the notary, "a woman so respects her pledge to uphold the name she has taken for her own, that she will not disgrace it—not even if it means untold suffering, as in the present case. Her religion and conventions, if nothing else, compel her to be that way. As to my own failure to have the bandit arrested, I learned of his identity too late. Feeling himself insecure without the protection of his father, he had already departed. My client made me promise that I would not disclose his kinship with the judge."

"I understand—the judge's wife is a lady," said my master, recovering from his surprise. Then he asked eagerly, "Didn't she also speak to you of a sister of the Ghost, another child of the judge?"

"You seem to know something yourself, Señor Mortimer."

"I heard of it indirectly. You'll pardon me if I don't go into the details."

The notary, smiling knowingly, said—

"The rector of the Jesuits, Padre Antonio, told you perhaps?"

"He said something, yes. Did you speak to him?"

"He was the confessor of the judge's wife. She had begged him to warn all those who are in danger of falling prey to the Ghost."

"That's exactly what happened. How did you guess?"

"My client, speaking about you, said something that made me think so. You had been their guest and had been gone nearly a week when I arrived in Santa Cruz."

"I see, but you haven't answered my other question yet," said Don Arthur.

"When the judge's wife made that call on the Ghost, his sister had been away; then as she learned that her husband visited her often, she for a time had thought that the stranger was not her daughter at all but his Austrian mistress. Later, however, after a showdown with her husband, she learned that the woman was really his daughter and that a great affection existed between them."

"Then many in Santa Cruz must have seen her!"

"Undoubtedly, señor, but she always appeared heavily veiled in the streets, thus maintaining the same mystery as her brother till, their father killed, they migrated to the Beni. Most certainly they are now in our midst posing as honorable people when they are not away performing their crimes."

"*Their* crimes! Do you believe both of them are engaged in such activities?"

"Haven't they always lived together—and haven't they the same blood?" the notary replied.

"They haven't *always* lived together," my master mused, but did not go into any explanations.

"At any rate," added the notary, respecting Don Arthur's reticence, "she is an accomplice, and the fact that nobody knows anything about her makes her just as hard to unmask as the Ghost himself. He has concealed his identity so thoroughly that not even his lieutenant, Vasquez, who had never seen him unmasked or been told his real name, could supply any information, though he did his best to tip the police off against his inexorable master. Vasquez had been shot and left for dead at a *posada* for blundering over the Ghost's orders to capture his father's youthful killer, Bernardo, who had taken refuge in Canichana country."

"And so you think the prefect alone knows him?" my master asked.

"Yes, señor."

"And the Ritters are his close friends! Do you think they would know who the Ghost and his sister are?"

The notary started.

"You are not going to ask them about that, Señor Mortimer?"

"Any objections?"

"No, but—but suppose one of them were the Ghost himself—or that they were acolytes of the Ghost?"

"Well, what do you think would happen?"

"They would kill you right away."

"Then suppose that the prefect is the Ghost and that I mustn't ask the Ritters any questions . . ."

"You are going after great treasures, señor. Be on your guard, that is all I can say."

My master got up.

"I am most thankful to you, Señor Parra, for this warning, and I should like to ask you to write to Colonel Llanos what you just told me. I have my reasons for requesting this and I'm sure he'll hold your letter as confidential and that he'll appreciate it personally."

"Then I'll do it, señor."

"Oh—I also wish to ask you another question. Do you know if the prefect of Trinidad has a scar under his chin?"

"I'm sure I don't, for he is heavily bearded."

"Thank you again," said my master. "I hope the opportunity will present itself to show you my appreciation." With these words he departed.

As we went into the street, Don Arthur put his arm familiarly over my shoulders.

"I noticed that the bookcase was not exactly soundproof," he said. "You must have heard everything."

I nodded.

"Then I don't have to repeat my conversation with Señor Parra," went on my master, smiling. "Of course it may all be only a succession of extraordinary coincidences, but even if this is so, it's well to be on the alert. However we'll go on just the same as ever because it would not do to antagonize them—they can still have you arrested and it would put them on their guard. If one of them is the Ghost, or they are of the Ghost's band as the notary intimated, it's a hundred to one that they are after the Inca treasures and that sooner or later they will unmask. In order not to be caught napping, our eyes must ever be trained on them in the daytime, and our ears strained for their footsteps at night."

Mutely I acknowledged his recommendations and he patted me on the shoulder, exclaiming:

"Bernardo, an easy way to put an end to this uncertainty would be to dismiss the Ritters on the spot; but unfortunately everything is as yet hypothetical and I can not do so without risking, as I have said before, your liberty for one thing, and then the safety of La Esmeralda with Lemos' gold and the documents. So it's too late to back out. But whoever they are we'll come out of this all right. Don't worry!"

Even if it appeared that his confidence in himself was unshaken, a hint of alarm had crept into his voice. He had taken warning and I breathed more easily.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE QUI VIVE

UPON returning to the boat, we lost no time in getting under way, for evidently we would soon have bad weather. Faint scarlet spots around the sun foretold a gale. We headed up the Madre de Dios River with the motors of our boats running full speed. As evening approached, we located a backwater in which to camp for the night. When morning came, a murky, threatening sky hung low over the jungle, but we went on until nightfall, when we had to land on an island which was the only place where we would find safe shelter for our craft.

The clouds, now black as pitch, now leaden gray, now greenish copper,

swirled ominously around what appeared to be a ball of fire. The gale blowing from the south increased in violence. The heat became unbearable and the waters of the river, piled up by the gale, flooded the banks and sent us scurrying to mid-island. The *caboclos* stripped off their shirts to save them, while Don Arthur, the Ritters and I donned our rubber ponchos.

A loud peal of thunder as the fireball dizzily spun in the black sky warned us not to linger in the open. We crawled into nooks formed at the roots of the big trees which bent and shook their branches as if beckoning for help in their battle with the elements. From somewhere one of the *caboclos* cried in agony that a snake had bitten him. Simultaneously, the hurricane burst. Deafening thunder is always the forerunner of the infernal chaos and desolation that prevails in the jungle when the time arrives for its periodical transformation, when all that is weak and old, all that has reached the hour of death, gives way to make place for the new.

For hours the foaming torrents flowed over the jungle like cataracts from another planet. Weltering in the muddy waters, almost choked at times by the swirling mass of leaves and broken branches, nearly all of us managed to survive. Two *caboclos* succumbed: the one bitten by the snake and his brother who, going to his assistance after killing the viper, had been crushed by a falling branch. Hastily burying them, we went on.

The river was hotter than ever. Swollen by the recent storm, its yellow flood was choked with floating trees, refuse and drifting islands torn from the edges of the jungle.

Suddenly José Ritter gave a short cry—a strange cry that didn't seem his at all, so different from usual was its tone. Unwittingly he had at the same time pointed at a bouncing object trailing the water behind us.

"What is it?" My master approached him, and Carl, who had taken the wheel, turned to look behind, knitting his brows.

"A boat!" I exclaimed, elated—and for cause.

The next moment I ran to my master, speaking to him in Quechua, and José Ritter, wondering what I was saying and laughing nervously, went away to sit with his brother.

"Where—where?" Don Arthur asked.

"There!" I said, triumphantly pointing at the boat as, running into a tumbling tree, it leaped clear out of the water, showing she had been painted from bow to stern, and from top to keel in vivid colors.

A moment later we saw the doomed craft rush past us and disappear in a whirlpool as the excited *caboclos,* who had gotten ahead of us, just discovered it. "Do you recognize it?" I asked, in Quechua.

My master looked at me understandingly, then, quite casually, spoke to the Ritters who were conversing in lowered tones.

"How strange! A boat prettily camouflaged with snakes and rushes on her sides, has either been washed away by the flood or her occupant has lost his life. If she had not had a motor, I would have credited the Indians of these parts with being clever."

"Indeed! Then it was a white man's craft?" was Carl Ritter's only comment; but his lips pursed viciously and he muttered something to himself.

Ushpa had been following us! I restrained my anxiety, and that evening at the camp I asked Don Arthur in Quechua what he thought of this. After the startling incident he, very much like myself, so far as I could make out, had remained in a quandary.

"I'll push on so fast that we'll leave that sinister Indian a year behind—if he's alive, which I very much doubt," said my master. "The Ritters, who seem to know him, must continue to think that we suspect nothing, although we must redouble our watch. I

repeat, there's nothing more we can do at this stage."

THE following day was again overcast, yet it was as hot as ever. Evidently we were not the only human beings in that remote jungle. Here and there from its depths came the Indians' signals, imitating bird calls. Always at the time of the first rains, the tribes gather near the rivers and as they take up their abodes, they utter these warning cries to ward off strangers. Soon they begin to quarrel among themselves, but with the fishing season lapse into peace—a spell of armistice; a happy time for the squaws since their husbands then make much of them, singing to them and rocking the babies to sleep with chirruping songs.

At one place a long arrow speeding from behind a tree mortally wounded one of our men. There was nothing for us to do but speed up and keep as far as possible from the perilous bank. This costly danger was bound to recur several times in the course of our long voyage.

The river, swifter and more swollen than ever, continued crammed with jungle refuse. The forests had been casting off their rags and nature was spreading them over the morasses, thus building up new lands to expand the domain of vegetation and eventually of man—the work of ages, but none the less sure.

We followed the angry Madre de Dios to its source, and this part of the trip alone took us more than two months. Then began our search for a certain trail in a remote, barren Peruvian territory, leading to the mysterious lake mentioned by Lemos the Spaniard.

Often stopping for days at some point on the banks of navigable rivers, where we sometimes left José Ritter with the *caboclos,* who proved easy prey to the deadly climate of this region, we explored eroded wastes where only vermin existed; at other times, unable to shoot the falls of some precipitous watercourse, with much difficulty we dragged the motor boats and *balsas* now up, now down boulder bedded, interminable mountain streams. Then again we would follow the large rivers, ascending hills as we discovered shortcuts, hewing our way through dwarfed and thorny vegetation or passing through great open forests. Our quest seemed a hopeless one.

Thus the entire rainy season passed. Afterward we wandered around in so many different directions that it would be impossible to explain. Jungles, plains, swamps, rivers—what did Don Arthur not explore, and with what zest! Tackling the most difficult tasks with an enthusiasm which inspired every one, he kept the others busy on work less irksome than his own. Thus our labors proved a source of gratification rather than drudgery. His continued activity strengthened our belief that we were nearing our goal and saved us from becoming despondent. Never worried or sick or even tired, he proved that nature and he were like the legendary wolf and the children it mothered.

With me he always spoke in Quechua and seldom let me out of his sight—not through fear of losing his only friend—but because he had become so fond of me. Our conversations in the Incan language never failed to incense the Ritters, especially as my master, never thinking that he was prophesying, had told them that we were practising it in order to use it where we were going. They had sensed mockery in this. But how true this jest turned out to be in the end!

Like Don Arthur the Ritters loved the jungle. Watching them, I could well understand why my master, in his conversation with the editor of Trinidad, had pronounced them so fit for the expedition. Perhaps it was this consideration that had influenced him at the beginning of the trip to underestimate the suspicious circumstances surrounding them. They never met

with sickness or accidents as the *caboclos* did, even though they always did their share of the work and took no precautions to escape the severity of the climate and the many other dangers.

They did not believe in being prudent in the jungle; they were fatalists.

"Nature is with us or against us," they would say to the Brazilians who had become so unlucky during the trip that they were reduced to one-fourth of their original number and had become fearful of even the most harmless fly.

But they loved good living. Whenever they could, they ate and drank well and had a tent to themselves fitted with a cork carpet and two cots.

José had become as difficult a puzzle to me as his brother. He devoted all his spare time to reading. He seldom spoke; I never heard him address my master except when he had to do so. His attitude toward the *caboclos* on whose *balsas* he spent the greater part of each day, was rude. One would have thought he hated all mankind, although at times he seemed to be at least a monomaniac. Once or twice his actions had been so strange and then he had become so irritable that I had felt inclined to believe him insane. Whenever he heard me speak in Quechua—"The spy!" he would mutter, scowling. He could not bear my presence. But if my suspicions were correct, this was only to be expected.

His brother assiduously cultivated the friendship of my master, who pretended to respond. But alone with the *caboclos* Ritter's brutal treatment and his total disregard of their sufferings were appalling. Even if they were dying, racked with fever or from wounds inflicted by the attacks of wild Indians, he would refuse to help them, assuming that a sick man merely served to cripple two sound ones. This also was only what could be expected.

He was, as my master had once said, a mysterious character; indeed very much more so than I had imagined. Even in the most trivial matters, his actions were strange. I was in charge of the tents and always found his bed untouched. Only his brother seemed to sleep.

Carl Ritter loved to walk out into the jungle at night. Often, when least expecting it, I awoke to see him stealing away from the camp or aimlessly stalking around the sleeping men. This paralyzed me with fear, but on more than one occasion I thought of killing him; only the feeling that my master was watching prevented it, and then I was not entirely sure that he was the murderer of my parents. What if the prefect of Trinidad were the real Ghost?

DURING the day he was full of activity, but in his own cryptic way. With a mere glance he would make his brother do what he wanted, and by gestures as plain as words he managed to convey Don Arthur's orders to the *caboclos*. His ability to perform his own duties was extraordinary. My master, who never had to tell him what to do, frankly marveled at his jungle experience and ingenuity in surmounting all obstacles. One thing that particularly puzzled me was that at times, while engaged in conversation, he would suddenly fall asleep. Neither Don Arthur nor his brother noticed this; however, if it happened while the men were talking to him, they would stop immediately. Then Carl Ritter would awake quite suddenly.

"Go on, idiots," he would growl. "I'm listening to you!" While in this lethargic state, he could hear as well as when he was awake and understand exactly what was being said.

Throughout the long voyage he had shown himself consistently bitter toward me. He seldom ordered me to do any work—and this was fortunate—but often he eyed me as callously as though trying to pierce me with his gimlet

stare. I felt sure he hated my very shadow, and this realization alone was again another indication to me that I was right about believing him to be the Ghost.

Even when near my master, I was never completely free from the fear that the Austrian would attempt to harm me in some ghastly way. This misgiving became more and more firmly fixed in my brain as we progressed; added to the daily hardships due to the innumerable obstacles of the jungle, it all finally undermined my morale to such a point that I began to lose my grit and courage. Worse still, my determination to ascertain beyond the shadow of a doubt the identity of the Austrians, to make them atone if they were really what I suspected them to be; my ambition to loom larger than a mere servant in the eyes of my master, were all sunk in the flood of doubts and apprehensions choking me. In this way my existence was miserable. How I hated the scoundrel who had poisoned my life!

Realizing my danger, I worked hard with the *caboclos* if only to keep in fit condition; then one day, when I felt keenly the need of being reassured in regard to our safety, I asked Don Arthur if he had discovered anything. What could be done? Must we eternally wait for events before concerting ourselves on the course of action we must take?

No, he said. He had not yet discovered any sign that the Ritters would act against us, if that was what I wanted to know, nor did he expect to until we came upon the treasure, for the reason that, with nothing to guide them, they would not know which way to turn. But he had noticed a change. Carl had asked him only the moment before if we were nearing our goal. Receiving a none too encouraging reply, he had become restless and overbearing and for the moment Don Arthur was content to study him. Was the jungle beginning to take effect on his lieutenant—or was he meditating treachery? . . .

José also had changed, but this was no news to me. My master did not consider him dangerous—why? He felt that way about it and I disagreed with him. The youthful Ritter had become morose and perhaps more of a snob than ever, but he was by no means a weakling. Supple as a willow branch and agile as a colt, he had gained in weight and strength, in health—his good color testified to that—while the contrary was true of the rest of us. So I took Don Arthur's unconcern of him as another consequence, or as a relapse, if I could put it that way, to his utter disregard of danger.

Finally one morning my master whispered in my ear that he thought we were near our goal. Perhaps an occasion justifying a departure from his passive attitude toward the Ritters would shortly present itself. I stood on the alert.

In the afternoon I surprised Don Arthur watching José persistently. Was he now studying him or had he discovered something new? I was not given the opportunity to ask, for the events thereafter ensued in rapid succession.

First of all one of the *caboclos* wrecked irreparably the motor launch towing the *balsas* and we had to take him and his two companions—last survivors of the twelve that had started with us on the expedition—on board *La Puma*. Tugging now only one raft loaded with the tents and the remaining provisions, we came to a redwood forest from whose banks poisonous toads spat their venom at us. In the night, at the camp, I was awakened from my sleep by a soft but persistent pressure on my shoulder. I was startled and afraid until I saw it was Don Arthur.

"My boy," he whispered, "I was right this morning—everything points out the nearness of our goal . . . I want to warn you again: keep your eyes open—life may depend on it."

CHAPTER X

LAIR OF THE MONSTERS

NEXT day as we floated down the river, Don Arthur said quietly to me in Quechua—

"We are about to come to the end of our trip."

Early in the morning, as we left the redwoods behind, we swerved along a narrow branch of the main river which Don Arthur thought was the Yurúa. After cruising awhile, we came suddenly upon a marvelous sight. As far as we could see, there were the waters of a lake. In the center of it was an island towering high above the distant jungle and covered with rugged mountains and trees thickly set in a dense growth of tangled foliage.

Don Arthur uttered a triumphant cry—and gave to the Ritters the order I had been awaiting.

"Here, let me have your guns!" he cried, pulling Carl's automatic from his belt with befitting animation—and just as naturally obtaining José's who, bored by the long tedium of the search, was slow in recovering from his surprise. "The place may be inhabited," Don Arthur went on nonchalantly, "and I don't want to run the risk of any of you losing your heads and killing a native. That would spoil everything."

"Do I look like losing my head?" Carl Ritter snapped out.

"I remember you did once at the Manso River," said my master, locking both the guns he had taken from the Ritters along with his own in a steel chest in the boat; then putting the key in his pocket, much to the Ritters' consternation, he produced from the lining in his helmet a copy of Lemos' chart—which he had brought after all—and added dryly:

"The treasures are here, and I'm taking no chances. What I say goes."

The Ritters glanced round and, quickly exchanging a bewildered look, burst out laughing.

"Why—it's all right with us," said José, rather sheepishly.

"Anything you say, Don Arthur!" Carl also acquiesced—his tone was mellifluous. "We trust you."

This was not exactly what I had expected of them—but had I not seen José come to the boat in Trinidad with two guns? I was not quite sure and so I dared not pose the question. Later I was bitterly to regret my having kept silent about it.

The topography at last looked like that of the Spaniard's chart. There were smaller islands dotting the lake, and we set our boat to exploring them from a safe distance, but as Don Arthur studied the chart under the covetous glances of the Ritters who, like myself, never for a moment had suspected that my master had brought even that copy, it was evident that there should also be extensive marshes somewhere nearby. Perhaps the mountainous island facing us hid them from sight.

After maneuvering our boat about the large island, we landed in the vicinity of a narrow wooded ridge rising almost perpendicularly from the vast lake. South of it, on a plateau of equal height with the ridge, we at last caught sight of the swamp. This vanquished any doubt that we might not be at the right place. The swamp extended to what looked like a static jungle. We set up a tent and prepared for the exploration of the island.

José Ritter and the three *caboclos*, whom my master drew aside to give secret instructions, were left behind at the camp, so only Carl and I, armed with *machetes*, accompanied Don Arthur.

The Spaniard Lemos had described two trails to the caves in his account. Apparently the more covert one led through the ghostly jungle which he had described as the strangest fastness he had ever seen, adding that there lived hellish creatures, monsters which by some psychical power exercised by the Indians, had been made their al-

lies. Don Arthur, like the judge at Santa Cruz, had dismissed this as an exaggeration of Lemos, but now that he was at the place, he felt inclined to credit even that detail in the old conqueror's narrative.

To convince himself, he chose to take this trail, and as we went some distance, he declared he felt the presence of other men nearer than was good for our safety. As might be expected, Carl Ritter disbelieved him. This was because he lacked the explorer's intuition.

We came to a sunken swamp beyond which we could have a full view of the mountain which we should soon climb. Cutting across thorny creepers, we then set foot on a marshy soil permitting only the toughest kind of growth. Several trails—tapir runs leading to some secluded fastness—twisted tortuously to avoid the thorn thickets. We had traversed these when suddenly we came upon the tracks of a man. My master's presentiment that the place was inhabited thus became in the end a reality.

Forgetting the mapped route, we anxiously followed the tracks until Don Arthur signaled us to halt.

We had reached the southern tip of the swamps. Beyond commenced an endless series of gullies, lagoons and small islands covered with bushes, ferns, rushes and parasitic flowers drearily still. Birds fluttered among these and drifting veils of mist, in which lurked the breath of fevers, permeated the eery landscape. Bordering it, not unlike a fortress surrounded by the mightiest forest imaginable, rose the other side of the mountain—a steep and imposing tableland a mile long.

DON ARTHUR, always in the lead, now told us to follow him closely and with great caution. For half an hour we pushed on in this direction as though we had been descending to camp by way of the mountain slope. It was broiling hot and rough going. Arriving at a wall of vegetation, he stalked toward an entrance. Then he passed into a clearing beyond which was an avenue of immense trees where the stilly quiet pulsated with mystery. Here Carl Ritter trod upon a *jararaca.* With an oath he crushed the reptile with his heel until he severed the body from the head—the prevalent jungle superstition being that if this were not done, bad luck would follow the finding of a viper.

As we left the place something hardly audible, a kind of wailing like a guitar string, sounded high among the trees.

"I also am now inclined to credit everything Lemos said," breathed Carl Ritter, looking at the top of a tree. "It sounded like nothing I've yet heard in the jungle. I like this place!"

He was tingling with elation, and as I watched him, wondering how any one could like the place, suddenly the thought occurred to me that I should kill him there with my *machete.* But the next moment I shuddered. I, who right along had suspected him so strongly, now shirked the task—perhaps because, like my master, I too sought a more convincing proof that he was the Ghost.

"It must have been the wind," suggested Don Arthur.

"I think not. Listen!"

A peculiar sound—like the splash of a body diving in the water—reached us from the end of the avenue.

"The monsters!" I mumbled, now convinced that they really existed.

But what were they exactly? I tried to picture them to myself, then laughed in order to shake off the fear which began to possess me. With all this I grew ill at ease and crossed myself.

For a minute more we continued walking, now bent almost double, partly to avoid overhanging vines clustered with myriads of insects, partly under the sway of the hypnotic atmosphere and the expectancy of meeting the man whose tracks we still

followed through the shadows.

"Is it some native come to rally his monsters against us?" I remember asking myself.

As we came to the first of a row of trees which were gray and barked up to a great height like weathered poles, we stopped. Instinctively we knew that something must happen. We waited—another splash.

"What—" I started to ask.

But Don Arthur stopped my question with a nudge. Then he pointed in the direction of the noise. An Indian fifty yards in front of us!

He was very old and wore his white hair page fashion, trimmed square to his earlobes. He wore large silver earrings and bracelets, a white kilt and sandals. A Quechuan!

Motionless as a statue, his attenuated silhouette stood out against a fantastically wild background.

With one impulse all three of us scurried behind a huge stump spreading its disarrayed shag of roots so we could observe unseen the lone native. In my haste to gain this shelter, I tripped and fell on top of a monstrous serpentine tube, so thick that it came to a tall man's knees. As I fell, gasping, my hands broke through the thin crust of the tube.

"A snake's slough!" said Ritter.

I rose, shaking fearfully, then pressed myself with bated breath against Don Arthur. Now I knew what kind of monsters the Spaniard had referred to!

The site was lugubriously alluring. The great trees formed a vault of weird splendor by the iridescence of their transparent, overhanging frilly leaves, which transfused with awesome effect a dull light through the avenue. A great void at the end—near which the Indian stood listlessly—proved to be the entrance to a cavern. It yawned ravenously under a mountain of vegetation indescribably tangled. A forest of boulders, some smooth and others moldy with moss-like fungus, formed a colonnade.

From the cavern, gray as a crypt at twilight, trickled out countless little clappings, each with a thousand echoes ringing silvery through every nook with faint, elfin jingles like those one occasionally listens to in his dreams.

There was a lake there, and the rank vegetation above it was a hanging forest, even more chaotic than that on the sides of the avenue. What appalling cataclysm could have given birth to such a place? What wicked whim had parted asunder the trees of a whole forest and entwined the tops in such a way as to form a canopy which the cyclones of the tropics had served to strengthen and the centuries converted into a terrace overhead? What monsters had developed in the scope of that densest of jungles, the haven of a primitive people?

The panting of an animal crashing its way through the lianas startled the Inca Indian from his meditation. A moment later he was feeling with his hands an old tapir which approached him, nosing about—this proved that he was either blind or that he could see very little. He was still fingering the animal when it uttered a plaintive grunt and, with a mighty effort, darted forth to the cavern and disappeared into the lake.

The suicide of the animal, and the Indian proceeding, soon afterward, to whistle weirdly, unnerved me even more. He had not finished his unearthly melody when from out of the mountain of vegetation shot a thick swinging cylinder toward one of the great trees along the avenue.

"The snake—there's the snake!" whispered my master.

THE phenomenal serpent, festooning itself between its den and the great tree, began to climb, and the Indian, aware of its presence by the noise it made while uncoiling, sought by his motions to attract its eyes, bright as embers and hideously protruding from a

round head bristling with scales.

Presently the Inca broke into words —Quechuan. Again my master was not mistaken.

"*Camba—Camba!*" the Indian had cried. "My race is run. Here come the animals of the jungle seeking death. Here I have guarded for countless moons our Inca fathers' jewels which made me yearn for thy eyes. Here I too wish to die. *Camba!* I want to enter thy kingdom! I'm old and sick—I don't want to drink the devil's brew—I don't want to protract my life in the island of the demented, so I've escaped from my people! *Camba!*"

His voice was acutely melancholy. He then raised his arms and began to chirp sounds of persuasive, lulling notes, softly and intermittently at first and then louder and more frequently, beckoning to the serpent to come down and devour him.

A crisp noise like that of pouring rain broke out from the scaly rings of the snake as, so sluggishly that it did not seem to move, it crept to a lofty branch, then to another and another, until it reached the foliage into which it began to disappear. Its body, seemingly interminable, finally ended in a blunt tip which fell with a swoop on the ground and swept over it, brushing the Indian off his feet. A moment later all of it was lost in the canopy above.

The old Inca remained disillusioned. Picking himself up, he groped to the tree and trudged round for awhile, then directed his steps to a lattice of beautiful vines partly concealing the cavern and grabbed a handful of them—parted them . . .

As he bent forward as though to peer inside, Don Arthur and Ritter stole up and seized him. One of them holding him by the feet and the other by the arms, they carried him to the clearing, where I followed.

The Indian, to my astonishment, broke into sobs.

"Ah, you followed me!" he wailed, dimly sighting us. "Well, I'm in your hands and am not asking for mercy. Come, give me that drink!"

My master looked puzzled and Ritter, not knowing the language of the Incas, became fidgety. I knew, by his expression, that he would have given much to know what was being said.

"We don't mean to harm you," my master reassured the Indian. "We only want to return you to your companions —you have been a good man."

"I thought the Amauta had sent you to punish me for my disloyalty," again wailed the Indian, proceeding to take from under his kilt a small bag.

Then, to our amazement, in the dim light under the immense trees, he produced a condor fashioned from a magnificent emerald, then a diamond cut like an Incasic sun and surrounded by emerald stars on which myriad lights played as in a living sheen; one was a brooch and the other a ring.

"I took these," he exclaimed apologetically. "They are my own handiwork and I wanted to die with them. Illa Tici, our god, may forgive me, for I had already offered them to him!" And he handed the gems to my master.

A long silence, during which the old man's feverish eyes dilated, followed. Only then we understood that he had lost his reason, and that he was growing more frantic.

"Assuredly this man has been doped because he is too old to be useful," explained my master, so low that Ritter and I alone could hear. "There are Incas in this region and this gruesome custom—history tells us—was one of the precautions their ancestors took to preserve the secret of the treasures under their guard. The tradition, then, still endures. Though this unfortunate one believes he has succeeded in evading his lot, the drug must have been administered to him only recently and it is just beginning to take effect. Soon he will have forgotten everything—but he has a strong will and is bent upon doing something before it is too late."

Suddenly the Indian closed his eyes

and, bruskly pushing Ritter, who had approached him, aside, crossed his arms; then, guided by the noises of dripping water, like a specter wandering in solitude, nimbly took the road back to the funereal cavern.

"Catch him! Get him to lead us to the caves!" cried Ritter.

He, however, did not stir—and my master and I followed the doomed Indian who, having only one idea, had even taken us for his own people. A moment later we stopped short, holding to each other. Paralyzed with terror, I saw the sepulchral form of the Inca open the lattice of creepers and disappear in the water, like the tapir.

Staggered by choking emotion, Don Arthur ran up to the border of the lake, then withdrew with a shiver.

"Those waters are pitch-black and heavy as glue," he commented, and cautioned me, "While I take the lead, follow Ritter closely and never let him get behind you."

Returning to the clearing, we found Ritter violently incensed by my master's failure to carry out his suggestion.

"Well," he growled, "it would have been easy to force that Indian to show the way to those caves."

"Leave everything to me, Ritter, and calm yourself," my master replied dryly. Then he consulted once more the Spaniard's chart and reasoned to himself, "Now let me see . . . We must follow Lemos' clues to the letter. We'll try to ascertain the number of Indians in this territory. Then we'll know what to do. Come, let's hurry!"

Making a wide detour, we finally came to the beginning of our climb, which by sheer chance was nearer our camp than we would have wished, for we found ourselves in front and close to it but cut off by the thickness of the trees and undergrowth.

"Keep your eyes peeled on Ritter," my master warned me furtively for the second time.

His caution was unnecessary. From the Austrian's ugly mood, I had already taken renewed warning. Fortunately he had only his *machete*, and it was even more fortunate a moment later when he lost it in a crag. His anger at this new contingency was another sign that if he were the Ghost he would soon unmask.

CHAPTER XI

TREASURE OF THE INCAS

AS WE climbed the mountain, we came to the first of a series of low, tunnel-like caverns. Don Arthur continued in the lead. I, in accordance with his instructions, brought up the rear.

We passed from one cavern to another, always steadily mounting higher. Often we were obliged to lie flat to avoid the sharp needles of stalactites hanging from the roofs. Our flashlights darted into dark corners, teeming with snakes. We had a great fear of *jararacas*, which are worse than cobras, and used our lights only when absolutely necessary, so as not to anger the reptiles.

In crags along the walls we soon discovered more caves with their entrances covered with creepers. Don Arthur lost no time in exploring these, going a short distance into each one so that none might be overlooked. Some of them were of good size but for the most part were narrow, so our progress was slow and without my realizing it, I was left some distance behind. After an hour we came to a ledge on the mountain from which we could see our camp and craft on the beach below.

Suddenly I heard a shout from Don Arthur.

"My God!" he yelled, as though beside himself with excitement, and my heart threatened to stop, for I knew he had found the treasure.

Looking up, I saw Ritter climbing rapidly to his side. They peered into the cave, clipped the vines on the sides to let in more light, and then both dis-

appeared into it. As I scrambled up the mountainside, I saw Ritter cast a look back at me from out of the cave.

Why had I let him go so far ahead of me?

Blaming myself for my carelessness and becoming apprehensive with anxiety, I quickly got to the entrance of the cave and fearfully looked in. Now I could believe everything that Cieza de León, the Spanish historian, had said about the treasures of Perú . . .

The cave was a huge room entirely surrounded by the magnificent effigies of the Incan gods. The statues were portentous, and the gold of which they were made glinted so brightly as to be blinding coming from the darkness of the foliage growth of the mountainside. Suspended like spiders from the murky ceiling by web-like strings, swung to and fro in the air, were strange beings, their bodies of a leathery brown tattoed with gold dust, their faces covered by monstrous jeweled masks. Armed with short forked lances, gloved with claws of shining gold and shod with talons of lustrous silver, they were dropping little by little. So unreal it all seemed that I stood rooted to the ledge at the entrance of the cave, gaping.

As Don Arthur also stood like one transfixed, unable to move, a prey to the hypnotic gaze of those monsters whose diamond clustered heads and eyes pierced the darkness like the stars of night, one of them quickly descended to block the intruders' escape—and my own ingress into the cave. I was the only one to realize this, and as I cried out, warning my master, utterly powerless and thunderstruck, I saw Ritter grasp a massive scepter from among the ornaments in a vase and suddenly bring it down on Don Arthur's shoulder with terrific force.

Instantly the monsters stopped their descent, and with gestures now beckoned Ritter to finish his companion, meanwhile screeching in the Quechuan language, "*Onecheey! Onecheey!*—Give him death! Give him death!" and squirming with swimming motions till they made the air seem alive with them.

Brought to his senses by the blow, my master had turned to defend himself. A second blow aimed at his head struck him on the other shoulder and stunned him. He fell to one side.

Then Ritter raised the scepter for the finishing blow, but a concerted cackle from the excited monsters which seemed to be bearing down again as if to envelop and crush him, showed him the danger of his own position. Wheeling, he bolted for the entrance—but found the enemy waiting to grab him.

At the same moment Don Arthur roused himself and, spurred by the hideous cries of the human spiders and my own desperate calls urging him to hurry, now made rapid progress in my direction. Ritter turned to look at him and I feared he would try to stop him, but he was no longer concerned with anything but overpowering the ominous creature which had already lowered himself to prevent his escape. With the heavy scepter he struck out at the armored head . . .

There was a clang of metal on metal, and the dazzling mask dropped to the ground, revealing a surprised Indian who nevertheless quickly wrapped his legs around Carl's neck.

With terrific screams and maledictions the other pendent men began to swoop low with the evident intention of also capturing Don Arthur. Fortunately they were too late to prevent his escape, as I had barely the strength to pull him through the gallery opening and drag him to a place of safety on the mountainside, but the feat cost me my *machete*, which I dropped in the cave, and as my master had also left his there, we found ourselves absolutely unarmed.

"The boat!" Don Arthur gasped presently. "The boat! It's our only hope. Keep the other Ritter from getting it!"

"The Indians will kill you here!" I cried.

"I don't think they will bother with us now—I noticed they were enacting

an ancient ceremony of the Incan goldsmiths. They want us to believe they are monsters in the flesh and will not come out until they've changed their costumes. But they'll probably finish Ritter. I instructed the *caboclos* to tie that young Ritter to a tree if they noticed any treachery, and to come to our aid, but I see that the cowards have run merely because he's got a carbine. Don't let that frighten you. I locked all the ammunition in the steel box, so the gun is not loaded. Get to the boat! Quick!"

I WAS scrambling down the mountainside almost before the words were finished. I could see Don Arthur getting to his feet, although not entirely recovered from the blows of the scepter, then following in my footsteps slowly, rubbing his legs, arms, and shaking his head. It was plain that he would soon be able to look after himself.

I came down the mountainside to be in good position to skirt the swamp without loss of time. It took me only a few minutes to slide down. I found the cave mouth was barely a hundred feet from our camp, but we had spent an hour in examining all the openings up to that point.

At the camp I found José looking up toward the caves, his face tense and twisted with hate and bitterness. I looked up also and the sight turned my blood to water.

Ritter had escaped and, having caught up with my master on a lower ledge overlooking the swamp, had attacked him again. Now they careened back and forth, locked in a deadly embrace. Don Arthur, invigorated by the fresh air, was almost a match for Ritter, who seemed to be feeling the effects of his struggle with the Indian. But his greater strength was already beginning to show, and Don Arthur tottered on the edge. I gave a shout of despair that rang over the hillside.

José darted for the boat, but I quickly interposed. Trembling with rage, he approached me armed with the carbine which he handled as a club. I had nothing with which to defend myself but a heavy root which I had grasped as I fell down the hillside.

I rushed at José with this and used it to strike his arms. It was a lucky blow. It hit him so forcibly that the gun fell out of his hands and the stick flew from mine, leaving us to fight with our bare hands.

In this struggle he was no match for me. As we met and grasped one another, I felt the softness of his body and this suddenly revealed to me the whole truth of the Ritters' identity. So I felt sorry for the unevenness of the combat. But my fears for Don Arthur made me want to finish the fight as quickly as possible. I tore at José's tight fitting shirt, and the fact *that I had been wrestling with a woman* was confirmed.

"I'll never forgive you for this!" she screamed, as, backing away to escape, she stumbled and fell. Her head must have struck a rock, for she groaned and lay still. I then turned to the scene on the ledge.

The two had reeled apart from the force of their combat, both overcome by fatigue. They waited, trying to recover their breath and strength, and it was plain that Carl Ritter would be the first to regain his fighting power.

There was not time for me to get back and no way of getting bullets from the steel box for the carbine without the key. The torture of my helplessness came over me and for a moment I was physically sick. The thought of Don Arthur up there at the mercy of the man who had murdered my mother and father was more than I could bear.

I made sure that the woman lay unconscious, definitely eliminated from the struggle. It was with an effort that I forced myself to look again. Ritter was slowly crawling toward Don Arthur . . . What was keeping the Indians from coming after us, I did not know. For surely they had had plenty of time to

change their costumes, if that were really the reason for their delay.

Then my mind suddenly grasped the only possible solution and I frantically looked around. With a yank I tore a vine from the tumultuous jungle growth. I quickly kicked up a rock from the lake shore and twined the vine tightly around it. Often I had done this as a boy on the plantation. With my Indian playmates I threw these primitive slingshots at animals with great accuracy when we were too young to be trusted with guns, but it had been years since I had tried the pastime.

Now it was no pastime; it was life or death for the man I admired most in the world. On the ledge Ritter crawled slowly toward Don Arthur, who awaited his coming with determination. But he could not raise his arms. The force of the blows of the scepter had deadened the muscles of his shoulder and the struggle on the mountainside had sapped his final strength.

With a whirl, I started the sling moving. When it had attained a maximum speed and yet one with which I could retain some control of its direction, I let it fly and then closed my eyes.

It sang as it careened through the air in the direction of the ledge. I prayed that the stone would find its mark; I prayed that my strength was sufficient to give it enough distance with enough force.

I could not look up; I was afraid my wild effort was wasted. There was a thud and a groan, and then a cry. The cry was from Don Arthur—a cry of joy! Quickly I looked aloft and saw the body of Ritter teetering on the ledge, and then go tumbling off into space. A moment later I heard the splash of the body striking the swamp. And the jungle became silent again, except for the gasping of Don Arthur.

Where were the Indians? Again I wondered, dreading that they would show up any minute now, and I started toward my master.

"Don't come up!" he told me, as if with his last breath. "Watch the boat."

He began to descend the mountain, painfully. As he came, I kept watch on the woman until there were signs of her coming to. Then I tied up her feet with the same sort of jungle twine I had used for the sling, and put her where her head would be in the shade.

Even then I could not go in aid of Don Arthur. I now feared that our own men, who had seen everything from behind some bushes and were returning, might make away with the boat.

Finally Don Arthur came into camp and I ran to meet him. He could barely drag himself along, but his mind was still clear.

"Into the boat at once! Get Diana and the men!"

"Diana!" I cried. "Did you know she was a girl?"

"Never mind now—I'll tell you all about it later. We're in great danger here. I heard the Incas speak of calling on some tribe living by the swamp to destroy us!"

I helped him into the boat and carried Diana in. Why had not I remembered before that Colonel Llanos had said that she always dressed like a man? The *caboclos* took to oars until I could start the motor and we drew away, abandoning the tent at the camp and our last *balsa* with the remaining provisions.

At the first sound of the motor, Diana awakened and looked around frantically.

"Carl!" she cried. "What has happened to you?"

"Didn't she see him fall?" Don Arthur asked me from the cockpit.

"No, she had taken a sedative and was asleep," I answered obliquely.

"Carl! Carl!" Diana cried frantically.

SHE looked back toward the island, which was then only about a hundred yards away, and tried to hurl herself overboard. Don Arthur caught her and held her. It was amazing how this José who had been so manly all these months

could suddenly become so feminine, but I judged it must be from the shock of the blow she had sustained when hitting her head on that rock and the fact of her brother's loss.

"Let me go to him!" she snarled, savagely repulsing my master. "He is my brother. He will be killed. I want to be with him."

"I'm sorry, but he's dead. And it's much better so," said Don Arthur, coming quietly to her side.

"If that is true, it is likewise true of me," cried the girl. "Let me go!"

"No, it is not true of you. I am saving you for a better fate. I am taking you back to Colonel Llanos."

Her eyes blazed with hatred.

"I would rather die in the jungle," she said fiercely, and repeated, "Let me go!"

"Colonel Llanos loves you," said my master. "You heard what the captain said—your disappearance has wrecked his life. He wants nobody but you."

"How long have you known José was Diana?" I asked, unable longer to hold my patience.

She glared wickedly at me, and my master, this time, satisfied my curiosity.

"My suspicions were aroused some time ago, but I still could not tell whether she were Diana and her brother the Ghost. It took the events of today to convince me of that. As I said to you after we saw the notary at Riberalta, I knew that they would show their hand if I found the Inca effigies."

"We should have disposed of you long ago—protector of this rascal who killed my father!" exploded the girl, shifting suddenly to the bench facing Don Arthur and thrusting her hand beneath the cushion.

Now she produced the gun which I dimly remembered having seen in her possession—a very small but powerful automatic, easy to conceal. To my consternation she pointed it at Don Arthur as she grated peremptorily—

"Now you better do as I say or I'll start squaring accounts with this boy, to avenge my father." She had us in her power.

"You are wrong in blaming Bernardo," temporized Don Arthur, looking anxiously at the *caboclos*, who for all the response they gave might have been so many cogs thrown by his side in the cockpit. "The judge wounded himself by accident just as he was about to pin the boy with the very sword that killed him. You have had revenge enough, for your brother murdered both his father and mother."

"Stop arguing and turn back and rescue my brother!" ordered Diana in a tone of finality. At the same time she aimed the leveled automatic straight on me.

"I did not know you were as cruel as your brother," muttered my master, reluctantly directing me to turn about.

"You have discovered the truth too late, Don Arthur! Your friend, Colonel Llanos, by his infamy, made me what I am." She paused and rapped out, "If Carlos is dead, you and Bernardo will pay with your lives!"

I steered *La Puma* back to its former mooring and rose to follow Don Arthur ashore, but Diana ordered me to remain in my seat and my master once more told me to obey.

No sooner had he gone a hundred yards, than some twenty Incas, wearing cloth masks, darted from a thicket and in the twinkling of an eye overpowered him; then, yelling and shooting arrows almost at random, they started rather uncertainly in our direction, hesitating to advance by the unshaded stretches. They acted as half blind people. Perhaps passing their lives in those dark caves, they could not stand the glare of the sun. That must be it, else they would not have been so slow in pursuing us.

"Lively with those oars!" Diana had turned to the *caboclos* who really did not need to receive the order, for they were so cowardly that they had already pulled away from the bank, stuttering

their fears. "And you with the motor!" she yelled at me.

My grief for having thus parted from Don Arthur seemed to fan her ire.

"You're responsible for my not having gone with this—" she indicated her automatic—"to my brother's assistance when he was there on the ledge. You'll pay for everything!"

I felt as if my blood had turned to water. Utterly wretched, incapable of the slightest effort to prove I still had a spark of manliness in me, I accepted the situation. The tragedy which had overtaken the man I loved as a father had completely overpowered me.

We traveled in glum silence upriver for an hour, then Diana snatched the wheel from my hand and beached *La Puma* on a sandy bank.

"We're going to camp here," she addressed the *caboclos*. "Then tonight we will return for my brother."

"But, *niña,*" one of them ventured to object, "Master Carl is dead!"

"Dead? Dead? I have a feeling that he's not dead! A man like him couldn't die so easily," she asserted emphatically and, as if to reassure herself, asked them a number of questions about the way in which her brother had lost the fight.

Probably hoping to make her desist from her mad plan, the *caboclos* told vividly what they had seen. This of course incriminated me all the more, for knowing only then that I had been responsible for the victory of Don Arthur, she immediately had me bound so that I could not escape, and then placed like a bale where she would constantly watch me.

At nightfall she started back for the lake with two of the *caboclos*. The third one, having complained of being sick, remained as my guard. I felt so disheartened that I did not even think of escape. On the contrary, having taken into my head the idea that Diana would be discovered by the Indians and would never come back, I waited with feverish impatience for events to follow their almost inevitable course.

More than one hour passed and suddenly the roar of a motor exhaust droned in the distance. This blasted my hopes. No doubt Diana was returning thirsting for vengeance and it would not be long now before I too died. But what did it matter! I had fulfilled my vow to punish the murderer of my parents and Don Arthur also was dead . . .

LA PUMA beached and I heard Diana's orders to the *caboclos* to break open the steel chest in order to get the ammunition.

But—what was that—that other voice asking for me? Could it be possible?

A harrowing sensation gripped me and I turned to look . . .

Yes. Carl Ritter, looking none the worse for his experience, except for minor contusions and a small cut on his forehead, had been brought back by his sister. Muddy and soaking wet he came near me.

"Kill him!" cried out Diana from the boat. "If we let him live he'll be our bane."

"Death outright would not be enough punishment for him," growled Ritter and then asked, fixing me, "Do you remember my promise to cut your tongue out at the Manso River? Well, the Ghost always keeps his promises!"

Diana joined him. She had gotten a new suit, soap and towels for her brother. "Are we safe here?" She was anxious to know.

Carl shrugged his shoulders.

"After I fell down the mountain, the Indians thought I sank in the quagmire, and even though they must have heard your boat a moment ago, I don't believe they will dare to follow us so far. Anyway we'll leave as soon as I make a map of the place tomorrow."

"It was lucky I found you," said Diana. "Lucky for both of us," she completed her thought.

"If I had not fallen on that network of overhanging lianas and hid there un-

til you came, you would have had to go back alone," he answered. "But I'm sorry you did not get that chart and the key to the arms chest when you had Don Arthur at your mercy. With plenty of ammunition I would feel safer; then your oversight about the chart forces us to lose time here."

"Why didn't you kill him on the way, as I told you, when you had the chance?" retorted Diana.

"Without being sure that the treasures really existed and not even knowing where Lemos' cave was?" countered Carl. "And what would we have done without any clue as to where this place is?"

"Oh, I suppose it had to be this way!" yielded Diana. "But what are you going to do now to learn where Lemos' hoard is?"

"Why should we bother about it now?" asked Carl. "We'll return with a strong expedition for the treasure here, which after all is what I started after when I went to the Río Manso. The nuggets might have interested me if I had not seen the millions guarded by the Incas. It will not be hard to overcome them. They are really half blind as you correctly observed, and are not any too brave. I saw that."

"Then you are also going to abandon your project to exploit that *gomal* we discovered?"

"Now that you ask, the idea still appeals to me. I'll think it over."

Noticing my rapt attention, Diana, who had not heard what her brother had told me on arriving, asked presently:

"I hope you are not intending to take back this whelp. He has heard everything."

"And he knows everything. But have no fear," reassured Carl. "The dog's tongue is too long—so I might as well proceed to eradicate it before we throw him as he is into the river."

With these words he dragged me to the bank and, to my horror, took a heavy pair of pincers for opening crates from one of the *caboclos* and struck me violently on the head with it. Trussed up as I was, I could not defend myself and I lay stunned on the ground.

"This is to fulfill my father's choice of punishment for this traitor," I faintly heard Carl Ritter say. "A cloth to better grasp his tongue, quick!"

So desperately I clinched my teeth when I heard this that my jaws ached, but my torturer tried to pry them open in order to force the instrument into my mouth. I jerked my head away—then I remembered nothing more until I came to . . .

Thank God my tongue was still there! But it seemed on fire and my teeth were so set that it was difficult for me to open them. Feeling my mouth so swollen that I could not speak, I sobbed and would have cried if the pain had not been so intense that even a whimper hurt me, so I was forced to remain dead still.

I had been brought back to my former place and I saw Diana sitting near me on a log close to the camp-fire. But soon her very self—or at least so it seemed to me—came up from the forest. I was only half convinced that I was not dreaming. From their conversation I gathered that the remaining *caboclos* had run away, but not in the motorboat, as they had at first feared.

The Ritter who had remained at the camp-fire proved to be Diana herself. She got up and looked me over carefully while I pretended to be still unconscious.

"We'll have to let him live until we meet with Ushpa, who must have found our signals to follow on our trail, because we don't want to bother with all the filthy work," she said as she cut the ropes binding my legs and arms, and then giving me a kick.

Carl bent over me. Placing his heel on my forehead, he poured the contents of his flask into my mouth as the best means to awake me. It was rum—but seemed molten lead.

Getting on my feet with difficulty, I

stared at them both. I had not been mistaken; the Ritters were the image of each other. Carl had shaved. He had worn a beard in order to conceal the scar made by Colonel Llanos after their duel in Santa Cruz. It was a scaly scar resembling a chin strap on his milky skin. Without it no one could have told them apart.

"What makes this dog so pensive? He almost makes me believe he's planning escape," observed Diana to her brother who, watching ominously, answered absently:

"Yes, it seems so. It was when his thoughts showed like that on his face at La Esmeralda I first recognized him as the *muchacho* who came with the American the night of the duel to the *posada* in Santa Cruz. Ha! He has such jaws! I could not force them open without killing him. But I'll yet root out that tongue of his if I have to smash his teeth in with my *machete.* I've promised. Afterward I will dispatch him to the devil!"

These brutal threats helped me to regain my courage. Now that they had prolonged my life, I might have the chance to turn the tables on them.

THEY settled down to drink heavily while a peccary they had killed slowly cooked on the fire. They had been able to get the guns and the ammunition from the arms chest and were now confident that nothing could possibly hamper their plans. At intervals, they amused themselves by asking me all kinds of questions, laughing at my futile efforts to reply, but I finally did not pay any attention to them. I was again thinking of Don Arthur. Sick and feeble though I was, I resolved to recover the boat and return to investigate the fate that had overtaken him. Then I would try to get back to civilization if only to bring the two fiends to justice.

It was incredible how much they resembled each other. Even if Diana naturally lacked some of Carl's mannerisms, she could imitate them perfectly. While cleverly burlesquing her brother's habit of suddenly going to sleep, the latter, becoming waspish, interrupted:

"Good! But there are two dissimilarities between us."

"Indeed! And you complimented me for impersonating you perfectly when I captured Llanos' friend, the planter, at the Madera."

"Yes, but when you held up the post office, at least two of my men detected the hoax by your voice," said Ritter, and cautioned her to cultivate his voice.

"Thinner, you mean? Bah! And the other differ—"

She did not finish. Her brother had whisked his hand over the scar. Obviously this was the other difference. Suddenly Diana started as if an extraordinary idea had struck her. She was on the point of explaining what it was when she changed her mind and, laughing instead, paced to and fro like a jaguar searching for the best place from which to spring over an obstacle. Then she darted into the hut, only to return quickly with her face set, her eyes glowing as once or twice before when I had thought her insane and a knife and cloth soaked in alcohol in her hand.

"Look!" she called out to her brother raucously. "I have read your thoughts —and since we have decided to continue to impersonate each other, let us do it right!"

Suddenly the knife flashed across her white neck and a spoor of blood like a chin strap smeared her face.

"Diana is dead—behold another Ghost!" she then cried while I gaped in horror.

I was convinced that she did not quite realize what she had done, that at the moment she was stark mad.

Carl Ritter approached her unable to believe his eyes and, having recovered from the shock, he broke out laughing until, inflamed with hatred, he said violently:

"This settles it! No more delays in starting after Llanos!"

Then they had me serve the peccary which had been roasting. Carl ate heartily and continued drinking with Diana until they became topheavy.

It was the time for me to steal to the river in search of *La Puma,* but I could not find her—she had probably been hidden by Ritter. Nevertheless I decided to make my getaway toward the lake while it was possible in the dark.

Next morning, shivering with ague, I could faintly hear the Ritters calling me, then the war cry of wild Indians mingled with shots. Had these savages been sent by the cave dwellers to exterminate the rest of the expedition or had they merely wandered so far in their quest of wives? Much as I wanted to return and take advantage of this opportunity to kill the Ritters, I decided it was more urgent to search for a root that is good for fevers. So I wandered far from the camp to find it. Finally, when nearly at the end of my strength, I stumbled on the herb. But the root had to be masticated, and as my tongue was so swollen, the cure was torture.

Utterly exhausted, my only desire was for sleep. I determined to proceed in my quest of Don Arthur after some rest. Accordingly I hid myself in the branches of a tree where I would not be likely to be discovered by the savages or the Ritters.

Torrents of rain woke me. The forest was so dark that I thought it was night, but in a few minutes the sky cleared and I saw the sun and wind-harried clouds through a gap in the foliage overhead. Although my head burned and my muscles ached, I felt strong again. So I descended from my refuge, not knowing how long I had been there, and proceeded on my search for my master.

What was my surprise when, near the caves, as the clouds had again hidden the sun for the rest of the day, I saw a party of Incas coming down the mountain. They were hurrying along with a man bound with ropes. Quickly I concealed myself in a crag of the mountain and waited.

They were leading Don Arthur, my master, as their prisoner. How he had changed in those few days! No longer was he the towering tree he had been, though to me he would always be the same. The old Don Arthur Mortimer was gone. In his place was an emaciated man bent nearly double and bearing an indefinable expression not unlike that of a dead man.

My horror and surprise at seeing him so changed, more than any fear of his escort of six herculean Quechuas, kept me paralyzed in my hiding place. After the group had passed, I followed at a distance, taking great pains not to be seen.

I was baffled by the motives of those Inca descendants in taking away their captive. They went directly to the river. From an inlet covered with root-like weeds they brought out a large canoe. Embarking, they started downstream. I too looked for some craft at this hidden mooring. Finding several, I camouflaged the smallest with reeds and leaves to resemble flotsam, then hugging the bank, followed the Indians.

The river entered a ravine—from then on a torrent. After a quarter of an hour of mad descent through a jungle of fascinating beauty, they paddled to a solitary beach where they dropped their prisoner on the sand. Then they continued on. As they disappeared in the distance, I ran my craft into a canal and anxiously catapulted to Don Arthur, gasping spasmodically in a futile attempt to regain my voice. Becoming suddenly alert and straightening up as if by magic, he too made a leap at me, exclaiming:

"Thank God you're here! But why don't you speak? What happened?"

While asking these questions he pulled me behind a large tree so as to be safe from prying eyes.

I motioned to my mouth and tried to give the story, but it was no use. Only a harsh, grating noise crept from

my throat. I would have to wait several days before I could speak again.

For the first time since I knew him, I saw his calm expression change to a scowl. Tensely holding me close to him under his grasp, he presently patted me on my shoulder, as was his habit. "I must know everything," he said slowly, "everything that has happened to you. Write it on the ground for me—my effects were seized by my captors, so I have neither paper nor pencil."

Gladly I complied with his request.

"We must go to see what happened at the camp of the Ritters," he snapped upon learning my story. "Much of our future action will depend on what we discover there."

Then it was his turn to tell me of his experiences.

CHAPTER XII

THE RECKONING

"I FIND it difficult to believe even now," he began, "that I was ever in the gallery of the Incan gods and that I actually penetrated the secret of those Indians who are a small tribe of gold and silversmiths living humbly with their wives in those caves and governed by a wise man whom they call Amauta. After I was captured, I was taken to a gallery giving access to the cave which you yourself saw. I heard your protest when I was being abandoned," my master went on, smiling fondly at me, "and later the throbbing of *La Puma's* exhaust as you sped away, for every noise within a vast radius of the caves registers itself clearly through some cunning device fixed to the wall in the gallery.

"Thus the Incas know of the approach of any strangers and have plenty of time to stage the stupendous spectacle which you saw—the ancient goldsmiths devised it to keep the curious from their shops, for they were very secretive in their craft; today it is used to trap marauders.

"Well, I saw the Huanqui, the Napas and other statues equally beautiful, on which they are still working. A lot of tools and simmering pots with molten metal proved this. The Amauta, a very alert man, discussed my punishment with his councillors, and last night, as their sound device again registered the noise of a motor, he dispatched a messenger to some tribe in the region with word either to destroy or capture the new intruders—I did not imagine that it could be Diana and her brother going back."

"Did they hurt you?" I interrupted, looking at his drooping shoulders which seemed to have sagged again.

He shook his head as he proceeded:

"They spoke first of killing me outright, then of putting my eyes out and feeding me to their monsters, but finally decided I should go mad, just like their old men who must be abandoned when they can no longer work—this also was the punishment inflicted by their ancestors on thousands of enemies. So they brought me a cup of *suppay-alckha,* satan's punch, which they left with a guard to give to me when I was thirsty. Fortunately I had refrained from speaking Quechua—I had been reserving this for the last moment to surprise them and thus regain perhaps my freedom—and they never dreamed I understood what they were saying.

"Later I pretended to drink the concoction but poured it into a drain hole on the stone floor and, being acquainted with the symptoms caused by the drug, I feigned insanity. After howling for several hours I remained prostrate a long time, wondering why they did not turn me out. Then I heard them speak of having to wait for a cloudy day to get rid of me and incidentally to send messengers with the story of their adventure to some other branch of their people living far from here.

"I had already suspected the reason for their shunning the sun. Their eyes, accustomed to the darkness of the caves and affected by the glitter of their ef-

figies, can not stand the sunlight. This explained why the mad Indian of the lair of the monsters did not show any alarm at our appearance, and why the cave dwellers were so tardy in pursuing us when Ritter and I were fighting on the ledge. Finally today it rained and the men you saw brought me here. Do you know where we are?" he asked.

As I shook my head, he explained:

"We are in the madmen's paradise—I gathered this from the instructions which were given by the Amauta. It is here that their old men are brought to die after a drink of that brew."

Shuddering, I hastened to ask when we better leave.

"We'll wait two or three days until your mouth and my shoulders, which were almost broken by the blows of the Austrian, are well again," he answered.

I did not like the prospect of staying there while the Ritters were perhaps still alive and making maps of the place. I was anxious to overtake them —to engage them this time in a fight to the finish. How sweet vengeance would be!

But I had to resign myself to what Don Arthur had said. We built a rude shelter and as evening approached, I captured a monkey with the features of a witch from a number that had come down to drink at a brook. The rest of the family crowded solemnly on the branches near us, and breaking out in terrifying howls, started to mimic in strange fashion.

"Can you guess what they are doing?" asked my master.

I had thought this was their way of mourning for their dead, but Don Arthur startled me with the assurance that the simians were imitating human beings — doubtless the lunatics marooned at the place. Quickly I chased away the weird actors.

Soon after, as we were cooking the monkey, a piping ullulation broke out from the riverbank. At first we thought it was the monkeys again. But as the eery cry was repeated, each time louder, we became convinced that it was a man. Whoever it was had seen the smoke of our fire and was approaching.

In breathless suspense we waited behind a tree. In a short while a lanky, filthy Indian appeared, dragging an old skeleton which was loosely joined together by coarse fiber. Discovering our refuge, he slunk into it and, satisfied that it was vacant, sat down before the fire and proceeded to devour our food. This was too much for my jaded nerves and I begged Don Arthur to leave.

WE HASTENED to the canoe, which fortunately I had beached where it could not be easily found, and moved to the bank across the river—the current was so strong that we would have to abandon the boat and go afoot. But we were now on the mainland by which we could easily retrace our steps to the lake.

The next day we started off at a good pace.

"My great adventure!" said my master as, coming again into sight of the mysterious mountain hiding the Incasic idols, he waved his hand regretfully. But he found consolation by saying, "Perhaps there are some gods who are best left to their worshipers!"

"But aren't we coming back for the effigies?" I asked.

"No," he answered. And producing from somewhere about his person the gems given to him by the old Indian who had committed suicide, he added dreamily, "I'm satisfied with these marvelous stones." Then, after admiring them, he sighed, "You can't help respecting a people who will protect their cherished possessions with such faithfulness through all those centuries!"

We kept prudently within the edge of the forest until we were convinced that nobody would see us. Then I noticed what looked like a secret mooring place for a canoe and ran toward it. A cry of joy rose from my throat as we found

our motorboat, *La Puma,* there.

"This can mean only one thing—something's happened to the Ritters!" exclaimed Don Arthur, but lest he be too optimistic, he refrained from jumping at conclusions. Finding the motor in order, we proceeded with great caution toward the camp where I had left the unholy pair.

Even before we actually arrived at the camp, I knew that Don Arthur's suspicions were only too well founded. The place was a shambles. Bodies, already almost reduced to skeletons by the fierce ants, were strewn about. A terrible struggle had taken place here, and, as we approached, the position of the bodies and the appearance of the whole scene eloquently told the story.

The Ritters, attacked by two groups of Indians come in canoes, had first emptied their guns; then, given no time to reload them, had resorted to a desperate hand-to-hand struggle, as the crushed skulls of the skeletons found in that direction clearly showed. But other attackers coming from the rear had overcome them with lances. Pierced from the back, the Austrians had been literally pinned to the ground, and then beaten and mutilated—their chopped skeletons only half concealed by their tattered clothes, left no doubt of this.

God had dealt justice to them.

From the spoils we knew the invaders had been Panos—a tribe of ferocious cannibals appearing occasionally on the Beni River, in faraway Bolivia. Strewn about were boa constrictor and alligator masks made of woven vegetable fibers with which these savages are wont to frighten and capture their victims. Then we found the remnants of the Ritters' erstwhile belongings. Conspicuously under the skeleton of one of them was a bulging pouch which the termites had devoured in part. Without this circumstance it is doubtful if we would have so much as noticed it. It contained beautiful ornaments clustered with magnificent gems which Carl Ritter had undoubtedly lifted from the vase that had held the scepter with which he had so nearly killed Don Arthur.

I wanted to believe that God also had in this way chosen to reward us.

"Well, Bernardo," said Don Arthur, "with the knowledge that the Ghosts can no longer bother you, won't you be glad to get back to La Esmeralda—as my son? Sara must surely be waiting there."

I smiled happily and he continued:

"As soon as we can we'll sail for Europe. We mustn't forget that the gold at the Rio Manso will be ours only after we have fulfilled Lemos' wish to take his bones to Valencia. As to giving the royal *quinta* to his sovereign —that is to the State—I'll do so by leaving you in Madrid for your education. Then you will come to help me in my explorations if you want to."

After this we lost no time in taking our bearings and reembarking for the Beni, leaving to the inscrutable jungle its immemorial gods.

AT SUNRISE

By ARED WHITE

September 27, 1918

SECRET

From: The Chief, Counter-Espionage Section.

To: The Assistant Chief of Staff, Second Section.

Subject: Analysis and decoding of document received from Operative No. 24, (Loeb, Hartley Z, 1st Lieut. Engrs. U. S. Army).

HEREWITH document in the case of above named operative, deciphered in accordance with your instructions. It was found that the message is neither code nor cipher but ordinary shorthand notes made by Lieutenant Loeb under the unusual circumstances indicated by the communication itself. The information conveyed is of incalculable importance, since it confirms previous Allied reports that German civilian morale has collapsed and the military program is threatened from within Germany. Such a state of affairs behind the enemy front can only presage early collapse of the entire militarist régime in Germany.

Only the highest order of skill and courage permitted this operative to carry on under the critical conditions. His successful concealment of his report is unprecedented in our records. It follows a special formula, luckily devised by this section last June, whereby a fragmentary secret message can be worked into the first few paragraphs of an ordinary letter in such a way that we are able to pick out and piece together the phrase intended. Identification of the vital words is provided by the use of key words, such as "little," "make," "rather," "seasonable." The vital word is the one that follows the key word. In reducing Lieutenant Loeb's letter, I have caused the precise words of his secret message to be set out in capital letters in the body of his communication for the study of the staff in making its evaluation.

Lieutenant Loeb's ingenuity in working out the formula is best attested by the action of the Imperial intelligence

section at Spa in forwarding the document to us. It is not difficult to understand that their intelligence operatives would permit Loeb to occupy himself thus, while in their custody, well knowing that what he wrote would come into their immediate possession. The thoroughness with which they examined the document is indicated by the stains on the paper, which are the result of chemicals used in testing out for invisible pigments. Their motive in forwarding the communication, once they had convinced themselves of its non-military nature, might have been one of warning or of good sportsmanship.

It must be apparent that the communication was written as something more than an official report. I believe it is a record of the officer's inner thoughts and observations through his critical experience. But I can not fail to comment upon the indomitable will, the high sense of duty, the tenacity of purpose and the magnificent courage that characterized this operative's conduct in serving his country under the conditions, which his letter itself best discloses. This section deplores the fact that such valiant service, of necessity, must pass unnoticed.

Recommend that the original be sent to the person addressed, evidently a close friend or relative, at Lieutenant Loeb's emergency address in the United States.

—H. B. ROLLANDE, *Major, Infantry*
Acting Chief, G-2 B.

ENCLOSURE

DEAR FREDERICK:

4:00 P. M.

I made an unusual discovery a moment ago, one which I hasten to communicate to you, though I realize how remote the possibility that you will ever know my thoughts. It is the secret of long life that I am setting down for you. I discovered it quite by chance. You see, life has a most whimsical and unusual flavor for me at the moment. I can count the exact number of minutes it will endure. So I stand in front of the little GERMAN clock that is ticking beside me and watch its busy second hand make a REVOLUTION OF the minute dial.

It's rather STARTLING, Frederick. A minute has such seasonable PROPORTIONS if you but fix your mind upon it, closely observe its flight and capture all of its elusive moods. I have known whole years to pass away more swiftly. Bring your watch and see the magic that it BREWS for you. Didn't realize it before, did you? I am able to live over as many months in retrospect while that little hand ticks its round. My mind no longer hurries and I have time to taste the sweetness of life. What a misfortune that I did not discover this long ago. It is only now, which is very late, that I see the past in its true perspective, and wonder at that restlessness which made me hurry through the days, always in search of some strangely elusive something that I never found.

Luckily, I made this discovery in time. For, if I were to count my future life in terms of days, or even hours, I fear the total would be most disquieting. But since I have learned the magnitude of a minute I shall be able to live out my allotted span, three score and ten. Yes, even longer than that. So I am not uneasy. Time stretches so endlessly before me that I shall be able to reflect calmly upon many things, though there are few of my thoughts and experiences I shall burden upon you, though it gives me occupation to set them down.

I spoke to Henry of my find, thinking it would help him; but Henry smiled and went on amusing himself in his own way with a stained old German novel that he picked from the stone floor of this execrable cage. Henry's nerves seem to be of steel. You would never have guessed his self-control, would you, recalling his old restlessness of spirit, his eternal lust of adventure and action, which took him meandering from one place to another in the good old days before the war? But here he sits before me, the stolid rascal, as nonchalantly comfortable, UN-

LESS my eyes deceive me, as if PEACE had been won and he contemplated BEFORE him a comfortable WINTER in his own club. And yet I, the man you accused of having no nerves, am compelled to busy myself lest the shadows of coming events frighten me.

I hear steps on the flagging outside. Clanking, martial steps of a Prussian patrol. I know their meaning. We are to be taken at last before the Germany summary court. All night they quizzed us. Polite rogues, for the most part, but clever. We told our story, nothing more. The evidence they hold against us would be laughed out of any court of justice. Intuition mostly, so far as we can learn, and a few vague circumstances. But I hold little doubt of the outcome. Those feet have stopped, there's a key at the door. I must excuse myself for the moment . . .

4:17 P. M.

Here we are in church. It is a beautiful little edifice with vaulted ceiling, high stained glass windows, a large ornamental altar and many unlighted candles. I think that were there any one here present capable of prayer, he might appropriately pray for the repose of our souls. I conclude this, Frederick, after looking over the court; for it is here that the august martial tribunal will sit upon us.

They have just filed in, very solemnly, and are seating themselves. There is a very fat, pompous one, who looks like he would burst of spleen, his face is so very red and puffed. He is a Herr Oberst, in full uniform. His eyes are villainous, and I can see that his mind is made up before he hears a word of testimony. I gather this from the malignant look he shot at us as he was squatting into his seat in front of the altar. There is another one, second in rank to the Herr Oberst, who is tall, thin and rancorous of look. He wears a monocle and does not deign to look at us at all. Another one of them seems bored to death, as if the formality of trial was a needless infringement upon his time and energy. The fat man just swore them and now their machinery is oiled for motion. Ah, there rises the judge advocate, to outline his case and call his witnesses.

The counter-espionage chief at Coblenz is being sworn. He tells his story. We were found living in a small house that overlooked the river, a point most convenient to observation of military traffic along the Rhine and Moselle Valley railroads. Our Brazilian passports are a hoax, he asserts shamelessly, admitting that he has no other support for his conclusion than a fixed belief. But he boasts that his intuitions do not fail him.

Our story of being in Rhenish Prussia to trace the heirs of a valuable estate in Buenos Aires, he just answered with a snap of his fingers. He says we are American secret agents. Spies. Again he hints at his matchless intuition. Yes, our papers authenticate our claims of neutrality, but he reminds the court of a vital fact: there is a great troop movement toward the Argonne forest. Why do we come to Coblenz from Berne at this critical hour, except to count those troop trains—thirty-six cars to the train—and report the exact German force that is being maneuvered!

He snapped his fingers again. This he does malignantly, and in our direction. He is a stone faced little man, with eyes of gray agate, and a mouth that snarls at one corner. When he sprang in upon us at Coblenz yesterday, without warning, his mood was plainly one of homicide. But we gave him no provocation to shoot. Henry laughed in his face and told him he was making a fool of himself, for which he would be brought to an accounting at the proper time.

But that sixth sense of his—he lays great store by it. Says it has cost fourteen men their lives. We make sixteen, if he scores.

One of his henchmen is up, a Prussian *Feldwebel.* He is mouthing over what the Herr Spy-catcher of Coblenz told the court. Yes, he is sure we are spies. American spies. He doesn't say

why, and no one asks him.

The judge advocate summarizes. He is trying to maintain a voice and air of judicial fairness. Must be a lawyer in civil life. Wait, he's digressing now, waxing eloquent upon the dangers to the Fatherland of secret agents of the Allies. Now he's drifted back into his judicial ethics. Says he has no recommendation.

Court is closed for a verdict. No one leaves. They're moving their heads together. We'll know the verdict in a moment, Frederick. I have only one hope; that they will send us to a prison camp, because of the elements of doubt that surely exist. No, I'm afraid that hope is empty. That fat one, the Herr Oberst, is taking a poll with those bulging, dead fish eyes of his. The thin *Oberst-leutnant* nodded. Two men who were whispering together just looked up and nodded. There's too much passion there for any bowels of compassion. We'll get—

Here it comes. The verdict . . . I didn't write it down, Frederick; a cold, official formula. The Herr Oberst grunted it out. We're to be given a military escort to the stone wall at sunrise. Sunrise tomorrow. But that's a long time off, isn't it—since I've learned to estimate a minute at its true worth? The sentry motions us to follow . . .

6:00 P. M.

I've been kept very busy since leaving the church.

They separated us for an evident purpose. I have been closeted with a very gentlemanly young officer; and, by the way, a graduate of Harvard, he tells me. He came to bargain. I can have my liberty. It is very simple. All I need do is throw off the mask, and supply information of three Russians. The Herr Leutnant confided in me that our case was hopeless, the court having inside information. A Belgian who came with us from Berne is a spy-double; and he had tipped us to the chief at Coblenz as American agents.

The jig being up, why not be sensible, he argued. I need not betray my country, nor outrage my honor. Merely divulge the identity and secret rendezvous of three Russian spies, known to be operating under American instructions, by courtesy of the French Deuxième Bureau, somewhere between Cologne and Ehrenbreitstein. He explains that these Muscovites once were agents of the black Okhrana, former agents of the Czarist secret police, and therefore men of very red hands whose death would be a blessing. So, of course, I need have no moral scruples.

I put to him, Frederick, a hypothetical question—

"Would you, Herr Leutnant, just assuming the conditions under which we deal, save your own life at the expense of three knaves, no matter how black they were, who happened to be serving your country?"

It was interesting to observe his reaction. A clear eyed youngster, this Herr Leutnant. He knitted a thin, straw colored eyebrow over his monocle and thought for a moment, then frankly said he guessed he would not.

"In that event," I said a bit stiffly, "are you not in an odd position, Herr Leutnant? If I am not an American agent, you are only ridiculous. If I am, you are decidedly presumptuous—not to say offensive."

The Herr Leutnant gave it up with that. A flush glowed on his pink cheeks. He rose and gave me one of those stiff German bows, from the waist, and apologized. He was genuinely embarrassed that he had given offense on a point of honor. An odd whim of the situation, is it not, Frederick? Tomorrow, though, I have no doubt the polite Herr Leutnant will see me shot without emotion. Taking a life, when surrounded by the proper formality, is not a thing for qualms.

I am thinking what an eternity of time would be mine, were it not for that spirit within that places a sentiment above life. What is it, Frederick?

A strange quality which I can not define, not even when I think upon it

through one of these precious years of mine. I need but speak, disclose the haunts of three men who mean less than nothing to me. I've no doubt their hands are red; yes, reeking crimson. A villainous set, that old Czarist secret police; cold mercenaries today, who sell their sinister cunning to the highest bidder. What crimes might not be soundly avenged were they to be set before the stone wall in my stead!

It is bait, Frederick. I looked upon it with a leap of the pulse. The power, the pulsating sweep of life, the glorious joy of just living and breathing! Why is it that only now I taste the nectar; now, when I can see rising the hand that will strike the cup from my greedy lips? What wouldn't it bring to me, now that I understand, could I only stroll among the streets of the old city, no matter how dull my rôle in life; meeting in the multitude, now and then, a friendly face . . .

I dismissed those thoughts abruptly, Frederick, and went to the clock. Here I am back at my notebook burning with contempt for the black jackal who betrayed us to the Kommandant at Coblenz. I can picture him drunk in Cologne tonight, on his dole of a hundred marks; and next week there may be for him a hundred francs for some service across the lines. Such creatures thrive while the world is a madhouse, good men given over to this reckless bloodlust, and there is a price on red treachery. But contempt strengthens me in my purpose to despise the creature. It gives substance to that fire deep within that tells me I must go to the wall. Yes, I will elect to march with the firing squad. I will die for an idea, a code, an ideal of loyalty. I will be only one of hundreds, of thousands; yes, of millions. What a charnel house that virtue is feeding, Frederick. Twelve million men —and the toll mounts, the red tide rises.

The Herr Leutnant wore a silver oval, three wounds in battle. When he is physically able he will return to the front. He told me this, as if in the fear that I might think him a noncombatant. Loyalty! The grim Herr Kommandant of Coblenz spoke of the three sons and five brothers whom the Allies had slain in France. I remember at Charpentry seeing the piles of French corpses; and at Fismes on the Vesle, the silent American doughboys. Loyalty, courage, honor! Forgive me this thought, Frederick, but it grows in my mind. Is not this finer thing within us making a shambles? Destroying the very civilization it created?

Here comes Henry. I identify his footsteps among those stiff heels of the Prussian guard. Yes, I was right; his face is at the door. My first glimpse of him gives me the answer. His blue eyes are sparkling and there is a firmness in his carriage, a touch of triumph; and much contempt in his face. But I knew they could not tempt Henry. He is well steeped in the good code. And he has a pride to fortify him, a pride that will take him in the morning to the wall with a taunting smile, no matter what stirs deep within.

They've closed the door on us. Henry is not very sociable. I asked him what inquisition he had been through, and he winked at me knowingly, shrugged, and buried his nose back in that stained old German novel. I get his meaning. He believes the Germans have our room wired, that they watch us through a hidden scope. Henry knows the game is up and I don't suppose he is looking for any miracles. But I sense that it feeds his vanity to let those Germans peek in upon his silent nonchalance. He is giving them a show of his mettle. So, tomorrow when they tumble his clay into a pit, it may be that some one of the firing crew will say the Herr American was a game one, who knew how to die.

9 P. M.

I've had time out for a sound meal, a smoke afterward; and several rounds before the clock. A priest was in. He spoke to us softly and read from his testament. When he had done that, he offered us

his sympathy and asked if he could minister to us. I would have talked to him freely, of many things. But Henry looked at me sharply and closed his right eye in warning. So, rather than offend Henry, I declined. Henry's thought was that we guard against a trick; our visitor might be a priest, or again an intelligence officer disguised in holy robe. For there is no sanctuary these days against wile and snare. I didn't agree with Henry's estimate of the man. He had a fine, kindly face; and eyes that were haunted by some strange suffering.

"But I think you have misjudged the padre," I told Henry.

Henry turned to me with a sour smile and broke his long silence.

"No matter, Hartley," he said ironically. "If German mercy can not save our lives, I have no reason to believe that German piety will save our souls!"

The clock ticks on. It seems to me that in the hours I have been in this room I have lived longer than in my whole previous existence. Yet it is now only a few minutes after nine o'clock. How Henry occupies himself I do not know. Earlier, I studied his pose. He reads German fluently, of course. But in half an hour he turned only one page of that novel. I have observed, in the past, that a favorite occupation of men in our position is to plan escape, to cling blindly to hope of some miraculous intervention. But Henry is too intelligent for that. He knows well enough that our fate is inexorable.

These walls are of stone; and outside there is an armed sentry with eyes glued to our door, beyond him double sentries who pace back and forth with the measured cadence of iron manikins.

We are to have another visitor. He's in at the door. Henry looked up at him, pursed his lips, shrugged his contempt and returned to his reading. I am taking my cue from Henry. But the fellow looms up from my paper as I reel off these thoughts through the end of my fountain pen. Our latest visitor is a man of thirty, I'd judge. His face is angular, his head a Prussian block, his nose aquiline and his eyes have that martial luster of the military caste. The set of his monocle, his bearing, the carefully nurtured and tended mustache over his somewhat effeminate mouth, disclose a gentleman.

He has moved over to me and is half sitting on the edge of my table as I write, Frederick. I can feel his eyes upon me, and sense his humor. He's trying to estimate the situation and make a propitious start with me. An expert, perhaps, come to try his hand at extracting information; of opening up that avenue of barter whereby we exchange three Russian scoundrels for our own good lives. We'll see, Frederick, how well I've estimated him when finally he speaks up.

"What are you doing, if my question does not intrude?"

His voice is friendly to the point of solicitude; and he speaks with the accent of Downing Street. A German from Oxford, perhaps.

"Writing, Herr Hauptmann."

"Ah, so I see." There is a genial mirth in his tone, rather than affront at my impertinence. "But you write in strange symbols. Addressing yourself in a familiar hand to some dear friend or next of kin, yes?"

"Quite right. A final message to a dear one named Frederick."

"Ah, a farewell message, my friend. Not a pleasant task I would say. Then you are determined to die, I take it?"

"But not, by any means, Herr Hauptmann, of my own volition. The determination you speak of is supplied by you Germans."

"Hardly that, sir!" He bit this out. "If you die it will be your own needless stubbornness and—pardon frankness—foolish pride that brings it about."

"But please remember, Herr Hauptmann—" I cast a look of amusement into his solemn face—"that the silly virtues you name have cost more than a full million lives of your own good countrymen in recent months."

He is silent. I do not fathom whether

he gnaws his lips in pique or sits coolly estimating our mettle. If my words did not convince him, at least there must be a quality in my voice that gives him my humor. If he knows men, he will retire shortly with his dignity. Otherwise he will stay to work himself into a frothing rage. He might even snatch away my pen and notebook, though I doubt that. I believe they are well satisfied with this means of occupying my mind, since what I set down can not possibly escape them!

"I gather that I waste my good time, gentlemen, and yours." There is injured dignity in his voice, but no temper. "In that event, I will leave you to your own thoughts."

"My time is not valuable, Herr Hauptmann, since I have more of it on my hands than you might believe. But you must judge for yourself the value of your own time."

"Until morning, then, gentlemen. Good night."

"At any time before sunrise, Herr Hauptmann."

The irony stung him. He flinched perceptibly and bit at the bristles of his cropped mustache. He adjusted his monocle and gave me a stiff bow as I looked up to smile at him. He left without any taunt at our expense, though there was just a slight note in his voice as he said his adieu. I would not call it a taunt, but there was in it a hint that he will observe our mood when the night is done. Well, he shall see.

4:00 A. M.

Time is slipping along. But I've lived through a lifetime, Frederick, since midnight; and a most delightful experience it has been. I've been through school all over again and have traveled and played and worked. The thing that puzzles me more and more is that I did not see the full beauty of life until now. As you reckon time, I have very little of it left. Another fifty minutes brings the hour of official sunrise. But that does not fret me in the least, just now. I've fifty full minutes—and my clock.

Henry is soundly asleep on the floor. He turned to at midnight. For a long time he lay with his eyes glued to the ceiling. When he closed his eyes, I thought for awhile it was pose. Why should any one sleep away precious minutes? But I leaned closely over him and saw that he had really managed it. Perhaps forgetfulness was what he needed. Not once has he stirred, so I gather he is not fretted by bad dreams. I dislike to think of his waking up, though he will not have long of wakefulness.

The black of night is thinning out. A rooster just crowed its (illegible) . . .

There, Frederick, I've just had a bad time. That rooster did it. Something in its voice, as it announced the dawn, set my flesh in revolt. Without warning my legs sagged. My knees began shaking and I felt a rush of blood to my head, a tightening at my throat, a mad impulse to shout at the top of my voice and beat at the door. Odd that a mere rooster should upset one so. I held on. I tried to write. Whatever it was within me rose up, made a hard fight to master me. But I win, Frederick. There are the marks of my nails at my palm. But I win. I am cool and serene now. I've just consulted my clock. There are thirty-seven of those long minutes left. That's a long time.

Twice before tonight I felt something gripping at my mind, a revulsion against the rising of the sun.

It is almost light now; light enough to see things out the window. Excuse me a moment. I've been watching the dawn. My window opens out upon a courtyard. There is a fountain, an elfin of marble from whose mouth the water spouts. The sparrows are beginning to wake up and chatter . . . Again that frenzy clutched at me, just because a rosy glow appeared at the housetops. I talked to myself, in a very low voice, so no one else would hear. It may sound foolish, Frederick, but it did a lot of good. Since morning began breaking, I

seem to be two different people. One wants to cry out for the officer of the guard, wants him to come here on the run to hear the names of three black hearted Russians. The other opposes. Want to make a show of yourself? he asks. Haven't you got the nerve to die? Aren't you as much a man as all those millions? Going to sell your country out? Want people to point to you the rest of your life?

I've the upper hand now. Those arguments did the trick. I'll use them again if I have to. But I do wish those infernal guards would quit their eternal stamp, stamp, stamp! They measure every step, and plant those iron shod heels of theirs down just so at each step. I hadn't noticed it so much before, but it's working on my nerves. I wish Henry would wake up. It is lonesome here. Somehow, I can't seem to keep my mind on the clock. But I'll be all right soon. I suppose that red glow in the sky outside has upset me for the moment.

4:30 A. M.

Not long now, is it, reckoned any way you want to? But I'm not so uncomfortable. I've had it all out again, and am sitting firmly at the controls. There is some one coming down the corridor now. The sound startled me for a moment, until I guessed it is our breakfast. Yes, it is a soldier with a steaming tray. Henry just stirred uncomfortably. I've been debating whether to wake him.

The soldier woke Henry, though the fellow made no noise. It must be that Henry sensed his breakfast. He rubbed his eyes and blinked. I hated to see blood come back into his brain. What an awakening! But Henry did splendidly. There was a momentary wild stare in his blue eyes, then he rose, stretched himself with an air of real well-being, and pulled a chair to the table. Our breakfast is quite an affair. Eggs, sausages, bread and coffee. Must have come from the mess of the Kommandant, in honor of the occasion. Rather a whimsical kindness; though I suppose a man should not be expected to die on an empty stomach. Henry is eating with relish. I do not find myself hungry, though I will drink a cup of coffee and nibble at the bread, just to give flavor to the black cigars that came with the food.

I started, but made a quick recovery and now my pen is steady. Heels, strange heels, heels marching with a swifter cadence than that metallic clank of our guards. Henry took a deep breath and shot a quick glance at the door. He is leaning back now with even eyes upon the ceiling as he coolly emits heavy clouds of gray tobacco smoke. He manages himself superbly. Only that first little token when he heard those feet. I am grateful for this occupation, Frederick. I cling tenaciously to the thread of my thoughts, penning them down as they come to me. It relieves the tension of my nerves—holds back that other fellow within me who wants to shout out the names of those three Russian rascals.

It is the Herr Hauptmann. He is calm and solemn. There is no gloating in his face, nor feeling of any kind. Behind him is what must be a platoon, all armed with their Mausers. Their faces are glum, wooden, seeming to say that they will do what they are told without letting the job harrow their own feelings. The Herr Hauptmann enters to (illegible) . . .

I was not expecting that. They took Henry out alone. I am left here, without explanation. Henry went with a stout step. When the captain motioned him into line ahead of the Grenadiers, Henry stretched himself, yawned, and went with an air of great indifference. Their steps have faded in the distance. Can this be a trick? I do not want to see Henry die alone, yet I must know what happens.

They are crossing the courtyard. From this window I have a clear view of everything. The drums are beating a slow step. Henry is at the wall. He waves

aside the black hood they had for his head. The Grenadiers are in line, their Mausers at the ready. Why doesn't something happen. I've been standing here endlessly. Have they all turned to stone? Henry is smoking indifferently. He just tried a smoke ring. What a magnificent vanity sustains him. But if only those sparrows would not chirp. There must be a dozen of them in the birch tree outside my window, all of them chattering at the rising sun as if their (illegible) . . .

4:52 A. M.

I turned away at the last moment. There was a sound as of some one upsetting a pile of old boards. It gave me a bad minute. That Russian argument has been tormenting me again. Needless, that. I have settled it once and for all! No matter how hard my knees knock in protest. I have my pen well under control again. I know what is coming. There are steps outside, those same steps that came for Henry. The Herr Hauptmann is in the room. They have played their trump card. Henry was right. They were really watching us last night. They saw that Henry's nerve would not fail him. So he died first, a spectacle for my benefit; for the effect on my nerves. They sense that weak spot, that damnable argument that has tormented me.

"May I hope you have something to say that will relieve me of a very unpleasant duty, sir?"

The Herr Hauptmann's voice is strained, formal. I have not looked at him. His words seemed to steady me (sentence broken off) . . .

"A favor, Herr Hauptmann. Please do not add insult to injury!"

There is silence. He stands there. Where, Frederick, did those last words of mine come from! That revolt swept me, just when I was feeling sure of myself. My brain reeled. Those three Russians—their names rushed into my throat until I thought I would strangle. Then out of that tempest came my voice.

"As you please." It is the Herr Hauptmann speaks. "Pardon, but I must ask that you come . . ."

We are in the courtyard now. We walk slowly, to the beat of dismal drums. I am master now, though my legs do not feel the ground as I walk. There is a whirl in my brain, as if I drifted in the air and I can feel my heart thumping above that awesome tap-tap of the drums. Yet I have no impulse to cry out against it all.

We are at the stone wall, and halted. The Herr Hauptmann offers no objection to my notebook, though it puzzles the Grenadiers. He bowed slightly when I declined the black hood and made to him my last request. It was that this letter find its way to you, Frederick, my good friend. The Grenadiers are forming now in front of me. I count, and there are twenty of them. They are very young men who look at me with a strange light in their eyes as they clutch their muskets. It all seems so unreal. In a moment they will kill me. My mind can not grasp it, Frederick. It is more like some horrible nightmare, against which one can not find his voice. The Herr Hauptmann stands at my side, his face waxen gravity. I am grateful to him that he understands my whim, does not take away my pen.

"Sorry, sir."

His voice. It was coldly polite. One good sportsman to another. The code. Time drags now. Why is there such deliberation? The seconds oppress me. I fear those three Russians, although . . . he looks (illegible) I will . . . (sentence left unfinished).

"Achtung!"

Forty heels crashed. But the Herr Hauptmann's command steadied me. They are gripping their Mausers, Frederick—

Twenty putty faces stare at me. I will not look up again. I'm not afraid, but my knees seem a bit weak . . . The command—Aim! Goodby, Frederick. My last breath . . . God, why don't they snap the thread! I . . .

A Story of the Louisiana Bayous

RIVER BANK

By JAMES MITCHELL CLARKE

THE meeting was wild as a stormy night on the river. Delta men, trappers, fishermen, hunters from the cradle up, are more used to settling things with their hands than with talk. And the French blood in them has a low boiling point. Before proceedings started they gathered in the low roofed rickety old hall set back from the levee and shouted insults and accusations. When order was called, they kept breaking into talk which quieted slowly under the pounding of the chairman's gavel.

Len Hammer, about whom this storm of feeling had gathered, sat a little apart, motionless even to his hands, apparently unmoved. Even when Jean LaForce got up and in his piping voice proposed the resolution demanding that Len resign, Len only looked at him.

His supporters, however, did not share his indifference. When LaForce accused Len of misappropriating money entrusted him for a new road that would connect this isolated river town with New Orleans and the outside world,

they hissed and yelled and stamped the floor. The opposing faction yelled and stamped the floor—and made more noise. For a moment after LaForce sat down the chairman's pounding could not be heard.

Paul Dumont, the wrinkle faced, shrewd eyed, heavy shouldered old trapper who was secretary of the road committee, went to the platform. He said simply that Len Hammer was an honest man and would prove it by showing where every penny of the money had gone. They yelled again.

But when Len took Dumont's place the men fell silent. His rough, strong voice filled the room with crisp sentences as he read from pencil written sheets a clear, blunt accounting of what he had spent for surveys, labor, supplies, contracts let and contracts to be let. When he finished they were still silent. No one had expected such a report. Politicians didn't act that way.

"If you want more, I've got the receipts and bank statements," Len said, and went back to his chair.

It was then that the Renauds showed their hand, which had stirred up rumors of Len's dishonesty and used Jean LaForce as a puppet and mouthpiece. Old Renaud, his gray mustache quivering, rose up and said that figures didn't prove anything—that Len was a known murderer, and a man clever enough to hide his thieving behind straight sounding talk like this report. What had Len Hammer done since he came among them? Renaud wanted to know. He had tried to change everything from the old ways to newfangled foolishness. And why? For his own profit, that was why!

The chairman looked at Len to see if he wanted to make any answer.

"Let 'em vote!" Len said. "If they haven't got any more sense than to believe that stuff, I'm ready to quit."

Some one laughed, and the two factions started rowing again. The arguments were loud and charged with bad feeling. This was more than a difference over a road. Progress, in its continual march, had come to the lower Mississippi. Many resisted, because it is the nature of people cut off from the world to resist change. And the Louisiana French are a suspicious race. They distrusted Len Hammer and his works.

When, finally, the votes were all in, quiet fell again. Two men from each faction were told off to count. It took a long time, and when they were finished they began over again. The crowd shifted restlessly on the wooden benches, but remained hushed. Only the voices of the counters droned on. At last the chairman took off his spectacles and rose.

"The motion has been defeat," he said. "One hundred eighty-one to one eighty-nine. Len Hammer will stay in his job."

The old hall rocked as Len's supporters got to their feet, yelling. Len Hammer jumped to the platform and held up his hand.

"Listen," he said. "The people I'm talking about know who I mean. You've tried to block every move I've made. You've smashed my boats and trapped on my land and stuck a knife into me every time you could. You tried to get me into trouble over the road. I'm tired of this dirty, underhanded stuff. I'll settle right now, outside the hall, man to man. I'll take on all five of you at once or one at a time, but come on and fight."

ALL eyes turned toward five men sitting together at the left side of the hall. From old Renaud with his graying mustaches and seamed, sly face, they ranged down to Bebo, twenty-two. They were the color of cordovan leather, these Renauds; red-brown, tall, straight, very black as to hair and eyes, showing plainly their touch of Indian blood. But their eyes were not good. They would not meet Len's glance, but looked at the floor or the wall. None of them moved.

Len Hammer laughed.

"Maybe they're bashful," he said. "Maybe they don't want to speak up in company. I'll be waiting outside."

But no Renauds appeared. Paul Dumont came to tell him that they'd gone out the back way, so Len went home. He walked down the levee road alone toward his house, which was also store and post office, just around the next bend. The hot, murky June night was very dark. Below the levee the gleam of lamps showed now and then through a screen of orange trees, but did not light the road. On the other side the great river made itself known by sound alone. Len heard heavy shoes crunching the oyster shell ahead. The man came slowly, steadily toward him and Len peered through the black. He could make out only a dim shape. But a voice said—

"Good night, Mr. Len."

Len stopped.

"Hello, Pete. Didn't anybody come for you tonight?"

"No, Mr. Len. They all went for the meeting. I can get home, me. I can walk good if I know how far it is to go."

Pete's voice was very gentle, patient. Len felt again the admiration which had prompted him to take this man into the store—and the queer, uncomfortable sensation he always had in his presence. For Pete Peltier was more than half blind. At night he could not see at all, yet he could find his way home and had recognized Len before Len knew him.

"How'd you do that, Pete?" Len asked. "How'd you know me?"

"You walk quick, Mr. Len—different from all mans around here. Good night, Mr. Len."

In the low roofed store Old Man Giles was writing up accounts of registered mail by lantern light. He looked once at Len's face and said—

"I see they ain't going to throw you in jail."

"No."

Len sat down on a box and rolled a cigaret. Old Man Giles went on with his bookkeeping. Pretty soon Len got up and began pacing the floor. The cans rattled on the shelves. Then he began to exercise his vocabulary. He went right down the line, cursing South Lousiana from the mosquitoes which now crusted the screen a quarter inch thick to the trappers who gambled away money which should pay bills at his store.

"What the hell's the use trying to do anything for these people?" he wanted to know. "I work my hands off trying to make a town out of this mudbank, and they call me a crook. You'd think I was trying to skin 'em out of their eye teeth instead of make 'em money. There isn't a man around that won't profit by this road, but can they see it? Not in twenty years!"

He paused to glare at Old Man Giles.

"Trouble is they think and act like this was a hundred years ago instead of now. Just because old grandpop Villard didn't have a road, there's something crooked about anybody that builds one. They even call me a murderer. Sure I shot that guy! But he needed killing. I wasn't even held for trial. Why do they have to bring that up?"

OLD MAN GILES looked at Len and saw blue-green eyes shooting sparks. Tufted light eyebrows drawn down. A craggy, lean face, seamed by wind and weather and a rough-and-tumble life, old for thirty-two years. Old Man Giles smiled, being fond of Len.

"I'll bet you my new hat against an empty mail sack you called the Renauds out to fight you."

Len whirled on him.

"What if I did? They cooked up this trouble over the road. There's been a Renaud behind every piece of trouble that's come my way—and that's plenty."

Old Man Giles shook his head gravely.

"Why wouldn't they make you trouble, Len? Till you came, the Renauds had everything their own way. They were kings around here. They don't like

to see change. Things are sliding out from under their hands."

"It's about time. There's five of 'em, and not a one that isn't yellow and rotten as hell—not a one but the girl, and she's no kin, except her mother married old Renaud and died of it. They won't even fight when you throw it in their faces. They've got to sneak around and get you from behind."

"All right," Old Man Giles said. "It's true. That was good stock once, but they've imbred and crossbred till there isn't much left. But you don't even try to get along with them, Len. You started bucking the Renauds when you first came here. You've been doing it ever since. You go out of your way to do it—like the time you slapped down young Bebo and then kicked him in the pants."

For an instant Len grinned, then his eyes shot fire once more.

"Do you think I'd stand by and let him and those Sanko boys gang up on Pete when he couldn't even see? There was Pete, trying to fight all three of 'em, blind as a bat. I guess Pete would walk out on me as quick as the others, but he's game. You've got to hand him that much."

Old Man Giles regarded Len thoughtfully, gravely.

"You don't try to work with people, Len. You picked the right place when you came down here away from the railroad and telegraph. A wild new country's the place for you. But even here you try to fight your way too much. These folks are all right if you just try to understand them and get along with them. You step on a lot of toes, Len."

"I understand the Renauds, all right."

"Yes, and you do everything you can to make them hate you more. When they find you talking to the girl, it's just like a slap in the face."

Len sat down abruptly on a box. He looked tired..

"Maybe you're right, Roy," he said. "Maybe I do scrap too much. But it's the only way I know how to do. I like a lot of these people—want to help 'em out—but I don't trust 'em. I don't depend on anybody but myself. And there have only been two kinds of folks in my life, Roy—friends, and those I had to get before they got me."

Old Man Giles, who was fond of Len, smiled.

"Sometimes you don't even wait to see whether they're friends before you hit out. You'd get along a lot better if you'd walk easy and talk soft, but you'll have to go your own way. One of you'll win, but don't ever expect you won't have trouble."

For a long time Len sat silent, frowning out through the mosquito laden door toward the dark where Mississippi's current bumped and scraped his two boats against the wharf with soft, familiar sounds. He twirled his old corduroy cap round and round in his knotty hands. At last he arose.

"Got to go down and see Thibaud about a load of shell."

"Tonight?" Old Man Giles said sharply.

"Tonight. That damn meeting put me behind. Tell Paul to have the *Mutt* ready for five in the morning, and if he hasn't got gas aboard I'll break his damn neck."

Halfway across the room Len turned suddenly and fumbled a moment with his cap.

"What would you say," he asked, "if I told you I was going to marry Elodie Renaud?"

"I'd laugh," Old Man Giles said. "Just like I'm doing now. You've got enough trouble."

THAT was not the only night Len started out on a job at eleven—and was called before Summer sunrise the next morning. The trouble over the road had, as he said, put him behind; which meant that the many threads of his activities had slipped a little from his grasp. It took hard driving work to

catch up again, for Len had a hand in almost every business with which the Delta concerned itself.

He had started out to grow oranges on the narrow strip of land between the levee and the great marsh behind. When a store got into financial difficulties, he had taken it over, along with the post office contract. Men had come to him, wanting to borrow money for oyster and shrimp boats. Chances to turn the incompetency or crookedness of others into an honest profit had come in the buying of alligator hides, fur and terrapin. Len Hammer had become a power in the Delta, with more work on his shoulders than even his tough, sinewy body and active mind could carry without strain.

For days following the meeting he spent all daylight hours on river, bayou or in the fields—nights talking interminably to men who needed orders, advice, persuasion; men who brought in reports and tales of trouble, men who wanted to be paid or to explain why they couldn't pay. He would have liked to forget the Renauds. There was enough without thinking of enmity.

But the Renauds could not be dismissed. Downstream, where the river pilots have their barracks, Len came out of a conference to find the mahogany coping of his fast launch smashed for three feet along her starboard side. There was no clew to the boat which had struck her. No one had seen it happen. But Len was certain it was no accident. Delta men do not handle a boat so clumsily. When work slacked up, he promised himself, he would trace the thing down and have an accounting with the Renauds.

And there was Elodie. Len had been in the habit of spending a while with old Renaud's slim, dark eyed stepdaughter every day—several times, some days. They met on neutral ground; the gallery of Elodie's aunt Marie's white house—though not often there—because that lady had allowed Len to cut back her orange trees and increase their bearing, much to the chagrin and anger of the Renauds; at the landing where the river cargo boats put in; sometimes at the post office when Elodie came for mail.

Elodie always had a smile for Len, a slow smile which began when she lowered her eyes and raised them slowly to his. Going about his work that week, Len remembered the look in her eyes—too big, almost, for the small face that was like a white oleander flower. And it came to him that he had not seen her since the night of the road meeting—not to talk to. Once, when he passed along the levee road on foot, he had seen her standing on the gallery of her stepfather's house. But when he reached the house she was gone.

When these thoughts came to him, Len shook his head impatiently and plunged into work. He hadn't time to be thinking about the girl. But hard as he worked, much as he had to think about, he could not get rid of a growing loneliness.

The only part of Len's complicated business which ran without his active supervision was the store and post office. Old Man Giles, whose withered left hand kept him from active work, took care of the books and distributed mail. Blind Pete Peltier did the heavy work and weighed sugar for customers. They did their work well, without fuss and without mistakes.

It was Pete who puzzled Len. He could understand Roy Giles, whom he had known for years, and who had come originally from St. Louis. But he could not make out the Cajun. Len had brought him home after he found Pete, with tears streaming from his blind eyes, trying desperately to annihilate the three who had attacked him, as one might bring in a stray dog. He thought that Pete might do enough odd jobs to pay for his keep until laziness or fishing weather drifted him away. Pete had stayed. Not only that, he had become valuable. Even at night, when he was entirely blind, his groping hands found what a customer wanted. He never

made a mistake in change, never avoided a hard job.

IT DIDN'T match up. Blind Pete's father was a line fisherman, making a few dollars from red fish and river cat caught over the side of a skiff, and an intermittent market hunter seldom more than one jump ahead of the game warden. His brother ran a small still, when he wasn't too lazy, and had a generally bad reputation for petty thieving. They lived in a squalid, half ruined house. Ignorant, shiftless folk, undependable as water, they represented the worst element of the Delta.

Backed by the energetic and cunning enmity of the Renauds, this element had been a half hidden, inert resistance to all Len's efforts, like the swordgrass and quicksand of the great Delta marsh. Even when he liked the folk, and he liked many, he could not trust them, any more than they trusted him.

He did not trust Pete Peltier, for more reasons than the discrepancy between his background and his actions. There was something uncanny about the man. Though Len admired the way Pete made his hands and ears do for eyes, it gave him the creeps. He could recognize any man who came into the store by his step on the plank runway leading from the levee. To see him count out change with his staring eyes fixed on a distant wall was strange, uncomfortable. Pete's eyes always had a queer, staring look—even in broad daylight when he could see. And when Len was about, those eyes followed him, followed him as if they saw and understood more than Len liked anybody to know.

Len felt Pete's eyes upon him that heavy, sunlit morning when he sat at the back of the store sipping a cup of black, smooth Louisiana coffee and snatching a moment's rest. He was thinking of something else, frowning out through a window where his orange trees cut the light with patterns of leaf shadow. He thought his thoughts, and knew that Pete was there—moving about his work with those queer, yellow-gray eyes turned upon him. He started when Pete spoke.

"Elodie is a fine girl, Mr. Len."

"You devil!" Len said, whirling around. "How'd you know I was thinking about Elodie?"

Pete smiled and said softly in the odd, south Louisiana patois:

"Sometime you stand and look and don't see nothing, Mr. Len. That is how a man is look when he think about a girl. I have seen you with Elodie—and everybody know how old Renaud has lock her up, him, so she can't talk to you."

"Locked her up? What's this all about, Pete? Let's hear it!"

"Since last week he have not let her outside his house. He says she is a bad girl and he can't trust her. She has not been to the store—not even the house of her aunt, no."

Len Hammer set down his coffee cup heavily. He stared once more out through the window, his tufted eyebrows drawn low.

"He makes her cook and keep house for five men," he said, as if speaking to himself. "And if the meals aren't hot, the boys slap her around. Now he locks her up and says she's no good."

Len's knuckles drummed on the table. His blue-green eyes began to snap like fire in cedar logs. He turned them on Pete, slowly, watchfully—as a man looks when he has to make up his mind whether or not to run a chance.

"Pete," he said abruptly, "did I hear somebody say the Renauds were giving a dance tomorrow night?"

Pete nodded.

"Yes, Mr. Len."

"Can you go to it?"

Pete smiled.

"They like for me to come. I can play good on the jew's-harp, me. But I don't go for the Renauds."

Len snatched the nearest piece of paper and began to write. Once or twice he paused to think, half shut eyes star-

ing off into space. Once he laughed, a short, abrupt laugh—like his speech, a little harsh.

"This time you go," he said to Pete. "Give this to Elodie and don't let anybody see you. Can you do that?"

"Yes, Mr. Len."

At a quarter of twelve that Saturday night, Len Hammer walked into the Renaud's house. He was not dressed for a dance. He had just come up from the bayou where his men were building a short canal between the river and the trapping grounds. His shirt was open at the throat and not clean. He needed a shave. He looked rough and hard—the way he was.

But when Elodie saw him she left her cousin's side and walked over to Len. She put her arm through his, and turned to face her people. Her eyes, huge in the flower-like face, held no fear.

People quit dancing. The negro boys of the orchestra lowered their instruments. Their eyes rolled and their jaws hung down. The room was so quiet the high whine of mosquitoes outside sounded loud. In that room were twenty-odd men—Renaud kin, and friends. The hot, close air, heavy with the smell of wine, grew tense as they stared at Len and Len looked back.

"Ready to go?" Len said to Elodie.

The girl looked up at him and smiled.

"I'm ready, me."

Then old Renaud charged up, choking and shaking.

"What you do in my house? Elodie, get back from this man!" He called her a light woman in French.

"We're going up to New Orleans," Len told him. "Elodie and I are going to get married. How do you like that?"

Len's laugh was short and harsh. He turned, and started marching through the people with Elodie on his arm. No one had yet lifted a hand against him. Old Renaud's voice was shrill behind them.

"Shoot me this man! Fortuné, Leon, Jules! Kill him He is kidnap Elodie!"

The Renaud boys were moving, going for their weapons. Len turned.

"You won't shoot," he said. "You haven't got the guts. You don't know whether I've got a gun or not, and you're too yellow to take a chance."

One by one he picked them out, and his blue-green eyes were on them, unwavering. They stopped where they stood, and one by one their eyes shifted away. Len turned his back once more, opened the screen for Elodie, let it bang behind them. Back in the room echoed the sharp, derisive twang of a jew's-harp.

Len Hammer laughed.

"I'll get my wedding clothes in New Orleans," he told his girl, and moved with her into the hot, dark night.

WHEN Len and Elodie came into the store again after a three-day honeymoon, Old Man Giles put down his ledger book. Blind Pete Peltier turned from a shelf and a smile spread over his heavy, dark face. His half blind eyes could not smile. His soft voice said:

"Hello, Mr. Len. Hello, Elodie. You are happy, you."

But Old Man Giles did not smile until he had looked at them a long time. And the smile went swiftly.

"I suppose you had to do it," he said, "but, boy, you certainly reach out for trouble with both hands."

Len laughed—that short, harsh laugh of his. He slapped Old Man Giles on the shoulder.

"Old man grief himself! What's happened now, Roy?"

"Nothing—yet."

"Then what's eating you? Can't a man get married without his house falling down on him?"

All the worry-wrinkles in Giles' face showed. His eyes regarded Len steadily over the top of his glasses.

"Do you think," he said slowly, "you can take his girl right out of Renaud's house and not have him pay you back? Just because they were afraid to stop you, do you think they'll let it drop?"

Len laughed again.

"If they were going to do anything, they'd have done it while I was away. What the hell do I care for 'em, anyhow? Any time they want to fight me, anyway, I'm ready and then some."

Elodie, who had stood at one side listening, turned Len half around to face her.

"He is right, him," she said, nodding toward Old Man Giles. "These days we have been so happy, I have always a fear." She touched her breast to show where the fear was. "They are bad, those Renaud men. *Cher,* I have heard them say what they would do. And now that you have take me, they will hate you most bad."

Len put his arm around her, grinning.

"Let 'em hate me," he said. "I hope they bite themselves and die of it."

Peace hung over the Delta—deep, shining peace of midsummer on the Gulf. Elodie, wearing her pretty new dresses, put his house in such order that Len took to shaving every day and humorously cursed the softening influence of women. Old Man Giles scribbled in his ledgers, and Blind Pete continued to move about the store on silent feet—and follow Len with strange, straining eyes.

Len, caught up again in the whirl and confusion of his work which would have broken a lesser man, paid no attention to the Renauds except to remind Old Man Giles and Elodie of their fears and laugh at them. He had for the Renauds the contempt of a strong man with work to do for those who make trouble and won't fight; the contempt a good shepherd dog might feel for yapping mongrels.

Quiet lasted two weeks. Then, on a night when Len was downriver, fire broke out in the store. No one could learn how it started. Flames spread with the suddenness of fireworks over one whole wall. Elodie ran to bring Len's workmen and neighbors. Old Man Giles wet a burlap sack and tried to smother the leaping flames.

There are no fire departments in the Delta. Before a bucket brigade had the blaze put out, the whole east wall of the store was burned, and Old Man Giles was lying unconscious on the floor. His burns were so bad he had to be taken to the Sacred Heart Hospital in New Orleans as fast as Len's *Mutt* would move.

The blow caught Len below the belt. He could afford to rebuild the store and replenish his stock. But he could not afford to lose Roy Giles. He began immediately to teach Elodie to run the post office, but the workings of even so small a station are complicated enough to confuse the beginner. It took time. Then there were the books. Elodie had not gone to school beyond the eighth grade, and Pete Peltier could neither read nor write.

So Len stayed in the store while his other interests got along as best they could—which was badly. And as the days stretched into weeks his fury grew. They'd done this to him, the Renauds, and he couldn't strike back. There was no way of proving they had started the fire and so make an arson case. They wouldn't fight. Len, seeing affairs that only needed his hand to save them, slid deeper into trouble, chafing at confinement within four walls, could only curse the Delta and send out word that he'd hammer the meanness out of any Renaud who came near his place.

HE SHOULD have realized that the Renauds would not stop at the half successful attempt to burn him out. He should have known they would not be satisfied with anything less than killing him or running him out of the country. But Len, being the man he was, could not understand the working of their minds. In such time as he could get away from the store—mostly at night—he went about alone, careless of what might happen to him.

It never occurred to him to carry a gun down here in the Delta, though—

with the suspicion all open country people have of the city—he kept one in the car for trips to New Orleans. When he came home to find Elodie, pale and heavy eyed, waiting up for him, he scolded her. The scolding, however, did no good. She continued to sit up till all hours, and clung to him when he came in. Elodie had lived with the Renauds.

It came suddenly, out of a clear bright day, where the levee road coming down from the New Orleans highway makes a great bend to follow the river. It runs, in this place, through willow trees. There is swamp on both sides, dense cover.

Len, driving back from the railroad's end, twenty miles above home, rounded the bend and came suddenly upon a great log blocking his way. He had scarcely pulled the brake when a bullet smashed his windshield into a fountain of flying glass.

Len felt the chips cut as he flung himself to the floor. Another bullet hummed close overhead. More slapped into the metal door beside him. Len picked two pieces of glass from his face and reached for his gun in a side pocket. The ambush was well planned. The swamp made cover which he could not have seen through, even if he had been able to raise his head to look. No one was likely to come by here for a long time. And what good would it do him if they did? The passer-by might take a hand to help, but probably would not. It was up to him. He was alone against several.

In a little while his attackers realized that they were not getting anywhere and ceased firing. But from the shots Len had learned that three were on the landward side, one between him and the river. He could not get out without being instantly shot. On the other hand, they could not kill him so long as he lay where he was. And they did not know whether he were dead or not. They would try to find out.

Len reached up and slid the cushion off the front seat. He set it diagonally in front of him, reached over the top, unlatched the door and gave it a push. Instantly a bullet struck the cushion with a soft sound. It came on through and bruised Len as a thrown stone might have done. Len looked over the cushion and saw vine leaves quivering beside a stump. One of the Renauds, he couldn't tell which, raised his head to see if Len were dead. Len fired and saw him sink out of sight in the dense growth. He slipped a new cartridge into the cylinder and dived head foremost out the door. Bullets were smacking into the car and spurting up dust under it when he landed.

Len crouched behind the hood and fired over it at random. From three directions shots answered him, almost together. He came from behind the car and charged the nearest sound, plunging down the levee bank.

There was no reason for Len to live. These were hunters, men who had handled guns since they could pull a trigger. But Len was not thinking of living or dying. All he knew was that he wanted to get another Renaud. Perhaps the suddenness of his attack, in the instant when they were throwing new shells into rifle chambers, gave him advantage. Perhaps it simply was not Len's time to go. Bullets cut all around him, cut off twigs which struck his face, ploughed up ground between his feet.

He waded a knee-deep pool and saw Bebo Renaud kneeling behind a log, using it for a rifle rest. Len shot Bebo and threw himself behind that log. He picked up Bebo's rifle and turned it on the other two. For a few moments the swamp was filled with crashing explosions. Then one rifle was silenced. In another moment the remaining Renaud fled. Len heard him break branches and splash through muddy water. He was gone.

Bebo Renaud was not dead. He lay on his back looking up at Len with terror in his face. Len laughed, and examined the wound in his side.

"You'll live," he said. "You'll live to get hung."

He went to look at the others. Leon was dying from a stomach wound. Between the levee and river, Jules, the oldest, lay stone dead, shot just above the eye.

Len put Bebo in his car and started for the town at the railroad's end. His neck felt queer when he turned his head and flies buzzed around him. The sheriff, when he came out in answer to Len's horn, looked at him queerly.

"I shot a couple of men," Len said. "It's hot, and you'd better get 'em buried."

Then he fainted, not even aware that blood was pumping from his neck.

LEN'S trial should never have gotten past a coroner's court. But Old Renaud had influence enough to have him taken to the parish seat at Pointe a La Haiche. They kept him in jail there for two weeks while a jury was impaneled, and Len very nearly died. Malaria, in its recurrent attack, came back to complicate the fever and weakness caused by his neck wound.

When he sat on the witness stand the room swam hazily before his eyes. It was only by sheer force of will that he was able to tell a clear, straightforward account of what had happened on the levee road. He knew that a great many people were at the trial—all the Delta, apparently. But he knew nothing else. When a verdict was brought in he was muttering about the Renauds in delirium.

He came to himself the first time to see Pete Peltier staring at him over the foot of a bed. Pete's eyes made him start involuntarily and gave him a chill feeling different from the malaria chill. He shut his eyes till he remembered that this was his own room. He must have been acquitted. He opened his eyes and grinned.

The troubled look on Pete's face gave place to a glowing smile.

"Where's Elodie?" Len asked.

"She is rest, Mr. Len. You feel good now, yes?"

"Hell, no!" Len shut his eyes again.

It was two days before Len was well enough to notice how worried Elodie looked. Her face was white and drawn from the double burden of nursing Len and tending the post office, but beside fatigue her eyes wore a haunted look. She moved nervously about, even when he needed no service. Len finally asked her what the matter was.

"They will do you some harm, Len. My stepfather and Fortuné have make talk of how they will get even. Once they have try to kill you. They will again. That is why I have fear, yes."

Len's laugh was the shadow of his normal laughter, but meant the same.

"They won't do anything," he said. "They know what happened before, and they're yellow."

Elodie shook her head vehemently, her eyes brimming with tears.

"They know you are down in your bed and can't get up, no. This is the time they will come."

Though he had laughed, Elodie's talk of the Renauds kept coming back to Len at intervals all day. In the afternoon Blind Pete came to stay with him while Elodie was sorting mail. Len noticed that his staring eyes were always on the window which looked toward the levee road. He seemed to be watching for some one.

Just before supper Len told Elodie to bring his revolver. He took a rag, some oil and worked on it till a fit of malarial trembling seized him and he had to stop. When the shaking passed he finished the job, filling the cylinder with fresh shells. He put the gun under his pillow as Elodie came in carrying a tray of food.

It was very hot that night. A ceiling of clouds hung low over the earth, seeming to compress the air till it was hot and sticky and close enough to cut. Outside the screened windows of Len's room, mosquitoes sang their endless, monotonous song. Huge winged insects,

moths, and great biting flies and flying cockroaches, bumbled stupidly against the wire, but only intensified the heavy silence.

Len Hammer, sleeping fitfully, woke when he felt Elodie's weight leave the bed. She was crossing toward the window, noiseless on her bare feet. Outside the window darkness lay like liquid velvet. An orange tree close by the wall hung down its leaves and did not stir. Elodie stood a long time looking out.

When she came back to Len her fingers trembled on his face, touching his eyelids.

"I'm awake," he said. "What's the matter?"

"Len, someone is come through the trees."

Len lay and heard the winged things strike the screen. He heard the great river, softly moving logs along the shore and the scrape of his boats against the wharf. He could hear nothing else. But he did not for an instant disbelieve Elodie, who had listened to nights beside the river for eighteen years. She knew the noise a man made walking, even though he prowled as softly as a cat.

Len's hand went under his pillow. But when he rose on one elbow and tried to aim the gun wavered in all directions. Even when he used his other hand for support, the malarial shaking was too much. Great drops of sweat stood out on Len's brow. Blood surged through his arteries and set the neck wound throbbing. He could not hold his gun on the window.

FOR the first time in his life Len Hammer knew what it meant to be helpless. He fell back, finally, unable even to hold himself on his elbow. This was defeat, the end. Between the trees of his own orange grove, one of the Renauds was coming. He would stand at the window and riddle the bed. He, Len Hammer who had always been able to take care of himself, would die in bed.

While weary seconds of waiting went by, Len thought of the years he had spent here. He had loved the Delta better than any place he had known. He had given it every ounce of his strength, the best of his brain. He had worked through the smothering heat of summer, the wet, raw chill of winter, rain, mist and bright days; enduring exposure, insects, the constant threat of death by fever, drowning or poisonous snakes. He had tried to make this section what it could be—should be—instead of a cut-off country, sunk in its ignorance and superstitious dread of change.

They wouldn't let him. He had fought, alone, for they would not help him. At every step he had met opposition, and come on through. Now, when he lay helpless, too weak to defend himself, they would kill him.

Len heard Elodie's breath quickly indrawn in a gasp. He struggled once more to his elbow, beads of anguish standing on his brow. An odd thought came to him as he struggled to aim the gun, and could not. He was the only man in the whole section who had screens on his windows. If he had wooden shutters as the others did, they could be closed. The man could not shoot through. Progressiveness, even in this, would be his undoing.

Elodie suddenly gasped, "He is here!" and flung herself on Len.

A shot crashed, splitting the heavy night in two with a clean sound. One shot. Len lay for a moment unable to move, not knowing what had happened. He was not hurt. Elodie—

His arm encircled the girl fiercely. Her fingers touched his face.

"You hurt?" he whispered.

"No, Len. You—"

He flung her aside and propped himself up.

"Somebody else," he said, "fired—"

From outside a slow, soft voice said:

"Are you all right, Mr. Len? I have kill this man, me. He is dead."

Elodie slipped off the bed and found a lantern. Its glow disappeared through

the store while Len waited, reappeared outside, showed the hanging, motionless leaves of the orange tree. He heard Elodie's voice and the other, soft, slow voice, but could not hear what was being said.

Elodie came in carrying the lantern. Tears were running out of her eyes. The smile on her mouth trembled.

"It was Fortuné," she said. "He was right under the window with a gun. Pete shot him by the sound he has make when he breathe."

Over Elodie's shoulder Len saw Pete Peltier, faintly illuminated by the lantern's light. Pete was smiling. His eyes stared at Len, trying to see him.

"Those are most bad mans, those Renaud," he said. "But I don't think they will do you any more hurt, no."

Len drew down his eyebrows, trying to take this all in. Blind Pete, who made his eyes do for ears, had shot from the dark and saved him. He smiled.

"I'm damned! I have got some friends, after all."

"Friends?" Elodie said, coming close. "All men here are friends to you, Len. You have been sick; you do not know what they are do. Every day some one has come to help. And they have haul your oysters for the new beds and sell those shrimp. They do the work on the road. If you had heard what they said at Pointe La Haiche after the trial, you would know about friends!"

Len laughed.

"I'm a fool," he said. "But Elodie, how'd Pete come to be around when Fortuné came? How did you know he'd come, Pete?"

"Every night Pete has sleep in the store since you are sick," Elodie told him. "But I—I did not know what he could do when he can't see, no. He is your friend most good."

Oriental Contrasts

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

IF THERE is a land of paradox on earth, that land is the Near Orient, and more particularly, some of the Mohammedan countries around the Mediterranean. There the women wear trousers—the men, petticoats. When a True Believer enters a Mosque, he takes off his shoes and jams his fez down until it causes his ears to project almost at right angles to his face; and, when he rides up or down hill, he gallops his mount, while on level ground he walks it.

Among the Tuaregge of Mauritania, or Southern Morocco, the women go unveiled and enjoy almost as much freedom as the average New York flapper. But the men, from the age of fifteen, carry veils and paint their cheeks and eyebrows, and possibly even rouge their lips, for all I know.

The Turks, for example, are constitutionally opposed to pronouncing the word "No"—probably for reasons of their own—substituting *inshallah,* equivalent to "let us hope so", literally "if Allah wills"—a vague and careful expression typical of the evasive character

of the majority of Near Oriental peoples. When the Turk says "today" (*buguen*), he means "tomorrow perhaps"; and when he says "tomorrow" (*yarim*), he invariably means "never".

That dreadful Oriental apathy, which caused us foreign officers in the Turkish army many a fit of rage during the World War, and which may rightly be termed an unholy combination of Kismet and passive resistance, against which no civilization or culture avails, originates, in my opinion, from the psychological identification of camel and camel driver as they journey across the deserts toward remote, shadowy horizons. The immeasurable solitude and frightful monotony of the glaring wastes has undoubtedly impressed its seal of infinite melancholy, not only on the character of the beasts, but also of the men who traverse those barren lands. Fatalism is, in my estimation, characteristic of the camel's, and passive resistance, of the donkey's mentality.

That fatal apathy, which, as I mentioned previously, on more than one occasion nearly drove us crazy during the World War, and which, notwithstanding Mustapha-Kemal's so-called "modern innovations", still permeates, as of old, the mind of the Turkish people, has its roots in the fundamental principles of the Mohammedan religion. This can easily be ascertained by many a wellknown Turkish proverb, such as the following: "Do not ask justice from heaven, because by so doing you would only do injustice to heaven. For there is no justice on earth!"

During the famous Ramadan feast, which is analogous to our Easter, the majority of the Mohammedans fast during four consecutive weeks—but only from dawn until sunset! As soon as the muezzin chants his evening prayers from the top of a lofty minaret, the throngs of empty-stomached True Believers, who for hours have been anxiously awaiting that supreme moment, pounce with a shout of joy on the richly—or poorly, according to one's pocketbook—garnished supper tables to make up for lost time. At midnight they enjoy another hearty meal, and a third, and last, just before dawn—when their fasting begins anew until sunset.

During the fasting hours no True Believer is allowed to eat or smoke, or to drink a drop of water, or even smell a flower, due to the unalterable precepts of the Asiha-Asita and other holy scriptures of Islam which prescribe, among others, rules as to how one may thrive by means of usury; rules about architecture; about the way one ought to pray; about the treatment of a newborn child; rules about the way every True Believer ought to sneeze; and least, though not last, how to conduct the famous *"ras"*, or *razza*—the periodical plundering expeditions which the desert Arabs still indulge in every year, to enrich themselves at the expense of their unsuspecting neighbors—because Allah is all-merciful and provides for His faithful ones.

No wonder that the Near Orient has become a land of paradox!

Once, for example, Von der Goltz Pasha was trying to explain to one of our old Takaut officers (an ex-régimentaire service of supply officer, of the old abd-Ul-Hamid régime) the necessity of speed in the execution of orders. To underline his statement, the field-marshal requested his German orderly to fetch him a message from headquarters within ten minutes by the clock. Which was done.

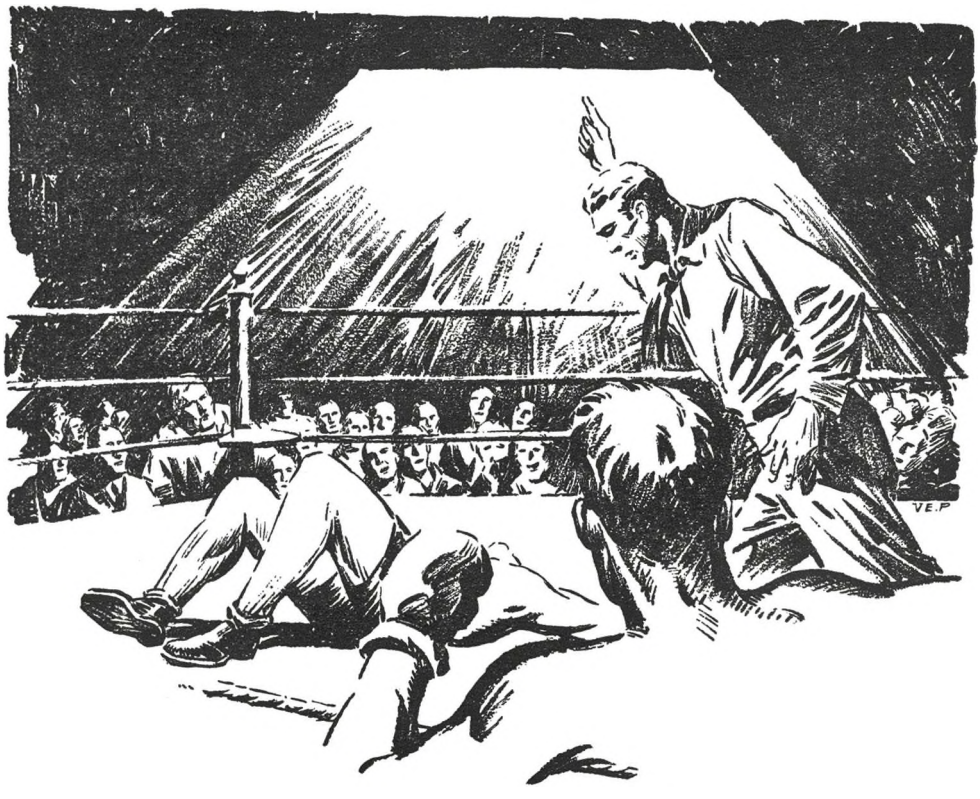
When asked to do likewise, the Takaut officer shouted to his orderly in the guardhouse to rush—*chabuk!*—to headquarters on a similar errand. To which his orderly replied:

"Evet effendim, shimdi!" meaning, "Yes, sir, I am almost on my way!"

Nevertheless, ten minutes passed, then fifteen, without the orderly's making his appearance. When the field-marshal and the Takaut entered the guardhouse, they found the orderly there all right—lacing his shoes preparatory to fetching the message. *Orlar-Oulson!*

The CHUMPEEN

By THOMSON BURTIS



ALTHOUGH personally I am a right guy, strictly on the up-and-up at all times with man or beast, I know that there are a lot of guys in the fight racket which are not in the same class as myself. That is why the first thing I do in the morning when I get up is to peel my eye and start to be on the lookout for the worm in any apple that's offered me for sale.

There's no worse blow than a double-cross to the button, but I thought that I had a perfect defense against it. However, I found out I was wrong. I didn't take no account of the fighters themselves which, on the average, are no good to themselves nor no one else. I don't think it's anything against my reputation for being a very smart guy, that one of these stumble bums pulled a fast one on me. If you've got a pet elephant around the house you don't take no precautions against him building a nest in the cuckoo clock, do you?

It starts one Thursday afternoon when I meet up with Puff Peters on the 50th Street side of the Garden.

"Hello, Bo, how's tricks?" he says to me, and slips me the duke.

This made me very suspicious because

the glad hand wasn't never in Puff's line.

"Hello yourself," I said, giving him the mitt. "What's on your mind?"

"I hear you're going to Chi tomorrow afternoon," he says.

"I am. I gotta talk over a match for Young Kramer against Benny Ziegal for the Coliseum," I told him, having quickly decided that it wouldn't do no harm.

"Listen," he said, "I got Irish Paddy O'Sullivan fightin' out in Cardmore, Montana, a week from tonight. The champ is refereein'. You know him, don't you?"

As a matter of fact the champ was a good friend of mine, but I thought it wise to say noncommittal-like:

"Yeah. That is, I've met 'im a few times."

"How'd you like to hop on from Pineappleville to Cardmore and handle O'Sullivan?" Puff says, looking everywhere but at me. He's always throwing the eye around like that, as though looking for a cop.

"How much is there in it for me?" I asked him, meanwhile trying to figure where the nigger in the woodpile is.

"Well, I'll tell you," Puff says. "We're gettin' seven hundred and fifty and expenses for the fight so there won't be nothin' in it for you except your expenses, but you know the champ; you'll have a lot of fun because I understand it's a very big event in that tank station and it won't cost you a dime. Expenses from Chi to Cardmore and return to Chi."

"Who pays the expenses?" I asked him.

"Bat Hurst," Puff says promptly. "He's promotin' the fight and the other fighter is his man."

I didn't say nothing for a minute as I do a little figgering. This Bat Hurst came from Cardmore and he managed the welterweight champ who also came from Cardmore. I had a feeling I'd get my dough all right, but I couldn't help wondering whether there was anything wrong. Puff handled a lot of palookas —he must have shipped around twelve head a week to various way stations around the country and of course he could not go with them all.

"If you show me your contract and Bat wires that he'll pay me and a roundtrip ticket is wired me in Chi, I'll do it providing the expenses start the day I hit Chi," I said finally.

After a lot of squawking about that extra day, Puff agrees.

Bat confirms by wire from Cardmore and so two days later I'm climbing on the rattler in Chi to meet Irish Paddy Sullivan. The contract called for him working out in Cardmore for three days before the fight. I'd stayed clear of O'Sullivan in Chi—he'd come on a day later than me—and when we meet in our adjoining seats in the Pullman, it's the first time I've got a look at him.

He was a heavyweight about six feet tall but not looking it because of being built wide and squatty like a frog. One look at him and you knew exactly what he was—a catcher for every punch throwed by his opponent. He screamed prize fighter from his bashed-in nose and puffed eyes to his loud necktie. He looks at me with a scowl on his face and his little gray eyes snapping and his under lip, which had been puffed out until it looked like a balloon tire, stuck forward in a pout.

"Why didn't you meet me at the train?" he says sullen-like. "You're supposed to be handlin' me, ain't you?"

"Sure," I says, looking around the train and hoping nobody connects me up too close with this trained seal. "For Pete's sake, I ain't supposed to sing you to sleep or see that you get your morning milk!"

"Here I land in Chi and nobody to meet me and nothin' to do until train time," he growls like a sore kid.

"If I'd 'a' been with you," I says, "I'd 'a' made you comb your hair, get a shave and have them pants pressed." His hair was red, and it was cut short and stuck up in all directions, like weeds out of a

swamp. "Where the hell did you get them cloth topped shoes?" I went on. "Did you spend your time in Chi shopping at Sears Roebuck?"

"What's the matter with 'em?" he growls at me.

"Nothing—if nobody wears 'em," I says.

PERSONALLY I'm a very classy dresser, always neat and snappy under any conditions. You can understand how embarrassed I felt with this hulking, shaggy headed punch-basket with his cloth topped shoes and his baggy pants and not even a vest to hide a shirt that was striped like a barber pole.

I see at a glance that he was just a cluck which any mind he had ever had had been punched loose from its moorings, and that I couldn't do nothing with him. So I said—

"Excuse me while I go to the club car and smoke a cigar and think things over."

"I guess I'll take a smoke myself," he says, still sullen-like. He's always looking at me sideways out of them puffed eyes.

"Go ahead," I says. "I'll be with you in a minute."

He hesitates, and then beats it off still very sore. The guy expects me to be a nurse to him or something. I stay away from him as long as I can, but finally I have to go back for a smoke. I find him sitting in a chair like he was on a throne, telling half a dozen passengers what he done to Philadelphia Tommy Curtin. I slip in to the seat inconspicuous-like and listen to him lying himself right into a match with Gene Tunney, and these bozos are taking it all in. According to him Dempsey had always ducked him. Personally, when traveling, I always pretend to belong to a more refined profession than the fight racket except at such times as I may be managing a champ or a near champ, if that time ever comes. It has never happened as yet on account of these bums always going sour on me.

So I stay at a distance and now that he was being a big shot, O'Sullivan didn't seem to need me. This snaggle toothed hulk, which had dived into more tanks around the country than Annette Kellerman in her prime, retailed me thrilling tales of his victories and, believe it or not, them rube passengers out of Chi seemed to be falling for it.

Finally he waves at me. I'm off in a corner giving the eye to a fairly good looking doll who's setting across from me.

"Mr. Kirke here—I'm takin' him along to attend to the details and handle me in my corner—sees to it that nothin' is allowed to bother me before a fight," O'Sullivan was saying like he was telling that I was a very efficient butler and a faithful chap.

They look at me, the dame freezes, and I'm compelled to get up dignified-like and walk over to this harp.

"Come on," I snaps at him. "Whaddaya mean sitting around here smoking like a chimney and breathing this air so long? Get t'hell back in the Pullman."

O'Sullivan looks crossways at me and bats his cut eyelids up and down. Finally he stumbles to his feet. He grins crooked-like at his audience. His mouth had been punched into a mattress with a zigzag cut in it which got wide when he grinned.

"He certainly takes care of me," he says as though he was indulging the whim of his loyal old retainer. "You gotta be in the pink if you get on top, and it's lads like good old Bo Kirke that don't overlook nothin'!"

He shambles out and I tell them the truth. The rest of the trip was like that—me trying to avoid him and him getting sore because I didn't seem to want to eat with him or chaperone him up and down the train.

Well, we finally pull into Cardmore at three o'clock in the afternoon. Irish Paddy was standing at the door while we're still five minutes away from the

station, but I stick in my seat on account of not wanting to get off the train with him if I could help it. When the train stops, I hear a lot of cheering and hand clapping all of a sudden. I look out the window and there's a mob of people milling around the station and they're yelling and clapping. I slip out the other end of the car and what do you think I see? This big bohunk is standing on the steps of the car hemmed in by a mob of rubes. He is raising his hands over his head and shaking hands with himself, grinning until his dented pan looked like one of these here gargoyles they have on theaters and the like.

I see Bat Hurst edging his way through the crowd and I get to him first.

"What the hell's all this?" I asked him while the palooka is still taking bows.

"They think the champ's on this train too," Hurst tells me. "He's refereein' in Kansas City tonight and won't be on until tomorrow. But I wanted 'em to turn out big anyway to steam up the ballyhoo."

"How about a little dough on expenses?" I says.

"After you check in at the hotel, come over to my pool room and I'll fix you up," he said.

He is a tall, raw boned, thin faced guy with sandy hair, no eyebrows or lashes, and a very cold and fishy eye. He was born in Cardmore and has been cleaning up there ever since, but he was one country boy who had managed a Cardmore boy into a world's champion. And he knew more about the Big Town than the boys who built it and his word was his bond the minute his name went on paper.

This crowd of small town sports, visiting farm lads and others, having discovered that the champ was not on the train after Hurst made them a little speech, was too dumb to be sore and O'Sullivan gets many a slap on the back as he struts through the crowd. He was all puffed up like a pouter pigeon—a hot shot for once in his life. I couldn't quite understand it myself. Of course the champ—the ex-heavyweight champ really—was still a great drawing card and dragged down heavy sugar for merely refereeing in the sticks, but nevertheless I couldn't figger a whole town being so nuts about a fight.

AFTER I'd got down to the combination pool room and gymnasium which was one of Hurst's rackets, he explains it to me. He dragged me into his office first, and shuts the door. It has a desk, a filing cabinet, a safe, four chairs and three spittoons.

"I pull these things off twice a year here," he told me. "And they're the big noise in this part of the country. This boy that O'Sullivan's fightin'—just a raw Swede farmer—is a heavy draw from Minnesota to Colorado . . . Where's your boy?"

"Back at the hotel," I told him. "I slipped out and left him parked."

Hurst hands me out a cigar, leans back in his chair and puts his feet on the desk. Outside the office door, you could hear the noise of a bag being punched, balls clicking on the tables on the lower floor and a steady buzz of conversation as everybody chinned about the coming fight. Hurst lights his cigar and says:

"I've decided that O'Sullivan shouldn't go in the tank until the fifth round instead of the second. This Redvorg has got too many two-round knockouts in his record, and I want this one to be in the fifth."

"O'Sullivan supposed to take a dive?" I says.

"Sure," Hurst tells me. He's got a long lantern jaw and it sticks forward a little farther and his eyes get beady. "Didn't Puff tell you nothin' about it?"

I shook my head.

"It don't make no difference," I said. "I'm just here for the ride and to say 'Hello' to the champ."

Just then the door busts open and in stomps my Irish potato. He looks at us

with that underlip of his sticking out and that scowl on his face.

"What's the idea of runnin' out on me?" he growls, all hurt and sore.

"You're supposed to be back at the hotel taking some rest," I told him.

"I don't need no rest," he says. "Swell manager you are, leavin' me all by myself in a strange town—"

"Never mind," Hurst says. "It was nothin' intentional. Sit down."

Paddy had left the door open and a ring of twenty or twenty-five men and boys had gathered around it and was peeking in. As soon as O'Sullivan sees this, he grins and struts to the door to greet his public.

"Shut it," commanded Hurst. "We got some business to talk."

O'Sullivan waves at them and shuts the door as though he didn't like to.

"Nice place you got," he says. It was; I got my start hanging around one just like it.

"Listen," Hurst says to him. "You know what you're supposed to do, don't you?"

"Sure. I'm supposed to lick that bum, Redvorg," says Irish Paddy.

"The hell you are," snapped Hurst. "Didn't Puff give you instructions?"

"What instructions? I don't need none. I ain't been fightin' for fifteen years for my health—"

"Didn't he tell you you were supposed to go in the tank in the second round?" snaps Hurst.

"No, he didn't. And I won't do it," blares O'Sullivan. "I'll knock that bum out in the first round!"

"The hell you say," Hurst says, quiet-like. He was like a long sliver of ice. "I don't know what Puff thinks he's gettin' away with, but that don't make no difference. You're not comin' up for the sixth round, understand?"

"I ain't takin' no dive for nobody!" raves O'Sullivan, a mean look on his face. "I'll knock that bum out in the first round!"

"Don't be a damn fool!" rasps Hurst. "I'm runnin' this show and you'll do what I tell you!"

"I ain't goin' in the tank for nobody," this bum says, dog-like and surly. "And you oughta be ashamed of yourself with all these people payin' their good dough to see me fight—"

He rambles on and Hurst looks at me and I look back at him. We both know what it is. This here trained seal which had laid down for every punk between Frisco and Norfolk had got all steamed up about his reception in town. He was a big shot and he wasn't going to ruin his position in this tank town for nothing nor nobody. I walks over to Hurst while Paddy's still talking and whispers in his ear.

"Wait awhile and I'll work on him at the hotel," I finished up. "It won't cost but a little extra, at worst."

"I don't know what Puff thinks he's gettin' away with," snarls Hurst, who is a very tough guy at times.

"I ain't got no interest in this whole thing as you know," I tells him, "but I'll do my best."

You see I was figgering on whether Puff had really told O'Sullivan that he was supposed to take one on the chin. It might be that he had but that O'Sullivan had decided not to go through with it. Can you imagine a mashed potato like Irish Paddy O'Sullivan getting upstage and refusing to take a dive—that bum who'd made his living for five years because he was the best trained seal in captivity? Nevertheless there it was.

WELL, anyways, Paddy works out in the gym an hour later. It was packed with suckers at fifty cents a throw, and if there was any chance of persuading him to let the breeze from one of Redvorg's swings keel him over, it got less after the workout. Them small town guys was eager just to touch him. Back at the hotel, believe it or not, he turns down an extra hundred berries which I offered him if he'd fall down in the fifth round. Hurst had offered two hundred,

so being on the up-an-up like I said, I offers Paddy his full half. He just wouldn't listen so I goes down to the pool room and corners Hurst.

"Listen," I said. "He says he won't do it, but I know he will. Give me the two hundred and when he sees it, that will be the convincer."

"Suppose the bum takes it and then changes his mind at the last minute because he gets a big hand or something?" Hurst asks me.

His eyes look like they got no lids at all, and have a habit of staring at and through you.

"He won't," I promised. "But anyways, Bat, if this fighter of yours can't knock this muskrat out in the first round, he ain't worth the bothering with anyhow."

"I ain't takin' no chances," Hurst tells me. "He's young and he's raw, but he's a big drawin' card that I get five hundred smackers for in six rounders against set-ups from Minnesota to Colorado like I told you. I ain't goin' to have him flattened until he's in the big dough and I got a piece of the man that does it."

"That won't never happen with Paddy," I assured him, and gets the two hundred dollars and an extra hundred on account of expenses.

"If every penny of it ain't accounted for, remember this is my home town," he told me.

He is, at times, a very suspicious guy.

Back again I go to the hotel and wave twenty fives in front of this red headed bruiser's face, but he won't give in. I figure that later on I'll raise the ante to a hundred and twenty-five as a last resort. You can see that I am always on the up-and-up—there I was thinking of putting up twenty-five of my own money to see that the fight was according to Hoyle. He finally breaks off my line of chatter by saying—

"Come on and let's eat."

"You go ahead," I told him. "I had a sandwich down at the pool room."

"A fine guy you are," he says, pouting, sulky-like, "makin' me eat all alone."

"Aw, beat it," I told him. "The whole dinin' room is waitin' for you and if I was along I'd be hoggin' the spotlight on you."

He was like a mutt, begging for one kind word. He wandered off sore. I didn't want to eat with him for two reasons. One you know, and the other was that I'd found out that the hotel served one of these *table d'hôte* dinners and I figured I'd eat at an *à la carte* place where I could pick up a dime or two on the swindle sheet.

Later on I walked around the town. It had a two-story business section about four blocks square and two stories high, with false fronts on the buildings to make skyscrapers of three and four stories. Later on I picked up a pretty good looking doll in a drug store. I stayed with her until about nine o'clock and spent a couple of bucks on her. But she was a very dumb broad and didn't know what it was all about.

I come into the hotel lobby just in time to see O'Sullivan break loose from eighteen or twenty men who was listening to him state that he would knock that bum out in the first round and go galloping across the lobby to meet a beefy broad who was coming out of the dining room. I had seen her through the door waiting on tables. She weighed about two pounds less than Primo Carnera and walked with her feet wide apart like a duck. Her broad, red face wasn't so bad looking except that her nose was flat, also like a duck's—in fact you expected to hear her quack any minute. She and Irish Paddy, him with a cigar stuck in his face and acting like he was the new mayor, walks on out of the hotel.

I'm in bed when he breaks into my room and says:

"What d'ya think? I takes a dame to the movies and the manager comes out in front of the screen and introduces me."

"What did you do?" I asks him.

"I took a bow and told 'em I'd knock that bum out in the first round, and

you should've heard 'em cheer."

"You ain't gonna do no such thing," I told him, sitting up in bed. "I've been authorized to offer you one hundred and twenty-five bucks extra to not come up for the sixth round."

He looks at me ugly-like.

"Not for a thousand," he growls. "I'm Irish Paddy O'Sullivan and I'm goin' to take that bum apart and see what makes 'im tick. I got my reputation to think of!"

Imagine that!

We go round and round for an hour and he gets very nasty. I couldn't do nothing with him. His head was swelled out like a balloon, that's all there was to it.

He works out morning and afternoon the next day, and the gym was packed to the brim both times. Late that afternoon, the champ gets in and I beat it away from the gym to meet him. He and I are old friends, as I've said. He is a very high class guy which has learned to talk and dress with the best of them and it was natural that in Cardmore, or any other town, he would rather be seen with me than anybody else on account of the fact that I got class, see?

After we had told each other how good our rackets was, and all that stuff and broke away from the mobs of people and got into a taxi, he says to me—

"Listen, Bo—" Bo is my nickname in the racket on account of me being such a Bo Brummel—"this fight is strictly on the up-and-up, isn't it?"

He's got a high tenor voice and is a pretty good looking guy, although dressed very drab in a double breasted blue serge, a plain hat and a blue and white necktie. There's no touch of color about his clothes.

"Sure," I said, "as far as I know. I'm just out here for the fun of it as I told you."

"Oh, yeah?" he says with a grin. "Anyway, I can't afford to be mixed up with anything crooked now. This ten per cent of the gate receipts graft is a swell racket and I can't referee no trained seal exhibitions."

"You got no worries," I told him. "This tumblebug which I am chaperoning is so puffed up from taking punches that if he does fall he bounces right back up again anyways, and this farmer, Redvorg, don't know no better than just to wade in and sock."

BAT HURST gets to us and helps us fight our way loose of the mob and through another one which was waiting at the hotel. We end up in the suite which had been reserved for the champ and start having a few highballs with some newspaper boys. The glasses had just had a refill when in busts the palooka scowling and ugly as hell.

"What's the matter?" he blurts out. "Ain't I good enough for you guys?"

"We gotta spread out the publicity," Hurst tells him chilly-like. "We got two attractions you see—you and the champ. We can't waste you both together."

Him and the champ kinda kids him out of it and we let him eat with us, although he didn't like the idea of eating in the suite instead of the dining room. Finally while the champ's taking a bath, Bat and me corners him. I see I'm up against it so before Bat has a chance to say anything, I says:

"Well, Paddy, what about takin' two hundred dollars for the dive?"

It was the same thing all over again. His cauliflower ears waggle and he's spitting like a wildcat through his broken teeth. I had warned Bat about the champ not wanting any crooked business so when Paddy threatens to go to him and tell him, we shut up.

But Bat's freckled face is very cold and bleak-like and his eyes are like two pieces of ice stuck in his face. He is feeling very peevish and so am I, as I see that it's going to cost me the whole two hundred to have this stumble bum do his act. Personally, of course, I didn't care whether he done it or not

as there positively wasn't no money in it for me.

Anyways, in spite of a call to New York and Puff, who claimed he had told O'Sullivan all about it, giving him orders, O'Sullivan didn't weaken. In fact, the next two days made him more upstage than ever as people poured into the town and he got to be a bigger and bigger shot. He kept hanging around with the champ and me and lots of things happened that was eye openers even to Bo Kirke, who has had his eyes open since birth. There was some little college or some kind of school near this town and the night before the fight, they was having some kind of a feed in the hotel. A lot of corn fed young punks and their dolls and a few profs running to whiskers and cheaters. They asked the champ to come in and make them a little talk, and Irish Paddy tags along with us and makes a speech and tells them that he'll knock that bum out in the first round.

The champ was sure a drawing card and everywhere we went there was crowds. Many's the "Ohs" and "Ahs" we got as we walked around the village. All the boys started putting feathers in their hats like I wore. Paddy was with us whenever we couldn't dodge him and when he wasn't with us he was with this beefy broad which he had picked up in the hotel dining room. Bat says she's a widow of forty-five. I'll say she didn't show her age any more than a elephant.

I worked on Paddy steady about taking the dive but he won't listen to reason no way whatever. My last shot at him is in the dressing room just before the fight, which was to take place in a theater. They had put up a ring over the seats in the center of the big barn and had put up a plank grandstand on the stage to accommodate more suckers. I was to be in O'Sullivan's corner together with a young lad from Hurst's pool room.

Hurst comes walking in to our dressing room backstage ten minutes before the fight while this lad is still busy bandaging O'Sullivan's hands.

"Did you want to see me?" he snaps.

"No," I said.

"Yeah," growls the palooka. "This fight is costin' you a thousand berries and not seven-fifty!"

"What?" snaps Hurst, and looks at me in a very peevish manner.

"Why, what the hell do you mean, you punch drunk punk!" I snaps. "Bat, I don't know a thing about this."

"Says you," Bat snarls. "What d'ya mean it's goin' to cost me two hundred and fifty extra?"

"If I don't get it, no fight," says O'Sullivan, squatting on a camp stool and glowering. "Instead, you'll get a speech tellin' this crowd that you tried to get me to go in the tank for a bum I can knock out in the first round!"

Bat just stands there and his mouth looks like a scar that has just healed across his hatchet face. And I knew that this here idea hadn't come from O'Sullivan in a thousand years.

"Who put you up to that?" I snaps. "That four-ton truck you've been steering around town?"

"What d'ya mean?" he says, squinting at me out of what was left of his eye.

He hadn't shaved since we'd hit town, thinking that made him look more like a fighter. He must've thought that without whiskers he looked like little Lord Fauntleroy.

"That big broad—the hash slinger down at the hotel," I said. "Have you been giving her any lip?"

"Don't talk about her like that," he tells me, his face getting ugly. "She's a fine woman and I did talk it over with her—"

The crowd is roaring like Niagara Falls at the flood. They was certainly a bloodthirsty bunch. I knew the place was packed to the rafters and I seen that Bat was up against it.

"O. K," he says. He was very cool and calm—like an executioner about to push the button—and turns around and walks out.

"Why don't you go over and watch

'em bandage this guy's hands?" O'Sullivan grunts at me like a bad tempered bear. "A hell of a manager you are."

"What difference does it make?" I says, meanwhile doing some rapid figuring. I hadn't liked Bat's face and I had a feeling that I was being blamed maybe in spite of my reputation for being strictly on the up-and-up with man or beast at all times. "You're gonna knock this ham out in the first round. He won't never lay a glove on you, to hear you tell it. Lord, you're dumb! What d'ya mean shooting off your mouth to a dame?"

"Listen here, Bo," he snarls. "Not another word out of you or I'll warm up by knockin' you through that window. Minnie and me are engaged!"

I gasps like a fish at that one. I thought that nothing could surprise me where a stumble bum was concerned, but that there was one for the book.

Just then a wild roar announces a knockout and we're called to the ring.

BOYS, that place had people hanging to the chandeliers. It took us five minutes to get to the ring pitched over the seats in the center. These farmers yelled continuous and Irish Paddy O'Sullivan is shaking hands with himself like the King of England on parade. We had to climb over seat holders to get into the ring and I spot Minnie quacking hysterically in a ringside seat. Alongside her sat a even bigger broad, but younger, which I found out later was her daughter.

Over in the other corner Redvorg was sitting all humped over, a lot of blond hair falling in his eyes. He was snarling across at my palooka. The champ is there leaning over the ropes kidding with people, looking very snappy in white flannels.

This Redvorg is a tall, spare guy, very hard looking, and O'Sullivan starts getting a little scared.

"Why don't you go over and look at his hands?" he growls at me, so I walks over. I takes one feel while Bat looks at me very cold.

"Say a word and I'll murder you!" he snaps.

Of course, I wasn't going to say nothing anyway, but if I had been I wouldn't have after he had spoke to me in that way in his own home town. One feel was enough. Not only did Redvorg have a couple of pounds of tape on his hands, but they had put plaster with it and then he had soaked his hands and the plaster had hardened until each of his mitts was positively like a rock. If this punk could break a pane of glass with his bare fist, he could've knocked over the Sphinx with what he had inside his gloves. I winks at Bat, making myself a very good guy, and we gather in the center of the ring.

For some reason, the champ looks straight at me when he says:

"Now, boys, we want to give the customers a good fight—no stalling, understand? Everything on the up-and-up and maybe we can get a return date for us all, eh, Bat?"

"Positively," says Bat.

We go back to our corners and Paddy takes off the yellow bathrobe with a shamrock on it that he's wearing. The ten-second bell rings and I climb over the ropes as the crowd starts to yell.

"Go in there and sock," I tells him out of the corner of my mouth. "You can take anything he's got, so don't pay no attention to him as long as you get in some socks yourself."

As I jump down, I find I am looking at Minnie. I just have time to see that she has a very hostile look on her red face when the bell clangs.

The crowd was on their feet already, howling like wolves. I land practically in a customer's lap, get myself together, and turn around just in time to see it. This Redvorg shoots across the ring like a needle had just shot up in his seat and stung him. The crowd is still yelling. He collides with O'Sullivan about two feet from O'Sullivan's corner and hits him one lick alongside the jaw. O'Sulli-

van goes down on his face, twitches a couple of times and that's that.

Before the champ has reached five on his count—he could have counted the national debt penny by penny without O'Sullivan hearing him—the crowd is on their feet starting to yell fake. By the time the champ reaches ten, they're yelling bloody murder and I have already sneaked halfway to the dressing room. My contract doesn't include being torn limb from limb. Even with the start I got, my suit, which I'd paid seventy-two dollars for, and no two pair of pants neither, was somewhat damaged. I slip out and around to a side door and take one look at the crowd. It's certainly a riot and in the middle of the ring with three or four thousand people hollering for blood, the champ is holding the still unconscious stumble bum up and with him is Bat Hurst trying to make himself heard. Being quite tired, I go directly to the hotel.

They took in thirteen thousand dollars, I found out later, but that crowd certainly did one hundred grand's worth of yapping. You'd positively have thought that they paid ten bucks per head.

Half an hour later, the champ comes to his suite where I had parked myself in preference to my own room. In fact I had checked out because there was a train going East at 1 P.M. His clothes is in perfect shape but he looks quite ugly when he sees me. He throws his hat in one corner and says in his high tenor:

"Where the hell were you hiding? And what's the truth about this? Redvorg's hands—"

He was interrupted by what sounded like the second battle of Verdun as the door crashes open and Irish Paddy O'Sullivan comes through it like a cannon ball through a piece of cheese. He is roaring like the Bull of Bashan. And then I see the two big broads waddling in behind him.

"I've been doublecrossed!" yapped O'Sullivan. "I was hit by a club. A hell of a manager you are—"

By this time he was close to me and I wasn't able to completely duck the haymaker he swung at me from the floor. It didn't hurt but I stayed down.

"And you too, you cheese champeen—you're nothin' but a yellow bellied crook!" howls the crazy Irishman, and he plows straight into the champ.

And there I lay, boys, while Irish Paddy O'Sullivan and the ex-heavyweight champion of the world fight all over that big bare sitting room, with no holds barred. Minnie shuts the door and she and her daughter back up against it to hold it shut. They was certainly constructed for just that purpose. There the two broads planted themselves and Minnie starts quacking at the top of her voice:

"Kill him, Paddy! Kill him!"

I LAID on the floor while water pitchers smashed and furniture was splintered and I seen the battle of the century. My eyes was popping with loud reports and I got up on my elbow to see better. The champ wasn't in perfect condition but at that he was in fair order, but believe it or not, that wild bull was putting it all over him. Three times the champ went down. O'Sullivan was a maniac I tell you and he fought like I ain't seen nobody fight since Bat Nelson was in his prime. He hit the champ with everything but the slop jar, which was in the bedroom.

Finally the champ stays down, although he's not out, and O'Sullivan is standing over him breathing hard and dripping blood.

"Stomp on him!" quacks Minnie.

But O'Sullivan is practically out on his feet himself. At that second, six bell boys, clerks, porters and whatnots, start trying to shove them two broads away from the door. It was a tougher job than an ant trying to move a mountain—it was like an ant moving two mountains. But finally the dames gave way.

"Don't say a word, champ," I says as I hops to my feet. "Everything's over, boys," I yelled to the pop eyed hotel folks. "Just a little friendly bout to keep the champ in shape."

And I drag him into the bathroom. He is too breathless to talk and too astonished to talk if he had the breath.

"Listen, champ," I says quick. "We can clean up a million on this bum. Hell, he can fight! Listen—"

The champ forgets all about his sore jaw and his shiner as he listens. Outside in the sitting room, the palooka is still bawling about being doublecrossed. You see he was really sore about being knocked out in Cardmore where he had been such a very big shot.

I'm on the telephone two minutes later and a few minutes after that I'm talking to Puff Peters in New York. In spite of me telling him all about his punk being knocked out in the first round and the champ explaining how he could use him for setups in the preliminaries of bouts he was refereeing, Puff seems very suspicious. Finally we buy Paddy's contract for five hundred dollars and ten per cent of our profits. The five yards would be wired right then. The champ lent me my share and I slipped out and wired it pronto.

When I come back, I found Paddy and the two broads still there. I goes in and gets the champ and just as we come out into the wrecked sitting room, in busts Bat Hurst. His long bony face is kind of pasty white and his eyes are like a snake in a bad humor.

"What the hell do you mean?" he snaps. "It's all over town that you've licked the champ and that the fight tonight was framed."

"Well, both of them's true," quacks Minnie, waddling up to Hurst.

"You'll get yours before you leave this town, big boy," he snarls. The next second he's spun around by Minnie.

"Don't you talk like that, Willie Hurst," she screeches. "I've laid you over my knee and paddled you twenty years ago and I can do it again tonight. I'll have you know that Paddy is my future husband, so run away and don't try to act uppity!"

And believe it or not, Bat Hurst which had met the toughest which New York had to offer, without taking a backward step, shuts up.

"Let's let bygones be bygones," I says quick like. "Paddy old boy, I've got great news for you. Me and the champ's just bought your contract from Puff and we're going to make you the champeen of the world and you're going to be billed as the man who licked the champ in a friendly contest—"

"Well, if you've bought his contract, it's just too bad," quacks Minnie triumphant like, "because we're gettin' married tomorrow and Paddy's stayin' right here in Cardmore and he's goin' to have nothin' more to do with crooks!"

We begged and we pled but it didn't do no good. Minnie waddles out of the room, herding the chump before her. We couldn't even find him the next day —they'd gone off and got married—and when we did the day after, we couldn't do nothing with him. I was very much upset on account of my two hundred and fifty smackers, but what are you going to do with a bum that quits just when he's found out he could fight if he was sore enough?

And that's the way of it. It cost me the two hundred and fifty bucks—which I had borrowed from the champ and which he is always after me to pay him —but nevertheless I still consider that I thought very fast and acted in a smart and open and above board manner to one and all and I'm sure that the boys will understand that now.

And the hell of it is, he can still fight. A while ago, I was passing through Cardmore with Young Joe Johnson, a pretty good heavyweight, and we stopped off and went out to the farm which Paddy and the broad had bought in order to find out whether he had decided to quit being a chump. He throwed us both off the place without even raising a sweat.

NOTES FROM A NIGER *Trading Station*

By T. SAMSON MILLER

THE balcony of the quarters over the store commands a view of the village whose conical huts cluster against the sheet iron stockade of the trading station. The white man sees about all that goes on in the hut lanes —the scavenging buzzards, whose droppings have whitened the thatches; the goats and hens and tumbling black children, who have large stomachs and thin limbs; the women pounding grain in mortars with pestles six feet long, and several women to each pestle. They sing as they pound. The men are mostly do-nothings. Nature being a generous provider of plantains, yams, and palm oil nuts (which last is to the West African what the coconut is to the South Sea Islanders) the missionaries protest that it makes for indolence; robs men of the healthy struggle for existence.

However, the West African hibernates throughout the day, and does not waken till the burning sun has dropped out of the empty sky; and then he wakes up with all his emotional capacity and physical energy in reserve for the tom-tom dance. The throb of the drums, the chant, hand clapping and bursts of laughter are as certain as the nocturne of the crickets.

At last Major R— has got his porters. He has been palavering for a week. The black hates to leave his village, is homesick when out of sight of his hut. Nor has he any incentive to work, his wants being so few. Also, Major R— is crossing the Pagan Belt. That is what the blacks call "bad country"; that is, a country with hostile natives.

The column—the safari they would say in East Africa—moves out at daybreak to cover ground before heat of sun. There is the scuffle for the lighter headloads, the cries of the partings, the many little but important businesses with the wizard who sells magic amulets to protect the wayfarer from the evil spirits that lurk by the trail, and the Evil Eye. At last there sounds the rhythmic click of ivory anklets as the column goes forth, to the shouts of headmen:

"*Tiffia, tiffia! Atchika, atchika! Agemma, agemma!* Close up, close up! March along, altogether! . . ."

* * *

The blacks make a compact mass around a wizened old man in a dirty gabardine. He has a *gilau*—a half-gourd covered with parchment and strung with two strings—a sort of crude banjo. In the bowl of the gourd are dry seeds. He twangs the strings in accompaniment to an endless chant. He rolls the seeds in imitation of the beat of rain, the rustle of wind in foliage, cries of children. With stiff fingers he beats a tattoo on the parchment, and his audience hears the war drums; or, it may be that the primitive tympanum adds dramatic effect to the thundered challenge of a warrior chief, who will be the local chief, for these nomadic troubadours know the art of flattery. They are linguists and their chants are the same, whatever the tribe.

If the village is not generous in contributing cowries—the small change of the Niger—the minstrel will tell all around that they are a mean and cowardly people. The princelings of the Upper Niger—Mohammedan princes, emirs, petty sultans, *shehus*—hire the rogues to make songs of their prowess by way of propaganda and intimidation.

The PRINCE *and the* REBEL

By NATALIE B. SOKOLOFF

"*OCH, OCH,*" sighed the Czar Alexey Mihailovitch, making a sign of the cross over his mouth, wide open in a sleepy yawn. "It is late and I am tired. Can't I go to bed now, and on the morrow—"

"No, Czar," the young Prince Odoevsky interrupted him firmly. "We must come to some decision right now. Tomorrow—tomorrow it might be too late. Nijni Novgorod was taken by the rebels a week ago today. They were setting out for Koslov, and if Koslov falls into their hands . . . It's our last stronghold this side of the Volga, remember."

"But Koslov is two hundred miles from Moscow," remarked one of the white haired *boyars* sitting on the right hand of the Czar's high, carved chair. "That is ten days' travel for the army. We have time to gather forces to—"

"What forces, *boyarin?*" cried Prince Odoevsky hotly, rising to his feet to face the calm assembly; he was tall, handsome in his rich dress of black cloth and sable, his young face flushed with anger and trembling with agitation. "What forces are you talking about, *boyarin?* What men are available now but our serfs, always the worst of soldiers? All free men have gone to serve in the rebels' ranks. Ah, you exasperate me, you sitting here so calmly, talking about forces. You don't realize what a menace this Stenka Raseen has become. You ought to have seen his armies, his men, his arms. I have seen them. Yes, he defeated us, crushed us. But I am not ashamed to say it. What can courage

do against numbers? He is too strong for us. I tell you, I won't be surprised if he takes Moscow."

"*Och, och,*" repeated the Czar, yawning again and crossing his mouth. "Don't say such horrible things—at bedtime, too. Of course you are joking, I know—"

"I am not joking, Czar," said the prince gravely. "Do understand me. He has an enormous army, this rebel Stenka Raseen. And we have none to speak of in comparison. We have only our *drushins** of serfs, and serfs will run over to his side as soon as we near Raseen. That's what my men did."

For the first time the plump, rosy face of the Czar displayed uneasiness. His eyes opened wide, his lower lip began to tremble.

"Oh, oh," he cried feebly. Then he grew red with anger. "But why don't you catch him then, this rebel?"

"That is what we have been trying to do these last four years, Czar," explained the prince patiently. "But so far we have failed. We have failed because we have not got enough men. That is why the *boyars* and I, Czar, we ask you to give us money to hire as many men as we shall find willing to serve us."

The Czar sat silent awhile, calculating.

He was a tall, well built man of sixty, with a long white beard, white hair, rosy complexion and blue meek eyes. Alexey Mihailovitch was to be known later as the Quiet Czar, though his reign on account of the Raseen Rebellion is

* Troops.

considered as one of the most tumultuous in Russian history. Personally, however, he was all the name implied. He had three interests in life. Prayer, chess and sleep. Matters of state bored him.

"And if I give you the money, will you beat the rebel and never bother me about him again?" he asked at last very gravely, while the *boyars* and even Prince Odoevsky, who more than any one else realized the seriousness of the Raseen Rebellion, coughed and averted their heads to hide their smiles aroused by the Czar's childishness.

"Yes, Czar," the prince assured him gravely.

"Very well. Then I consent," said the Czar. "You can go home now, *boyars*. Good night. Prince—" he turned to the young man—"you stay with me."

Odoevsky bowed low. It was considered a great honor to be detained by the Czar at bedtime. One thus honored was allowed to follow the Czar into the bed chamber, see the Czar put into bed by his servants and then sit at the bedside until the Czar fell asleep.

To Odoevsky to be thus favored was especially pleasing, for he had just returned to Moscow with the news of complete destruction by the rebels of the Czar's *drushins* whom he had led against Raseen.

"Then you are not angry with me, Czar?" he asked, bowing low.

"I am never angry," answered the Czar, rising and taking up his tall hat of velvet trimmed with lynx which lay on the table. "Come."

Followed by the prince, he crossed the stone floor of the gloomy chamber toward the door leading into his bedroom, which was opened at his rap by the Czar's chief valet. Besides the latter there were in the room five men servants and the Czar's bodyguard, a tall strongly built man heavily armed. This bodyguard was one of the two men always with the Czar. They took turns, one serving during the day, the other throughout the night.

The bed chamber was a pleasant apartment in comparison with the other rooms of the Kremlin palace. The stone walls and floor were covered with soft carpets. The large bed, raised on a dais, was piled high to the ceiling with numerous pillows and blankets. Carved chairs and benches stood along the wall. One corner of the room blazed with silver, gold and precious stones of the innumerable ikons before which burned small red and blue oil lamps and flickering tapers.

The servants undressed the Czar, then wrapping him in his furred night robe, they assisted him up on to his high bed.

The Czar yawned and smiled.

"Sit down, Prince. Here on the dais. That's right. Now, whom shall we have to entertain us. I'm tired of clowns and jesters. Or would you prefer them?"

"No," answered Odoevsky very gravely. "I don't care for jesters."

"Whom shall we have, then?"

"Would the Czar like perhaps to hear a wandering minstrel?" put in the bodyguard. "You liked that old man, Czar, who came here last month."

"Is this the same one?"

"I think it is."

"Bring him in."

A servant was dispatched at once and he soon returned, followed by an old man dressed in rags. He had disheveled white hair and a beard, and was leaning on the arm of a tall young man. The latter's hair was cut short and round and he wore drab trousers and a dirty shirt, the recognized uniform of a minstrel's guide. Both carried long staffs.

Crossing the threshold, they bowed to the ikons; then, the Czar motioning them to come nearer, they approached the dais, bowed to the ground and sat down on the floor facing the Czar.

THE prince studied them with interest. Not that the sight of the pair was anything out of the common. He had seen hundreds of these wandering minstrels and their young guides—in the marketplace, along the roads, in churches, in

his own yard going to the kitchens to entertain the serfs—but so far he had never given them a thought. After the disastrous meeting with the Raseen forces, however, which he saw consisted wholly of the common people, his interest in the populace was suddenly awakened. Were they all on the rebel's side? Had they all easy access to Raseen, as it was said? Perhaps these two would tell him something about the rebel and his ways.

The old minstrel had his bandura slung over his shoulders. He now took it on his knees, struck a chord and began to sing.

"No, I don't like this," said the Czar. "I've heard it hundreds of times. Sing something new, minstrel."

"Something new, Czar," repeated the old man, and his eyes twinkled. "I don't think you will like it, Czar."

He exchanged a swift glance with his young guide.

"Sing that song—the latest of Falcon's," said the guide with a laugh.

"No, no!" said the other quickly. He suddenly looked frightened and pulled nervously at the guide's sleeve.

The prince watched them intently.

"Yes, sing that song of Falcon's, minstrel," he said quietly. "And who is Falcon? The people's poet?"

"Falcon—" began the guide, but the old man tugged at his sleeve; warningly, it seemed to Odoevsky.

"Yes. Yes, most noble Prince. A people's poet. A songster. Nothing to speak of." He spoke nervously while the guide sniffed as if contemptuous of the old man's furtiveness.

The young guide's eyes wandered about the bedchamber slowly and the prince read in that gaze hate, contempt and something like triumph. He had seen men look like that often in the last four years, but only lately had he come to realize the look's terrible meaning. It was the hatred of the slave for the oppressor and the master. It was the look of Stenka Raseen's men. He shuddered.

"If the Czar commands," said the minstrel. "I will sing him a new song." His eyes again twinkled. "The latest song, Czar."

He struck a chord.

> "There is a man in the south,
> By the name of Stepan,
> Stepan Teemofeivitch,
> Surnamed Raseen."

And as he sang he seemed to grow younger, stronger. He was stirred no less than his listeners who had fallen under the spell of the melody and of the words. He sang of freedom, of rebellion, of the rebel's triumph. His old eyes sparkled while the guide by his side bowed his head low and sat motionless as if afraid by a look or movement to betray his feelings.

"Ah, that's a fine song," said the Czar, leaning on his elbow and nodding his head approvingly. "A fine song. And who is this man the song is about? The name seems familiar. Some ancient hero of the people?"

The guide sniffed contemptuously and the minstrel said quickly:

"Oh, no. No hero, Czar. A Cossack. A simple Cossack, Stepan Teemofeivitch."

"Commonly known as Stenka Raseen," put in the prince coldly.

"Ah—the rebel. Well, the man is bad. But the song, the song is good. Sing it again, minstrel. I will go to sleep with those wonderful words in my ears."

"And some day you'll go to sleep forever with those words in your ears," thought Odoevsky bitterly.

He sat by the bedside until the Czar, lulled by singing, slept at last.

One of the valets then conducted the minstrel and his guide out while the prince repaired by way of the stone chamber where the council had been held, to the apartments of the Czar's father-in-law, *boyarin* Narishkin, whom he had not seen since his return to Moscow. The latter had already retired however.

"Shall I conduct your Highness out?" asked the *boyarin's* valet, who stood

guard at his master's door.

"No—I know my way about," the prince assured him, and he turned into a passage.

He had expected it to lead him to the stairway, but soon discovered his mistake. He passed several rooms, then another passage. He knew now that he had lost his way. It was a part of the enormous building wholly unknown to him and, judging by the silence and the darkness about him, uninhabited. Suddenly he saw a dark figure, which struck him as familiar, pass hurriedly along one of the intersecting corridors. The prince quickened his step in time to see the man's back as he disappeared into one of the doors, a moonray from the skylight falling upon him for a moment. It was the Czar's bodyguard who was supposed never to leave his master's side throughout the night.

The prince stood for awhile staring at that door; then, moving with caution, he opened one next to it and entered. What could the Czar's bodyguard be doing here, in this unfrequented part of the palace? The room was in darkness save for the starlight which streamed in through the small barred windows. Then he espied a thin streak of light coming through a crack in the door leading into the adjoining room and almost instantly he caught the sound of voices. Sitting down on the floor—the crack was just over the threshold—he put his ear to the crack and listened. It was the voice of the minstrel's guide speaking. The prince's heart grew cold with suspicion. What had a person so low as a minstrel's guide in common with such a personage as the Czar's bodyguard?

"So he fell ill, you say?" Now it was the bodyguard's voice.

"Yes," the minstrel's guide answered. "My brother Ivan fell ill in Vladimir, so I had to take his place. What have they decided, those fatheads in the council?"

"They could not decide on anything—as usual." The bodyguard sniffed contemptuously. "The Czar promised them money. But what good will it do them?"

"Then what shall I tell Stepan Teemofeivitch?"

"Shh!" the minstrel hissed warningly. He then said something the prince failed to catch.

"Eh, you needn't worry," the bodyguard remarked with a sneer. "No one ever comes into these rooms or enters this part of the palace. As to suspicion! Those *boyars,* they haven't the brains to suspect any one. Well, as I said, you can tell Raseen that the *boyars' drushins* won't be ready for another two weeks yet."

"He will start the march on Moscow before that, then," said the guide proudly.

"Has he taken Koslov?"

"I don't know for sure, but that was his plan. Eh, Nikita—" the guide was evidently addressing the bodyguard—"if you but knew what a jolly life we lead, what jolly times we have! And Stenka Raseen, what a man! And how good he is to us all. Know Falcon?"

"What? The one that's been the Czar's huntsman?" cried the bodyguard. "He was a poet, too. Sings, he does. He disappeared two years ago."

"That's the one. The poet—he is very friendly with Raseen. His right hand, in fact, Falcon is."

"The lucky dog! And such a quiet, dreamy sort of chap, he was. I would never have thought that Raseen would—"

"It happened this way," the guide explained. "Ever heard of Raseen's wife, the Persian princess whom Raseen took prisoner in one of his campaigns into Persia?"

"Of course. This wife, he threw her overboard when the Cossacks began to complain of his taking the princess everywhere with him while no woman is allowed to enter camp."

"Yes. He was afraid, Raseen was, of Cossacks deserting him, and so to please them he threw the princess into the Volga, but she did not drown as every one believes."

The bodyguard, fascinated by the guide's story, gasped—

"No?"

The guide was silent for a moment; then he continued in a very dramatic manner:

"No. This Falcon, he was in the boat with Raseen and he jumped into the river after the princess. Raseen was mad at this disobedience and he snatched out his pistols and shot at him, but missed. And Falcon, with the princess, swam to the bank and they both disappeared."

"But you said that Falcon was Raseen's right hand?"

"Yes, now. You see, after awhile—we had just taken Astrahan that day—Falcon appears among us. And Raseen suddenly grows very fond of him. Guess why?"

"The princess?"

"Yes. Falcon arranges it so that Raseen sees his wife now and then. He became very popular, Raseen did, after he threw her into the river. The Cossacks thought that it showed how he loves them. More than his wife, even, see? And so he keeps it a secret—the truth, I mean. I have nothing against that except that when he goes to see her, he goes alone. And it is dangerous for a man like Raseen to go anywhere without his guard."

"And the funny thing is," put in the venerable minstrel, "that Falcon hates Raseen."

"No!"

"He does. But he loves the princess and the princess loves her husband Raseen and so he does everything to please her."

Which information excited such merriment that the prince for a long time heard not a word spoken amid bursts of laughter.

Then the bodyguard spoke.

"When do you think of starting back?"

"Right away."

"Go, then. And I must hurry back. If the Czar should awaken—"

THE prince heard them rise and, getting to his feet quickly, he opened the door a bit to see what direction the bodyguard would take. He saw the men emerge into the corridor, the old minstrel and his guide turning to the left and their companion to the right. The latter the prince followed at a safe distance and thus found himself very soon in that part of the palace where lay the apartments of the Czar and his family. Once more he directed his steps to the *boyarin* Narishkin's chamber, telling the valet at the door that he must see his master immediately on matters of state. The old *boyarin*, though only half awake, greeted the young man warmly.

"What brings you here, my dear boy, this time of night?"

"*Boyarin*," said Odoevsky, grasping the old man's hand, "what in your opinion will put an end to the Raseen Rebellion? I've heard it commented on in the counsel today, but I would like to hear from your own lips."

"We are as good as beaten now," sighed the *boyarin*, caressing his white beard. "Serfs are against us. Free men are against us. We have only the lesser nobles and the rich merchants to rely on. Considered thus, we stand to the rebels as one to a thousand; more I should say. One to five thousand. One thing only can save us as yet, my boy. But that is an impossibility."

"And I am going to do the impossible," said Odoevsky.

While listening to the conversation of the Czar's bodyguard and the wandering minstrel and his guide, a daring plan had developed gradually in the young man's mind. He now recounted it at length to the *boyarin* who, having heard him in perfect silence to the end, embraced him warmly.

"But they will kill you, my boy."

"You must believe in me."

"I do. Yes, I do. And who knows, perhaps you will succeed. If the blessing of an old man . . ."

The young man bowed his knees be-

fore the old *boyarin,* who blessed him with a trembling hand.

"And I? What shall I do here in Moscow to help you?"

"Tell no one of my plan, first of all. And now call your officer and tell him to have the minstrel and his guide stopped. They could not have gone far beyond Kremlin."

The *boyarin* clapped his hands, transmitting the prince's order to a guard who reappeared in a few minutes with an officer. The latter listened attentively to the *boyarin's* explanations.

"And bring the clothes of the minstrel and his guide to me, right away," added the prince. "And remember, Captain, not a word to any one about the arrests made. The Czar's bodyguard must be arrested at once, too, of course."

"Very good, Prince." The officer saluted briskly and disappeared.

"What else?" asked the *boyarin.*

"Send some one to my house for Dedushka. He is old enough and clever enough to play the minstrel's part. And he is devoted to me. He is my oldest servant, you know. With him, I will start for Koslov at once, *boyarin.* I know the town well. Now, tomorrow, have your *drushina* set out as quietly as possible for the Kilievsky village. It's some miles from Koslov, and as the rebels will be busy in the town, the soldiers might station themselves in that village unobserved. Have them discard their uniforms. Clothed like peasants they will be thought of as some of the rebel's men. When I need them, I will let them know."

"Whom are you taking with you?"

"Four of my personal servants. No, you must not frown. I trust them implicitly. Of course they will travel separately, but I will see them somewhere in Koslov."

The valet opened the door to let in an old wrinkled man, white haired and stooped, whom the prince called Dedushka. After shaking hands, the prince said—

"Dedushka, we are going to visit the rebel, Stenka Raseen."

"Just as you say, master," agreed the man calmly.

"If you were to tell him that you are to call on the devil himself," remarked the *boyarin,* smiling, "he would have consented just as eagerly."

"Well, I am glad you will go with me, Dedushka," said the prince.

The appearance of the officer, bringing the old minstrel's and the guide's clothes, roused them all to action. With the aid of scissors expertly manipulated by the *boyarin* and some nut oil which is famous for making the whitest skin look as if it had been exposed to the worst of sun and wind, the prince was transformed into an ideal minstrel's guide. His dark hair cut short and round, his face, neck and hands brown like a peasant's, and wearing the drab trousers, dirty shirt and a hat of sheepskin, he, at the suggestion of Dedushka, showed how low he could bow like the lowest commoner.

"Be very careful of your speech," said the *boyarin.* "Speak slowly, with a drawl, and use the simplest words. You, Dedushka, look perfect. Can you sing?"

"That's all I do nowadays. I know all the songs," he added, swinging the bandura over his shoulders and taking up the long staff.

"Well, *boyarin,* goodby."

"Goodby—and God bless you. Yes," he added, seeing that the prince stood hesitating at the door, "it will be better for you to leave the palace by the secret stairway. Through this closet." He ushered them into a narrow closet and opened a door concealed behind a tapestry. "These stairs will lead you out into the stables. There you'll find your way easily. Goodby."

"Wait, I forgot about my men," said the prince. "Suppose you call them here, explain everything to them and have them start at once for Koslov. You know the four men I mean. Can you do that, *boyarin?*"

"Certainly; at once. Goodby."

With one hand holding up his long robe he held the other high with the

lighted candle to light the two down the slippery stairs, at the bottom of which the prince looked up and waved to him.

"You are not afraid, Dedushka, are you?" he asked, taking the old man's arm as they came out of the stables into the palace yard.

"No, Prince. I believe in you."

They crossed the Red Square, dark save for the trembling lights which gleamed yellow from the turrets and bastions along the Kremlin Wall and, passing through the deserted streets of the city's outskirts, emerged on to the highway and began their long journey toward Koslov.

Luck favored them. The weather was warm, dry and, this part of the country retaining still the peaceful atmosphere which characterized the Quiet Czar's reign up to the Raseen Rebellion, they met on their way with wagons of the peasantry, merchant caravans, and now and then a noble's carriage, all of whom were eager to offer a place in their vehicles for the wandering minstrel and his guide, men of that profession being held in great esteem at the time.

THUS they journeyed day and night, the general aspect of the land remaining unchanged until they came within a few miles of the town of Koslov. Here they saw the unmistakable signs of the rebels' nearness. The burned villages and estates of the nobles, deserted hamlets, mutilated corpses in heaps along the roads, and in the two small towns through which they had to pass, the horrible sight of the black gallows with its victims swinging in the twilight wind, while ravens circled about them under the pale sky. Judging by the clothes of the hanged, or rather what remained of those clothes, they had all belonged to the class either of *boyars* or rich merchants. Not a man, woman or child did the two travelers meet along the quiet streets of these villages and towns.

Those whom death had spared on account of their low station had either joined the ranks of Stenka Raseen or, as in the case of women and children, had followed in his wake into the wealthy city of Koslov to reap with the rebels the spoils of their victory.

Odoevsky and his companion entered that city on the night subsequent to its seizure by the Raseen army. The market square upon which the town gates opened was flooded with brilliant moonlight and the first thing to greet them was a peculiar, indescribably shrill sound, which, even before they discovered its origin, filled them with horror.

This sound was the cries and shrieks of the victims dying a slow death on pointed poles. Set high on this Oriental instrument of death, high and close together, several hundred men, their distorted figures green in the moonlight, formed a sort of fence all around the square. Odoevsky shuddered while Dedushka clutched at his arm. In silence they walked across the vast stretch of cobbles toward the cathedral looming dark ahead of them, its gilded cupolas and crosses gleaming dimly against the starlit sky.

Long black shadows were thrown across the square by the mansions which flanked it on four sides, by the church belfries, and by the enormous gallows which rose on the opposite end; while the doors of the houses flung open, revealed the illuminated and noisy crowds of the Raseen army feasting around the long tables in the halls of the nobility. The doorways and windows sparkled with lights. Shouts, snatches of song and music, the stamp of dancing feet, poured into the open to mix with the cries and moans of the conquered victims.

"Prince," whispered Dedushka, "if Raseen takes Moscow it will look like this too."

"And if we are found out," answered the prince, "we will die an awful death. We still have time to turn back. What do you say? Go home if you like; I'll manage alone."

"But without me you can't get near Raseen. No—I want to take part in liberating Russia from the hands of this cruel man."

Odoevsky pressed his hand in silence.

A couple of armed men loitered on the cathedral steps, evidently stationed there to guard the church treasures from the mob.

"What, old one," one of them remarked kindly as the prince and his companion came nearer, "looking for a place to sleep?"

"Truly have you spoken, my son," replied the minstrel, leaning on the young man's arm as they ascended the broad flight of steps. "A rest I am seeking, I and my guide. And how is our master, Stepan Teemofeivitch—our sun, our pearl, our deliverer? If I could but feast my old eyes on his beautiful countenance, warm my old bones in the warmth of his eagle gaze! How is he? How is he?"

"Stepan Raseen is well, thank you, old one." And the guard smiled at the minstrel's enthusiasm. "You'll see him tomorrow, at morning mass."

"The benefactor! The all-merciful! The magnificent!" chanted Dedushka, then sighed heavily as Odoevsky pulled at his sleeve as timely warning not to overdo the part. "Ah, *och*. Old I am—old. May we sleep here, my son? On these steps?"

"You may. And see that great building with the iron balcony? That's what had been once the governor's mansion. That's where Stenka Raseen is resting. The lights on the first floor, that's his council feasting. But he himself, he is on the second floor, asleep probably. He has had a hard day."

"I want to see him, I certainly do," put in the prince, pronouncing every word slowly as was the custom of the common people. "And I would like to see this poet, Falcon. The one that makes songs."

"Well, you'll see him too," promised the two guards in unison.

"Only take my advice, brother," one of them added. "Never come too near Raseen. He doesn't mind being looked at from a distance. But to come near him! He is afraid of traitors. He is always surrounded by a heavy guard and never would he venture out alone. For suppose some one should kill him, why, it's the end to all our plans. Mark it, brother, we can win only with Raseen. It's his head that is beating the nobles' and the Czar's *drushins,* not our sword. Therefore must we preserve him, guard him. So you take my advice. Don't come too near him."

The two guards then began once more to pace the cathedral steps while Odoevsky and Dedushka laid themselves down in the black shadow thrown by the enormous building. The old man fell asleep at once, but the prince never closed his eyes. The shrill cries of the dying and the noise of the revelers filled him with terror, chasing sleep away. He thought that unless he succeeded in his daring plan, his voice would be added to those which now came to him from the unfortunate men set high around the market square.

He saw the new day break slowly, all blue, iridescent and as if smiling, strangely oblivious to the horrible spectacle the town square presented in the morning sunshine. The square gradually took on life. Soon it was swarming with townspeople of the lower classes, all brightly attired in their holiday dress, smiling, laughing, the women holding up their children that they might catch a glimpse of Stenka Raseen, who had come to liberate them from the nobles.

The great bell of the cathedral struck once, twice, and suddenly all the bells of the city began to peal gaily. The doors of the cathedral were flung open and the chief priest appeared with two lesser priests walking on either side of him, all three wearing the gold robes and tall, sparkling hats the clergy dons on festive days, all three somewhat pale and keeping their eyes away from the grim spectacle along the walls.

The chief priest blessed the throng;

then, holding the cross over his chest, stood motionless, waiting. A hush fell on the crowd. Then came a sound from the opposite end of the square. All heads turned in that direction. A narrow alley formed in the heaving, human sea. Stenka Raseen had emerged from the doors of the governor's mansion and was walking briskly toward the waiting clergy.

STEPAN Teemofeivitch Raseen, the greatest Russian rebel, was of middle height, broad shouldered, a well built man with a strong, sunburned face out of which gazed a pair of piercing black eyes. His short, carefully trimmed beard was coal-black as was the small bristling mustache. His love of wealth was displayed in his garb: Tall boots of red leather, blue breeches ornamented with yellow cord, a high necked shirt of white cambric, brilliant with embroidery, over which he wore a short kaftan of black cloth edged with sable. The round hat of blue velvet was set at a becoming angle on his handsome head and was trimmed with lynx fur of the palest yellow.

He was then in the prime of his years and of his power. The river Volga from Astrahan up to Yaroslavley was his domain. He had made several campaigns into Persia which resulted in a treaty most favorable for him and his adherents. The Turkish sultan, the Persian khan, and the rulers of the petty Tartar kingdoms were inclined to look upon him as on an independent monarch and held intercourse with him instead of with the Czar. All of which had transformed the erstwhile savage Cossack into a man of quiet bearing and dignified demeanor.

As was his custom, Raseen was escorted by a numerous retinue who were careful, however, to keep to the side and back of him and never as much as by a step to precede him. The people must see their liberator. And they did see him. A great shout went up as soon as Raseen appeared—a shout of exultation, of joy. And it never died until the rebel, mounting the steps and taking off his hat, stooped to kiss the cross offered to him by the chief priest. Then, only, silence fell, while the mob stared.

Straightening himself, Raseen looked about him and his eyes fell suddenly on an old minstrel and his young guide who stood a few paces behind the clergy. He smiled kindly. The bright color which rushed to the cheeks of the young man, he mistook for the blush of admiration of his person and, his heart still open to flattery, Raseen smiled at him.

Odoevsky, growing bold at this, approached a step.

"My brother fell ill in Vladimir. I took his place," he said quickly.

"Brother? You took his place?" Raseen frowned. Then, "Oh, yes. I recollect now. I understand. Come to me after mass. And how is our Czar? God bless him and keep him," he added gravely and respectfully, bowing low as he pronounced the title.

Raseen persisted in making it a point of his campaign that he was waging war against the nobles and the *boyars* with the purpose of giving the people the freedom of the Cossacks, but not against the Czar. This policy had won him many adherents.

"He is well," answered Odoevsky gravely.

Raseen nodded and walked on, disappearing through the dark portals. The priests followed, then the rebel's escort, and at last the crowd, struggling desperately but silently among themselves, began to pour into the cathedral. Those who failed to get in remained in the square and on the steps. The old minstrel and his guide sat down in the shadow thrown obliquely across the sunlit steps by the stone walls.

The minstrel sang while his guide was kept busy picking up coins thrown to them by the appreciative throngs. A woman brought them bread and some cold meat. Another a jug of milk. They ate hungrily. A man in a peasant blouse approached them to throw his donation

into the guide's hat, which Odoevsky held out for that purpose. As he stooped the prince whispered, without looking at him:

"There's a tavern here. The Golden Horseshoe. Stay there until I come."

"The *drushina* is in the Kilievsky village. They await your orders."

"Good, go now."

The conversation passed unnoticed by the crowd, intent on listening to the old man's singing.

Just before mass ended a man came out of the cathedral, the crowds with shouts of greetings making way for him. He was tall, thin, very fair, and richly dressed in a red silk shirt and green kaftan trimmed with fox. The minstrel at the moment was singing the new popular song, "There is a man in the South," which the prince had taken care to teach him on their journey. The fair haired man came up to them.

"Your song, Falcon," some one called to him.

Fear gripped the prince's heart. It had never entered his plan to come face to face with Falcon. For Falcon had been the Czar's huntsman. Very likely Falcon had seen him, Odoevsky, more than once at court. What if the man should recognize him? He looked up to meet the intent gaze of the poet's pale eyes and the two stared at each other for a long while.

Then Falcon said slowly—

"I have seen you before."

The prince found nothing to say to this.

The crowd around them had meanwhile taken up the minstrel's song. They sang loudly and, as Raseen came out on to the steps and saw the crowds gay in the blinding sunshine and heard the words, he thought:

"I am already history. Whatever happens to me now, whether I will sit in Moscow and rule the land, or lose my head in the Red Square, I will live always in the hearts of the Russian people."

"Yes, I have seen you before," Falcon repeated to the prince.

And he shrugged his shoulders and walked away after Raseen.

As the steps emptied gradually of the crowds, the prince rose and, with the old man leaning on his arm, made his way toward the governor's mansion. He knew that Falcon had recognized him, yet he did not waver from his original plan. He just made a few changes in it. True, when deciding on this plan in Moscow he had failed to take into consideration the possibility of being recognized by Falcon and the disastrous consequences of this recognition.

Now, however, thinking it over he saw that the consequences need not after all be so disastrous. First of all there was the poet's face, manner, voice, which all went to make him like a stranger in the midst of Raseen's riff-raff. Circumstances evidently had drawn Falcon into the rebel's ranks, but at heart, what had he in common with Raseen and his adherents? Then, why did not Falcon raise an outcry at once on recognizing him, Odoevsky?

On reaching the governor's mansion they were at once taken into the great hall where Raseen, wearing his kaftan, his shirt unbuttoned, and his feet on the fender, was smoking his short pipe before the blazing logs. Some five rough looking men were with him, apparently his councilors. The poet, Falcon, stood leaning against the marble mantel.

"Tell us what they say of us in Moscow?" ordered Raseen, as the ushered pair approached him with low and humble bows.

THE prince recounted at length. He did not find it necessary to lie, for truth served his purpose in this instance just as well.

"Ha! So they can't get enough men?" demanded Raseen with satisfaction. "I tell you, comrades—" he turned to his companions — "we'll be in Moscow Kremlin by the end of the month."

A guard entered suddenly to whisper

something into the rebel's ear. Raseen's face grew dark as he listened. Then he threw a swift glance at the old minstrel and his guide.

"Let him come here," he said to the guard quietly.

A lad was brought in. His hair was cut short and round and he wore the dress of a minstrel's guide.

"Benefactor! Father! Magnificent!" he cried, falling at Raseen's feet. "They," he pointed an accusing finger at Odoevsky and Dedushka—"they are lying to you. I don't know who they are, but the guide—he is not my brother. I was taken ill in Vladimir and my brother took my place to go to Moscow, but that very day I felt better and I started back for Koslov to wait here for my brother. And then today I saw these two on the cathedral steps and, O benefactor, I saw this man had my brother's clothes on. O magnificent, ask them, ask them where is my brother."

Odoevsky stepped forward.

"Stepan Teemofeivitch," he began resolutely, but Raseen put up his hand sharply.

"The accused never speak here. We have done away long ago with trials and discussions. I know this lad. If he says you are not his brother I have nothing to do but take him at his word."

"So," he went on slowly," we have impostors here. So—take them and stick them on the poles in the market square."

"Yes," put in one of the men near Raseen. "That's how we do it here. Quick. No talking. That's our Raseen all over."

"But my brother!" cried the lad. "Ask them—"

"Get out!" shouted Raseen. "What do I care about your brother? Take them out and do what I ordered," he added to the guards who had swarmed into the room at the sound of the rebel's angry voice.

"Stepan Teemofeivitch," some one said quietly.

Every one turned to look at the speaker. It was Falcon. Raseen did not forbid his interruption.

"Stepan Teemofeivitch," the poet went on. "It is Sunday and it does not do to shed blood on Sunday if Monday will suit us just as well. I will put them in prison and tomorrow—"

"Perhaps you are right," agreed Raseen. "Yes, I think you are right. "Why on Sunday if Monday will suit us just as well? Ha! That's good. My dear Falcon, you are quite clever sometimes. Really clever."

"I am glad I have made you laugh," said Falcon calmly, but the prince caught a note of intense hatred in the poet's voice. His heart began to thump with revived hope. "May I take the prisoners?" Falcon asked.

"Take them, take them." Raseen laughed.

The poet motioned to the guards who, surrounding the pair, escorted them out of the mansion and across the square into the town prison, Falcon leading the way.

"You can go now," he said to the guards as, taking a key from a heavy bunch at his belt, he unlocked one of the cells.

He then motioned the prisoners to enter the cell and, as they obeyed, locked and bolted the heavy door. This door had a small aperture crossed by iron bars. Through these bars the poet now spoke to the prince.

"What is your game, Odoevsky?" he asked, lowering his voice.

"So you recognized me?" remarked the prince, rather unnecessarily.

"I saw you often at court where I had been the Czar's huntsman. Your face is not the kind to be made unrecognizable by an application of nut oil," replied Falcon with a smile. "What is your game?" he repeated, frowning.

Odoevsky thought a moment.

"Falcon," he said, "may I speak to you as man to man? Just answer some of my questions, will you?"

"Ask them, Prince."

"Tell me, Falcon, do you truly be-

lieve in your heart of hearts that Raseen will be master of Russia?"

"You saw his councilors," the poet answered evasively. "Are they the men to govern the land?"

"Then you think that should Raseen even take Moscow, he will lose in the end?"

"Yes," answered Falcon, after a moment's hesitation. "Raseen is a splendid soldier, a magnificent general, but he is no statesman. He can pillage, kill, he can take cities, sink fleets, but to govern the land—no, he will never succeed in that."

"Then why do you stay with him, Falcon?"

The poet shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you admire him then?" persisted the prince.

The other answered in his usual manner, with a question.

"You saw the decorations of the market square? Who can admire the man who allows such things be done to people?"

"Then," said the prince, breathing hard with eagerness and hope, "then leave him. Come to our side. Help us. Help me. We will beat Raseen.

"I can't. I wish I could, but—"

"Why? With your aid I will have Raseen in my hands. And without Raseen, what can his army do? He is their head and heart. Am I right? Then help me, Falcon."

"I can't. I can't," repeated the poet, his face pale with agitation. "You don't know why."

"I know," said the prince quietly.

"What?"

"Raseen has a wife—the Persian princess."

"And she considers me her friend. How can you ask me to betray Raseen?"

"You must not think of Raseen, Falcon. Think of the princess. If you believe as I do that Raseen will lose in the end, can't you see that she will have to share his fate? They will kill him, and her too. While if you help me now, I will see to it that she comes to no harm. And the Czar will reward you. You will be noble, rich. And Raseen dead, the princess . . ."

The poet's eyes began to sparkle.

"Women forget quickly," added the prince meaningly.

He gripped the bars with both hands. Everything depended now on Falcon's decision.

"Tell me your plan," the poet said at last.

"As soon as it gets dark," Odoevsky obeyed eagerly, "go to Raseen and tell him that his wife is in the hunting lodge in the Merchants Woods. Know it? Conduct Raseen there. I will get my men who are waiting for me in the tavern. I will send one to where Narishkin's *drushina* is stationed with the order to start for Koslov at once. Raseen gone, they'll take the town easily. As soon as I send the man off, I and the others will hurry to the lodge and wait for you there. Will you do as I say?

"Yes."

He then unlocked the door and led his prisoners out into a back alley.

"You," he said to Dedushka, "had better start for Moscow at once."

"Yes," agreed the prince. "We do not need you now, Dedushka. Go and take care of yourself." He turned to Falcon. "Till tonight, then. In the hunting lodge."

THE three then separated. The prince had no difficulty in reaching the tavern of the Golden Horseshoe where his men were waiting for him. Dispatching one to the Kilievsky village with a word to the captain of the *drushina,* he left immediately with the remaining three for the Merchants Woods. Not to attract attention, they made their way through gardens and orchards empty of inhabitants, who had all flocked to the market square in the hope of catching another glimpse of Stenka Raseen on whom their eyes never tired of feasting.

The sun was setting as the prince and his companions entered the dark woods.

On reaching the hunting lodge, which stood in a small clearing surrounded on all sides by ancient pines, they entered it and took their positions at the windows and near the door. Their long vigil now began. Time dragged. The slightest sound made their hearts stand still with fear and suspicion. A dry twig falling off the tree, a bird in flight setting the leaves to whisper as it brushed them in passing, the creak of the boards under the weight of the four heavy men; these were the sounds around them.

What if Falcon should change his mind? What if instead of bringing Raseen he should come with his men to take them back prisoners? What awful death in that case awaited them?

Meanwhile dusk was falling. The prince raised his head to peep from the little window. The trees about the clearing looked black now. Among their highest branches the few early stars began to blink. The moon came out, flooding the clearing with its silvery light and almost instantly there emerged out of the dense growth the figure of Stenka Rascen. Wrapped in a black cloak, he stepped out into the clearing, walking briskly. Behind him came Falcon, walking slowly with head bowed.

The prince ducked his head quickly, making a sign with his hand to his men to get ready. Heavy, eager steps ascended the rickety steps to the lodge door, the door flung open and Raseen's voice said—

"Wait for me, Falcon."

He was on the threshold.

"Zoraira," he called tenderly. "Zoraira."

Four men fell on him, bearing him to the floor. He struggled fiercely. But when Falcon entered the lodge and at the prince's order struck a light, he saw Raseen securely bound and gagged lying on the floor, his captors, who were panting with exertion, standing around and looking down at him.

"Must we gag him?" said Falcon hesitatingly. "Prince, I have played the traitor to him. Please let us at least deal not too harshly with him."

The prince understood the poet's qualms. He ordered the men to place the rebel on a chair and himself removed the gag. Raseen thanked him.

"Stepan Teemofeivitch," said Falcon quietly. "Do not judge me too severely."

Raseen laughed.

"We are birds of a feather, comrade," he said, smiling. "I would have done the same in your place. And there's the old saying, 'All's fair in love and war.' So you two had it all arranged beforehand, eh?" he added.

"No," Falcon said.

"And what would you have done had he failed to recognize you, Prince?" Raseen, who seemed amused, asked.

Odoevsky marveled at the man's composure.

"I would have taken you here, as Falcon did. By the same deception."

The rebel looked at him with interest.

"You are a brave man, Prince," he said thoughtfully.

True to the prince's calculations, the Raseen Rebellion was quenched in less than a month after the leader's disappearance, by the Narishkin's *drushina* and those of the nobles nearby. And a week following the government's victory, Stenka Raseen was executed publicly in the Red Square in Moscow Kremlin. The crowds, dispersing later, heartily took up the song sung by the Czar's soldiers returning to barracks. And Prince Odoevsky, standing with the Czar at a window of the palace, caught the familiar words.

> "There was a man in the south,
> By the name of Stepan,
> Stepan Teemofeivitch
> Surnamed Raseen."

"They have it wrong," said the Czar. "I know that song. It goes *is a man,* not *was.*"

"But it is *was* now, Czar," the prince explained patiently. "We have just seen the man beheaded—Stenka Raseen."

"Ah, yes. Well, the man's bad, but the song is fine. It will live long. Yes, it will outlive us all."

A Story of Monte Carlo

MISTRAL

By RAOUL WHITFIELD

IT WAS the way he ate spaghetti that first attracted my attention. I'd put Remmings on the *Conte Grande,* in a more or less sober condition, and the noon sailing vessel had got away from the Genoa docks. I'd been hungry, and I'd wandered along the dock section looking for a restaurant. The one I'd picked had fooled me; it smelled pretty badly and there were thousands of flies. They were persistent and buzzy and they seemed to like Italian food. But the spaghetti was good. As I wound it round my fork I looked around the small, dirty room and saw him. He was eating the stringy stuff, but he was cutting it with a knife. That seemed a bit stiff, in Genoa, and after I'd done two plates of it, smothered with a good Parmesan cheese, I looked

him over just out of curiosity.

He was big and dark. He had black eyes and a lean face—very lean for his size. It was a hard face, yet there was softness in his eyes. I caught him once when he was inspecting fly specks on the ceiling, and noticed the scar under his chin. His skin was white and the scar stood out pretty clearly. I'd seen knife scars before, and this looked like one. It was long and slightly curved, and a nasty red color. I got the idea that it wasn't a very old scar.

His suit was of gray material, a quiet cloth. It fit him very well. I decided that he wasn't an Italian. He caught me looking at him, and it seemed to make him nervous. The next time I glanced in his direction I caught him watching me without appearing to do so. His hands were nervous and the muscles of his mouth twitched.

While I was drinking terrible coffee I heard him say—

"Damn flies!"

His voice was thick, but without accent. Two boats had come to Genoa that day from the States—a big one and a small one. I decided that he was an American and that he'd just arrived. He paid his check and went past me as I was trying to think in terms of the lira. I smiled a little, and he started to smile. But something changed his mind. He looked worried and frowned, turning his head away from me. He was better than six feet tall and had very broad shoulders, but his body hunched forward when he walked.

I thought about him several times as I drove toward the border town of Ventimiglia. At St. Remo I got my trunks from the rear of the car and had a swim in the Mediterranean. It was around three in the afternoon and the day was hot. I forgot about the scarred one until I'd driven across the border into France and had reached Monte Carlo. Before the Casino I stopped to light a cigaret, and a great yellow machine pulled up. It was of Italian make—a very expensive type of car. The chauffeur was an Italian. And from the rear of the machine my scarred friend descended. He spoke to the chauffeur and didn't see me, and I turned my back as he went into the Casino. I was very curious about him. That fly filled, dock section eating place, the knifed spaghetti and this expensive machine—there was something strange in the combination.

I followed him into the Casino, and knew at once he had never been there before. He didn't seem to know just what to do, and the ornate reception hall that lay ahead of him didn't offer any solution. I felt that he'd expected to see the gambling tables immediately and he was confused. An attendant approached and spoke to him in French. He merely asked if he could be of service, but the scarred one did not understand.

I was very close to him and I acted on impulse. At his side I smiled.

"You buy an admission ticket in this room on your left," I said, and gestured toward the room with the low counters and the cashiers behind them.

He stared at me with his dark eyes, and then they got very cold. The warmth went from them so suddenly that I started to turn away. But he said—

"Thanks, buddy."

I nodded. Well, I was sure that he was an American and that he didn't speak French and that he was afraid of something. And I was interested. But I knew that showing interest would be about the best way of learning nothing. So I sauntered into the room on my left and reached the *billets de jour* counter. I handed over my passport and ten francs and received the *billet*, after my name and number had been jotted down. It was all done pretty rapidly, and I was turning away when I heard the scarred one say—

"One admission—"

The Frenchman behind the counter smiled and asked for his passport. The scarred one didn't understand, so I said,

still helpfully butting in:

"He has to see your passport. Formality here."

The dark eyes widened and his right hand went to the inside pocket of his gray coat. I caught the red color of the passport binding, but that was all. It slipped out of sight again and the scarred one swore.

"Must have left it—at home," he muttered in his thickish voice.

That was a pretty bad one. He wasn't giving me credit for having eyes or brains. But I smiled at him.

"You can still get inside," I said. "Give him your name and the name of your villa or hotel. Tell him you're very anxious to make a little play—you feel lucky. Smile at him."

I EXPECTED him to say he couldn't speak French, and to ask me if I would help. And I was prepared to tell him that the man behind the counter could speak five languages quite well, and English was one of them. But I was fooled. The scarred one smiled at the man behind the counter; he said that he'd left his passport in his hotel, and that he felt lucky and would like to try roulette.

The Casino employee smiled back, said that it was not good to leave one's passport behind, and asked him his name. The scarred one said—

"Tom—Thomas Burke."

I knew that he was lying. The man back of the counter continued to smile and asked the hotel and the town where Mr. Burke resided. The scarred one said—

"I stay at Cannes, at the Grand Hotel."

The Grand Hotel was very safe. Practically every French and Italian Riviera town has a Grand Hotel, and I once knew a village that had two for a time. But it happened that the date was August the third, and the Grand Hotel in Cannes had only been opened three days. There were very few persons staying there; it did much better in the Winter season. The proprietor was a friend of mine; I had been at the hotel for a time the night previous and was quite sure no Thomas Burke was staying there.

The scarred one received his *billet*, which ticket entitled him to play roulette, but not baccarat. I went from the room ahead of him and into the large reception hall. The scarred one halted and lighted a cigaret very popular with Americans. I saw the color of the package reflected in the mirrors about the room. Then I passed into the salon and went to a table that was not too crowded.

The ball fell on red numbers four times in succession. I went to a change booth and bought four thousand-franc, oblong chips. Returning to the table, I placed one of the oblongs worth forty dollars on black. The ball rolled against the spin of the wheel, and finally dropped into the groove of a black number. A croupier raked another oblong chip against mine and I picked both of them up and left the table. I had won forty dollars in one play, and that completed *my* particular system for beating the Casino. It was not very often that I won my forty dollars on the first play, but quite often I was one bet ahead of the Casino before I lost my four or five oblongs.

And whenever I was that one bet ahead—I quit. I never attempted to gamble my limited funds against the Casino's almost unlimited ones. And I remembered being told by one of the biggest gamblers of the Riviera that if all those who played at the Casino played as I did, it would be pretty tough for Monte Carlo. It was betting small money against big money, betting that the Casino would go broke before they did, that made it easy for the Casino.

As usual, I was pleased. I cashed in my chips and looked around for the scarred one. In the large salon I failed to see him immediately. When I did see him I strolled over to the table

where he had seated himself. He had seven or eight hundred dollars worth of chips before him, and he was playing thousand-franc oblongs on the line between two numbers. He won once while I was watching, and his face was expressionless. The world's greatest gambling casino did not awe him now; he was gambling. And it was easy to see that he was accustomed to gambling.

He won again, just before I left, but he did not smile. The pay-off was eighteen oblongs for his one. Seven hundred and twenty dollars. And it was his second eighteen-for-one win in several minutes.

Outside the Casino I stood for some seconds and thought about the passport I'd seen. I decided that the scarred one was a crook and did not care to take a chance.

Either the passport he had was a bad one and he didn't wish it to get in Monte Carlo records, or it was a good one and he was afraid of a leak somewhere. Or he was afraid of something that might happen in the future, and a checking up at the Casino might follow.

Showing a passport at the border was something else again. And there was just the barest possibility that my scarred friend was a big shot, and might have been recognized and not allowed to play. That has happened at Monte Carlo. The Casino authorities are very careful about some details, and, as every one knows, they are very careless about others.

I forgot about him while driving the Grand Corniche. The day was very hot; there was not a breath of wind. At Nice I stopped at the Frigate bar for a champagne cocktail, and at a little beach between Nice and Cannes I got damp trunks from the rear of my small car and had another swim. Then I drove on again, wondering if Remmings on the way back home from Genoa were sober yet. I decided that he probably was not.

IT WAS a bit cooler when I drove round that point of land to the east of Cannes. The town lay in a semicircle; the waterfront was crescent-shaped before me. On the far side were the Esterel Mountains coming down to the sea. It was a nice sight. A harsh horn from behind caused me to pull to the right of the road along the Croisette, and with a rush and another burst from its horn, a great yellow machine went past. I recognized the machine and the chauffeur, and caught a glimpse of the scarred man in the rear seat. He was grinning broadly, and I guessed that he'd won quite a bit. But why hadn't he stayed on, playing his winning streak to the limit?

The Grand Hotel was along the Croisette a distance beyond the spot where I should have turned off to my small hotel. But I didn't turn off. I drove on slowly, and a square or so from the Grand I passed the big yellow machine, moving slowly. The chauffeur was grinning.

I sat in the car near the Grand and smoked a cigaret. When I went inside there was no sign of the scarred one, but my friend the proprietor was about. We went into his little office and talked about other things and then about the scarred one. Yes, he'd arrived. Traveling very light in a hired car. Just two bags, without many seals. His name was Anthony Senna; he was from New Orleans, in America. He had a room with bath, but not facing the Mediterranean.

I raised my eyebrows and my friend smiled at me.

"It was not a matter of money, I think," he said. "It was a matter of wind."

"Wind?"

My friend the proprietor nodded.

"Monsieur Senna, he does not like the wind," explained. "It keeps him awake of nights, it annoys him. And when there is a mistral, as you know, there is wind. Much wind."

There was certainly much wind when there was a mistral. For three or six, and on rare occasions for nine days there was the wind. It blew straight in from the Mediterranean, out of a cloudless sky. It spread sand all over the Croisette—the curving road along the beach, with the fashionable bars and shops. It ripped awnings and sent smart yachts behind the concrete seawall to the tiny harbor. It battered ten-foot waves over the sand, and the spray from them was salty on your lips, a square from the Croisette. And all the time the sky was blue.

And the scarred one who had stated in Monte Carlo that his name was Thomas Burke, and in Cannes that it was Anthony Senna, did not like the wind. This one who had cold eyes when spoken to, and who cut spaghetti with a knife in a dirty, waterfront eating place in Genoa, and who played thousand-franc chips at Monte Carlo—the wind kept him awake at night.

"He stays here for some little time?" I asked my friend.

The proprietor shrugged.

"On the Riviera, who can tell how long one stays?" he countered. "But I have given him a room on the top floor, on the corner, facing the rear."

"On the *corner,* facing the rear?" I repeated, puzzled.

I said that because one of the peculiar things about top floor corner rooms at the Grand was that they had only the two windows at the rear. There was no side window. And there was no room next to them, but rather very large linen closets. The rooms were apt to be hot at this time—very hot.

The proprietor nodded, and I said—

"I suppose he looked at some other rooms?"

My friend seemed a little surprised at my interest. But then we talked often of unimportant things—of things that seemed unimportant to us, and yet very important to others.

"Monsieur Senna looked at several rooms and selected the one at the east corner," the proprietor told me.

"Well, in event of a mistral, he will hear only a little wind there," I said.

And my friend agreed.

"The walls are very thick, and the window screens quite tight. He will hear only a little of the mistral," he agreed.

A TELEGRAM from Paris took me to St. Raphael the next day. I was searching for a German by the name of Schmidt, who had stolen many marks from a small town bank somewhere near Berlin, and who the Paris office of the agency with which I was connected had heard was in the French Riviera town. The office had heard incorrectly, though the Schmidt at St. Raphael slightly resembled the German thief. He was a good fellow, this Schmidt, and after we had stood each other a few rounds of drinks I left him and drove over the Esterel Mountains toward Cannes. It had started to blow, and when I took my machine over the highest stretch of road, with the Mediterranean almost a thousand feet below, the car rocked from the gusts of wind.

"Mistral," I said. "The beginning of one."

And I thought about my friend with the scar on his chin and the warm eyes that got so suddenly cold. I drove pretty fast and reached Cannes around four. The wind was increasing; awnings were being hauled in and yachts were steaming into the small harbor, behind the concrete breakwater. Sand was swirling in eddies across the Croisette. The two most patronized of the beach bars, the Miramar and the Chatham, were deserted—it was three hours before cocktail time.

I went to my hotel and got the file that held my photographs. It was a big file in a special case, and I'd gone over two hundred photos the night before. I did another fifty and then quit. In the fingers of my right hand I held the likeness of my scarred one. The scar was

missing, and the big one was wearing his hair differently. But he was my man. I turned the photo over and read:

Anthony (Tony) Senna. Chicago, September 1926. Jackie Marks' bodyguard until Marks was machine gunned out, in March 1927. Murder suspect. Indicted three times —no convictions. Beer. Mixed up in Spencer Tracy kill. Not indicted. Dropped out of sight for year in early 1928. Turned up in Los Angeles on gambling barge in June, 1930, after standing trial for murder of copper in Chicago in February, 1929. Al Fess murdered on barge three months later. Senna stood trial for murder. No conviction. Used plenty of money to get clear. No record after this.

There was a description of the scarred one that did the trick. I guessed that he'd got heavier, was wearing his hair differently and was only using that Senna tag when he was forced to. He knew that there was the *carte d'identité* business, probably, and that the local police would have his name from the hotel. I decided that his passport was all right, but that he hadn't wanted Senna to get into Monte Carlo records. He'd played safe at the Grand, fearing the police, in event of any sort of accident, might check his passport.

Well, I knew who he was. And I remembered that Al Fess had been a big shot in Chicago, but had been driven out by Capone and had followed Horace Greeley's advice to go West. He'd worked the big gambling barge beyond the three mile limit, and then things had started to go wrong. I remembered that the barge had been blown up once, and set fire another time. And not long after that Fess had been shot to death. My scarred one had been indicted and tried. No conviction. That trial would have taken place along in September or October, I figured. About a year ago.

I shoved the photo back in its proper file and smoked a couple of cigarets. The wind was cutting up now, but I didn't mind it. The screens in my room's three windows rattled, and something loose on a cornice somewhere made a pounding noise at intervals. I thought of the room Senna had selected and smiled a little grimly.

The theory I liked best was that Senna had murdered Al Fess, a year ago. He'd kept out of sight for awhile after his trial. Fess had been pretty big. Perhaps Senna had tried to move around a bit in the States. But it had been too tough. So he'd come across and had landed at Genoa. But he was still worried. He liked rooms with thick walls and without other rooms next to them. He liked them on the top floor. He was lonely and in a strange country, but he was afraid of strangers. In other words, Tony Senna must be a hunted man.

AFTER a little while I had a swim in a sea that was getting rough by the minute. The waves were three and four feet high and, in the manner of the Mediterranean, they pounded to shore very close to each other. When I got back to the hotel after my swim the mistral was still picking up force. I changed into light flannels and slipped a Colt automatic into a deep hip pocket of the trousers. I couldn't quite make up my mind about what I wanted to do with Senna. That is, whether I wanted to talk with him, or try to talk with him. Just out of curiosity—for he wasn't wanted.

A *chasseur* brought in another telegram. After he'd taken my franc tip and had gone, I read it. It was coded simply—from the Paris office. I was to forget about Schmidt for the time. A client in Paris was very anxious to locate one Anthony Senna, who it was thought had landed in Genoa the day before. There was a description of Senna in code, and it included the scar. I was to locate Senna and wire the office. That was all. Except that there were the letters V.I., which meant "very important".

I smoked another cigaret and smiled at the break putting Remmings on the *Conte Grande* had got me. And I felt a little sorry for Senna. My hunch was

that Senna hadn't come far enough away, or that he'd come to the wrong place. In any case, business was business. I went to the French telegraph and sent a coded wire to Paris. It was to the effect that one Anthony Senna who answered the required description was staying at the Grand Hotel at Cannes, France.

When I thought of the surprise this speed would cause, in Paris, I decided I rated a drink or two. So I drove against a rising wind and parked near the Chatham. Senna wasn't there. It was after seven and the bar was crowded. The pajamas the women wore were as colorful as usual but had long ceased to startle me. I went outside, having trouble getting the door opened against the mistral wind, and went inside the Miramar.

At first I didn't see my man. This bar was larger and noisier and more crowded. I went toward a small table in a far, dark corner. And then I saw Tony Senna. He was slouched low in one of the big lounging chairs. His big body was slumped, his arms were at his sides. From where he sat he had a view of the whole bar and of the entrance. On the table before him was a glass of beer. His face was twisted; he looked miserable.

When he caught sight of me he straightened a little. He started to smile. I waved a hand carelessly and watched the hard expression come into his eyes. But it went away, and he sort of grinned. He hesitated, then said thickly—

"Alone—have a drink?"

I hesitated. Being an agency man has its Judas moments. This was one of them. I'd sold this man out, and he was asking me to drink with him.

I said—

"All right—sure."

I dropped into the lounge chair across the table from him, leaned forward.

"My name's Benn," I said, lying because I knew he would lie. And he did.

"Mine's Burke," he replied. "Tom Burke. Thanks for that tip at the Casino. I was kinda worried in there, and maybe I didn't act right with you."

I waved that off. A gust of the mistral wind made things sing and rattle outside. The big one shivered.

"Mistral," I said pleasantly. "Just getting into action."

He swore.

"Hate wind. Gets me. Mistral, eh? What in hell's that?"

I ordered a whisky sour.

"Just wind," I told him. "If it's a real mistral it'll last three days, or six—or nine. The nines are pretty rare."

He sat up straight and blinked at me.

"Like *this*—for nine days!" he muttered. "Lord—I'd go crazy."

I nodded.

"Some people do," I said. "There's a sort of unwritten French law—it applies to men and women living together. If one of them murders the other along about the eighth or ninth day, it doesn't count."

Senna stared at me.

"No kiddin'?" he muttered.

"That's what they say—pretty hard to convict in such a case. The wind gets at you after four or five days. I've never seen a nine day affair, but I've been around for a couple of the six day sessions."

HE MUTTERED something I didn't catch and sipped his beer. Every few seconds he'd look toward the entrance, and his dark eyes were sharp. No one came in unless he saw him. I thought of the wire I'd just sent, and felt strange about it. The agency game can give you lousy moments.

When the waiter came with my whisky sour I lifted it slowly and said cheerfully—

"Here's to crime!"

He grinned at that and raised his beer glass. I frowned at it.

"Beer's no good here," I told him. "It's a waste of time."

And he said a little grimly, without

thinking too much—

"Yeah, but it doesn't hurt my eyes or nerves any."

There was something about the scarred one that I liked. I didn't bother figuring just what it was. Perhaps I felt a little sorry for him. I had a very strong hunch that death was coming his way. His actions didn't hurt my hunch any. He wasn't exactly scared, but he was nervous. I wanted to know something, so I went after it.

"You haven't been over here long, have you?" I asked, and didn't make my voice too anxious.

He looked at me narrowly.

"I'm an engineer," he said. "I've been down in Mexico—alone a lot. Had a couple of months leave due me, and grabbed a freighter for Genoa. Just an idea."

I nodded. I didn't believe that he was an engineer, but I did believe that he'd been in Mexico and that he'd been there alone. He was fed up, and he'd picked the Riviera and Cannes. And it hadn't worked. And he was drinking with the man who had spotted him, turned his name up.

There was a crash of glass, somewhere beyond the bar. The entrance door opened and a group of people came in, laughing and letting the wind carry them along. Senna hunched down in the chair again.

"I hate wind," he muttered. "I gotta get out of this town."

I thought of my wire and didn't like that idea. So I said:

"It'll be blowing all along the Riviera. And you'd have to go pretty far back in the mountains to dodge this breeze. You can't be sure—it may not stick. Tomorrow morning you may not feel a breath of wind."

That was an ironic thought. A fast plane could reach Cannes from Paris in five hours. The regular planes did it in six. If some one wanted to see Senna badly enough, if I wasn't going haywire on my basis and hunches, some one could be at the Grand Hotel around midnight. A good plane could edge into the wind and get down all right.

Senna said—

"You think it may let up, eh?"

I nodded, and finished my whisky sour.

"Sure," I said. "Have one on me?"

He had another beer, and I had another sour. I tried to get him to open up a little, but he didn't want to talk. He kept his eyes on the entrance door and on human faces that passed near our corner. I said—

"You played at the Casino—any luck?"

He grinned, showing white teeth. Then his dark eyes got hard and frowning.

"Yeah—too much, maybe," he stated.

I looked puzzled.

"Too much?" I said.

He got sort of a silly smile on his face, only it wasn't all the way silly. After a few seconds of silence he said a little grimly:

"I've only been this lucky a few times in my life. And right after those times—I got unlucky. You know how it is."

I finished my second sour and rose.

"Yes, sure," I said. "I know how it is. See you again."

He didn't seem surprised at the abruptness of my departure.

"Yeah," he said. "So long."

I went out into the wind, got to a phone in the Miramar Hotel and called the office of the small flying field at the end of town. I was known there as Jay Benn, and sometimes I used a ship for a fast hop to Germany or Switzerland or Spain. In Cannes I was thought to be a pretty good American, with enough money but not too much. A fellow who liked that section of the coast.

I got Leon Demoigne on the phone and asked him to ring me if a plane landed around midnight. He said that he would if I wanted him to, but that he could tell me now that one was coming down from Paris. She was a fast monoplane, and there would be two passengers aboard, beside her pilot. I

told him that was not the plane I was thinking about, and he said he'd advised by wire against the flight, but that the ship was apparently coming along anyway. He ended up by saying that it was probably bringing along a couple of crazy Americans who had heavy dates.

Even in French his idea didn't sound right to me. I thought it was perfectly right that the plane was bringing along a couple of Americans. But I was quite certain they weren't coming because of the kind of heavy dates Leon anticipated. And I was damned sure they weren't crazy.

I HAD dinner alone at a small Russian restaurant, and the black bread didn't taste as good as usual. The thing that got me was that I was pretty sure Tony Senna wasn't wanted by the police. I was pretty sure that crooks were using a reputable agency, as they had used agencies before, to trace another crook. I had the feeling that I'd put Senna on the spot, and I didn't like it. He was a killer and probably a lot of things that went with it, but it seemed to me he wasn't going to have much of a chance. I could almost hear guns—and I could almost see the big scarred man going down. I might be all wrong, but the set-up framed things that way.

At ten o'clock I went back to the hotel and found the telegram I expected. It was from McKee, the agency head, and it was brief. I read, " 'Fine fast work clients pleased drop further investigation of Senna.' " It was in code. And it convinced me that death was coming close to the big fellow. I was to drop out, which was not the ordinary method. The clients would handle things themselves. And they were pleased.

I lay on my bed and listened to the mistral wind howl. It was getting on my nerves too. After a half hour or so I made a decision. Business was business, but some of it took away too much self-respect. I drove to the Grand Hotel. Senna was not in. When I got to the Miramar bar he was just where I'd left him. He'd been eating sandwiches, and he was still drinking beer. He grinned at me.

"I couldn't go out in that stuff," he said. "So I just stuck here."

I nodded and pulled a chair close to him. I ordered coffee and *fin*. He was looking at me with his dark eyes narrowed.

"Damn mistral!" he muttered. "You think it'll last three days, maybe six?"

I said:

"You never can tell." Then I went right into it. "Listen, Senna," I said softly and without paying any attention to his start of surprise, "you got a tough break in Genoa. I happened to eat in the same spot and see you. I saw your passport edge, at the Casino in Monte Carlo, and I know some things. My name isn't Benn—and I'm connected with an international detective agency. My office wired me to look for you, and I wired back that you were at the Grand Hotel here. Two Americans are coming down by plane—clients of the Paris office of my agency. They're coming down to see you, and they'll get here about midnight. It took me a little while to figure things out, and when I got them figured out I decided that you were being spotted out for killing Al Fess on his gambling barge, off Santa Monica. I didn't like my part, so I'm warning you. That's all of it."

His big hands were gripping the table edge, and getting white with that grip. His dark eyes were slitted and cold. I kept my right hand on the Colt grip.

"I don't think you're the whitest guy that ever lived, Senna," I said. "And I've got my hand on a rod now. So don't do the wrong thing. What I want to get across is that my hunch is the law isn't coming after you. Not *my* kind of law. You've got a couple of hours, and you don't like wind. *I'm* all right, because I wired you were staying at the Grand, and you were. You can hire a machine—"

I stopped. Senna had taken his

whitened knuckles away from the table. He was relaxed in the big chair, and his face held a terrible grin. He chuckled. I stared at him and he shook his head slowly.

"Lord!" he breathed. "Imagine a dick tipping me off! Imagine that!"

I smiled a little. But I didn't say anything. He kept on shaking his head. After awhile he lighted a cigaret.

"I wouldn't waste too much time, Senna," I told him. "This wind may not hold up that plane too much."

He shook his big head.

"I ain't going away, Benn—or whatever your name is," he said slowly, tonelessly. "I've been leaving places for a long time now. Going places—far places. Spots I didn't like, see? They've been after me a long time. I ain't saying I did for Fess, but if ever a guy rated a dose of lead, that rat did, see? But me, I'm staying here."

"Don't be a fool, Senna," I said. "The law doesn't want you—"

He looked suddenly tired.

"These guys are worse than the law, Benn," he said wearily. "I tell you, I'm tired of running away. I'm staying here. Now you—" he raised a big forefinger and pointed it at me—"get the hell out of here!"

I said as I rose slowly:

"Well, I warned you. I may be all wrong—but I tipped you, Senna."

There was irony in his eyes.

"Sure, Benn," he said. "Now you get the hell away from me."

THE plane landed at 12:10 by my wristwatch. It landed in a nasty wind, after circling the lighted field three times. She was a small monoplane, cabin type. I had my car on the Frejus road, with the lights out. After about ten minutes a car that had been waiting at the field turned into the main road and moved toward Cannes. I had to drive very fast to follow it. I was several squares behind when it reached the Grand Hotel. The wind was raising the devil with the palms along the Croisette; it seemed to be steadily increasing.

I parked a square away and went into the hotel by a side entrance. When I reached the main lobby no one was about but the *concierge*. He knew me. He said that the two gentlemen had said they didn't want Monsieur Senna disturbed, but was he in his room. And he said that he had told them that Monsieur Senna was at the Blue Frog. And they had thanked him and departed. They had not engaged rooms and they had not brought any baggage into the hotel.

"How do you know Monsieur Senna is at the Blue Frog?" I asked.

The *concierge* shrugged.

"He has told me that he thought he would go there," he returned. "He has asked me for a quiet place to drink, where there is music and yet not a crowd. And where the lights would not hurt his eyes."

"*C'est ça,*" I muttered grimly.

"Well, it *was* so. The Blue Frog was a small drinking and dancing place; there was a two-piece orchestra and the lights were dim. It was not smart and it didn't get much of a crowd. I reflected that dim lights would give Senna a better chance, and that a small crowd would mean less chance of humans other than those concerned being hit by stray bullets. I wasn't sure that Senna cared much about other humans, but every man has his particular code of what he calls honor. Senna was no exception.

The Blue Frog was just off the Route d'Antibe, the main business street of Cannes, at the east end of town. It was set back in some palms and there were no buildings very close to it. In my car I drove fast, parked a half square away and hurried on. I went in a side entrance and spotted Senna right away. His eyes were narrowed on mine and he was smiling. He wasn't slumped in any lounging chair this time. He sat on a small, wooden chair. It had no arms. Both hands were in the pockets of his

light suit coat, and he was seated slightly to the left of the table. He faced the side entrance directly, and the main entrance to the place was in a line with his big body.

I stood for several seconds looking at him. Then I went to the bar. I ordered Scotch, straight. The two-piece orchestra was playing "*Ay-yi-yi,*" with the guitar dominating the piano. There were only a few people inside; mistrals kept folk at home. And that was good, too.

When I lifted my drink, my fingers were shaking a little. There was a mirror beyond the bar, and I looked into it. I could see the front entrance. The barman saw my shaking fingers and guessed wrong. He said that the mistral was not good, it did bad things with one's nerves. I agreed and downed the Scotch. As I set the glass on the counter my eyes went to the mirror, and I saw a tall, hard faced man come in. I turned and looked toward the side entrance. A shorter, heavier man stepped inside the dimly lighted room, letting a rush of wind in with him. A girl laughed shrilly, and the orchestra continued its swift rhythm.

I think they both saw Senna at the same instant. With so few people in the place that wasn't hard. I saw the shorter one of the two stiffen, and his coat material came up from the bottom. There were two terrific crashes. No Maxim silenced guns, these. There were screams. The short one took one step forward and crashed to the floor.

I swung around and stared at Senna. There was another gun crash and his big body jerked. But his right hand came up. His left battered the table aside and he walked toward the main entrance and toward the tall, hard faced man. There was another gun crash and Senna's left arm hung limp at his side. His gun was up, extended in his right hand. He kept walking, his face twisted in a terrible smile. The tall one was staring at him; he fired again but the bullet went wild. It tore artificial flowers from a wall behind Senna.

And then Senna worked his gun. It crashed again and again. I counted four shots, and then all sound was merged into a terrible roar. When the roar died away, I went toward the two motionless figures on the floor near the door. The tall one was dead. Senna was alive; he said weakly, as I leaned over him:

"The others—done?"

I left him and went to the side entrance door. The thickset one was dead, too. The bullet had ripped upward through his mouth. I went back and kneeled beside Senna.

"Both done," I told him.

He tried to grin, but it was too tough. He said, very weakly:

"Sure—I got—Al Fess." And a few seconds later he said, "Guy—I can't hear—that damn wind—"

"Take it easy, Senna—"

I couldn't think of anything else to say. He closed his eyes and after a few seconds more he said weakly:

"Funny—if it hadn't been for that damn wind—I might have—run again. But it just—made me sore—made me want to—stick here—"

He didn't say any more. He was dead when a very excited gendarme reached my side and asked a dozen questions one after another. I answered one of them and went to the bar for another drink. It was some time before I got it. As I sipped it I decided that it was just as well Senna had had a funny idea about the wind, if he *had* had it. You can't always be running away from things.

The mistral lasted three days, and when it was over the sun was very hot.

The Blue Frog did a big business; the proprietor put a frame around a hole made by one of the bullets that missed Senna. The smart crowd went in for a look, and the French townspeople went in too. The proprietor told me he would have liked to frame one of Tony Senna's bullets, but that couldn't be done. Senna hadn't missed.

BIRTH *of an* EPOCH

By WM. ASHLEY ANDERSON

HARVEY and I had our share in the birth of an epoch, but we took our part in very humble fashion. We had some cash in our pockets still, and bicycles for transportation. That day we rode out to Arlington, and drifted toward the parade ground of Fort Meyer, where a very thin gathering of people were wandering about in the vicinity of a small, derrick-like device from which a weight was suspended.

We first thought it might be a gallows; but at the base there was a short rail, and we quickly learned that its purpose was to shoot an airplane into the air. Youth has this great advantage: it is credulous.

So far as flight was concerned we were years ahead of the World in our imaginings. We knew all about Lilienthal and Chanute and Langley's airdrome, which we had just seen in miniature in the Smithsonian Institute.

The plane was just being deposited at the end of the field. We promptly took a hand, joining the unhorsed cavalrymen who did not recognize their fate in this contraption of canvas and spruce, and dragged it across the dusty ground to the catapult. You will recall that there were no wheels on this machine; merely wooden skids like long thin skis.

It was put in place on a small truck balanced on the rail. The weight was drawn up, and caught by a trigger catch controlled by the pilot. Mr. Wright appeared in an old fashioned duster and, as I recall it, a derby hat, which he exchanged for a cap. My impression of him was that of a rather diffident business man—derby, stiff collar and bow tie. He sat on the entering wedge of the lower plane, with feet resting on a bar no thicker than a broom stick. There were no ailerons on this craft; the control sticks warped the entire surface. The motor was behind the pilot, with a long thin radiator, and two pusher props.

Mr. Wright took his place. The pilot gave a signal for all to stand clear. He pulled the trigger. The weight dropped. The plane skimmed along the rail, caught the air, and soared up and away to the right.

There was no particular show of emotion on the faces of those who were watching, a sort of blinking satisfaction, perhaps, and some gratified murmurs. The plane reached the end of the field and made a left hand turn with a slight bank. It made the circuit of the field at a height of about one hundred and fifty or two hundred feet—an extremely business-like performance. Mr. Wright continued round and round in a large circle. He could be seen plainly. Every detail of the machine was perfectly visible at all times. Before long the performance grew a little monotonous. The plane went round and round, until a quarter of an hour had passed; then half an hour. People smoked cigarets, walked about and chatted in small groups; gossiped and talked of important personal things. Three quarters of an hour passed. My heart had swollen to the bursting point.

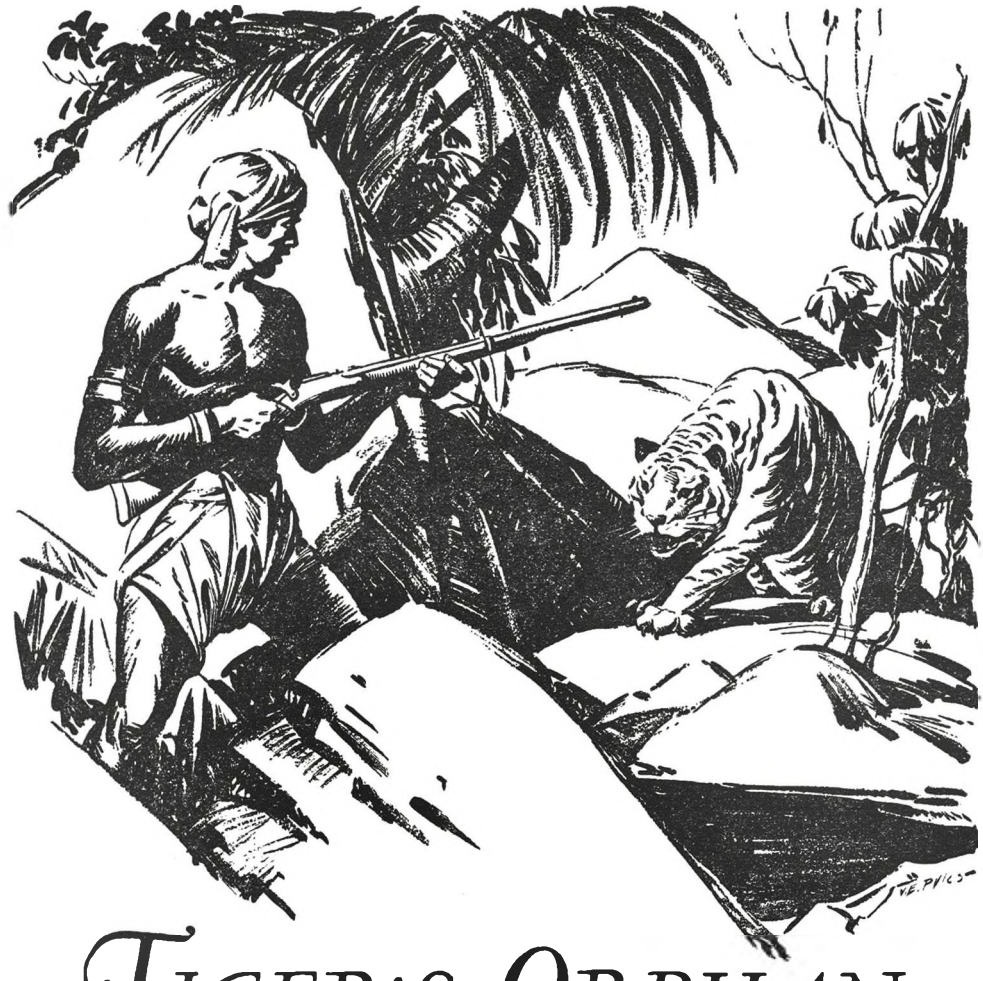
An hour went by.

All at once an officer with a red face and rolling eyes walked agitatedly through the groups of gazers, calling out:

"My God! Do you realize what's happening? Let's give him three cheers!"

Three scattered cheers were given. This was the first time that a man had flown with wings for more than an hour!

By GORDON MacCREAGH



TIGER'S ORPHAN

A Story of India

DHUNNU was born in the little mud village of Mailabari, in the Bengal Terai district. His fate, from the very moment of his birth, brought him into the world with a blood feud on his hands and established his life in unenviable ways.

That was for two reasons. One was the inescapable dictum of the inscrutable gods that his father's fathers for all time had been relegated to the lowly caste of Kami; and the other because his immediate father, a strong man with his hands, who had the germs of thought in his dim mind, dared to rebel against inexorable destiny and flouted the Brahmins who interpreted the law of the gods. He had refused to pay them the tribute that would propitiate the gods. Wherefore Ram Nath, the Brahmin, who

fattened upon the village's spiritual needs, spoke a word in the ear of Kundu Chetty, the money lender, who held a long outstanding mortgage on the rebellious one's paddy field—as likewise he did upon the field, and indeed upon the next season's unsown crop, of every man in the community.

He who confers charity upon a Brahmin gives to the gods. So Kundu Chetty quietly foreclosed on his mortgage and turned the iconoclast out to live or to die as the gods might decide. But the sturdy rebel established the fifteen-year-old expectant mother of his son in an eight-by-ten mud hut and fared forth to Chilgunge in the Himalayan foothills, where there was a sahib who had a post-office, who would not hold his caste against him but would give a job to a strong man as a mail runner for all of eight rupees, which is nearly three dollars, a month.

A mail runner is an important person. He wears a khaki uniform with a brass badge and he carries a staff with an iron clapper which announces ahead:

"Clink-clink-clink, his Majesty's mails. Let all men and vehicles clear the road. Clink-clink, there must be no delay."

So the gods, well advised of the rebellious mail runner's daily path, sent a tiger to pick him off one evening as he ran his route. And Ram Nath, the Shivaista Brahmin, nodded with slow unction and drove home the moral that the tiger had been none other than the Lord Shiva himself.

"All things are Three," preached the Brahmin. "Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. And all Three are One, being the Principle of life."

Which none of the villagers could understand. But Ram Nath expounded further:

"And the greatest of these is Shiva the Destroyer, who is an angry and a jealous god and who always punishes those who do not do him honor."

Which, in both name and attributes, was not so very much unlike the Biblical Jehovah, of whom the villagers, of course, knew nothing. But they said:

"It is undoubtedly so. The man refused to make offerings. It is just."

And for a couple of weeks thereafter the potbellied distortion of painted clay, which passed for the Lord Shiva in Ram Nath's misshapen temple, reeked of jasmine flowers and fed well on saffron stained rice and copper coins and, now and then, a silver two-anna piece. Then the village forgot the incident and reabsorbed itself in the long, colorless business of trying once more to borrow enough from the good money lender to plant sufficient seed to avert famine in the following year, in case the gods should see fit to send their drought.

So Dhunnu was born into an unfriendly world, heralded by no blowing of conch shell horns and banging of temple bells. No Brahmin came to wave a sprig of sacred *tulsi* plant and to mutter *mantras*. No professional eaters advertised the generosity of the household by engulfing incredible quantities of rice and curdled milk. The child mother, a thing accursed, for whose sins the gods had taken her husband from her, having accomplished her feeble duty to life, lay down and died. Nor could the infant be named like any respectable person, Dhunnu the son of so-and-so; but only He of the Tiger Feud, or Tiger's Orphan.

Not by any means was he known as Dhunnu who inherited a feud against the Brahmin; for that would be sacrilege. Nor against the money lender who drove his parent out; for it is the lot of the peasantry of all India to remain forever in debt to the money lenders, who are an institution hallowed by immemorial custom and who constitute, in their exorbitant way, the farm relief of the immutable East.

YET Dhunnu survived in the same astonishing manner that some East Indian children do contrive to survive the appalling infant mortality of their land. He grew up somehow in the dust and the

dirt behind his mother's sister's husband's hut, immunized from a hundred diseases only by the white hot sun that burned up most of the more virulent bacteria.

As soon as he was old enough to run about he was absorbed into the function which the gods had decreed for all small boys of a Hindu village. He was sent out with the other village boys to herd the scrawny, humpbacked zebus and the ponderous, slate colored buffaloes and the milch goats of the community.

Oddly enough, he grew to be a happy sort of brat. His very existence being a survival of the fittest, he was fit. Dressed, like the other herd boys, only in a piece of blue string round his stomach, protuberant from a diet of too much rice and too little everything else, his limbs showed the beginnings of a sturdiness that he inherited from the strong man of his hands, his father.

Soon he was the boss boy of the herd grounds; and having no parent to run to with his little problems and troubles, he developed the virtue of thinking and acting for himself; and he gave his orders to the other boys.

But he remained an aloof sort of youth. The stigma of the fatherless clung to him. The other boys, with the supreme diabolism of the human boy unchecked, were full of sly allusions to the fact that the gods had sent a tiger to punish the paternal impiety and the allusions were all the more underhanded because he was strong enough to beat their heads together, and when they ran away he could throw stones after them with unerring accuracy.

So Dhunnu Tiger's Orphan was left a good deal to himself. But he did not mind. The world was full of life, and all of it was interesting. The big black crickets that fought so furiously over nothing; the red hot ants that came in their columns to carry away the remains; the anvil birds that were able to eat the stinging ants; the swift gliding snakes that ate the birds; the mongooses that ate the snakes; the jackals that were clever enough — sometimes — to catch the wily mongooses.

All these things were full of interest and absorbing mystery. And presently it began to seep into Dhunnu's wondering mind that he could understand the reason for all of them. There was blood feud between all the different families of beasts: the Lord Shiva had so ordered. All things must destroy and in the end must be themselves destroyed. It was the law of life.

So also was there a feud between Dhunnu's family and the beast families. To slay because one had slain. Sometimes, for a fleeting moment, it came into Dhunnu's groping mind that perhaps there might be cause for feud between his family and the family of Kundu the money lender. But the ramifications of that reasoning were too subtle for him. Money lenders had been necessary to the scheme of things for all time in India; and that curiously aloof thing, the law of the British *sirkar*, always seemed to give them right over the peasantry who smeared their thumb marks upon paper.

So Dhunnu shelved the matter and told the other herd boys that they were good-for-nothing brats and ordered them to feed the cattle in such and such a place, and went himself and lay on his stomach at the jungle edge and peered into the cool depths and wondered about life.

And since he lay very still, the live things of the jungle shuffled and rustled about their quiet business of life before his eyes, and he saw many things and began to understand many things that remained a mystery forever to the noisy youths who raced madly about and shouted over their games.

It was a long, lazy life, this business of growing up; and Dhunnu, strangely enough, found himself enjoying it. He did not know which he liked better: the blazing days of the hot season, when the jungle was moist and cool; or the drenching monsoon when all sorts of queer

beasts came down from the Terai foothills to feed on the lush growths of the early rain.

From a wandering hillman who was going on a pilgrimage south to the faraway festival of Juggernath Puri he learned how to make for himself a pellet bow. A strong shaft of springy bamboo with a string split in the center and held apart by bamboo splints to form a square notch into which a round pebble, or a hard clay pellet, might snuggle with a nicety. By an adroit movement of the wrist at the moment of firing, such a pebble might be propelled to a considerable distance with quite some accuracy.

Since it has been the fixed policy of the British government to suppress all weapons among the teeming and sometimes turbulent millions of India, the use of spear and bow and arrow has been utterly lost to the peasantry of the land, and they have been reduced to a singularly helpless and defenseless state. Which, in some measure may explain the charge which the clever students of the university in Calcutta made to the effect that this government-enjoined helplessness accounted for the twenty-five thousand or so luckless humans who are slain every year by wild animals.

But a pellet bow was another thing altogether. Dhunnu began to find that he could knock over small birds and even —by the exercise of infinite patience to gain close range—wild fowl.

That meant meat. A substance that the household of Dhunnu's foster parents tasted perhaps as often as twice in a year. And Dhunnu waxed and grew strong accordingly.

AND then his inexorable fate descended upon him and cut all these things out of his life as with a knife. For Dhunnu attained to his fourteenth year.

He was a man. No longer could he play at cattle herding with the boys of the village. He was old enough to go to work in the rice fields; to labor in the sweat of his brow; to struggle and pinch and save; to borrow from the money lender against the unsown crop; to remain eternally thereafter in debt; to do all the wretched things that make the Indian peasant the abject, futile, miserable creature that he is.

As a man who did a man's twelve hours of work, Dhunnu was permitted to sit on the outskirts of the evening group who gathered under the mango tree and to listen to the elders gossip about events in their narrow circle of life and exchange wise profundities about nothing at all; and sometimes, when some older man's humor was good, he was allowed to hold the passing hookah pipe for a few moments and to inhale a bubbling lungful or two of acrid, incense flavored smoke.

The talk ran on the simple doings of simple folk: on lives and deaths and rains and crops, and inevitably upon the beasts of the jungle. The wild pig had rooted up so-and-so's field. The sacred monkeys of the Hanuman godling had raided such-and-such a man's granary. A leopard had snatched the tax collector's wife's brother's dog in so-and-so's village. In such-and-such a district a man eating tiger was abroad.

At that Dhunnu pricked up his ears to listen for wisdom. But only weird and wonderful stores about the ways of beasts issued from the lips of the graybeards; and Dhunnu began presently to know that these people who lived on the very edge of the jungle knew nothing at all about it; that their knowledge was half superstitious lore and half hereditary misinformation. And he scorned them silently for their ignorance.

Lean and uncomfortable years passed. The lot of Dhunnu was heavy upon his head. The inescapable tradition and immutable custom of a changeless land bounded his small horizon.

Till fate once more in its slow cycle opened up a tiny loophole in the surrounding blackness. A sahib came to the village. The sahib was an assistant engineer of the P. W. D. and he was engaged in some mysterious business of

measuring ground with a chain and looking through a little telescope on a tripod. And he damned the village with rancor in execrable Hindustani because there were no chickens to be had and his cook would have to make his curry of goat meat. And damning the community and all its headmen, stalked in vile humor to his camp.

This was the tide in the affairs of Dhunnu which, if taken at the flood, might lead on to who could tell what further manifestation of fate. Dhunnu took his courage in both his hands and ran after the sahib. Timidly he salaamed low before him and made his plea—

"Let the Heaven Born pardon and let it be permitted to speak."

The sahib grunted sulkily at the apparition.

"Well, what is it, boy? I can't attend to your troubles for you. Take them to the dipty commishna sahib at Sialpur; it's his job."

But Dhunnu salaamed again and said—

"Sahib, if the Protector of the Poor permits, I can show where the *kalich* pheasants roost at sundown."

Now pheasants, of course, were a delicacy much to be preferred to scrawny village goats.

"O-ho," said the sahib with interest. "*Kalich* pheasant?"

"Yes, sahib. Five of them. One male with four females."

"Ah! So you are a *shikari*—a hunter?" asked the sahib.

"No, sahib. I am a poor coolie. But—" confidently—"I know where the *kalich* roost."

So the sahib called for his shotgun and tramped off behind Dhunnu, who went in a fever of apprehension because the sahib in his heavy boots made a horrible noise through the jungle silences.

But, sure enough, the pheasant were exactly there where Dhunnu said they would be; and the sahib bagged two of them with his right and left barrels. And he was very pleased and gave Dhunnu a silver eight-anna piece, which is fifteen cents, and told him:

"You are too smart for a coolie. You should be a *shikari*."

And Dhunnu salaamed low and said with the conviction that he suddenly knew was his fate:

"Yes, sahib. Some day I shall be a *shikari* and—I shall meet a tiger."

But the sahib laughed and said—

"But to be a *shikari* one must have a gun and a permit from the *sirkar*."

And Dhunnu said—

"It is even so, sahib—" and he hung his head.

But the sahib was in a good humor—and the path to the pheasant roost had really been swift and sure. So he said:

"Listen, boy. My work will be in this district for some months. From time to time I shall be able to come in for a *shikar*. And I shall tell Willoughby sahib, who is the dipty commishna at Sialcote, and who is a keen sportsman. Lead him well and truly to good *shikar*, and who knows but that the favor of a dipty sahib may lead to a permit for a gun."

So Dhunnu knelt down and laid his forehead upon the sahib's boot tips, and went away knowing that he knew his fate.

THE sahib came again; and the other sahib, the deputy commissioner, came too; and Dhunnu showed them all the things that he had learned about the creatures of the wild whose fate and function it was, as decreed by the Lord Shiva, to destroy and to be in turn destroyed. And as he scoured the jungles to mark down the trails and drinking places and lairs of the creatures against whom his family had a feud of death, he daily learned more; and both the sahibs agreed that he was an extraordinarily good *shikari*.

So Willoughby sahib began to make inquiries about his character and standing to determine whether he might be a safe person to have the privilege of owning a weapon.

But the village headman said—

"Sahib, Heaven Born, how can this young man be worthy, for he is of the caste of Kami?"

So then Willoughby sahib cursed the headman for a fool and wrote out a permit for Dhunnu Tiger's Orphan to own a gun.

And Dhunnu thereby immediately became a person of standing in the community. His lowly caste, of course, remained unaltered—that was irrevocable destiny. No person of the higher castes, Brahmins, Kshattrayas or Sudras, could eat food that he had touched; and of the three, only the Brahmin might enter his house, and that only because the Brahmin was a priest by heredity and therefore vulnerable only to the greater defilements. But Dhunnu at least stood in the position of a man with a recognized profession; and at last he had a name.

Dhunnu the Shikari was his title.

It was true that he did not as yet own a gun. But Dhunnu, in his new knowledge of his destiny, knew that the gods had decreed a gun for him. He knew, too, that mortal man must accept with thanksgiving the meager trifles that the gods vouchsafed and must, in fact, remind the gods with offerings every so often. His own father's case was proof enough of that . . .

So Dhunnu came with humility to the village priest. Old Ram Nath had long ago been called to the anterooms of his ferocious gods to await the balancing of his deeds against his Karma. His place had been taken by another Brahmin whose name was Bhutto Krishto who, as his name implied, was a Vishnavist. So this priest painted a blue face on to the potbellied denizen of the shrine and gave it a curly black mustache to represent Krishna as being the most popular manifestation of Vishnu in the fearfully complicated Hindu pantheon; and he planted bazil shrubs all about the bulging whitewashed wall of the sacred retreat and established a more kindly worship than his predecessor.

"All things are Three," droned the priest. "And all Three are One. Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. And the greatest of these is Vishnu the Preserver whose avatar is Krishna, who also was upon this earth and knows the needs of mortal men who come with suppliant offerings."

It was all very confusing to Dhunnu, about whether the Destroyer or the Preserver were the greater. But who was he to question these things? The son of his rebellious father knew better than anybody else that mortal man could not do without the gods, and that the wise man went to trouble to propitiate them through the medium of their appointed servants, the Brahmins. So he gave the priest a brace of fat wild ducks. The Brahmin, of course, could not eat food that lowly Kami had touched; but the gods could—at night when nobody was looking. So the good priest told Dhunnu:

"Krishna the merciful, who understands your need and recompenses offerings, will give you opportunity to get a gun."

Dhunnu, then buoyed by faith, worked feverishly to save up the two-anna and four-anna silver pieces that the sahibs gave him for leading them to *shikar*. Nor did he by any means forget to bring frequent offerings to remind Krishna about his gun. It took him longer, therefore, to save; but Dhunnu—from his father's fate—knew well the value of offerings.

And lo and behold, in the course of less than a year the opportunity came. In a village fifty miles away was a *shikari* who had a gun. It was a thing that loaded at the muzzle and was fired by a little copper cap, a half dozen of which were carried stuck in a hole filled with wax in its stock. But a gun none the less.

This *shikari* had the misfortune to be gored by a sambur stag that he had wounded with the inadequate weapon; and the village *hakim* had doctored the wounds with a poultice of sacred cow dung. So the *shikari* died of gangrene, and the gun could now be had for ten

rupees, almost four dollars.

But Dhunnu, owing to the offerings that had brought this splendid opportunity within his grasp, had saved up only four and a half rupees toward the requisite ten. The obvious remedy was open to him—the course of the peasantry of all India in time of stress. Dhunnu, remembering the stories of his father's fate, had desperately kept clear of the money lender up to date and had heaped obloquy upon his house. But now in his hour of need, that parental catastrophe seemed very far away. It was not within his personal memory anyhow. A second generation can be persuaded to follow the herd into a war. So Dhunnu went the way of impatient youth, profited not at all by the bitter experience of age, followed the peasant herd, and did as his foolish father had done before him.

KUNDU the son of Kundu Chetty sat, as his wise father had done before him, obesely naked behind a grille of iron bars, his wares spread at his feet. Little piles of copper pice and of silver two-anna pieces, and four-anna pieces, and even of whole rupees. Infinitesimal sums; but relatively the vaults of a bank to the coolie class of a hidden away Bengal village.

Only, unlike bankers, *chetties* will lend money on no security at all other than note of hand; and they will gamble—at an interest of thirty-six per cent—on any kind of chance whatsoever; on the unsown crop and on the unborn calf or on a man's capacity for earning as much as the interest on the loan.

Kundu the son of Kundu knew all about Dhunnu and his ambitions, and without fuss or delay lent him five and a half rupees, with the simple proviso—written on paper above the borrower's thumb mark—that, should the interest not be paid upon due demand, he would take away the gun. Very much, in fact, as though one were buying a radio on time.

Whereupon Dhunnu, thanking the gods, ran most of the fifty miles with his permit in his hand to possess himself of the archaic weapon.

And Kundu the son of Kundu closed his greasy sheepskin bound book and smiled with thick lipped unction. The tally of village thumb marks on paper was now complete. There was a particular satisfaction in getting this stiff necked recalcitrant into the web. It was in this Kundu's own memory how the village had murmured when his father had foreclosed on the newly married father of this Dhunnu, the bold *shikari*. Furtive stones had been thrown on that occasion out of the dark, and much evil abuse had been heaped upon Kundu the money lender and upon all his forebears and all his offspring to be. Even business for awhile had fallen off.

Although Dhunnu the *shikari*, simple soul, could find no reason for carrying an unprofitable grudge against the normal functions of a money lender, Kundu the money lender was no simple soul. It is only among the animals, lesser beasts without thought, that no rancor remains against a weaker creature that one has wronged.

Kundu, therefore, closed thick lidded eyes and drew a long breath and with a well earned satisfaction crammed his mouth full of betel nut and pepper leaves and spat a red stream through the iron grille of his cage.

But Dhunnu, having acquired the thing that was called a weapon, came back and made thank offering to Krishna.

And marvelously opportune was the purchase. For the time of Kali *puja* was at hand. Kali the Terrible, whom the Thugs worship, the wife of Shiva, is wont to ride through the land upon the backs of tigers. And coming to the village for her festival, she discarded there a tired tiger.

The thing was beyond argument or quibble. The Kali festival had come and gone and there was the tiger in the nearby jungle.

Dhunnu knew that this was the sure progress of his fate. Between his family and the tiger family there was the feud which must be paid by blood. He had a gun and here was a tiger. He was a little in doubt as to whether he ought to kill Kali's tiger; so he took a pigeon to the priest to ask about it.

Bhutto Krishto the kindly sighed and said it was a pity to kill any live thing. Yet, since all Three were in the end One, the function of the Destroyer must in the end overlap that of the Preserver; and since the tiger might kill a man—or worse, a sacred cow—it might be all right to kill the tiger.

All this began to be very involved. But Dhunnu accepted the dispensation of the Brahmin whose business it was to know about such things; took also his life in his hands and went into the jungles to clear up the feud that he had inherited that must be paid with blood.

With infinite patience and caution he set about tracking down the most patient and cautious of the cat tribe. Most white men, armed with a modern high velocity rifle, go in after tigers with elephants and a hundred beaters. Dhunnu the *shikari* went in alone, naked except for a tightly wound loin cloth, with his ten-rupee muzzle loading thing to pit his craft and his skill against the wily beast on its own ground.

Patience and caution were the vital requisites. Being a Hindu, all patience was his heritage. As for caution, that rickety gun was cause enough to breed caution in the boldest man. There was no room for any kind of blunder in this game of tag with life and lurking death.

But Dhunnu had faith in his fate. He had made many offerings to the gods; and the gods had given him a gun and had sent him a tiger. The gods ordered all things. In their own good time they would bring the tiger within range of even that gun. And time was an element of no value that the very poorest peasant possessed in abundant surplus.

So Dhunnu, a lithe brown shadow, flitted between dimly lit tree trunks, skulked along the edges of tall elephant grass, crawled on his naked belly through the runways of deer and wild pig.

THE sun made a thousand fantastic shapes of dancing light and dark shadow; streaky green-yellowish-black forms that moved with the wind and stilled in the calm. Any one of these shapes at the very next turn might be five hundred pounds of striped fury waiting, infuriated, for the thing that followed it.

Infinite patience and ceaseless caution must precede the hunter's every footstep. He found tracks, great round pugs of padded feet that traveled clear and heavily impressed for maybe a mile, and then disappeared into thin air in the mysterious manner that the tracks of all the cats do. Tracks that would lead definitely into a tall patch of grass and would come out nowhere. Yet there would be no tiger in that grass patch—a phenomenon that discourages and baffles all tiger hunters.

The tiger, too, was making no mistakes in this game. Not a single move of betrayal did it make. Tigers that lie up in the neighborhood of an Indian village usually, sooner or later, resort to the foolishly lazy business of carrying off an occasional goat or cow—and then come the sahibs with their guns to sit up in a *machan* built in a tree over the kill.

Only infrequently—and that, too, only when very old—does a tiger come down to the utterly lazy business of killing man; except, of course, when the gods have especially detailed a tiger to inflict punishment upon some rebellious mortal.

Dhunnu, in the long wanderings through the jungle, cogitated seriously whether this might be the same tiger, grown old and very wise. Twenty years, of course, was a long life for a tiger. Too long, in fact; but—Dhunnu thrilled

at the thought—this might well be the son of that tiger. Why not? If the gods had decreed the punishment of the father, why would they not grant compensation to the son who had well served the gods?

That was a stirring thought. Dhunnu took a haunch of a barking deer and went to ask the priest about it. And Bhutto Krishto said noncommittally—

"With the gods all things are possible; and assuredly do they grant compensation in this life to those who win merit in their eyes."

So then Dhunnu was sure. And surely enough, too, did his chance for compensation come. Or rather, it was sent; surely was it sent, for it was no doing of his own.

He was coming home, feeling that he had lost all tracks miles away, thinking, as the Hindu can, of nothing at all. When suddenly—the first sight in three months of hunting—he saw the tiger.

Across a clear expanse of dry *nullah,* scoured out by the rain, a great striped form pushed slowly through the grass and stood blinking in the sunlight. It saw the man in the same moment, and for a split second the two enemies looked at each other across the heat shimmery water course.

All in a flash Dhunnu saw that it was a tigress and that it was heavy in milk. That meant cubs somewhere not very far off. In the same flash he lifted his ancient gun and pulled the trigger. The thing went off with a roar. An answering roar came from the tigress. Through the smoke screen of his cheap black powder Dhunnu saw it leap high in the air. Then the tall grass hid it.

Dhunnu wasted a frenzied minute while he crammed another charge down the barrel of his antique; and then, with woful lack of caution for a *shikari* who hoped still to live, he dashed across the rock strewn *nullah* and scrambled up the farther bank to perform quickly the whisker singeing ceremony over the prize that the gods had finally given to him.

But he found only trampled grass flecked with a few blood spots. With insane recklessness he followed the blood trail; for surely the gift of the gods must be lying not far away.

But the blood stains ceased; the pug tracks disappeared; the divided grass stems closed together. Nothing moved. No sound came out of the jungle.

Perhaps the gift that the gods were giving to Dhunnu was that the furious beast was not crouching in wait behind the first bamboo clump.

But Dhunnu called the curses of all the wood devils upon his feeble gun and stumbled back to the village to ask the priest about this anomalous happening.

And benevolent old Bhutto Krishto, not concealing his satisfaction, said:

"Inscrutable are the ways of the gods. Undoubtedly Vishnu the Preserver decreed that the lives of those cubs who have done no wrong should be preserved. From which, my son, mark the proof that preservation of the life that Brahma the Creator has given is the greatest of all the functions."

But Dhunnu's mind was full of doubt. These manifestations of life and their explanations clashed inexplicably. The gods had imposed a duty upon him, a feud to be cleared off by the payment of blood. Krishna had therefore given him a gun. And now—if the priest were right—Vishnu exercised his function of preserver of life.

Of such doubts are atheists born—people like the father who sired him. But there was an outlet. The gods undoubtedly existed and their ways were inscrutable. It was mortal man with finite mind who might be wrong. Perhaps he had been making a mistake in his offerings. Shiva it was who had destroyed his father for unbelief. The Destroyer, therefore, not the Preserver, might give compensation in destruction. Kali herself, perhaps. Kali, who wore the necklace of skulls, was bloodthirsty. Maybe for a goat, for an all black goat, Kali would give him her tigress that she had discarded.

SO DHUNNU made a pilgrimage, three days' journey to Putteepur, where there was a Kali temple. And the priest there told him how foolish he had been: he should have brought a goat to Kali long ago. Surely Kali the Black Mother would hear him. And when the blood payment of the feud would be delivered, on no account must the proper thank offering of blood be forgotten.

So Dhunnu paid in his goat and went home to strengthen his courage for another interview with Kundu the money lender before he should follow up the beast that he had wounded, who would now be consumed with fury and would be a hundred times more cunning.

The tigress, in the meanwhile managed to crawl to her lair, to the home den that she had chosen with the super cunning that Brahma confers upon all things through which he is about to manifest his miracle of creation.

She was sorely wounded and she knew, with the unerring instinct of the wild, that a worse thing than her own hurt menaced her. She was a mother, and her first, most ferocious urge was the necessity of providing maintenance for her cubs.

Two of them there were: beautiful yellowish brown, tortoise-shell blotched things—they had not yet shed their kitten coat and attained to their stripes. They greeted her with squeaky mews and rumbling purrs and climbed over her just like any other kittens.

But she dragged her weary self into the den and lay and panted. Her anguish was not over the flattened lead ball lodged deep under her shoulder; but over the knowledge that hunting for meat in order to keep up her own strength to supply maintenance for her young was going to be an impossibility for many long days.

For a tortured night she lay in motionless silence while her kittens played and fed and played again at devouring with little throaty growls the bones of previous meals.

And then the mother tigress did a strange and really a very wonderful thing. So wonderful that it could be accounted for by only an explanation beyond the normal.

Cats sometimes do the same thing. So do dogs. So also all animals—and even primitive peoples—in time of stress and food shortage. Scientists, who do not believe in the gods, have various explanations for the phenomenon. But they are all difficult to understand. The explanation of Bhutto Krishto the Brahmin was quite simple, so that any simple villager could understand.

Vishnu, having taken over his function of preserving the life that Brahma had created, made a compromise with Shiva. In order that the one might be preserved to full life and strength he agreed to surrender the other before its time to the Destroyer.

One of the cubs was a splendid fat youngling that gave promise of future magnificence. The other was not so promising. So Vishnu spoke to the wounded tigress, and she, listening to the voice of Vishnu—which the scientists call the "instinct of preservation"—put out one tired paw and with a single swift and painful effort broke the spine of the sickly cub in order that her sustenance might be conserved for the stronger.

It was wonderfully simple. And so Bhutto Khrishto the priest explained it later—months later—when Dhunnu found the crushed bones of the cub in the deserted den. But Dhunnu was not able to understand so much theology anyhow.

He gathered up his courage and went again to Kundu Chetty and explained to him how, if he had possessed a gun that was really a weapon, a reasonably modern instrument that fired factory made cartridges instead of hand loaded black powder that the bazaar dealers mixed with sand—not by any means a high velocity rifle such as the sahibs used—but at least a smooth bore, breach loading shotgun capable of tak-

ing a twelve gage ball. If he had possessed such a weapon, the tigress would never have gotten away merely wounded. And such a weapon could be bought from an Eurasian in Sialcote for not more than fifty rupees.

Kundu considered Dhunnu with serious attention.

"And from where," he asked with calculated insult, "could the son of your father ever hope to earn as much as fifty rupees?"

But Dhunnu had given the matter much thought; and borrowers of money must perforce be impervious to insult.

"Befriender of the Poor," he said. "the *sirkar* pays a bounty of fifty rupees for every tiger that is slain if the skin is delivered as proof to the courthouse at Sialcote."

Kundu knew that this was true. So he lowered his heavy lids over his eyes and grunted fatly as he heaved himself over to reach for his greasy sheepskin bound book.

So then Dhunnu was sure that Kali the Black One had decided to help him; and he got the fifty rupee gun—and nine, several times reloaded paper shells were thrown into the bargain—and he set out to track down his enemy to wipe out his feud.

But the tigress was lying up sorely hurt and made no move from the den that her cunning had chosen; and all of Dhunnu's skill, all his knowledge, was of no avail against the bargain that Vishnu had made with Shiva.

THE hot dry season came and the tigress recovered sufficiently to go with her half grown cub to follow the game into the foothills—or she died somewhere. Dhunnu did not know. At any rate, no tiger tracks were found in the moist sand of the *nullahs* or along the edges of the crackling yellow elephant grass.

Dhunnu, therefore, having leisure on his hands, fell into the snare that fate has imposed upon his people and followed the path of folly that his father had taken before him.

Though he had no parents to force his hand, the immutable custom of the land was stronger than any parental authority could ever have been. Dhunnu chose for himself an early matured child of fourteen and married her.

And Kundu the money lender smiled with slow satisfaction and made an entry in his sheepskin bound book; for no man is properly held by the heel until he has given his hostage to fortune.

But Dhunnu was wiser than his father in that he by no means flouted the gods. Bhutto Krishto the Brahmin summoned a colleague from a neighboring village; and he himself installed a pot of the sacred *tulsi* plant in the east corner of the hut and counted ten full rounds of the *til* seed rosary, while his colleague accepted two rupees on behalf of the sacred bull of Brahma the Creator; and the neighbors ate up another rupee's worth of rice and excoriatingly hot curry; and altogether it was a very expensive and satisfactory event.

The dry season passed and the rains came again. With them came a report that a tiger's tracks had been seen on the dirt road that led over the hill to Sialcote.

Dhunnu snatched his new gun and ran to investigate this bold beast that walked on the very road itself. Not very large tracks were these; not the great, blunt clawed pugs of the old female which he had hunted; but well shaped, none the less, and firmly placed, with the impression of sharp needle points showing where the toes had splayed and sunk into the soft clay.

A strong, half grown beast, Dhunnu judged. Good! The feud had evidently been inherited from the mother by the son. This was as all inevitable things should be.

But little time did Dhunnu the benedict have to go jungle running, following up footprints. No leisure was there to spend hours of vigil beside a pool where the deer came to drink. The

responsibilities of life enveloped the *quondam* free hunter in a net of constant needs. Dhunnu knew at last that two could live not more than five times as expensively as one.

At last one day the engineer sahib came. What was this rumor, he wanted to know, about a tiger in the neighboring jungle? A rumor, he had heard, no more; for this tiger, like its mother, was a clean and careful liver. It killed no cows nor goats belonging to the villagers; so there was no complaint and cry for help.

The sahib would pay a big backsheesh if Dhunnu could lead him to the slaying of this tiger. Twenty or thirty rupees perhaps—a princely sum. But Dhunnu could do arithmetic. Even thirty rupees would be less than the bounty the government would pay on the skin. And over and above everything was the feud of the blood that had been imposed upon Dhunnu by the gods.

So he lied easily to the sahib. It was a quite foolish and thoughtless sahib; otherwise he might have made that simple calculation for himself. But sahibs are prone to be thoughtless in their dealings with those quite understandable creatures, the peasant class of India.

Dhunnu had heard the long, throaty moan of the tiger that very afternoon up on the hill over which the road went to the distant big city. It was a favorite hunting ground of the beast's. A week or so of intensive tracking might locate its usual drinking pool or one of its paths through the long grass.

But Dhunnu told the sahib that the tiger hunted the jungles many miles away; and he ran at the sahib's stirrup all the way over the hill so as to be on hand to explain away any noises that the foolish sahib might hear—in the event that any animal might be so foolish as to make any noise when it heard the sounds of a shod horse's hoofbeats.

The sahib carried some sort of metal rod—some tool of his profession—at his saddle horn. It clinked metallically against his stirrup as he rode—for all the world like the metal shod bamboo staff of a post office mail runner.

So, as the sahib rode over the hill—who can explain the queer, hereditary memories that come down to caution animals?—a great yellow striped head appeared soundlessly from the jungle edge. Splendid amber eyes looked up the road as the head held the minute-long immobility of the cat beasts. Soundlessly then the head withdrew into the dense greenery. The sahib clinked past. Dhunnu, the tiger's hereditary enemy, chattered alongside the stirrup. He knew—he could smell tiger somewhere in the immediate vicinity—but he chattered the louder. They passed. Soundlessly the great striped head emerged from the dense green. Amber eyes gazed motionless down the road. Then the soundless jungle swallowed all; till presently the long hunting moan traveled down the wind.

Dhunnu came back, having earned a tip of four annas, to meet at the door of his hut Kundu Chetty who wanted an overdue interest of eight. In his desperation of the moment Dhunnu wished almost that he had sacrificed—as many a desperate debtor has done—everything to the promised backsheesh of the thirty rupees. . . .

The season passed. The dry weather came and the pug marks in the jungle disappeared. No government bounty had been earned. Kundu snarled at Dhunnu's door for his principal. Dhunnu learned to feel that the snarl of the tiger, as he had sometimes heard it, was less unfriendly than the usurer's.

The long season wore on. Brahma the Creator made manifest his function. The wife of Dhunnu, who, as a Hindu woman, had remained a nameless nonentity, acquired her dignity and, with it, a name—the Mother of Dhunnu, the *shikari's* man child.

Bhutto Krishto the Vishnavist came with due ceremony of burning *lobhan* gum and expounded afresh to Dhunnu that of the greater gods all Three were

One and that the greatest of the Three was Vishnu the Preserver and that therefore the most sacred of all life's functions was the preservation of the life that Brahma had given.

And Dhunnu, to whom these theologies had been very confusing, who had wondered whether Shiva the Destroyer or his bloody wife Kali might not be the deities to whom one should make offering, suddenly understood it all with perfect clarity. He was convinced. Dhunnu, the father of Dhunnu, knew beyond cavil or argument that the most sacred of all human duties was the preservation of the little mud home, the protection of the mate within it and of the little life that the mate now nurtured.

SO WHEN Kundu Chetty came and snarled his demand for his fifty rupees principal, Dhunnu the father of Dhunnu, who had borne no rancor against the normal functions of a money lender, showed his teeth and snarled back at him that he would pay the principal as soon as he could. Very soon now. The season was at the turn again and the tiger would follow the game down to the lush rain grasses. But in the meanwhile Kundu of the evil ancestry could not make that kind of disturbance at the door of the house where Dhunnu the son of Dhunnu lay asleep.

Other people—many other people—in the heat of their defensive impulse have made that kind of talk to money lenders. And all of them have always regretted it.

Kundu, after the manner of the East, spoke evil words about Dhunnu's ancestry—which didn't matter. But he went on to speak evil talk about Dhunnu's offspring—whereupon Dhunnu ran into the hut and fetched out the very gun over which the argument waxed, and chased Kundu from his door before some of the curses might get in and establish themselves as evil eye.

It was all very imprudent; and Dhunnu was presently quite worried. So he went to the priest to see what an offering might accomplish in the way of averting trouble.

Old Bhutto Krishto stoutly averred that, though he had been without doubt unwise, he had surely done right. The function of Preservation was the noblest of all human endeavors; for in preservation alone could man most closely cooperate with the gods. Therefore would Vishnu, through his avatar Krishna, protect him.

So Dhunnu was convinced all over again of the sacredness of the protective impulse and, with absolute finality, he renounced all leanings toward the bloodthirstier cults of Shiva and his horrible consort and brought an offering of a pair of wood doves to Krishna the Benevolent.

And it seemed that Krishna indeed took notice of his plea. The season wore on apace and shortly the long drawn moan of a hunting tiger was heard in the jungle. Of two tigers, no less. Dhunnu's heart swelled. The simplest mathematics proved that two tigers exactly doubled the chance of bagging one. They also doubled the chances of being bagged by one. But that consideration did not trouble Dhunnu for a moment. He was under the protection of Vishnu the Preserver—the priest had assured him of it. By earning the government bounty of fifty rupees as soon as might be and paying off the frightful principal that now hung over him like a nemesis, he would be preserving all that was worth preserving in life—his tiny mud home and the mate and offspring that it contained. Vishnu would therefore help him to slay one of these tigers.

It did not matter much which one. The clearing up of the blood feud that had been thrust upon him by Shiva the Destroyer, the eliminator of his parent, was an affair now of minor importance to the performance of his sacred duty to Vishnu in preserving the safety of his family by clearing up this menacing debt. Dhunnu could understand the nicety of these theological

points very easily now.

Kundu the money lender—crass person—could understand no such thing at all. His function in life was to lend money out at interest and to see that he collected that money; interest and principal; to the last pice. He scoffed at the idealistic belief of a simple soul that Vishnu would help anybody preserve the sanctity of his home by helping him to earn a government bounty on a tiger's skin. There is no room in the normal function of a usurer to entertain theories about the theologies.

Kundu Chetty, therefore, came to Dhunnu and showed him papers, printed things that were very fearful to Dhunnu, and snarled at him that as soon as he should go to the big courthouse at Sialcote and get a certain sahib's signature in a certain blank space, the *sirkar* would empower him to take away all Dhunnu's property, even unto his mud house, and to drive his family out to starve.

Dhunnu knew that the inexplicable *sirkar* permitted money lenders to do these things. Had not Kundu done it to other luckless people? And had not Kundu's father perpetrated that very brutality upon Dhunnu's own father?

A frightful thing, now that Dhunnu came to think of it. To drive a man's helpless wife and child into the street. An utterly unforgivable thing! Cause—a million times greater cause—for a feud to the death than the mere slaying of a man by an animal.

Dhunnu, in fear and agitation, went to his priest about it. And Bhutto Krishto, benign in his certitude, assured Dhunnu anew that Vishnu the Preserver would help him in the sacred duty of preservation and gave him his blessing for his enterprise.

So Dhunnu, full of confidence, greased his body thoroughly with coconut oil and girt his breech cloth tightly about his loins and went into the jungle to earn that bounty which would lift this menace from his shoulders.

Within the first few days he found tracks; a double trail traveling close together. One was the imprint of an immense paw, strong and heavily trodden. Dhunnu knew it immediately for the print of the tiger against whom he had —or used to have—a feud of blood. It must have grown into a magnificent beast, he marveled, as he looked at the great, perfectly shaped pug marks.

The other trail was smaller, lighter; a female obviously; the mate, without doubt, of the big male. The mate?—there was something disconcerting in that thought; something that clashed uneasily with that so convincing dogma of the priest's about the sacred duty of protecting one's mate. But Dhunnu pushed on warily through the sun flecked shadows on his quest.

What hand Vishnu took in the proceedings was difficult for Dhunnu to understand until the priest explained it to him later and made it all clear. Sufficient that on the fourth morning Dhunnu saw his quarry.

IT WAS almost in the same place where he had seen the tigress two seasons ago. Or, at least, in the same kind of place. A broad swath cut through the jungle by a water course. Steep banks of crumbling soil held together by tangled roots bounded a winding, flat gully of rocks and sand, through the center of which zigzagged a stream of brown tumbling water fed by the recent rains. Sparse grass clumps and scrub clung tenaciously to every root hold in the wide *nullah*.

Dhunnu, peering cautiously over the edge, nearly whooped as he saw a lithe, tawny yellow and black striped body sunning itself under the farther bank. It was a good hundred yards away. A long range for a fifty rupee shotgun. Still, with a spherical bullet . . .

In that same moment the beast, with the eternal vigilance of the wild, saw the movement of Dhunnu's head. Startled, it was on its feet in a flash and looking hurriedly for a place to

scramble out of the open space into the shelter of the jungle above.

Dhunnu saw that it was a female and that it was heavy with expectancy of cubs. It was not even a disappointment to him that this was a stranger, not the beast he had hunted in feud for so many seasons. It was a creature whose skin—if he could get it—would win a bounty of fifty rupees. That was all that mattered.

The tigress sprang heavily at a shelving spot of the bank. It failed to reach the top. The loose soil crumbled under its weight and, snarling, it slipped back into the gully.

A hundred yards. A long chance. But Vishnu was helping him.

Dhunnu prepared to shoot.

Then came a sudden, deep lunged roar and a rush out of a surprisingly inadequate patch of scrub. Dhunnu the *shikari* knew the voice. Immense and magnificent, the mate of the tigress sprang from cover and in two vast bounds reached the edge of the swirling brown water.

There it stood and snarled defiance. Splendid in its courage. Magnificent in its disdain of shelter. Topaz eyes glared their rage across the water.

It was a beautiful figure of strength and steel muscle power and grace. It looked eagerly hesitant at the brown stream. Almost, with a good takeoff, might it have cleared the thirty-foot channel to charge in against the man who, also hesitant, held his gun half raised.

Dhunnu the *shikari,* faced at last by the beast against whose family he had conducted his long feud, drew in his breath with a sharp hiss. He knew that he was witnessing a superb example of the protective function, a male creature endangering its own life to cover up the safe retreat of its mate.

Into his mind flashed the bewildering memory of the priest's last words to him about the sacredness of the duty of protecting one's mate; the very contingency, now at hand, upon which the priest had blessed him and sent him forth. And he knew from his personal conviction that the priest was right.

He hesitated therefore. Possibly it was the doing of Vishnu whose function it was to preserve all life. No more than a second; but it was enough. The female found a way to scramble up the bank. The male gave a final snarl of rage, an immense bound, and was immediately no more than a swiftly moving shape hidden by grass patch and scrub.

Dhunnu the *shikari* went home, having won no skin that would bring a government bounty of fifty rupees.

And all the way home—thank the gods it was not far—he felt that he was followed by a wary something that wanted to make sure he would not attempt to follow any tracks across that river bed.

Dhunnu's mind was in a turmoil. How was a plain man, a simple soul of no great wisdom, to know whether he had obeyed the behests of the Preserver in letting escape the splendid beast that had accepted danger of its life in order to protect its mate; or whether he had displeased the god by failing thereby to win protection for his own mate? To a simple man all these things were very bewildering.

It seemed on the face of it that Vishnu was very strongly displeased. For Kundu Chetty came and demanded what Dhunnu could not give him. What did it matter to him that Dhunnu had nearly shot a tiger? *Nearly* paid no dividends. What did it matter that Dhunnu in his desperation swore that he would go out, risking the displeasure of all the gods and would somehow, by hook or by crook, some day soon bring back a tiger's skin—he had been saying that for nearly three years—and he had deeply insulted Kundu into the bargain. All the village had shouted with delighted laughter to see Kundu run that day when Dhunnu had chased him with the gun from the door of his house.

Kundu Chetty would be satisfied with no further promises or procrastination. That very afternoon he would go to Sialcote and would get the sahib in the courthouse to write his fatal signature upon the papers. And no pleading of Dhunnu's would alter that decision. Lay insult upon Kundu the all-powerful money lender, would he? Kundu had brought better men to heel before now; he would show Dhunnu, the bold *shikari,* how to be respectful to his betters. And Kundu grinned through thick lips. Three years had he waited for this. Now it had come—as he had known all along that it would come. All things in the end came to the man who had money.

DHUNNU, crushed, but still believing, went to the priest for advice. And Bhutto Krishto, sorely tried, but strong in his faith, insisted that it had all been the will of Vishnu who preserved all life, and that Vishnu would yet make manifest his will and would preserve his servant and by that preservation would preserve the servant's household, and so on.

This was beginning to be rather involved again. But Vishnu—miraculously enough—did make his will manifest.

Kundu, the money lender, alternately grumbling in rage and grinning in malevolence, started out that same afternoon to go to Sialcote—and that same afternoon Dhunnu heard the deep, throaty moan of a hunting tiger on the hill above the road to Sialcote.

Dhunnu's heart stopped beating. Was this an awful manifestation of some strange pact that the Preserver had made once again with the Destroyer? Could it be a working out of the will of the gods? This tiger had never killed man. Would it suddenly be an instrument of the gods as its ancestor had been? Dhunnu cowered in his hut and wondered whether the gods were indeed abroad.

He never knew how long it was before an uncomfortable thought came to him. Vaguely it came at first, quite nebulously; and then it grew and took oppressive and insistent shape. Whether gods were abroad or no, what was he, Dhunnu the *shikari,* doing hiding in his hut while wild beasts were abroad?

To be a *shikari* was no mere accident of luck, no inheritance of birth. The *sirkar* did not grant gun permits to any old nondescript applicant; it chose men of skill and courage with the definite policy in view that such men could do their bit toward protecting their little outlying communities from the menaces of the jungle.

The ominous moaning of the tiger on the hill just when the enemy who threatened Dhunnu's household had taken that road to Sialcote was a startling coincidence. The Brahmin had promised him that Krishna, who had eaten fatly of his offerings, would bestir himself in his servant's behalf. It might well be that the high gods stalked abroad.

But Dhunnu did not know very much about the gods; they and their ramifications were so confusing. There were times when he even doubted whether Bhutto Krishto the Brahmin was so very right about the gods and what they would do for people; though it was politic to bring offerings.

What Dhunnu did know with certitude was that that long, throaty moan, uttered with head close to the ground, was the call of a tiger out to kill. First of all things was Dhunnu a *shikari.*

A *shikari* had a responsibility and a duty to perform. So Dhunnu resolutely took up his gun and went from his hut, trembling. He trembled, not at the prospect of meeting, face to face and foot to foot, a five hundred pound tiger out to kill; but at the thought that maybe the priest was right and that he might meet some fearful manifestation of the gods.

Dhunnu knew every path and every runway on that hilltop. The ventriloquial moan had sounded in the ravine

where the wild sugar cane grew, and again higher up. That meant that the tiger was following a run that would bring it to cross the road near the old shrine of Hanuman, the monkey god, and would—if it did not walk boldly on the road itself—continue on up the hill to the pool where the barking deer drank.

But this was midafternoon; too early by many hours for the barking deer to drink. Why should a tiger take that path at this time of day? But what use guessing? The strategy would be to take the shortest cut to the pool and there to cast about for tracks to follow farther.

To Dhunnu all this was a perfectly simple and obvious reasoning. But many a sahib, with all his erudition and all his close study of other sahibs' books about big game, would have given many hundred rupees to have understood so intimately the doings of almost any beast.

So Dhunnu climbed with silent, springy steps up the hillside to the hidden pool; and there was revealed to him the manifestation of the doings of the high gods which no sahib could have understood at all.

With the infinite caution of a wild thing himself, Dhunnu crept to the vantage point of a rock from where he knew he could look down on the pool—and there the miracle was displayed before him.

The splendid, sinuous form of the tiger crouched just across the pool, not forty yards distant, in full view, all oblivious of danger as it drank. A crimson stain rippled under the lapping tongue, faded to pink with the widening circles over the water's surface, and was gone.

DHUNNU, prone on his rock, could see every detail over the brass bead of his fifty rupee gun. There was a hide that, properly cured and mounted by some sahib, was worth many fifties of rupees. A magnificent beast, this; no mangy man eater, old and broken toothed; but a gorgeous young male in its full strength. Yet Dhunnu's finger, tense on the trigger, remained still. It did not move that last fraction of an inch that would send the long saved twelve gage spherical ball to a sure target.

For the miracle was that the tiger had killed but had manifestly not eaten, for its flanks were lean and sinuous.

And now it sat back and washed itself with all the daintiness of a house cat. What thing had it killed that it disdained to eat? And why—almost fearfully Dhunnu asked himself—why did it not purify itself?

It was not a man eater. Was the splendid thing a tiger at all; or was it—was Bhutto Krishto the Brahmin right about the gods?

Scientists, of course, who do not believe in the gods, would have explained with cold logic that here was an angry tiger that had been assailed by man, that had followed a man home, and that was obsessed with the strong instinct of protecting its mate from man's aggression just as it was about to bear its cubs.

But Dhunnu did not know any scientists. The wisest man he knew was Bhutto Krishto the Brahmin who insisted that the function of preservation was the greatest of all the divine attributes. Slowly, very slowly, Dhunnu let the fifty rupee gun sink from his shoulder. Its barrel clinked softly on the rock.

On the instant the tiger gave a low *woof*, a superb bound and was gone. Almost as a god might have disappeared.

But Dhunnu had no doubts about anything at all now. He picked up no tracks across the pool; he followed no faintly marked runways. Instead, very solemnly, he selected three oval shaped stones. Two he placed to form the base of a triangle and the largest he set at the apex. Then he scoured the brush for wild saffron and with its juice he stained the tops of the stones yellow. In the center of the triangle he built

a tiny fire; and when the wind permitted the smoke to rise in a thin vertical column he drew from his gun the twelve gage ball cartridge that he had saved up for so long and placed it on the top of the largest stone. Then he bowed his head in the moist dirt and mumbled devoutly:

"Lord Krishna who hast preserved my house and my family from my enemy who would have cast them out, I give thee this tiger whom thou has made holy as thy instrument. The greatest of the gods is Krishna."

All this without any sort of evidence as to what creature this tiger had killed and had not eaten.

But Bhutto Krishto the Brahmin, when Dhunnu came back to the village and told him the wonderful tale, immediately banged upon the temple gong to summon the men folk together and to expound to them the patent truth how the Lord Krishna had bestirred himself to protect one who had been generous with offerings and had punished another who, though rich, had been niggardly.

And the village graybeards sagely nodded their heads and agreed that it was indeed so and that it was good to stand well with a Brahmin who had influence with Krishna Deva.

For no Kundu ever arrived at Sialcote. Neither did he ever come back to the village. And in the resultant confusion about his house the greasy sheepskin bound book disappeared as completely as Kundu Chetty had disappeared.

Which was a dispensation of benign providence for all the village.

Wherefore:

"All things are Three," said Bhutto Krishto with benevolent satisfaction. "And all Three are One. And the greatest of the Three being Vishnu the Preserver, behold, my son, in his manifestation of Krishna the Merciful who knows the needs of men he has made peace for your family with the Lord Shiva whom your father offended. To the Lord Shiva he has given sacrifice. The tiger, in performing this sacrifice, has wiped out the feud between your family and his, thereby absolving you from the sin of slaying a splendid beast whom Kali has assuredly chosen for her own. The greatest of the gods is Vishnu and the greatest of the functions is Preservation."

Which was rather rambling and quite fraught with confusion. But Dhunnu understood it all with perfect clarity and he brought a live peacock as an offering to Vishnu, who had bestirred himself to preserve his little mud home with its priceless contents of his mate and the little brown mite of humanity that was Dhunnu, the son of Dhunnu.

BALLAST

A Story of the China Seas

By JACLAND MARMUR

STANDING upright in the sternsheets of the longboat, Captain Eaton, a dark figure against the sunset, watched his command blazing beneath the tropical heavens. The ship *Mary L.* sent upward a pillar of smoke that hung like a sullen typhoon cloud over her head. Her foremast alone yet stood, tatters of blackened canvas still fluttering feebly from the swaying topgallant yard, a blackened cross high above a burning wreck.

At the master's feet in the open boat Mr. Grove, the second mate, sat placidly working his tobacco cud. Now and again he shifted his stare from the men before him to where the *Mary L's* other boat drifted with Mr. Stark, the chief officer, in charge of his watch—five men and the boatswain. And only when the foremast collapsed at last with a great rending of timber did Mr. Grove turn his head.

"There she goes, sir," he announced calmly.

As if this had been the predetermined signal, the *Mary L.* heeled suddenly on her beam ends and the sea rushed upon her. A shower of sparks belched skyward with the last tongues of flame. Then she settled rapidly, a charred hulk drifting away into the dusk. Only then,

without turning his head, did the master speak at last.

"Enter it in your log, Mr. Grove. Three minutes past seven, local apparent time. Latitude 6°:03′, north; Longitude east 108°:54′."

"Aye, sir."

The master turned away from the remains of his ship and sat wearily down on the thwart. He was a stocky man, given to stoutness, with solemn eyes beneath bushy gray brows, and for a moment he simply sat there, his large hands resting on his knees. Then, rousing himself, he hailed his chief officer's boat.

"Mr. Stark," he called. "Pull over close for a moment."

The dusk deepened rapidly, but the sultry heat of equatorial latitudes still weighed upon the swelling sea. The two open boats ground their gunwales together gently. A faint line of cloud materialized to windward as, in a voice that was calm, quite simple and a trifle dull, Captain Eaton gave his chief officer his final instructions.

"Mr. Stark," he said, "you are directly between the Charlotte Bank and the Vanguard Bank a little to the south'ard. The China Coast steamer lanes between Hongkong and Singapore lie to the westward, but the monsoon and the currents are against us. To make for Saigon is dangerous for the same reason. There is not enough water and biscuit in the boats to chance it. I mean to sail south, Mr. Stark, to the east'ard of Pulu Laut and the little Natuna Islands, for Sarawak. Do you understand?"

"Aye, sir."

"Watch out for eastern leeway, Mr. Stark," the master went on in his grave bass voice. "Sarawak Head is your landfall. I shall expect you to account for every man." He lifted his broad, hairy hand suddenly from his knee where it had rested during all the time that he spoke. He extended it now in a gesture embracing the shadowy figures hunched over the thwarts. "Do you hear, you men? Mr. Stark, your chief officer, is in absolute command." His hand fell again to his knee. "That is all, Mr. Stark. Shove off. Good luck to you . . . Mr. Grove—set the lugs'l."

"And fair winds, sir, and a swift voyage to you!"

Unconsciously the traditional answer of the sea sprang from Mr. Stark's lips. The master shot him a sharp glance, but he said nothing, watching in silence as the lugsail of the longboat was sheeted home. A space of open water appeared between the two craft, widening rapidly. Mr. Grove clasped the tiller; the craft's head swung. The breeze strengthened, striking the two open boats suddenly, and in the momentary hush before the rain, Mr. Stark heard the master's voice for the last time, clear and distinct.

"Steer south."

The next instant the sunset shower swept between them, hissing loudly on the thwarts and the rippling sea. It brought with it darkness, passing swiftly, and in its wake overhead the sky cleared. Large, glowing stars appeared, casting faint tracks of light upon the water. In the distance the master's longboat plunged headlong into the night.

Mr. Stark turned to appraise his men.

They were seven all told: three sailors, Chips, the boatswain, and the apprentice boy, Ned, on his first trip to sea: and the mate who was in command. Between them and Sarawak were two hundred and fifty leagues of sea, a breaker of fresh water and two tins of ship's biscuit.

HE WAS a tall, gaunt man, the mate of the *Mary L,* all bone and muscle. Young, twenty-five at the most, yet as he stood towering above them in the sternsheets, there seemed nothing youthful about his aquiline face, for he felt the weight of responsibility upon his thin shoulders. With short, terse orders he placed his men.

"Boats, sit up in the bows," he commanded quietly. "Frenchy, I want you right in front of me. Ned, lad, come aft

in the sternsheets here. You, Nils and Svensen, the thwart behind Laroche. Very good. Set the lugs'l. Pass the sheet aft, Chips. Ned, watch that little compass. Can you see? Steer south—due south."

He sat down abruptly and stared at his men. He knew them; they were his watch. They had revealed themselves to him in the icy gales of the roaring forties, the blistering heat of the tropical calm, and through these last six days of backbreaking work at the pumps before Captain Eaton's command to abandon ship. Yes, he knew his men; and it was an indication of the young chief officer's character that he placed the man he considered most dangerous, Frenchy Jean Laroche, closest to him. Mr. Stark liked to face his troubles . . .

He turned now toward the youngster at the tiller. He was no more than a slip of a boy, fifteen at most, with a cheek as smooth as a girl's. The sea for him was still a brave and splendid adventure. His youthful head was bent and he kept his eyes on the faint gleam of the little compass card.

"Ned, boy," the mate whispered softly, "a bit of bad luck for you. Shipwrecked first trip. What'll—"

"Bad luck, sir!" Ned's head snapped up, his thin, handsome face alight. "I—I wouldn't miss it, sir. No! Not for all the world!"

Mr. Stark smiled faintly down at the young, eager face. Opposite them Frenchy opened his lips in a growl.

"That's the end o' the *Mary L.* Good job, I say, *parbleu!* The damned old hooker!"

A half hearted laugh rippled the length of the open boat, but when it reached old Jorge, the boatswain, sitting solemnly in the bows, it stopped abruptly.

"The end o' the *Mary L,* hey?" he growled in his chesty bass. "You wouldn't know a fine ship if you had your choice o' a hundred, Froggy. The end o' the *Mary L!*" he boomed scornfully. "Merry hell ain't started yet. Don't you know that much, you fool?"

He spat this last out sharply and no one spoke after that, for old Jorge was the oracle of the forecastle. Under the urge of the night breeze the sleeping sea awoke, gurgling softly all about them. A blood-red disk of a moon edged above the rim of the eastern board, floating goblin-like into the empty void of the heavens, and the *Mary L's* boat sailed directly across its path.

When the first sickly light paled the stars, Mr. Stark still sat in the sternsheets. Beside him, Ned still clutched the tiller, but his head had fallen forward on his chest and he slept quite peacefully, his weight leaning carelessly against the mate's shoulder. Mr. Stark, without disturbing either the apprentice boy's tight grasp or his sleeping attitude, stirred the rudder now and again as he kept the open boat on her course for Sarawak before the fitful puffs of air. Suddenly the boy started upright.

"Oh, my God, sir! I—I've been asleep!"

"Just this minute dropped off, Ned. You've had a long trick." Mr. Stark raised his voice. "Boats!"

Old Jorge's head snapped up where he sat in the bows.

"Aye, sir?"

"Rouse the men. Come aft here and relieve the boy."

He waited until the boatswain, crawling over the thwarts and shaking the men to life, reached his side. Then he pried off the lid of one of the tins and rationed out the hard, dry biscuit. Carefully he reached down between his legs for the water breaker, and as he held the pannikin under its spout, six pairs of eyes were glued to the thin stream that tinkled into the tip cup. Each man waited his turn, following every movement of the pannikin with his eyes as it passed back and forth, back and forth. Mr. Stark drank last.

"Raise the lugs'l in the gear," he ordered. "Out oars. Ned, lie down for a sleep. Boats, the course is south."

The men said nothing. That first ra-

tion of ship's biscuit and the single swallow of water had brought the grim reality of their plight home with brutal suddenness. In silence the long sweeps went over the side and the rowlocks started their monotonous complaint. The breeze died. The China Sea, flat, breathless, as smooth as glass, stretched as far as the cloudless horizon, empty, placid, unconcerned. The sun rose, abruptly and without warning, and the lifting oars, catching its fierce light, blinded the eyes. Laroche, pulling the stroke position, glowered down at the bottom boards. He moved mechanically backward and forward, his baleful stare never once leaving the water cask in its chocks between Mr. Stark's feet. With the boat's motion its contents slopped back and forth with a cool, pleasant sound. Laroche licked his lips.

"Better take a spell, sir," old Jorge muttered to the mate.

MR. STARK shook his head, but he slid down to the bottom boards and leaned his head wearily back until it rested upon the little breaker of water. He lay there for a long time, fully awake, his eyes closed against the glaring light, hearing nothing but the slap and gurgle of water at the boat's bows and the monotonous *click-clack—click-clack!* of the rowlocks. At length he dozed fitfully, the hard lines of his face never relaxing.

He awoke with a start to the sound of angry voices. His patrol jacket and soiled drill trousers, soaked with perspiration, clung soggily to his aching limbs. When he opened his eyes he found himself in darkness. It staggered him for a moment until he discovered that old Jorge had dragged the end of the tarpaulin over his face against the rays of the equatorial sun. Then he heard the voice of Laroche, harsh and broken.

"I ain't a camel! A man can't pull in this bloody heat without water! What good's it, anyway?"

"Pull your oar, Frenchy, you damned fool!" There was no bitterness whatever in old Jorge's profanity, and his voice rumbled calmly out of his chest. "If you had your way, we'd all be dead or lousy maniacs in twenty-four hours. Quiet, you damned fools! Give the mate a chance—"

"Mate be damned!" Laroche screamed. "We're adrift in an open boat! There ain't no such thing as a mate! Open that breaker, Jorge, or—"

Mr. Stark tore aside the tarpaulin and leaped to his feet, swaying unsteadily in the sternsheets.

"You men—all of you—listen to me!" His voice was harsh and level, ominously restrained. "You are all of you my watch. You will drink only when I pass the pannikin. You will stop pulling the oars when you drop or when I tell you to. Do you understand? To me you aren't six shipwrecked men; you're still six of my sailors who pulled away from the hulk of the *Mary L.* in my charge. In my charge!" he repeated fiercely. "And, by the Lord, six sailors I'll bring into Sarawak to Captain Eaton —if he gets there first.

"Six sailors I'll bring past Sarawak Head—do you hear, you men? Dead or alive, pulling at the oars or stark and stiff on the bottom boards! Six men—or six yellow water rats. Take your choice. It's all the same to me! But I tell you this, Laroche, I'll bash in your skull if I have to—but you're coming into Sarawak with me! Every damned one of you!"

The mate swayed over the heads of his watch, all the light of the blinding universe centered on his tall, gaunt frame.

"Chips! Stretch the tarpaulin across the bowsheets and make it fast. Leave it sagging in the middle; we may catch some rain. Svensen, you and Nils take a spell. Crawl under the tarp' out of that cursed sun. Now the rest of you—pull! Pull, I said!"

The men glowered up at him. Laroche passed his tongue over his parched lips and leaned forward for the stroke, but his baleful eyes never left the face of the

chief officer. The rowlocks started again: *Click-clack — click-clack!* The sun blazed. Rivulets of sweat blinded their eyes, trickled steadily along the creases of their rough faces, tasting bitter and salt as sea water on their cracked lips.

The hours dragged by. The sun lowered. Motionless, the mate sat with his scorched hand on the tiller, his face haggard and brown like the face of a mummy in which only the eyes burned with life. On the western board the sun dipped suddenly in a bombshell of crimson and purple and gold, then vanished from sight.

A hot breeze sprang up, fanning his cheek and rippling the flat basin of the China Sea. In silence the mate bent down to the spout of the water cask. The liquid gurgled and tinkled loudly as it struck the bottom of the tin cup. The men at once shipped their oars and sat up stiffly.

Mr. Stark passed the pannikin again and again to old Jorge, and he handed it once to each of the watch. A swallow it was, a bare wetting of the tongue and throat. Ned, the apprentice boy, drank slowly, lingering long over each precious drop. Old Jorge tossed his off at a swallow, then smacked his lips loudly and sighed.

The sea darkened swiftly. Suddenly the clouds piled high over their heads. The loud hiss and patter of the sunset shower swept closer. The mate lifted a small canvas bucket. Then the squall drove rapidly to leeward, draining the heavens of all light—but the tarpaulin forward was dry as a bone. The shower which seemed so certain had missed them completely.

Mr. Stark stared bitterly at the receding line of rainfall on the flat sea. Laroche let out a shriek, leaped upright and started toward where the mate stood, the water cask at his feet. Old Jorge half rose, but Mr. Stark had already turned.

"Stand back, Laroche! Stay where you are!" he barked.

A HOARSE growl sounded in the sailor's throat, no more. He lunged savagely forward. Mr. Stark waited only an instant; then his clenched fist moved in a short arc. It caught Laroche squarely on the chin, and as he fell his head struck the gunwale with a sickening thud. He slumped to the bottom boards and lay quite still. No other man stirred. The mate bent down and reached under the thwart for a coil of heaving line, from which he cut a length and with it carefully trussed the unconscious sailor.

"Sheet home the lugs'l," he commanded then in a hard, quiet voice. "Jorge, douse a bucket of sea water on Laroche and pass him for'ard. Stow him under the tarp'."

A moment later he heard the growled mutter of old Jorge as he came clambering aft again after depositing Laroche under the canvas.

"Good ballast that, sir. I ha' him lashed to the ringbolt. Good ballast!"

The mate said nothing. With the descent of darkness the breeze freshened. The lugsail filled. The boat moved forward again, gathering momentum before the weight of the wind. White foam gurgled loudly at her bows; phosphorescent water rushed past the gunwales. The stars appeared again, small, cruel eyes peering sightlessly down into the cavern of the night. The men slumped in sleep where they sat, a groan sounding from a troubled throat, then a heavy sigh. And suddenly from under the tarpaulin forward, Laroche, coming to life, raised his voice. He cursed monotonously, senselessly, a stream of obscene and violent French. At last, exhausted, he too fell silent.

"Ballast," old Jorge growled again. "Good ballast!"

There was no sound but the moan of the night breeze and the ancient voice of the sea, and overhead the blazing southern cross set awry in the star studded dome of a dark and cloudless heaven.

The second day the sun came up like a bursting bomb. In its cruel light the plight of Mr. Stark's watch was pitilessly revealed. They huddled like shapeless bundles of rags stirring startlingly with life. Their eyes sought his, and then wandered to his feet where the little cask of fresh water rested in its chocks. Old Jorge alone stared forward, one hand clasping the tiller, the other about the shoulders of Ned who sat hunched beside him. The boatswain's face was covered from ear to ear with a thick growth of soiled white beard out of which his eyes burned, and it gave to him a fierce and sanguine expression.

"Out oars!" Mr. Stark commanded without stirring.

Nils lifted his shaggy blond head and uttered one word in a dry croak—

"Vater!"

The mate shook his head. The muscles of his sun scorched face twitched. At noon he might risk another pannikin around. Meanwhile the men must be kept busy. His head kept shaking from side to side as though, having once started, he had not the physical energy to overcome the inertia of the motion. The sailor said nothing. Beside him Svensen's muscles tensed. Nils dragged himself painfully erect, Svensen following. They started forward in a half crouch, their eyes never meeting the mate's stare, but glued intently at his feet. Tottering, they reached forward together.

Mr. Stark was on his feet. His hand came out of the pocket of his patrol jacket holding his pistol. At his side old Jorge stood up gravely, the tiller post, which he had pulled from the rudder socket as he rose, in his hand.

"Nils! Svensen! Stand back!"

The two sailors came on, deaf to the mate's warning. Jorge lifted his wooden club. His face never changed its calm and placid expression as he brought it down on the head of the nearest man. Nils crumpled up with a groan. Svensen let out a low growl and dived headlong for the water cask, his fingers clawing at the mate's legs. Mr. Stark brought the barrel of his gun down on the base of the sailor's skull, and the two men lay inert at his feet. Facing him on the bow thwart, Chips, the carpenter, half rose, met the glint of reflected light from Mr. Stark's pistol and fell weakly back.

"Jorge—"

The mate turned toward the boatswain, but he had no need to go on. Old Jorge had placidly replaced the tiller handle and was stooped over, heaving line coiled in his left hand. The mate sat down very suddenly and took the tiller. Carefully Jorge bound the two men, and one by one he dragged them under the tarpaulin to join Laroche.

The apprentice boy slept on, exhausted, untroubled by what had happened, his young face hidden in his arm, his limps twitching spasmodically in fevered sleep. The lugsail flapped loudly in the calm. The boatswain crawled aft again.

"Lashed to the thwart," he growled. "Hold 'er head down, sir. Ballast—good ballast!"

MR. STARK did not stir. He stared ahead, unblinking, at the shimmering mirror of the China Sea. At noon he filled the pannikin, passed it around, and himself crawled under the tarpaulin and held the cup to the cursing lips of his human ballast. They drank avidly, greedily, foul oaths streaming upon the hand that brought the water to their mouths. The mate paid no heed. He supported them so that they might drink, eased their shoulders carefully down to the bottom boards again, and crawled aft in silence.

He did not blame them. Mentally he swore as violently as they. Had he been one of them he understood that he would have done exactly the same thing. He knew the craze for water; it gnawed at his vitals just as fiercely. For there was no physical difference between the

officer and the men, none whatever—excepting this: He was in command. The thin thread of responsibility that stretched invisibly between him and a solemn, grave eyed shipmaster in a boat no longer visible below the horizon, alone differentiated Mr. Stark from his thirst crazed watch. For Laroche was right. In an open boat one man was as good as another.

The ship *Mary L.* had need no longer for either master or mate. But Laroche had no need to remember; he had never had charge of a watch. And Mr. Stark heard yet the simple, quiet voice of his master.

"You are in absolute command of your watch and your boat, Mr. Stark. I shall expect you to account for every man. . . ."

Click-clack!—Click-clack! The maddening rhythm of the oars between the metal thole-pins and the beat of the sweeps in the water alone accompanied the thoughts of Chief Officer Stark as he sat with his shoulders hunched in the sternsheets of his first command.

Dusk of the fifth day found Mr. Stark kneeling before the edge of the tarpaulin, bareheaded beneath the torrential downpour of the sunset squall. Behind him in the sternsheets Ned, the apprentice boy, and old Jorge, the boatswain, sprawled against the gunwale, chests bared to the streaming heavens, the one hairy as a beast, the other smooth and soft skinned as a girl. Arms about shoulders they supported each other, the shaggy seadog and the youngster on his first trip, and their mouths were open, issuing inarticulate sounds, little gasps of ecstasy as the warm, wet rain fell upon them.

There was no longer any man on the thwarts upon which the immense drops of water fell with a loud patter. The long oars rattled untended against the gunwales, but from under the tarpaulin before which the mate knelt there poured the foul oaths of three languages, a frenzied babble. The men cursed fiercely in weak, cracked voices, hurling obscenities upon the mate, calling loudly upon him to tear aside the canvas so that the momentary bliss of wetness might fall upon them, lashed helplessly.

In the faint light that lingered yet in the heavens, Mr. Stark's face could be seen, set in stony ridges, the water dripping from his matted hair, his hands trembling as he tended the little canvas bucket that caught a thin stream of dirty water from the running tarpaulin. He uttered no word, as though he were deaf to the maledictions showered upon his thin shoulders by the men of his watch, but now and again his lips twitched, and the muscles of his jaws worked convulsively.

As swiftly as it had come the squall swept to leeward, leaving the sea bright and fresh, sparkling in the last light of dusk. Mr. Stark crawled aft, carrying with extreme care his little bucket of water. He stirred the boatswain to life and ladled a quarter pannikin. Old Jorge and Ned gulped noisily. Then, in silence, the three doled a carefully rationed measure to each of the cursing men beneath the tarpaulin, and the mate methodically funneled what was left of the precious liquid into the breaker. After the loud noise of the rain and the senseless shrieks of the men, the stillness of the night became appalling. A fitful breeze sprang up, flapping the lugsail, and the lapping of the water seemed suddenly deafening.

"Jorge," Mr. Stark croaked hoarsely, "you and Ned—bail the boat. That water slopping about—salt! Those fools—it'll kill them."

The effort at speech seemed to exhaust the mate. He sat with his chin on his chest, the tiller in the crook of his elbow, watching the only two men remaining to him as they dipped and lifted their bailing tins methodically, like two grave children at play. And then quite suddenly his body slipped to the bottom boards, his hands clutching for the tiller. Jorge crawled over and took his place.

"Take a spell, sir," he growled harsh-

ly. "You're all done up, Mr. Stark."

The mate struggled feebly, but at length he gave in and rested his head on the breaker of water. An instant later he was deep in exhausted sleep.

THE boat swam on in darkness. The moon rose, revealing the ghostly patch of her single sail. The weird stillness of desolation and death lay upon the China Sea. At the tiller old Jorge sat, a hulk of a man with shoulders bowed, the night wind ruffling the unkempt hair of his head and his beard.

Suddenly a black shape stirred on the thwart. Young Ned lifted his face, and the limpid light of the moon fell full upon it. It was the peaked and tortured face of a youngster, but in the eery light the agony lined upon it gave it the appearance of extreme age. His eyes blazed, and he passed a trembling hand across his forehead. Carefully he slithered forward, his glowing eyes fastened upon the mate's outstretched body and upon the dark shape of that breaker that contained yet a dozen swallows of water.

When he reached the chief officer's side he stopped, upright on his knees, and in his right hand he held upraised the unsheathed blade of a long sailor's knife. The naked steel shot a fierce gleam of reflected moonlight across Mr. Stark's grim face. For an instant the apprentice boy knelt there, wild eyed. At the tiller old Jorge slept, unstirring.

The steel blade flashed, started its descent swiftly. Then it hesitated, trembling violently in the youngster's hand. A great sob shook his breast and suddenly he shrieked aloud.

"Mr. Stark, sir! Mr. Stark, sir! Wake up! Wake up!"

The mate lunged to his feet. The boatswain's head lifted from his chest, but other than this he did not move. They remained thus for the fraction of an instant—the chief officer of the *Mary L,* old Jorge, and the young apprentice boy still on his knees with his bared knife in his hand, shuddering convulsively.

"Mr. Stark, sir!" he screamed again. "My God, I can't stand it any longer! I—I wanted to murder you!"

He clawed at the thwart and tottered to his feet. Dumbly he held out the knife. The mate looked at him, saying no word. Then he took the knife and flung it into the sea. And as it left his hand Ned crumpled in a heap at the chief officer's feet. Mr. Stark went down, opened the spigot of the water cask and drained a mouthful into the tin pannikin, holding it then to the youngster's lips.

"Here, lad," he growled, "swallow this. Now curse, Ned. Swear, boy! Bellow! Damn me and the sea and the ship to hell! It'll help. I—I don't mind."

Ned gulped the warm, sticky water. He looked up at the face of the chief officer and he murmured simply—

"Thank you, Mr. Stark."

The mate moved toward the tiller.

"Take a spell, Jorge. I'll take over."

The aged boatswain moved aside in silence. The breeze hummed as it puffed against the drawing lugsail, and the voice of the sea rose loud and insistent as the open boat sailed on for Sarawak.

The mate awoke with a start. How long he had slept at the lashed tiller with his head lolling on his chest he did not know. He remembered the moon's track on a waste and desolate sea, the moan of the night wind, and the muffled cursing of his watch filling his ears. Now the moon had waned, fading as if afraid into the paling gray of a cloudless sky. The strange light before dawn hung like a thin fog upon the tumbling waters of the China Sea. He looked for Jorge, and came violently to his feet.

The bearded old seadog sat hunched on the bottom boards close to Ned. One end of what remained of the heaving line was fastened to his right wrist, the other lashed fast to a metal thole-pin. He lifted his matted head as the mate

towered over him, and he passed his tongue over his lips twice, his large staring eyes unblinking in the frame of his grizzled beard.

"Leave me be, Mr. Stark! I ha' done some vile things in my life. A half hour more—I'd fling you over the side for a swallow o' dirty water! Leave me be!" His voice rose to a cracked shriek, then died again to a dull monotone. "The rope keeps remindin' me. I'm all right now, sir."

The chief officer of the *Mary L.* listened to that hollow voice coming up from his feet while the light on the eastern board grew steadily stronger, and one by one the stars faded from the heavens overhead. He swayed grotesquely with the boat's lurching. His hands clenched and unclenched at his sides. The sun burst above the rim of the sea and hurled its first blinding light at his gaunt figure. And suddenly, for the first time, Mr. Stark's will burst its chains.

"You're all right now!" he screamed at the leonine head of the boatswain. "You're *all* all right, now! Four of you lashed under the tarp' and two of you out on your feet! Shove it on to me! Yellow! You're all of you yellow water rats!"

HE LIFTED back his head and his hoarse, half crazed laughter resounded like a hollow cackle of the damned in the empty immensity of sea and sky. The men had *bound* themselves to integrity, but he, he had no visible bond on his hands and feet to keep him from insanity and oblivion and dishonor. As if by tacit agreement, almost calmly in spite of their curses, they had shoved the entire weight of responsibility upon his shoulders. They were ballast—helpless, human ballast!

Abruptly Mr. Stark stopped his ravings, and the men under the canvas, roused from their stupor by his voice, hurled their maledictions upon him anew. Only at his feet young Ned and Jorge remained silent, looking up at him with large eyes that did not blink. Gradually his rigid muscles relaxed and his fists, unclenching, fell slowly to his sides. . . . Ballast, they were, but ballast as much for Mr. Stark's soul—as for the frail shell of the open boat he held so stubbornly for Sarawak. He turned away with a choking sob.

Mr. Stark was alone now, utterly alone, face to face with his responsibility and his agony.

That day, the sixth, was an endless nightmare. The sun blazed. Mr. Stark babbled incessantly, holding converse with the hundred whispering demons that hovered about him on the wings of the freshening breeze. He sat in the sternsheets, a man tormented, with the fixed stare of an old seadog and a young apprentice boy glued always upon him. Toward midday he tore off his patrol jacket and tossed it over the heads of the two to hide from his sight the tortured faces, the swollen lips, the pleading eyes that never left him.

Hours passed. Eternities rolled unheeded over the head of the chief officer of the *Mary L.* The sun dipped, and on the leeward horizon immense white trade clouds billowed above the rim of the world. Darkness; then the ghastly light of the moon and the ancient sound of a breaking sea. The boat raced with the combers, and the cool sweet wind brought sanity back to Mr. Stark. He steered with care, his thin, scorched face uplifted, his hollow eyes searching the darkness.

There was now no human sound in the open boat.

Suddenly he clutched the tiller more tightly and half rose. A faint line, dark and jagged, marred the southern horizon above the sea. Mr. Stark passed his free hand across his eyes and looked again, beads of cold sweat standing on his forehead. Slowly it grew more distinct, taking a vague and monstrous shape above the water's level. The mate fell back, trembling. For a long time he dared not look. Then he raised his head again, fearfully. He meant to

shout in mad exultation, but only a gurgling sound issued from his constricted throat.

Black, brooding, silent, the jungled land barred the horizon!

The boat bore swiftly down upon it. The threatening mutter of surf came to the chief officer's ears. The cove widened, its two black arms reaching out on either side of him. The bared white fangs of the shoals appeared, and in the distance the moonlight played on the gleaming sand of a narrow beach. A dancing light on the rim of the jungled land blinked unsteadily. Mr. Stark put the helm over and the space of open water narrowed. Suddenly a grave bass voice hailed the night.

"Ahoy there! Ahoy the boat!"

Mr. Stark stood up, the tiller between his knees. He waved his arms like a maniac, but no sound came from his open mouth. He had no strength left to loose the sheet of his lugsail. He moved the tiller; the boat's bows swung. A comber caught her under the counter and drove her for the beach. She grounded abruptly, heaving Mr. Stark bodily over the side into the shallow water. He came to his hands and knees and crawled dripping to the land. A short, stout figure advanced to meet him as he tottered up the slope of sand.

"Why don't you answer a hail, man?" It was the querulous voice of Captain Eaton. "What sort of a landing do you call—" He broke off suddenly and stopped short in his tracks. "My God! It's Mr. Stark!" He stared, dumbfounded, at the tall apparition staggering toward him. "We beached at dusk," he went on solemnly. "I had given you up for lost. There is a spring of brackish water on the edge of the jungle. I let the men have a drink—they needed it, poor devils—and they fell off on the beach asleep. We'll find out where we are and what's to be done at daybreak." Then he finished mournfully, "I had to shoot and wound two of them. Poor devils went mad with thirst."

Mr. Stark stood before the master, swaying weakly from side to side.

"The men, sir," he reported in a dry croak, "are all accounted for. They are all safe—in the boat."

"Well, you had better have them get the painter out, Mr. Stark. That's no way to leave a beached boat!"

"They can't move, sir. They're—"

"What?"

But Mr. Stark could explain no further. His knees gave way quite suddenly beneath him and he crumpled to the sand. For a moment Captain Eaton stared in puzzled silence at his chief officer. Then he turned and walked to the side of the boat in which the lugsail still flapped loudly against the mast. And it was not until he tore aside the tarpaulin that he saw sprawled in the light of the moon the shapeless heaps of Mr. Stark's watch, lashed one by one to the ringbolts and the thwarts; and far aft the forms of young Ned, the apprentice boy, and old Jorge, the boatswain.

Captain Eaton made no outcry, but he hurried to the spring and came back a moment later with a small canvas bucket of water. He stopped first at the outstretched figure of his chief officer and knelt down beside him. Mr. Stark lifted his head.

"Go easy, sir," he said, "with the water or—you'll finish them. Likely they'll curse you, sir. Don't pay any attention to them. They're all right."

"Aye, Mr. Stark," the master muttered. "Don't worry. I'll take over."

Mr. Stark heard the master's words with a faint smile on his lips—"I'll take over"—and when the pannikin of water left his mouth he collapsed full length, his face burying in the sand. He had only waited for those three words of assurance, lifting the weight of responsibility that alone had sustained him, before he, too, passed into the oblivion of exhausted sleep.

Captain Eaton drew off his jacket and dropped it over the shoulders of his chief officer. Then, his gray brows puckered in a mournful frown, he went about tending the men of the watch.

GLENALLAN

CONTINUING A NOVEL

IT WAS in the fashionable gambling rooms at Martin's that my Lord Barrymore found young Malcolm of Glenallan and whispered that the moment to strike had come, and in the Scottish hills the clans were gallantly rallying about the banner of Charles Edward Stuart, back from exile in France to wrest his rightful throne from the German George II. Malcolm, eager to be on the way back to his Highlands where history was in the making, grew indifferent in his play; and his luck immediately became phenomenal. He won so easily and so carelessly that he angered his opponent, the arrogant Captain Fitzstephen, of the Dragoons. Fitzstephen became intolerable in his insults and Malcolm struck him.

A duel was arranged, but as Malcolm placed his loyalty to the Stuart above personal honor, he demanded that the meeting take place immediately. And when Fitzstephen refused to fight until the next morning—by which time Malcolm would be well on his way back to Scotland—the Glenallan left the gambling house with the jeers of England's first gentlemen rankling in his heart . . .

On the way to his rooms he was set upon by highwaymen. Just as they closed upon Malcolm two horsemen galloped up to his rescue. And Malcolm was delighted to find them escorts of the beautiful Lady Helen Hornsby, returning home from the theater. Malcolm told Lady Helen that he was returning to Scotland; and when she replied that she herself would soon be visiting Edinburgh, Malcolm, fearing for her safety in the civil war about to break, advised her against it. Lady Helen, thinking him merely indifferent, became cool.

Malcolm reached his ancestral home, Allan's Castle, to find his father, the Laird of Glenallan, dying. The old laird pledged him to fight to the bitter end for the Stuart—then died. And Malcolm, now chief of the clan, rallied his little band and marched forth to the rendezvous with the Stuart, leaving his young brother, Fergus, behind.

of the CLANS

OF THE SCOTTISH HILLS

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

The Highlanders gathered; they descended upon Edinburgh. Successful in eluding the English general, Sir John Cope, they secretly drew up before the city one dark night. A plan was made to rush the Netherbow Gate; and Evan Macgregor wagered a bottle of brandy with Malcolm that he would beat him to the portal.

"Leave the gunpowder," calmly whispered Mr. Secretary Murray. "We'll run for it. All of us. And no yells."

"Aye," said Donald of Lochiel; and the chieftains passed the instructions rapidly. The signal was "King James the Eighth", spoken by the leader.

THE gates swung fully open. A hackney-coach, pulled by a beast that had been overworked that night, started slowly forward. The Highlandmen, grinning, waited. And when all of the sentries inside the gate itself were hidden by the coach, Donald of Lochiel spoke the signal.

Malcolm got off with a good start, and for half the distance was running even with Macgregor. He had no sense of fear. A footrace he always loved, and he was a grand runner himself. The wager for a bottle of brandy had done much to make the business seem more like a sport—a bit of deviltry that some boys might commit—than like the capturing of a nation's capital.

The driver of the coach, thoroughly tired and half asleep, stiffened suddenly in his seat. He had been looking out over a bare, bleak moor. And this had abruptly become a mass of half naked men, who flourished swords over their heads and held round targets in front of them—men with bright skirts and swinging, tasseled sporrans. He gasped. He shut his eyes, opened them again. The men were upon him—they were all

around him. Two youths dashed past first, and then the gateway was swarming with kilted figures. The reins fell from his hands. He was incapable of any action.

No less amazed were the sentries. The first man to reach the gate, Evan Macgregor, knocked one of them down with the flat of his claymore. The second man, Malcolm Glenallan, covered two others with his pistols.

"Drop your guns!"

The sentries obeyed, blinking, gasping. And the next instant there were Highlanders everywhere.

"The guardhouse is this way—over this way," Macgregor yelled.

They followed him. Two dozen members of Edinburgh's trained bands surrendered without the slightest struggle, convinced that all the Wild Scots in the world were confronting them. The sentries above, each made the target of five or six muskets, were equally submissive. Under Keppoch and Glenallan, one half of the force made a complete circuit of the walls. Out of sight of the Netherbow Gate not a single guard was aware of what had occurred; each, wrapped in quiet and peace at one moment and threatened with instant death at the next, surrendered as quietly as you please.

The bright plaid kilts, the terrible appearance of the claymores, the reputation for ferocity which these Highlanders possessed, and most of all the total unexpectedness of the attack—these took Edinburgh. It was done with a regularity and a quietness that were almost military—almost as though it were an exercise previously rehearsed by both parties. The trained bands were locked in the guardhouse. The sentries were relieved by Highlandmen, who posted the wall in the same numbers and at the same places. A large body was stationed at the Cannongate in order to cut off communication between the city and the castle.

The capital had been captured without a shot, almost without a sound.

CHAPTER VIII

PRINCE CHARMING

THOSE who lived in Robert Forbes' house were as amazed as any other persons in Edinburgh when they awoke to learn that the Wild Scots were in possession of the city. Lady Helen and her host and hostess took it calmly enough; but Gerald, her brother, was furious.

"Where's Cope?" Gerald demanded again and again. "Where are the militia?"

Neither question could be answered. Cope, it appeared, had a habit of being absent when his presence was most desired. And the trained bands, once a bustling, boasting force, were dissolved entirely, most of the members being engaged in hoping that their memberships would not be learned by the newcomers, while the others were locked in the city guardhouse.

"Damn them!" Gerald shouted; he stamped up and down through the dining room. "No, I don't want breakfast! Forgive me, Forbes, really, but I'm so damned angry—"

The kilted Scots made no attempt to storm the castle. Instead, they walked quietly about in little groups, grinning or gaping at what they saw, chatting among themselves in their strange tongue, but disturbing nothing. Later in the day they began to disappear; and the rumor got out that the Young Pretender was about to make his triumphant entry into the city.

"I'm going to watch it," Lady Helen told her brother. "I don't care how you feel. *Looking* at him can't do any harm."

And soon there came the sound of the Highland pipes, loud and spirited. Lady Helen, and Gerald too, together with their cousins and all the servants in the house, crowded to the front windows and watched the parade.

A grand sight it was! And a strange one, too. The Prince's army had been called a rabble. It was that—and yet

it was also an army. The men rarely walked in step; yet they had a certain system, each clansman, it would seem, knowing exactly what place he should occupy in relation to his chief or chieftain. Many of them were barelegged; others wore moggans, or stockings without feet; but most of them had molach brogues, which were crude shoes made of soft leather that was turned inside out. The gentlemen were armed to the teeth; the commoners had axes, or broadswords, or even mere clubs; the commonest weapon, excepting the claymore, was the scythe blade tied on the end of a pole, and the long and terrible Lochaber ax. Most of the men had round, leather covered targets slung over their left shoulders.

There were not eight thousand of them, as had been reported even by the more conservative gossips in Edinburgh so late as the previous day. There were scarcely half that many. But they were a spirited and a formidable lot.

There was the Marquis of Tullibardine, who had seized his brother's estate at Blair and had proclaimed himself the Duke of Athol and summoned his vassals. He rode in a coach drawn by six spanking Flemish mares. His men marched behind him.

There was Oliphant, Laird of Gask; Mercer, Laird of Aldie; Lord Nairn and his followers; doughty old Arthur Elphinstone, in his "damnation regimentals", sharing command of a ridiculously small company of cavalry with Lord Kilmarnock and Lord Pitsligo. There was the young Duke of Perth, his head high, his eyes flashing with excitement. There was Lord George Murray, tall, serious, an expert in military matters; he was Tullibardine's younger brother.

But strangest and most terrible of all were the Highlanders, the true Wild Scots.

There were the Robertsons, from Struan, from Blairfitty, from Cushieval, waving exuberantly at the people who watched the parade—the Robertsons with their dark tartan and their swinging leather sporrans. There were the war-like Macdonalds. Alasdair MacColl led the Macdonalds of the Keppoch clan—only one hundred of them, because their chief, who was a Protestant, would not allow them to bring a priest. There was Kinloch-Moidart, with one hundred more men; stocky, beefy faced Young Clanranald with three hundred men, indifferently armed but anxious enough to fight; the MacDonald of Tierndrich, with his small band; the MacIan of Glencoe, who led sixty warriors eager for revenge; the Macdonald of Glengarry, in a beautiful dress tartan.

Then the Camerons came, four abreast, bare knees swinging, eight pipers blowing up with all the strength in their lungs. The Camerons made a grand display. Young Lochiel marched at their head, his eyes a-twinkle, a smile on his face, his legs swinging in step to the "Black Donald March", his silver pistols shining in the morning sun. Angus MacClarke, MacMartin of Letterfinlay, Taylor of Cowal, and faithful Bobbie MacUalrig, were just behind him, and behind them were the gentlemen, and behind them the helots.

The Camerons were the largest group of them all. After they had gone, there was a break in the procession. Then the Glenallans came. And Lady Helen leaned forward so far that she almost fell out of the window.

"Damn me, if it isn't that young barbarian who was afraid to fight Fitzstephen!" cried Gerald. "He's mighty cocky now, isn't he?"

There was, indeed, no man who was prouder than Sir Malcolm Glenallan. He had insisted that his clan be placed a reasonable distance behind the Camerons; it infuriated him to have people think that his men owed allegiance to Young Lochiel and that he himself was only a chieftain. Then, too, with all the Camerons' pipers blowing, the strains that Old Angus was able to produce from Old Angus's father's instrument would scarcely be heard if the clans

were close together. It must not be thought that Old Angus was piping the "Black Donald March". He was, instead, giving the *"Spaidsearachd Ailein Oig"*, the "March of Young Allan", and he was giving it with all the energy left in his lungs.

The people must not think that the Glenallans were only a Cameron sept. It was for this reason that Malcolm had donned his dress tartan, brilliant red and yellow, which swung at his knees and belled behind him as he walked. Evan of Lochallan walked on his right, followed by his gillie; and on the left was the phlegmatic Walter MacPhail. Behind the chief was Gillie Angus with the musket. Behind him were the three sons of MacMichael Roy, and vacant faced Looney. Old Angus was in front, the place for a piper.

"Mighty cocky," Gerald repeated. "You'd think that Glenallan had the whole kingdom behind him, the way he walks."

"I think he's handsome," Lady Helen said. "He was never like that when I saw him in London. He never had that confidence. Look at the strides he takes!"

Gerald shrugged.

"Oh, he's a nine days' wonder—"

The Glenallans were followed by the Stuarts of Appine, under quiet Ardshiel —two hundred of them, and fine warriors every one. Then came Cluny Macpherson of Cluny, and his son, Young Macpherson of Breaknaig, with one hundred and fifty clansmen all in their brave red tartan. And then there were one hundred of the Grants of Grenmorriston.

Lady Helen was delighted.

"That's our clan, Gerald!" she exclaimed.

"Our clan be damned! Since when have you turned Scotch?"

"Your grandmother was a Grant," Robert Forbes reminded him.

"That doesn't make *me* a yapping savage, does it?" retorted Gerald, thoroughly out of patience.

THERE was another break in the procession now. The clans had all marched past. The Lowland regiments were gone. There remained only the Prince, and the Prince came at the end because he knew the value of a theatrical effect. From the windows of Robert Forbes' house they could hear the cheering, approaching in waves, as the crowd caught sight of him. It would seem that everybody in Edinburgh was yelling at the top of his lungs. The noise was so great that it drowned the music of the pipes.

"For which thank God," Gerald muttered.

But even Gerald could not help but whistle in admiration when Charles Edward Stuart rode by.

Charles Edward was, in the first place, an exceptionally good horseman, and he was astride an exceptionally fine horse—a beautiful bay gelding that stepped as though it realized it was carrying a prince of the blood royal. The rider, tall and slender and incredibly graceful, smiled and waved his hand. He wore a blue velvet bonnet bound with gold lace and topped with a white rose; a short tartan coat, the white tartan of the royal line of Stuarts; a blue sash trimmed with gold lace; red velvet small clothes; black military boots. At his side hung a silver hilted claymore. On his breast glittered the star of Saint Andrew. He looked like a figure from a fairy tale, he looked like a maiden's vision come to life. You scarcely dared to breathe for fear that your breath would break a charm and cause him to vanish. You scarcely dared to blink for fear that he would disappear while your eyes were closed.

Gerald Hornsby grabbed his sister's two wrists.

"Stop throwing kisses, you fool! Do you want everybody to think we're a pack of Jacobites?" But she pushed him away, never taking her eyes from the Prince.

The Prince rode slowly by, one hand on the hilt of his sword, one hand salut-

ing the populace. He smiled right and left, and occasionally, inspired by a shouted witticism, he laughed aloud, throwing his fine head back, tossing the white rose in his bonnet . . . He passed Robert Forbes' house, waving gayly.

Lady Helen called for her cape.

"I'm going down to the Cross. No, don't try to stop me, Gerald! I'm going there."

"At least let me go with you. It's not safe in this crowd of fanatics."

"Come along. I know you really wanted to go anyway and didn't dare suggest it."

The Prince of Wales entered Holyroodhouse, where of yore his ancestors had dwelt: ancient Holyrood, where the Stuarts had been married and had danced and had played, where the walls were pregnant with memory and the halls hummed with the music of the past. The multitude was quiet as the Prince passed these portals.

Then the proclamation was read at the Cross. Mr. Secretary Murray did the reading, and in a clear, hard voice. Around the Cross were the improvised cavalry, in trews and philabegs. Outside of the circle these fellows formed with their horses were the clansmen waving their bonnets and shouting in Gaelic; some of them had drawn their claymores and flourished these in the air. Murray of Broughton's wife, a great Amazon, astride a magnificent stallion, distributed white cockades to the faithful Jacobites and the newly converted, into which two classes, it would seem then, the entire people of Edinburgh fell.

Lady Helen looked in vain for the Glenallan. And not finding him, she joined her voice with the others in calling for the Prince to appear again.

He consented, stepping out on a balcony where all of them could see him. The roar was deafening. The Prince waved his hand and smiled to right and left.

"Damn you, stop cheering for him," Gerald whispered.

"I won't," cried Lady Helen. "He is the most gallant man I've ever seen and I'm going to cheer all I want!"

"He is good looking," Gerald admitted. "But I don't see what that had to do with it."

"He's *gallant,* Gerald! Look—he came here all alone. No help from France, no help from Spain, no money, practically no friends. Gerald, admit it now! That's a brave thing to do."

"Yes. But there are brave men in Whitefriars, for the matter of that."

But Lady Helen was not pleased with such faint approval.

"You have no feeling, Gerald."

And so, arguing, they returned to Robert Forbes' house, jostled and pushed by the excited crowd and obliged to shout at each other to make themselves heard.

Lady Helen strongly denied that she was a rebel. But she would be, she said, if ever she had another look at that young man. That, she explained, was the sort of man who should be king, whether by divine right or by Parliamentary sanction or in any other manner. A king should be a king, she explained, not a drunken little German beast. Her attitude amazed Gerald, who had been so busy informing the world of his own attitude that he had not observed, or had not attached importance to his sister's contempt for the House of Hanover.

And now he was alarmed.

"When they have you locked in a dungeon you won't feel so fine about it all," he grumbled.

Their host himself met them at the door. Robert Forbes was a quiet, easy humored man, not given to excitement. But there was some tremble in his voice when he informed Lady Helen that she had a visitor, come during her trip to the Cross.

"A young Highlandman, no less. An arrogant laddie, too. Just bristles with feathers and pistols and things. Really, Lady Helen, I was quite afraid of him at first!"

CHAPTER IX

A NEW GLENALLAN

THE change in Malcolm, which Lady Helen had remarked when Malcolm was on parade, was even more apparent now that he was in the same room with her. His bright tartan, his shining pistols and dirk and broadsword, his feathers and his white cockade—even these things were not so conspicuous as the superb air of confidence that he wore. He seemed infinitely strong—ready at a signal to grab the world with one hand and toss it into some undiscoverable corner of the black cosmos.

Moreover, there was no little swagger in his bearing. Lady Helen had remembered him as a shy, cautious young man, uneasy in his English clothes, giving the impression that he was too tightly bound, too closely confined for comfort; and she had heard that other men considered him a rude fellow, with no wit and no apparent breeding to justify his aloofness. But now he was different. His feet were spread wide, his hands were on his hips, there was a light of suppressed excitement in his eyes.

Nevertheless, he was solemn as he bowed to her.

"You asked me to call on my way back to London."

"It is good to see you again." And she smiled.

Gerald, hovering in the doorway, was silent. Robert Forbes too, who was with Gerald, said never a word this while. Lady Helen beckoned them.

"Gerald, you and Mr. Glenallan have already met . . . Robert, this is Mr. Malcolm Glenallan, the son of the Laird of Glenallan. Mr. Robert Forbes, sir, my cousin."

Malcolm nodded. Robert Forbes started to bow, but paused halfway when he observed the coolness with which he was greeted. And as for Gerald, he was silent still and stood scowling.

Then there was an awkward pause. Lady Helen remembered that there were always awkward pauses when the Young Glenallan was a member of the party.

"Your men have been very fortunate," Robert Forbes ventured at last.

"Aye."

Robert Forbes took snuff, closed the box, tapped it and offered it to Malcolm.

"A pinch from my mull, sir?"

These two were Scotsmen, even though the one came from Lochaber while the other lived in Edinburgh. And Robert Forbes was not at all a belligerent sort of fellow.

"Thank you." And the Glenallan took snuff. "I hope that my presence doesn't frighten you," he said afterward. There was a breath of sarcasm in his voice. "His Royal Highness has issued the most explicit orders against all manner of plundering or annoyance of the people. You may be sure that nothing of the sort will happen, and doubly sure that I wouldn't be a party to it if it did."

Robert Forbes lied pleasantly.

"I had never expected such a thing, sir." He bowed, backing out of the drawing room. "I shall ask Mrs. Forbes to join you?"

"Please do," said Lady Helen.

"I'll wait for her to come," Gerald announced.

But now the Glenallan was frowning.

"I would rather be alone with Lady Helen," he said bluntly.

"I am not sure that it would be proper for you to be alone with her," Gerald said. He was very stiff, very proper.

"Now, Gerald—"

"Are you going to blame me too, sister? Have you turned rebel entirely, that you want to talk with them alone?" He banged a fist on the little table. "What's back of this?"

"Nothing is back of it," said Lady Helen. "Mr. Glenallan has come to visit me, and you've been acting like a vulgar barrister, that's all. Why don't you get out, Gerald?"

She had ample power over her

brother, who was, after all, no more than a boaster and who was two years her junior. She seldom exercised this power, preferring, for the most part, to allow him to rant. But now she was firm. And Gerald quit the room.

"You must forgive my brother, Mr. Glenallan."

"He saved my life once," Malcolm said.

And now she begged him to be seated. She was graciousness itself, and very lovely in blue and gold, with her own brown hair bound loosely at the back of her small head. She was intensely curious and asked him many questions about Charles Edward.

"The Prince," Malcolm assured her, "is as amiable as he is handsome."

"Do you think he will appear in public again while he is here?"

"I know he will. He has to raise funds, ye ken, and enlist the sympathies of as many people as he can. He plans to give a reception at Holyrood soon. May I escort you?"

The invitation was so abrupt that Lady Helen gasped. She could not reconcile this bold young fellow with the bashful gentleman she had known in London. She stammered acceptance and some manner of thanks. Gerald would be furious, of course; but a reception would give her an opportunity to meet the Stuart. Perhaps she shouldn't meet him! Perhaps it would not be correct for one of Emily's ladies-in-waiting. But she could trouble about that afterward. For the present, she had accepted the invitation.

It was at this point in the conversation that Mrs. Forbes entered the room, a delayed duenna. To her and to Helen, after many questions, the young Laird explained his costume, what it meant, why it was so arranged and so colored, how it was used.

"This is my dress tartan. My brother and myself are the only persons privileged to wear it, now that my father is dead. Perhaps you noticed that my men wore a dark tartan? That's the war tartan. I can wear that too, if I wish, and I do when I'm hunting . . . This? Why, this is my sporran. It's a purse. See, it opens on the top . . . On the brooch? Why, the MacIldowie arms. Yes, we have escutcheons too."

His target fascinated the ladies. There was something irresistibly romantic, in an age of gunpowder and copybook armies, to find a real soldier, an officer in a genuine revolution, equipped with a shield. And aside from this, the target was a beautiful piece. It was perfectly round; the outside was covered with tightly stretched leather, tooled in foliaged design, with an enormous brass boss in the center, four smaller bosses surrounding this, and numerous little brass studs and nails, all brilliantly polished, arranged geometrically upon its surface. The back was covered with calfskin and padding; there were two arm holes and a fist grip. In addition, in the back of the target, there was a sheath for a triangular dirk; there was no handle, but a screw end to this dirk, which, before battle, could be fixed into the big central boss so that it stuck out like a unicorn's horn. Malcolm so screwed it for their edification, smiling at the breathless interest they displayed.

"I never *saw* so many weapons," Mrs. Forbes declared.

LADY HELEN, however, was most attracted by the dress tartan, a brilliant red mixture, not unlike that of the Glengarry Macdonalds. She thought it was the most beautiful pattern she had ever seen. How in the world was it made?

"Bitter vetch and pivet berries, when they're ripe, with salt, and a little water flag and bog myrtle."

This answer did not enlighten her; but she smiled politely.

"I have some extra dress breacan with me," the Glenallan said. "If you like it, I'll send you some this afternoon."

Mrs. Forbes indicated disapproval. But Malcolm was paying scant attention to Mrs. Forbes. Lady Helen herself

wanted to accept the gifts; but she was doubtful of the propriety of acceptance.

"It is very kind of you, sir. But if only you and your brother can wear it—"

"I am the chief of the clan," Malcolm said solemnly. "I alone can give you permission to wear it. I give you that permission."

"Oh—"

Now Mrs. Forbes was suspicious.

"And what does that mean?" she asked.

"It means," Malcolm explained, "that the lady is accepted by me as a member of my clan. The clansmen are at her service whenever she would call them, unless I instruct them otherwise. None of them will ever do her harm. All of them will defend her if there is need for it. It means that she will always have hospitality in Glenallan."

"That is a lot for a piece of cloth to mean," the dubious Mrs. Forbes suggested.

"It is Glenallan cloth," said Malcolm, as though that accounted for everything. He turned to Lady Helen. "I'll send it by a gillie who speaks some English, if you want to ask him any questions."

Yes, certainly this was a different man from the Mr. Glenallan of London. Those little unconscious rudenesses, which in the English city had seemed to mar his character, fitted perfectly with the rough grandeur of the kilts. His arrogance, never displayed directly to Lady Helen but apparent in every other act of his, was of a piece with the eagle feathers and the claymore and the polished pistols. His long legs and thick muscular arms at last had a chance to expand, to stretch and swell in primitive exuberance as the Glenallan moved.

He asked and was granted permission to call the following day. He had appeared to expect that this would be granted him. Indeed, refusal of anything would have amazed the Glenallan now. He was a feudal baron, a tyrant at twenty-four. He bowed gravely and quit the house; and Lady Helen and Mrs. Forbes watched him from the window as he swung with long strides down the street, contemptuously disregarding the rude stares of the citizens.

The tartan arrived an hour later. It was some eight feet long and half as wide, and very pleasant to the touch. Gillie Angus brought it. He was quiet, careful. He assured Lady Helen that the wearing of this cloth anywhere in Lochaber would be a protection against all human danger so long as the houses of Lochiel and Glenallan were in power.

"An' they always will be," Gillie Angus promised her solemnly.

And after he had gone Lady Helen spent the sort of evening which, a few hours previous, would have seemed to her intolerably dull. She did not visit, she did not gossip with the Forbeses, she refused even to play cards. She devoted herself, instead, to mere thinking—thinking about the young chief and the striking figure he had made and the strength he had shown. She thought still longer, perhaps, about the way in which he had gazed at her all during the visit. Lady Helen was sufficiently accustomed to flattery, of which there was abundance in London. But there was about this young man a determined admiration, a blunt and indubitably honest desire.

She had not realized this while he had been in her presence. But now that he was gone she marveled that he had not picked her up in his arms and walked away with her—taken her to some distant hillside where the strange Highlandmen lived in ancient magnificence. Among the fops of London, among the laces and the frills of the court, habitually she felt strong. It was a new sensation for her to be a weakling in the presence of a man.

The next afternoon Malcolm called again. As on the previous day, Mrs. Forbes stood guard over them. Lady Helen was not abducted. But the young chief had lost none of his terrific vitality and none of his arrogance. Robert

Forbes himself candidly admitted that he was at times genuinely afraid of the fellow.

"Lord, what a temper he must have," Robert Forbes observed afterward. "I have made inquiries about him," the host added. "He appears to be a very important personage, in spite of the smallness of his following. His family name is MacIldowie. They are a branch of the Camerons, I believe. But the Highlanders always call him Glenallan, which is the name of his estate, and his own clansmen call him Macdomhnull Dhu, or 'Son of Donald the Black'. His father was Sir Douglas Glenallan, a famous old trouble maker. And this young man himself, from what I hear, has been knighted by the Pretender. But I don't think," added the cautious Robert Forbes, "that it would be quite proper for *us* to acknowledge it and call him Sir Malcolm."

"Not yet, anyway," offered Lady Helen.

Her cousin glanced curiously at her, and Gerald was a thundercloud; but she only smiled.

Malcolm's third visit to the Forbes house was brief.

"We're marching out," he told them. "Cope is coming down and we're going to stop him. May I see you when I return?"

And when this boon had been granted, he kissed Helen's hand gravely, awarded Mrs. Forbes a formal bow, nodded coolly to Robert Forbes and to Gerald, and departed. His men were waiting for him in the street outside. He placed himself at their head, with Evan of Lochallan on the right side and Walter McPhail on the left, the piper in front, and Gillie Angus in the rear with the musket, and behind Gillie Angus the three sons of MacMichael Roy and Looney. He nodded to Old Angus, and the marching song was started.

And thus, with everything in its proper place, Malcolm went off to join his Prince.

CHAPTER X

BATTLE

CHARLES EDWARD STUART drew his sword and unstrapped and threw away from him the sword belt and scabbard.

"My friends," he cried, "this day our cause will triumph! We will return with victory or we will not return at all. See, here is my sword—I have thrown away the scabbard!"

They cheered him loudly and flourished their own claymores and threw their bonnets into the air.

Then they marched out of Duddingstone. A careful gillie, attached to the Duke of Perth, first took the precaution to pick up his Highness's sword belt and scabbard.

"He'll thank me later," the gillie explained.

They left Figgat Burn behind them and took the pleasant way through Easter Dunningstone to Musselburgh.

The men were gay. The pipes were playing bravely and some of the men were singing:

> "Oh, who'd na ficht for Charlie?
> "Oh, who'd na draw the sword—"

They went up Edge-buckling Brae, passed around Wallyford and over Fawside Hill, took the post road at Douphiston, ascended Birsley Brae, and about half a mile west of Tranent came suddenly upon the enemy.

The men raised a great shout, and would have rushed in immediately had it not been for the efforts of the gentlemen.

The fact is, though they were on higher ground and could start the battle or avoid it, as they pleased, the slope that stretched down between them and the Saxons was marshy and intersected with enclosures and cut at the bottom by a broad, deep ditch alongside of which ran a thick hedge. And so, at length it was decided to camp upon the spot, where at least they were secure from attack, and wait for the morning.

It was now dark and the night was chilly. The day had been clear, but now the skies were overcast and the mist rolled in from the sea and there was a faint drizzle of rain. The Englishmen below had lighted great campfires which glared through the darkness, round and yellow and geometrically spaced.

The Glenallans were not given sentry duty and, soon after the final arrangements for the day had been made, they wrapped themselves in their plaids and went to sleep.

Malcolm was awakened by Donald of Lochiel, who shook his shoulder and whispered to him. It was pitch dark. The drizzle had stopped, but the mist was thick about them.

"Sh-sh! No questions now. Come with me."

He led Malcolm to a field of cut peas, where his royal Highness, wrapped in a tartan blanket, was seated on a pile of straw. Evidently he too had just been awakened. Nearby were the high officers of the army. In front of the Prince stood Robert Anderson, an East Lothian gentleman, son of Anderson of Whitburgh.

Young Lochiel whispered to his cousin.

"He says he knows a path by which we can go round the swamp and get between the Saxons and the sea without being exposed. It's high ground there, too, ye ken, and all dry."

Anderson swore again that if he were made guide for the army this night he could lead all the men to the other side in safety. He had hunted over this ground many times, he said. His talk was convincing. It was decided to start the march immediately. The men were awakened; they adjusted their tartans and fell into line, two columns of three abreast. They marched in the deepest silence, careful not to let their weapons click.

The Prince was wildly exuberant, like a boy at his first fair. When they came to the ditch at the foot of the hill he cried, "See if I can jump it!" and made a grand attempt to do so, falling short, however, by a few inches, and thereby covering himself with spattered mud. He laughed gayly, forgetting the need for silence. Immediately there came an English voice—

"Who goes there?"

The Highlanders gave no answer, but stood still. Three shots were heard, and the receding sound of hoofbeats in the soft wet earth. A wee ribbon of smoke, in which there was the smell of gunpowder, drifted past their faces.

"Dragoons," said Mr. Secretary Murray.

But the Prince only laughed again.

"It doesn't matter. Mr. Anderson tells me that we have already come far enough to be safe. Does any other man think he can make that jump?"

Nobody volunteered. Malcolm believed he could do it, but for that very reason he did not try, fearing to embarrass Prince Charles by his success; so he hitched up his kilts and waded across as the others were doing.

Then, for a time, they were on an upgrade. The path was rough, but the morass was behind them now and the agile Highlanders had no difficulty with rocks. It was dawn, but the mist obscured the enemy.

Finally they halted, having, according to Anderson, reached a spot exactly opposite to the position they had previously been holding.

"Keep the men awake," commanded the Prince; but this instruction was unnecessary, for the men were much too excited even to think of sleep.

The charge was to be started as soon as the clans had been wheeled into the proper position. The Macdonalds were given their usual post of honor on the right wing. In the center were the Macgregors and the Duke of Perth's men. The left consisted of the Camerons, the Glenallans, and the Athole regiment. Prince Charles commanded the second line, only fifty yards in the rear.

Malcolm, facing his clansmen, raised

his right hand for attention.

"On your knees, laddies." They obeyed, uncovering. "Almighty God, preserve bravery. Preserve our Prince and make his arms victorious this day. Give every man courage and strength, for thou knowest there are no men who worship thee more truly. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—amen."

"Amen," the Glenallans echoed, and rose to their feet.

AND now all along the line targets were unslung, poniards were unsheathed and plaids were tightened or cast off entirely. Malcolm strapped his own plaid firmly under the broad leather belt, screwed a dirk into the boss of his shield, pulled his bonnet far down on his head, took his musket from the hands of Gillie Angus, made certain that his claymore was loose in its scabbard.

"Scrug your bonnets, laddies!" The command to advance soon came and they started forward at a rapid walk, their feet whispering through the stubble.

But it was difficult to walk and they soon broke into a trot. Then a breeze came from the sea at their backs, blowing the mist away, and those in the front line saw the enemy.

In spite of himself, Malcolm felt his heart sink. General Cope had, indeed, been warned of the Highlanders' movement, and he was ready for attack. There were artillery and cavalry at each wing, and a solid line of infantry between. Their red coats and high, pointed hats were clear through the mist that was left; and from a million places on muskets and cannon and sabers came gleams of bright light. The precision was frightful. Malcolm looked to right and left, observing the contrast that Charlie's men made. They were ragged, barefoot, ignorant, without any military experience; they advanced obliquely, because the command to charge had reached the left wing first; scarcely two hundred muskets or fowling pieces were to be seen, the rest of the weapons being mostly claymores and scythe blades and Lochaber axes, though a few men even carried brass studded clubs, and some of the Macgregors relied upon the ancient long bow; there were no bayonets, and no cannon.

But he cursed himself furiously. Was this fear? He glanced at his men to see whether they had observed any change of expression that his face might have displayed for the instant. But they were intent upon the foe. Evan of Lochallan was on the chief's right, Walter MacPhail on his left, and close behind them were the other clansmen. Old Angus alone looked at his leader, his eyes asking for the command to play. Malcolm nodded.

"Blow up, Angus."

He raised his musket to his shoulder and fired. He threw the musket to the ground, drew his claymore and raised it in the air, his right arm stiff. With the opening notes of the bagpipe came his battle cry.

"Glenallan! Glenallan!"

The men broke into a full run—a sprint. They, too, shrieked the battle cry.

"Glenallan!"

The infantry fired one volley at them, and the smoke blew back into Saxon faces. Malcolm, whose long legs had carried him ahead of the others, burst through this smoke and came upon a company of Dragoons. He had been advised to strike at the horses' noses when he met cavalry. But he had no opportunity to do this. The Dragoons discharged their carbines and wheeled and dashed away. The very sight of the Wild Scots charging downhill had been too much for them.

Malcolm fired a pistol after them and immediately ran to his right, where there was a company of foot soldiers desperately reloading. One of them stepped out of line to meet him. Malcolm caught the bayonet on his target, dropping to his left knee to do so; he

turned off the point and struck a full blow on the head; the soldier dropped. The others, frightened at the sight of the young chief and the men behind him, turned and ran.

A Dragoon, whose horse had gone wild under him and was beyond control, came stamping among the clansmen. They dodged quickly. The Dragoon raised his saber above Malcolm. But Looney's long Lochaber ax, hook-ended, caught the fellow's coat and pulled him to the ground; and at the same instant Gillie Angus leaped underneath the animal and slit open its belly with a poniard. Malcolm, in springing aside, had slipped on the wet ground and fallen to his knees. He rose in time to see Looney cut the fallen Dragoon's throat. He grabbed the halfwit and shook him furiously.

"If I catch you doing that again I'll knife you myself!"

Looney nodded. He could not understand the reason for this instruction, but the instruction itself was within his comprehension.

An old man, evidently a major or colonel of Dragoons, came running up from the rear, trying to rally whatever foot soldiers would stand with him, since his own men had run. Some fifty or sixty redcoats supported him. But the Camerons were nearer to this group, and reached it first, and by the time the Glenallans came there was little left to do. Malcolm had no heart for slaughter, and it was only slaughter now. Great Davie, with his terrible sword, and Walter MacPhail, bellowing at the top of his lungs, could not be restrained: they hurled themselves into the killing and did not stop until the redcoats had thrown down their muskets and called for quarter.

It was astounding. All this had occupied barely five minutes. The Highlanders, in fact, had scarcely begun to fight, and there were many of them who had not struck a single blow. The second line, fifty yards behind, found no redcoats that were not dead or captured. The battle was already ended.

And the looting was begun. The Highlanders ran everywhere, stripping the bodies of dead and wounded alike, taking coats and muskets and watches and wigs. The wigs were a great novelty. All of Cope's baggage, including his military chest, had fallen into the hands of Prince Charlie's men, and there were many wigs in the baggage, for Cope's officers must go to war properly provided. Half the Macdonald helots and all of the Macgregors were fitted out with powdered perukes, and they danced around screaming at one another and making faces. One man was vastly excited to find himself in possession of a mirror; he had never before seen a mirror. Another man had a watch which he was trying to feed, assuming from the noise it made that it was some sort of animal.

The Camerons, on the whole, were well behaved, and the Glenallans, being so few, were easily controlled. But the helots of the Great Clan Colla, and the Robertsons and Maclaughlins and Grants and Macgregors ran wild, taking everything they could find.

The field was horribly bloody. There were English soldiers who were literally hacked to pieces—headless, armless, legless. Great Davie, according to Walter MacPhail, who had witnessed it, had cut one man exactly in half at the waist with a blow behind which Davie had put all his strength. It was said that a Macdonald of Clanranald's party had with a down blow crushed a skull completely and sunk his blade as far as the chin. Malcolm stepped over one poor devil who had been cut from the right armpit almost to the hip bone. The corpses were the more terrible because they had been stripped naked. The white of bare skin, and the red of blood, almost blotted the brown earth from sight.

Malcolm came to some men who were carrying Evan Macgregor from the field. Evan had been wounded twice and was unable to walk, but his eyes were spar-

kling. He smiled at Malcolm.

"I'll bring that bottle of brandy to your quarters tonight," Malcolm promised.

Macgregor held out a whisky flask. "A drink on it now, Callum. It's been worthy of our fathers!"

Malcolm smiled and took the flask.

"Deoch slaint an Righ," he murmured and drank.

CHAPTER XI

MALCOLM SPEAKS

THEY came marching back in grand style, with prisoners slumping in line, captured standards held high and the Prince looking more handsome than ever. The pipes never played so loudly. The men never felt so brave. And after the celebration was finished and the shouting had died, the Glenallan renewed his visits to Robert Forbes' house in the Cannongate.

"It was no battle," he told them there when they insisted that he describe the experience. "There could not be a battle when the Saxons didn't fight."

He was true to his promise about Holyroodhouse. His invitation to Lady Helen was made definite. Cope disposed of, Prince Charles entertained; and Malcolm and Helen attended. She met the Prince. More, she danced with him three times. And for a lady so accustomed to the presence of royalty, she displayed an uncommon degree of excitement over these events.

She pleased the Stuart too. Not only her personal charms, but her great name, pleased him. It was well, he reasoned, that among his admirers he should number the representative of so wealthy and so Hanoverian a house as the Hornsbys. Naturally polite, he outdid himself in graciousness when Lady Helen was with him. He clapped loudly for more music at the ends of their dances; he bowed before her and insisted upon kissing not merely her hand but also her cheek; he invited her to lunch.

The army was encamped outside the city. But the military council met every day at the palace and discussed plans. Charles was in favor of marching directly into England, convinced as he was that they would be reenforced there by Jacobites glad of the opportunity to fight for a restoration but reluctant to travel to another country for this purpose.

"London is our next prize, gentlemen! We have taken one capital. We must take the other."

The chiefs and chieftains were not optimistic. Scotland was theirs, true; but there still was a great deal of Hanoverian feeling; and in spite of the loud receptions the Prince was given whenever he appeared in public, the majority of the Lowlanders probably were foolish enough still to favor the German's rule, though not zealous enough to fight for it. The mass of the English regular troops had not yet been brought into the field. The chiefs and chieftains were in favor of remaining in Scotland. They shook their heads when Prince Charles predicted certain victory after an invasion of England.

Then, too, there was the castle. Could it be said that an army possessed Scotland when Edinburgh castle was in enemy hands? Promptly after their entrance into the city, the Highlanders had formed a blockade. And when Cope had been defeated, leaving no prospect of immediate relief for the castle garrison, it seemed certain that General Guest would ask for terms. General Guest, however, did nothing of the kind. Instead, he sent down word that unless the blockade were lifted he would open his guns upon the city.

Prince Charles was shocked.

"Barbarous!" he cried, again and again. "I can not permit those innocent people to suffer."

The chiefs and chieftains argued with him. The people who lived near the castle could evacuate their houses, taking all their valuables and even all their furniture with them, while Guest was

restrained from opening fire by means of half-promises and official messages dickering for different terms. In the end it would probably prove the most merciful course, the Highland leaders insisted.

What if a few houses were knocked to pieces? What had the Lowlanders done that they deserved such tender care? Of all the money in Edinburgh how much had been contributed to the Stuart cause except by force? Of all the strong and healthy men, how many had enlisted?

But the Prince was not to be shaken from his benevolent notions. The blockade was lifted.

For the most part, however, the talk at council sessions was concerned with less interesting features of the campaign. The raising of funds, the conduct of the men with the townspeople, the ordering of provisions and arms, the allotment of sentry duty. Almost every day the Prince promised them that aid would come from France; but the aid did not come.

Meanwhile they drilled and equipped themselves. The original force had made little pretense at military organization, marching in whatever order seemed most convenient at the hour; but in Edinburgh there was a considerable change in the arrangement of the clans.

Mr. Secretary Murray and Young Lochiel and Lord George, and Prince Charles himself, were busy forming regular regiments. It was Sir Thomas Sheridan who proposed that the Glenallans be joined with the Gordons, giving as his reason the fact that the Camerons, with whom the Glenallans logically belonged, were already more numerous than most of the Highland regiments, whereas the Gordons needed about a dozen men to round off their group.

Malcolm protested, and so also did Young Lochiel. But Sir Thomas was closer to his Highness, and the order was signed.

IT HAD the effect that every Highland gentleman had expected. The Glenallans, to a man, laid down their weapons. They would follow only a descendant of the Black Donald, they said. Not even a Gordon of Glenbucket would satisfy them. If their own chief must be superseded, then they would follow Young Lochiel, with their own chief in immediate command. Otherwise they would go back to the hills. No amount of argument could dissuade them. And eventually the order was rescinded, and the clan remained a sort of independent company under the formal captaincy of Malcolm, who, however, accepted commands only from the Stuart himself.

All of this Lady Helen learned at Robert Forbes' house in the Cannongate. Her visitor was becoming more loquacious these days. With proper urging, and a carefully kept silence when silence was demanded, he could be induced to tell her many things about the army and about himself and his clan. He described in glowing terms the appearance of his brother Fergus, and he never tired of praising Young Lochiel.

Once she ventured to ask him about the affair at Martin's. The Glenallan's face darkened.

"How did you learn that?"

"Captain Fitzstephen told me. I met him the next morning on the Mall."

He said nothing, but it was obvious that he was angry, and she was sorry she had spoken. Nevertheless, she was intensely curious about this episode, and she put another question.

"Was it because you were coming here that you did not want a duel?"

"Aye."

"And was that why you advised me not to come here, that night? Because you knew there would be war?"

"Aye."

"Are you sorry I came?"

He seemed startled at this question, and then puzzled. He looked up quickly, studying her as though he suspected that she was making sport of him.

"Sorry!" he cried. "Why, I'm in love with you!"

Now Lady Helen Hornsby had been told often enough, and in many different ways, that she was beloved. And the declaration had never failed to thrill her, for she was, after all, a woman. But this young Highlander's frank, almost impolite statement, left her without speech.

Malcolm's honesty astounded her and almost frightened her. She was not accustomed to sincerity. In the presence of an emotion so intense she felt like a baby. She was not able to talk. She nodded weakly, not even rising, when the chief excused himself; he explained that there was a drill he must attend, and he bowed himself out.

"Why, I'm in love with you!"

If any other man but Malcolm Glenallan had spoken in that manner, she would have laughed aloud. But she did not dare to laugh in his presence. She was afraid of him. More than that, though, she respected him, and she knew that he was honest in his declaration.

That night he called again. He was to take her to Holyrood, where Prince Charles was giving another reception. He made no reference to the episode of the afternoon, but walked beside her chair and chatted pleasantly on the way to the palace. In the ballroom she saw little of him. He spent most of his time in conversation with other Highland gentlemen. He could not dance; and he believed that he was depriving her of pleasure when he intruded his presence upon her at such a function. There was something very solemn about the attitude.

Malcolm, on occasions like these, was not unlike a father who escorts his pretty daughter to a ball and smiles at her innocent pleasures there but keeps his own mind occupied with important, parental matters.

But the trip home was more eventful. It was a rare, clear night. Edinburgh slept peacefully; the air was warm; the sky seemed very near to them. Malcolm walked again by the side of the chair, Gillie Angus trailing him at a discreet distance. The chief was quiet. He frowned at the paving stones that passed under his feet. It was with no little difficulty that he regulated his pace so as to keep back with the chair; time and again his legs carried him too far in advance for politeness.

Helen wondered, but she did not speak. She was embarrassed, for the memory of Malcolm's declaration was hot within her. She jumped a bit, startled, when he leaned over and placed a hand on the top of the chair door.

"Soon we're going out of the city," he said.

She expressed surprise and regret; but she suggested timidly, that it might be better for him to keep such military plans to himself.

"It's no secret," he cried impatiently. "There are no plans yet. But Charlie's bent on going to London. He thinks we've waited here long enough. He thinks that Englishmen will join us along the way. The Jacobites, that is. I don't like it . . ." He scowled at the pavement. "But Charlie will get his way. He's stubborn as a bull. He says we're not recruiting any more men here and we might as well start the march now before the German gets his full army back from Flanders."

"I suppose we will be leaving the city soon, too," Lady Helen said. "Gerald is getting over some of his silly notions about defiance, and the princess will be wanting my services." There was a wee sigh from the chair, and Lady Helen pressed the folded end of a fan against her mouth. After awhile she said, "It's been very pleasant here, with the balls at the palace and everything. It doesn't seem possible there's a civil war going on all the time, does it? You know, I like Edinburgh. I didn't at first, but I do now."

"Aye, it's better than London."

He shut his mouth again after this remark, and he kept it shut until they had reached Robert Forbes' house and

the link boys and the chair carriers had been paid and dismissed. Lady Helen knew, even before she saw the candles in the window, that Mrs. Forbes was waiting up for her, although it was long past the good lady's usual hour for retiring. But she walked up the garden path slowly. And she stopped without resistance—almost as though she had expected it—when the Glenallan grabbed her arm.

"*Eilidh*—"

Her thin brown eyebrows wrinkled together; her face was a question mark. The Glenallan shook his head with impatience.

"That's Gaelic. It means Helen—"

His grip on her arm had not relaxed. It hurt her, but she was afraid to move. There was in this chief the fascination of perfect strength. She felt the paralysis that a man might feel who stood with his back to the wall and watched the onrush of a terrible host—with this difference: she felt no real sense of danger, but only a grand awe.

"This afternoon—you were surprised when I told you I love you. Didn't you know that?"

She shook her head.

"I—I didn't know."

He released her arm abruptly and, both hands on his hips, he faced her, all a-frown.

"Of course I love you," he cried. "How could I help loving you, and you as beautiful and sweet as you are? I did love you when I first met you, and I love you more now, and more every day!"

He seemed about to seize her again. But he stopped suddenly, dropped his arms to his sides and made a stiff bow. He apologized for his behavior. He was ashamed of himself, he told her, because he could not control his feelings. Would Lady Helen forgive him?

She feared that he was angry; yet his anger seemed rather to be directed inwardly against himself, than outwardly against her. She wanted to reassure him, to tell him that he had not made himself ridiculous in any way, to explain that she respected him more than she respected any other man. She wanted him to kiss her. But she was afraid to speak—afraid of him and, stranger still, afraid of herself. And so they parted in silence.

The next day, when Malcolm came to Robert Forbes' house, he called her Eilidh.

There was a relentlessness about the courtship. He kept after her as a hunter might pursue a wounded deer. And she did not resist; perhaps she was too frightened to resist. She was a slave to something she herself could not identify. She was in his power, and she realized it; but the realization was becoming less frightful each day she saw him. For she trusted the Glenallan. He was a gentleman, in the old definition of that word. No knight of ancient days had been more punctilious about his honor. His code was firm and full—a genuine part of his peculiar personality, which he would no more think of breaking than he would think of breaking one of his own legs. If prisoner she must be, Lady Helen reflected, she could not hope for a turnkey more reliable.

CHAPTER XII

LADY HELEN OF GLENALLAN

CHARLES EDWARD STUART knelt as in prayer, in the drafty little chapel at Holyrood. Actually, he was not praying: he was thinking. But it looked well to kneel there in silence, alone, while the early morning sunbeams oozed through the stained glass windows and the wee red light at the altar flickered nervously. And he needed to look well. There were men watching him from the doorway, and they would report this prayer to other men, and would relate how devout the bonnie young Prince was. He needed all that. More and more, as this business progressed, he was realizing the value of his personal appearance. In-

credible that these harsh, silent mountaineers should even think of his looks; it was his blood, not his handsome countenance and his ability as an athlete, that they should consider. But in fact, as he knew, there were many in the ranks who were out to fight and possibly to die largely because Charles Edward Stuart was picturesque, graceful and gracious, a figure out of old chivalry. He rather despised them for this; but if they were willing to fight he was in no position to cavil about their inspiration. So he knelt in prayer, while the men at the doorway watched him, silently approving.

In an hour they would start south. Capturing Edinburgh had been too easy. Defeating Cope at Prestonpans had been accomplished so readily that he still was scarcely able to believe it himself. The real war was yet to come. Louis of France had not responded. The Lowlanders were lukewarm. Charles pretended to believe that the people of Lancaster, at least, would rise to a man and flock to his banner; and a few weeks previous he truly had believed this; but he was having his doubts now. Upon the Highlanders, upon that ragged band of grim, desperate, difficult men, everything seemed to depend. And he still could not understand the Highlanders. He could get no grip on them. They obeyed him when they pleased; but when they differed from him—and this infuriated him—they said so, and said it emphatically. Scotland they were willing to conquer, but England was another matter.

But he had won the prolonged argument with his council. They were going to England. They were to start within an hour.

Charles was not frightened. There was too much excitement, too much to do, even to think of fear. Nevertheless, doubts were swarming about him like night gnats in a boggy, breezeless country—millions of them—giving him no rest—nipping him everywhere at once, relentlessly. He wanted to be rid of doubts, if only for this brief kneeling in the chapel. He wanted to rest, to think of nothing at all, while he seemed to be praying; just to press his hot hands over his eyes, his head averted, and push away all thoughts and all doubts and dreams, leaving his mind a sweet, refreshed thing. But it was impossible.

After a time he heard the men in the doorway shuffle nervously, impatiently. He had been there, he estimated, long enough. The impression had been made.

He really wished, as he rose to his feet, that he had been able to pray. Sometimes he could pray; but only at night when he was alone and lying down.

He caught himself exhaling the tiniest sigh and he stifled this promptly; it was with a grave, properly serious face that he left the chapel. Mr. Secretary Murray, wearing a characteristic frown of worriment and clutching a handful of documents, was waiting for him.

"Is the baggage ready? Have the cavalry been posted? I want a full display of cavalry."

"They will be ready very soon, Highness. Elphinstone is to report to you here."

"Perhaps it would be well if I were to show myself outside once more before we start." He started toward a stairway, thinking to appear on a second floor balcony.

"There is one more matter here first, Highness—"

"What is that? Oh, yes! Our Glenallan wants to enter the married state. Is he here?"

Malcolm came forward, bowed stiffly. He was dressed in full war regalia, carrying all his weapons except the musket, which Gillie Angus toted respectfully in the rear; three eagle feathers were in his bonnet, and his tartan was fresh, unwrinkled and very bright.

"Your Highness is kind to stand with me."

"I'm delighted to have the opportunity. It is gratifying to be reassured that the MacIldowie line will persist, and

especial cause for rejoicing to know that the chief of this ancient clan is to have so lovely a bride. She is here?"

"She is in the next room, Highness."

"Summon her, and we'll go inside. It's an odd time for marrying, Glenallan," the Prince remarked.

"I am aware of that, sir."

"Of course you know that you'll be obliged to leave your wife immediately after the ceremony. I would be delighted were I able to give you leave to remain behind a few days, but you know that we can't spare a single soldier, much less so valuable an officer as yourself."

"Aye," said Malcolm.

LADY HELEN appeared, on Robert Forbes' arm. She wore simple brown and gold; and her hair was unpowdered. A fringed Spanish glove was on her right hand, but her left hand was bare to receive the ring. She was demure in manner, as befits a bride, keeping her gaze on the floor even while she curtsied.

The Prince raised her graciously.

"Maidens have gone to the marriage altar in greater state," said Charles Edward, "but I think one never went there with such sincere admiration of all who saw her. When my royal father and I are at St. James's Palace in London Town, I will command you to appear before us in this same gown you are wearing now."

Highlanders were thick about them. All cousins, no doubt. Glenallan, the Prince reflected, appeared to be related to almost every important family in the Highlands. Curious people. He wondered if he would ever be able to get their complicated genealogies straight in his mind. Meanwhile, it would be a good time for some repeatable compliment.

"I think," he said, rather louder than before, "that any woman in this world could well be pleased to enter such a distinguished family as that of MacIldowie, whose members have always been among my royal father's staunchest friends and most beloved subjects."

There was a mutter of approval at this. Yes, assuredly these men were all cousins of some sort.

"Shall we go inside, gentlemen? Time is pressing."

It was a Catholic chapel, but an Anglican minister had been persuaded to perform the ceremony. It was all highly irregular. Gerald Hornsby, who had indignantly refused even to attend, had sworn that it would be no legal marriage at all; and many of the gentlemen who attended were whispering that it was no marriage anyway, by Scottish law, until it had been consummated; and there was a very excellent chance, they pointed out to one another, that it never would be consummated. Sir Malcolm might never return from this trip.

But Helen had agreed to it. She wanted it. Malcolm would be her husband, even if she never saw him again. She tried not to think about it. Surrounded by strange, barbarically attired mountaineers who spoke a tongue unknown to her, attended, herself, only by her cousins, the Forbeses, and with poor frightened Mrs. Forbes the only other woman present, Helen dared not even lift her head until she found herself at the altar next to Malcolm. He did not touch her, and she did not glance at him; but just to feel his presence, just to know that he was close to her, was enough. She was calmer in her mind, more serene, untroubled, while the minister recited the service.

It was almost brutally brief. Afterward they marched out together, side by side, the ring burning on her finger, her glance again upon the stones of the floor. She was able to murmur the polite things while her hand was being kissed, and to smile and smile and smile. Malcolm stood beside her, very straight and serious. The men kissed her hand, said things, and backed away, for they were still in the presence of the Stuart. Soon Charles Edward himself embraced

her, tenderly, informally, and he too departed. There was much to be done outside; the army was ready to move and the pipes were playing. Men hurried away. And Sir Malcolm and Lady Glenallan were left alone in the bleak brown corridor.

He kissed her quietly, firmly, holding her very tight.

"I must go, too, Eilidh. Don't be afraid."

"You'll come back!" she cried. She clung to him. "You must come back! You mustn't get killed!"

"Sh-h-h. You must be quiet and have confidence, Eilidh. It's a war that will be over with soon. We'll be together and happy, or we'll be finished. But whatever it is, we'll know about it soon."

Somebody around a corner of the corridor coughed apologetically.

"Macdomhnull Dhu—" It was Lochallan.

"I'm coming," said Malcolm.

He kissed her again. He started to say something, but he was not able to say it. He held her very tight, staring into her eyes. Again he started to say something, and again his mouth closed firmly. He shook his head, smiled a swift, fleeting smile and kissed her once more. Then he released her and walked quickly around the corner and down the corridor, never looking back. Within half an hour he was out of the city, marching at the head of his clan—marching for the border.

CHAPTER XIII

RETREAT

THE Highland army had crossed the border, captured Carlysle, dodged General Wade's superior force, outdistanced the Duke of Cumberland and his enormous command, passed through Manchester, and arrived at Derby, less than seventy-five miles from London, on the fourth of December in the year of our Lord 1745.

It was an achievement before which the entire world gasped. European military experts originally refused to credit the reports of it. To Londoners, too, the thing did not at first seem possible; but when they realized that the rebels actually were so near them, they became panicky. The banks were mobbed; wealthy men and women were taking ship for the continent; the royal yacht had been put into readiness and the royal jewels and art treasures were packed aboard; men were hiding their valuables in their cellars, and women who subscribed to the general belief that the Wild Scots were cannibals who ate babies were frantically and in many cases successfully endeavoring to persuade their husbands to quit the city.

The Highland leaders themselves, however, knew nothing of this excitement in the capital. They knew only that enlistments had been trifling and desertions considerable; that another army was preparing to meet them at London, and that, even if this defensive force were defeated, and the city taken, the Duke of Cumberland with an army that was double the size of the Highland army, would be down upon them before they could see to the proper fortification of the place. They had expected—at least, Prince Charles had expected—that the Stuart warriors would be much more numerous when they reached Derby. Instead, they were fewer. They had met with no cooperation from the English Jacobites, who were afraid to lose their estates and their titles, if not their very lives.

In Derby the Glenallan was quartered with Lochallan and Walter MacPhail at Mr. Littlehorse's house. There Young Lochiel visited him.

"Ye heard of the council that's to be tonight, Callum?"

"Aye."

"Ye ken what it means?"

"Aye. It means that we have been brave long enough and now we're going to be cowards."

"Don't be a fool, Callum! The only

thing we can do is retreat. Have ye not heard that the German's men have taken Edinburgh again, and the Campbells and the Macleods and the Rosses have been raised by Duncan Forbes? Ye ken what they'll do to our own country, Callum? It's the hills we should be protecting! If the Englishmen want their lawful king, let *them* fight for him!"

Malcolm opened a bottle of brandy, drank deep, wiped his mouth, walked to a window. He was too angry to talk. In the street below Old Angus was playing a fiddle somebody had found for him, and Paul MacMichael was doing a jig, to the vast amusement of ten or twelve townspeople. Across the way was a blacksmith shop, and there were collected the rest of the Glenallans, together with several Camerons and a few Gordons; they were eager for the taking of London, and had gone to the blacksmith's shop to have their claymores sharpened; they were quarreling now about precedence, while the smith waited patiently, wonderingly, not daring to start with one weapon until it was determined whose weapon this should be.

Glenbucket's *comhsreang* contended that his inherited position as the gillie who held the rein of a Gordon's horse at dangerous passes entitled him, of course, to go before the helmet carrier of even a descendant of Donald the Black—a contention Great Davie of the Glenallans was in no wise prepared to grant.

"You'll vote for retreat?" Young Lochiel asked anxiously.

"I'll not vote at all," said Malcolm.

Donald, too, took a drink from the bottle and banged it down on the table again.

"It's a mean business, Callum. I ken that—we all ken it. But damn me, Callum, what else can be done? God be my witness, no man loves Prince Charlie more than I love him and no man is ready to risk more for his cause! But can ye deny it, Callum, that he's more intent upon getting London than upon treating us as we deserve to be treated? Can ye say that our giving up everything we own, sacrificing our lives and our clans for him, has made him the one bit more respectful of our own rightful powers and our own duties to our clansmen? Does he listen to me the way he listens to Kelly? Does he listen to Lord George the way he listens to that damned snob Sheridan? I tell ye, Callum, we've got to go back! There's nothing left for us to do!"

Malcolm turned away from the window and took another very long drink from the bottle. It quieted him inside, and when he spoke again his voice was not so harsh.

"You and I should not quarrel, Donald. And there's no need for it. I ken you're right and I'm wrong. I'm not so daftie as I seem. But I'll not vote at all in the council, Donald. Nobody will pay attention to me there, anyway."

IT WAS, as Lochiel had said, a mean business. Every chieftain knew that Prince Charles was concerned first with England and was using Scotland only as a stepping stone. He had landed in Lochaber penniless and practically alone, and had asked for their support. They had given him this; they had restored him to the throne of his ancestors. But he wanted more. He wanted England. Even if he got England, it would be the same story of history over again. King of England and of Scotland—rather King of England and of another little place nearby, a place where the people were poor and ignorant and troublesome and the climate undesirable, and where court would be intolerably dull.

Who wanted Scotland, except in an emergency? James the Sixth, the first man to be king of both nations, had felt that way; and so had each of his successors; and Charles and his father were not exceptions. Caledonia was to them a royal backyard. The great titles, the big grants, the glitter and pomp of court, would remain exclusively in London.

And the Jacobites who had been afraid to fight under his banner would flock around the young Prince when he was restored to St. James's, and tell him tall stories about how faithful they had been, and give him money and promises, and get titles and power from him; while in the Highlands the starving warriors would be oppressed by laws designed to "civilize" them.

No, Malcolm was not as daftie as he seemed. He knew, after his third or fourth audience with Charles Edward, what would happen if the Stuart line were restored. And he knew, now in Derby, that the real fighting was yet to come. German George had brought only a small portion of his army into the field; and in addition to his own men, he was importing Dutch and Hessian mercenaries now. Pitted against several small Highland clans would be the veterans of Fontenoy and Pettigen, men who had been soldiering all their lives and did not know any other trade. Pitted against the ingenuity and gallantry of Lord George Murray and the Macdonald of Keppoch, would be the skill of General Wade, the savage strength of General Hawley, and the furious, pounding brutality of that dog faced young Duke of Cumberland. The claymore was a beautiful weapon with a beautiful history, and for hand-to-hand fighting no man could ask for anything better. But muskets and cannon did not permit such fighting. It was an age of gunpowder, and the chivalrous combats of the old days could not survive.

The whole business made Malcolm sick. To march upon London or to retreat—it made little difference . . .

At the council that night the Prince was petitioned to return to Scotland. Lord George Murray undertook the thankless task.

"His Royal Highness knows that while we have blood in our veins we will battle for the cause that is his. But there are four armies against one army. There are enemy clansmen about to invade our own countries and ravage them. All the bravery, all the gallantry, all the skill in the world, your Highness knows, can not prevail against this weight in numbers. We have been disappointed. Let's admit it. We have expected reenforcements from France, and they have not come. We have expected enlistments among the faithful in this country, and the faithful have hidden themselves at our approach or denied that they ever were pledged to our cause. Why, even Lancaster, where we had thought to see the men clamor for the privilege of enlistment, has given us barely one hundred soldiers, and they unarmed and without experience!

"We must retreat. In Scotland there is yet some hope. In England, only extermination awaits us. We are gentlemen—his Highness must remember that—and we fight not for pay, like common soldiers, but for honor and glory. We have no wish to be pounded to pieces in an alien country where the women will spit upon our corpses and the merchants will gloat over our graves. If die we must, we will die in Scotland!"

The Stuart, as everybody had anticipated, was furious. He sprang to his feet, and the palms of his hands slapped with an angry sound against the chair arms. His head was thrown back. His blue eyes flashed.

"*We will never retreat!* I told you that I had come for a crown or a coffin. Did you think that I was boasting?"

There was a heavy silence. Lord George Murray still was on his feet, but there was nothing he could say in answer to this. There was nothing anybody could say.

And the Prince continued, harshly at first, with bitterness and sarcasm; and then the old charm began to reappear, the charm that had caused so many hard headed chieftains to make fools of themselves. His voice softened, his eyes too. He coaxed them, spreading his hands pathetically and appealing to their love of danger and their high sense of duty. He reminded them of the ancient glories of their respective fami-

lies—of the magnificent bravery of the Macdonalds, the quiet courage of the Gordons, the steadfast loyalty the Camerons had always displayed, the spirit of the men from Athole. He reminded them of Bannockburn and Flodden Field, of the Great Marquis who had led their ancestors at Kilsyth, of Bonnie Dundee, who was called *Ian Dhu nan Cath*, "Black John of the Battles", of Calum More . . .

HE STEPPED down from his dais and walked among them, tears in his big blue eyes, tears on his smooth round cheeks. He appealed to each of the greatest chiefs individually, in some cases even putting his hands on their shoulders and reminding them of the friendship and love they had always professed to have for him.

"Do not think of me as a prince of the blood royal! Act as you would act if a simple gentleman, a cousin, Charles Edward Stuart, came to you and asked you for help . . ."

It was difficult; but they listened in silence. They had prepared their emotions against such disturbances. They had steeled their souls beyond touching.

And the Prince, in time, resorted to mere argument.

"It would be folly to turn back, anyway. What of Cumberland, and what of Wade? We escaped them once. But they've learned our tricks. Can we expect to escape them again? You, my Lord Murray, have had the temerity to suggest that my cause already is lost and my arms already defeated. Well, if you believe that, can you not wish to die in the charge rather than be cut down ignominiously from behind while you're flying away from conflict?"

Lord George Murray shook his head sadly.

"I will command the rear myself," he said.

The Prince gave up in despair. The Stuart blood, high charged with arrogance, showed now at its worst. His Highness's eyes were ungraciously a-frown, and a sneer defaced the royal lips.

"It would seem that I must accept the dictation of my father's subjects. I am called a Prince, but I am made a servant. Well, I will order the retreat—since a refusal would find me deserted by men who want to run home."

He turned his back upon them deliberately and walked toward the door. And there, as they had expected, he turned for a final word.

"The council is dismissed. This is the last council that I shall summon. I had wanted you for advice and assistance, but I find you giving me insult instead. Hereafter, I command alone."

He quit the room, unattended, slamming the door after him.

Malcolm and Donald walked together as far as Mr. Littlehorse's house and parted in silence. Gillie Angus, still holding the musket, followed Malcolm to his bedroom; Angus was ordinarily a model valet, but this night the thrill of a march to the great city had loosened his tongue and bent the formality he was wont to observe.

"Ye were talkin' aboot Lunnon City, Macdomhnull Dhu?"

"Aye."

"Did the council decide which clan would be Bonnie Charlie's guard when we go in?"

There was still some whisky in the bottle on the table. Malcolm drank it down—and suddenly turned upon his servant, throwing the bottle to the floor.

"Is it a general you've been made that you must know all this!" He grabbed the musket from Angus' hands and hurled it upon the bed. "I'll not be needing you to undress. Get out!"

Gillie Angus, astounded, but wisely prompt in obedience, backed out of the room. His face, as the door closed upon it, carried an expression at once puzzled and sorrowful—the expression of a dog that has been whipped for something it does not understand.

Malcolm was instantly sorry. He went

to the window and gazed out at the blacksmith's shop. It was early evening. The smithy's grindstone was whirling, and there was a conical projection of sparks where it sped past the edge of a claymore. Ever since the entry into Derby, the clansmen had been gathered at this shop, and now that the question of precedence had at last been settled, the broadswords, in their proper order, were being sharpened as rapidly as the smithy could sharpen them. It was well that the clansmen should be prepared to enter London . . . Possibly they might find some resistance? The very idea made them laugh.

There were four of them around the grindstone still. One was Old Angus, piper for the Glenallan. His voice, high pitched and broken by excitement, reached Malcolm at the window.

"Aye, Macdomhnull Dhu was only the second mon ta get in Edinbro'. Aye. That was because he slipped on a roun' stone, ye ken. But he will be the *first* mon ta get in Lunnon! There's no' can beat that laddie . . ."

CHAPTER XIV

FITZSTEPHEN AND MALCOLM MEET AGAIN

CAPTAIN FITZSTEPHEN of the Dragoons had twice informed General Hawley that the Highland insurgents were advancing, and by way of reply had twice been instructed to go to the devil.

It was not possible that the rebels would have the audacity to attack a force so superior. They had their own hills at their backs; they knew when they were defeated. The Young Pretender was undoubtedly a fool, but General Hawley had never heard that he was a halfwit. Of course he would retreat. Meanwhile, there was plenty of time for the pursuit.

The army was well established right where it was; the men were prepared; there was a storm blowing up, and to continue the advance now would be foolish. Besides, the wine at Callander House was the best wine the general had tasted for many a day; and Countess Kilmarnock, for all the sad mistakes of her husband, was one of the most charming hostesses that ever lived; and so, in short, would Captain Fitzstephen please get out, sir, and not be so silly?

Thus General Hawley. But Fitzstephen thought differently on the matter and he lingered in Callander House.

Captain Fitzstephen was not at all happy. He had only recently learned of the marriage of Lady Helen Hornsby to the Laird of Glenallan. It was astounding and it was final. For a second time this young barbarian had come between the captain and his money, and that was a sin the captain could not forgive. To be sure, Glenallan would soon be killed—either in battle, or, when the rebellion had been stamped out, on the scaffold—and Lady Helen, widowed, would undoubtedly become reconciled with her outraged family. But she would make a martyr of the man. Fitzstephen knew that there would be no remarriage. Helen was that kind of woman—romantic, impractical, faithful to foolish ideals.

Fitzstephen was not romantic, and neither was he impractical. The news of the marriage infuriated him, but he wasted no time grinding his teeth or beating his breast. There was nothing lucrative about despair. He was busy with another thought now—a wild hope. He was, he knew, as well mounted as any man in the service of the king; and when the final fight came—and that would be soon—there might be a chance for him to break through the Scottish lines and reach the person of the Pretender. The man who captured the Pretender, or who killed him, would be the hero of his generation. More, he would be the recipient of a reward of thirty thousand pounds. Fitzstephen could use the glory, but the money was the true stimulus.

It was, to be sure, a wild hope. But it was the only hope of wealth he had

at the moment.

Because of this, he was impatient with Hawley. If the rebels were really advancing, as reported, then obviously it was time to march upon them and crush them. The victory would be cleaner, more complete than a victory in the hills. Moreover, Fitzstephen was troubled about this "breakfast" that the countess was giving the general. It was near noon already, yet neither had moved from the table. Fitzstephen peered again into the dining room.

It was a handsome room. The Kilmarnock fortune, if rumors were true, had been diminishing rapidly of late years, and milord had enlisted under the Pretender's banner in a desperate attempt to renew the lost grandeur of his family. But the dining room at Callander House retained plenty of that grandeur. It was a square chamber, and very big, paneled to the ceiling in walnut that was almost black from age; and there were small pilasters, with Corinthian capitals pricked out in gold, at the top of the paneling.

In the center was an enormous table at which the hostess and the general sat. They were a curious pair. Countess Kilmarnock was tall and handsome, voluptuously built, and very beautifully dressed in red silk and gold thread lace. She was all the woman, with softly curved neck and shoulders, round arms, small hands, a gentle, soothing voice, and bright blue eyes. General Hawley was all the man—a blustering, bellowing soldier, broad shouldered and deep chested, with a big, sneering mouth and a high and haughty nose; his neck was thick and his face was as red as the wine he drank.

"I tell you, ma'am, your husband was a rank loon to be taken by that young idiot. We're going to smash them to bits, ma'am! Why, before I left Edinburgh, do you know what I did?" The countess admitted that she did not know what he had done, and expressed great eagerness to learn. Hawley unslipped the last button of his waistcoat, stretched his legs full length under the table and grinned. "I had six gallows erected," he told her. "Six of them, ma'am! Lord, what a business they will do when I bring the rebels back! They are doing good now, too. It's good to impress upon the people that they're dealing with a man now and not with a figgety fop like Cope."

He drained his glass, and a flunky behind him, suspiciously prompt, refilled it.

The Countess Kilmarnock said: "Yes, surely they have a real man to deal with now. That must be why they are retreating."

FITZSTEPHEN, peering in, marveled at her manner. No woman so accomplished and so lovely could esteem Hawley an attractive figure—though this, apparently, was the general's own explanation of the hospitality. Perhaps the countess, being a sensible woman, knew that the Young Pretender could not possibly be successful, and was already laying plans against the time when her husband would be sentenced to hang. Or, again, it might be that the countess, aware of the insurgents' plans, was deliberately trying to keep General Hawley from his camp, two miles away, in order to permit the Highlanders to gain the advantage of position and attack by surprise. Certainly, if it had not been for the lady's flattery, Hawley would have returned to camp at the first alarm, even though he did not credit these reports that the rebels were advancing.

"They chased Cope away," Hawley explained, "and they got past Wade, and they even got past Cumberland. Oh, they can march! No question of that. But there's an end to this island, ma'am, and I'm going to shove them off."

He drank another glass of wine. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. He belched thoughtfully.

It was at this moment that a sergeant attached to his own company approached Captain Fitzstephen. The sergeant had been riding hard; his uniform

was wet and his boots were spattered with mud.

"The rebels have been seen crossing the Carron at Dunnipace Steps. Colonel Ligonier told me to see that this news reached General Hawley personally, sir. He said it meant they were going to try to take the top of the moor."

Fitzstephen strode without hesitation into the dining room.

"Madam—sir—I hope you will forgive a third interruption—"

"Damn me! What is it this time?"

"Colonel Ligonier, sir, sends word that the rebels have crossed the Carron and are trying to take the top of the moor."

General Hawley shook his head as though to clear it from the confusing effects of the wine, and brushed his hand across his eyes with the irritable gesture of one who has walked into a cobweb. He had examined the ground in the vicinity of his camp and he knew what it meant if the Pretender captured the top of the moor.

"My horse, sir!"

He rushed from the room, scarcely a leap behind Captain Fitzstephen, and without addressing another word to the woman whose charms had kept him so long from his camp.

With the sergeant and the captain and a few personal attendants, he galloped for the camp. They rode furiously, sending the mud high into the air with great splashes.

They found the camp in a turmoil. The colonels were grouped in anxious conference at their headquarters tent, afraid to move without the command of the general. Hawley stamped in among them, hatless, wigless, his coat unbuttoned, his boots and breeches spattered with mud.

"Ligonier, Hamilton—where the devil is Hamilton?—Cobham, make all possible speed through that park and to the top of the moor. You first, sir, and you second, and you third. Go *now,* you blockheads! You'll have further orders before you get there."

Even his own aides had never seen him so boisterous, yet so clearheaded. He roared commands steadily, tolerating no interruption and no answer.

"Wolfe, are you ready? Good, sir! March your men immediately after the Dragoons. Barrel, then Monro, then Scott . . ."

Scarcely twenty minutes after his arrival an entire army had been set in motion, three regiments of Dragoons galloping ahead, the foot regiments following, and the artillery bringing up in the rear. They splashed through Bantaskine Park and hurried up Maggie Wood's Lane.

There was a strong southwest wind blowing rain directly into their faces, and it was very dark. Hawley, with water streaming down his face and the gay froggery of his coat in ludicrous disarray, charged back and forth at the head of his aides, never ceasing to bellow. His face was almost black with rage. The veins of his neck, bluish green, stood out like fluting on a breastplate.

Captain Fitzstephen was in the very van, riding like a madman. Certainly the Dragoons would make the first charge. It would be his opportunity and he meant to seize it.

The top of Falkirk Moor was irregular and rocky, and a deep ravine cut down from the place where Fitzstephen first sighted the rebels.

They were amazingly close. They had, in fact, actually reached the top of the moor.

"They must have wings," Fitzstephen muttered.

But they had been running hard; their ranks were not properly assembled; a cavalry charge, made with spirit, would throw them into utter rout. Fitzstephen probably would have anticipated the command had it not reached him almost at the very instant that the tartaned warriors burst upon his view. He had already drawn his saber, which now he waved over his head, turning in his saddle.

"With me, brave fellows! Not one of them gets away!"

THE Highlanders assembled quickly, the men from the rear scurrying forward to fill the gaps in the ranks, while those who had outstripped the others stepped hastily back. Their muskets and pistols were leveled at the onrushing dragoons. They waited. That was the odd part of it; they waited. By all the rules of warfare they should have turned and run. Were they not being charged by cavalry?

But they waited, motionless. And when the Dragoons were less than half a pistol shot away, and not until then, the Highlanders fired.

The Dragoons broke instantly. The single volley did it. Most of the horses, green animals, reared and stamped beyond control, or turned tail and dashed back among the foot soldiers.

Fitzstephen's steed was better trained, and Fitzstephen's own spirit was sounder. He tried desperately to rally his men, but they did not appear at all reluctant to follow the lead of their mounts away from the Highland army, and the captain, after a few minutes of vain shouting and saber waving, during which time a second volley was fired, himself continued the charge. It was not possible, he reasoned, that the other companies had acted as disgracefully as his own. Because of the darkness and the rain and smoke, he had only been able to see those immediately about him.

So Fitzstephen charged alone, one man against an army.

A Wild Scot stepped into his path, flourishing a broadsword—and leaped out of the way barely in time to save himself from being trampled. Another tried to drag the captain from his saddle—and received a saber cut that laid his head open. A third, a short, empty faced fellow, caught Fitzstephen's coat with the hook end of a Lochaber ax and yanked the captain to the ground. Before Fitzstephen had a chance to move, the Scot dropped his ax and leaped upon him. And Fitzstephen, with a poniard at his throat, did not stir.

"Why don't you kill me?" he suggested coldly.

Apparently the Highlander did not understand English. He shook his head, his face assuming an expression of even more than ordinary bewilderment. His knee still pressing the captain's chest, he recovered the captain's pistol with his left hand and then he rose to his feet.

There seemed to be little fighting around them. Most of the Scots had moved forward, and they were firing their pieces occasionally. Some of them had drawn their broadswords and swung their targets into position, but they did not move. The truth was, it did not seem possible to them that men could be so cowardly as the Dragoons had appeared to be, and they had paused, suspecting a ruse.

The blank-faced Highlander conducted Fitzstephen to the front rank, covering him carefully with the pistol all the while. There he muttered a few words to a dark, excited young man, evidently a gentleman, who had been using all his power to prevent the men around him from dashing into what he feared was a trap. The young man nodded, and presently addressed Fitzstephen.

"You are a prisoner, sir."

"So it seems. May I ask *whose?*"

"The prisoner of my chief, sir."

"And he is?"

The young man considered this for a moment, thoughtfully, and then nodded as though to indicate that he deemed the question a fair one. He turned away, and engaged in whispered conversation with another, somewhat taller young man. And soon this second young man turned to face Captain Fitzstephen.

"You are the prisoner, sir, of Sir Malcolm MacIldowie Macdomhnull Dhu, the Laird of Glenallan and chief of the clan of that ilk."

"Hello!" said Fitzstephen. "My old gambling friend!"

TO BE CONTINUED

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

TWO representative letters from a whole batch received, commenting on William Wells' recent article "The Myth of the American Panther". The first comes from our old friend, Tonto, and offers some further enlightenment on the subject of Western predatory cat-animals:

Los Angeles, California

Difference of opinion makes horse races. "Pro and con" prevails on all subjects—and in answer to Mr. Wells, in the September 15th issue, I am the "pro" that lions do scream and that there is an American panther.

There are mountain lions and mountain lions. There are alligators in Florida and alligators in the swamps of tropical Central America, but quite a difference, in size and disposition.

El gato grande, or big cat, called by the name of *el lion,* was in one specimen described by my compadre, an ex-grizzly-hunter and a youthful friend of the Joaquin Murietta of long ago, as *"el lion grande de Canyon Diablo a la mismo coyote amigo de diablo."* I may spell it wrong, but he called that lion names; for the lion would not tree and, if pressed, got a dog with a slash; and would come around camp and leave tracks the next day. By the above, my Spanish friend meant that this particular California mountain lion was "the big lion of Devil's Canyon, who is the same as a crafty friend of the devil."

THE circus label says, "California Mountain Lion"; and again, "Puma". Puma, mountain lion or cougar of the north are the same. The panther is another animal, which exists in both Mexico and Arizona and, I presume, New Mexico.

Felis concolor is the cougar, or cougouar, or *cuguacuara* of South America. It is also called the *Puma concolor* in species; and in locale, mountain lion, California mountain lion, cougar, catamount, painter, puma. And the home range is from Texas to Patagonia, including also the United States. It screams in mating season only. The panther, or panthera, or pundarika, a variety of leopard, is a *Felis pardus,* and of a species whose

cousins are the catamount, the jaguar and the puma. The panther range is from Texas to Patagonia and thence to other lands, and not in the north U. S. A.

THE above erudition is from books open to all, and to Mr. Wells. I have gone into a cave after a lion on the Chevalon, even as Mr. Wells, but I had a cocked rifle and a good flashlight and, what was of far more assurance, a personal conviction that there was a way out and that Mr. Lion had left there before I came. Before and after, I was berated for a triple condemned fool by a none too gentle or inexperienced companion of that hunt, but I was gambling, my life on my judgment, and wanting to irritate the estimable Mr. Lew Chalrebois, so well known in that Arizona country for his nerve, who was with me at the time.

Let's go back to 1892, where in the vicinity of Milton or six miles west to be exact, in northern Arizona winter, a cowboy called Nosey was riding the trail under the pines, and a cougar dropped for him. Nosey was bundled up with thick coats and a scarf and was an artist with the six-gun; so he got the cougar.

IN 1901 near Bollybock Mountain south of Klamath, Oregon, Harry Trader and one other struck a salt lick and scared off some deer, when they saw coming towards them a big lion. He was coming fast, and mad at losing the deer he was after. That lion charged unprovoked a hundred and fifty yards and luckily both men stood and shot their best. He dropped on his last bound two feet from Harry's feet, riddled with 27 hits from high powered rifles.

Going down the Coast south of Maricopa in the hills, let us reason why a mountain lion charged one of three men spread out looking to jump a wounded buck, in the year 1922, 80 miles by air from the vamps of Hollywood and 20 miles from the Montecito colony of Santa Barbara millionaires. Old Jim had a hunch that something was following him and, hearing a noise behind, turned, shot and dodged as a lion jumped for him. The lion left, and we agreed it was because she had kittens nearby and was disturbed.

LET us figure why that cougar jumped in the corral with the Señor Jatta, near Arroye Grande Creek in 1910, while he was branding a calf. As Jatta moved, he swung a lucky stroke with the heavy branding iron and brained the cougar.

Again on the Cibecue, in the Apache reservation in 1914, a lion entered the camp and killed a dog. He put the fear into that bunch of Apaches, but only retired to eat the dog; and with the gathering of a multitude of curs and the shouting, he sprang up into the tree to look things over. He was shot, and his hide beat the eight foot four measurements unstretched. He was old and thin, for our measure called it a trifle under nine feet, of which over three feet was tail. He was large but no unusual giant for those parts. The weight of a lion within a hundred pounds depends on condition. Some are "keen built" and rangy, and others thicker, and they vary just like people in proportions.

IN all animals there are exceptions, and to follow a rule shows one has not ranged far and wide. Those lions Mr. Wells slew with rock and knife were from Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and northern Utah, where it was possibly too cold for them to heat up to form, and they kind of dogied maybe from packing so much grub to keep warm.

I have listened in many places to that penetrating scream of the cougar, with its wail and note of angry exasperation, and any cowpuncher or Apache from that country can tell you about what a sweet sound it is in a dead still night in the Spring.

TWO years ago I had a fine meat supply in out-of-season venison. The lion was a good picker, for that buck was fat and had not yet begun to run or get the musky flavor. Mr. Cougar had jumped the gentleman buck from a brush rise and ate most of his tummy and left most of the hind quarters. He also left the stink and smell of a circus cage where he had rolled and spewed from his gorge. The meat was fresh killed and tasted fine. I could not find the lion, although I knew he was on some rock ledge watching me rob him of his meat.

Just one thing: This puma can whip the jaguar or *el tigre,* the spotted dread of the jungle of tropical America, any time and any place, in a fair fight or unfair, as it may come. Although twice his size and able to jump a corral with a young steer, the jaguar knows the mountain lion or cougar is death for him. Ask any circus man who handles cats, if you doubt it. I have seen men kill trapped lions with a club, and in a trap they fear the lynx more than the lion. But when a man gets killed, "It's always the first time".

I KNOW of plenty of lion country left, up in Idaho, on the rim under the Mogollons, up towards Kernville in California, and the old *coyote diablo* still hangs forth in his habitat, and was seen again last year, in Santa Barbara County, California. Then there are many lions in that strip of Arizona north of the Grand Canyon, where they are fed up and lazy, and take to juniper trees or pines, too full of deer meat to more than growl if a man climbs up the same or a neighbor tree to noose them, as has been done.

The lion gorged after a feast can't run far and doesn't want to fight. All he wants is to be left alone, for he is heavy, torpid, loggy and slow moving with half a buck inside him; that is probably sixty pounds or more of meat inside an average two hundred pounds or less of lion.

THE howl of the lobo on an icy ridge on a cold winter night raises the hackles of man, just as the impudent little bark of a fox carries its note of assurance that nothing very bad is around. The monotonous note of the hoot owl gets on the nerves sometimes, as does the boom of the Apache tomtom, or buckskin-on-a-hoop.

The scream of the cougar raises your hair and also the hackles, not to speak of the scruff. A lion a week just about breaks the professional hunter even, and it might take him two or three years to kill a number equal to Mr. Well's hundred dead lions, but there are men who have been at it for thirty years, and still doing well.

One does not want to be too sure of anything, or too positive when dealing with the wilder animals; and courage with the cougar as with man is a matter of stomach, disposition, and individual. Like the famous Kit Carson, I believe in caution.

—L. A. SPELLMAYER (TONTO)

Another letter. This one cites the experience of another authority who never heard the puma scream, though the writer himself affirms the opposite:

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Over fifty years ago my grandfather used to entrance me with a yarn of how in his own boyhood days a "painter" trailed him for miles one night on a lonely woods road, letting forth at intervals on a blood-curdling screen. And twenty years later I heard the same scream—the long, drawn-out scream as of a woman in agony.

In 1897 I was living and working as engineer of a large mining company in the State of Zacatecas, Mexico, fifty miles from railroad, with headquarters at the old town of Concepcion, Del Oro. One day in the fall we had been over in a wild remote mountainous section and were riding home late in the afternoon along one side of a deep, wooded valley when the silence was pierced by a long drawn-out scream from the opposite slope about four hundred yards away. We all started, even the animals we were riding, and one of the natives, exclaimed, "*Leon montes!*" and immediately after, "*Mira lo!*", pointing across and about on our own level; and there just emerged into the lower side of a small clearing was a mountain lion, or puma, walking rapidly upward with two cubs as large as bull terriers trotting at her flanks.

She paid no attention to us, although she doubtless heard us in the still, clear air of that altitude (7000 ft.), and they disappeared into the brush so quickly that there was no time to pull our rifles and shoot. We hurried on up the trail to try to intercept her at the saddle or pass where the ridges joined, but when we got there the manzanita growth was so heavy that we could not penetrate it; and we neither saw nor heard anything further. And I have never seen another puma wild, although I've spent weeks in their country in California, and seen their green hides.

Prof. Howard Eckfeldt, head of the Mining Engineering Department of Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pa., was the other white man of the party, and would possibly remember the occasion. The scream and the scene are still as clear in my memory as though the happening had been yesterday.

In talking to Dr. Keller (in Africa with Roosevelt) of the local zoo today about it, he said that his pumas never utter a sound except a low snarling cough, and that in all his time in the West he had never seen or heard a puma except when hunting with dogs, and then their only utterance was a spitting snarl. He suggested that the scream might have been uttered by the puma's kill; but I asked whether the puma would have emerged in the clearing only a few seconds after the scream *without his kill,* especially when she had two quarter-grown cubs to feed. And further, what animal she might have killed in that manzanita scrub would have uttered such a scream? I am fully convinced that the puma does scream on occasions.

—J. S. MILLER

ONE of you asked information about bait and tackle for taking pompano from the surf. Here it is, from one of the comrades round the 'Fire:

Bagdad, Florida

The writer has had a cottage on Santa Rosa Sound, which is east of Pensacola Bay, for about eight years, and during that time has been familiar with pompano fishing with hook and line from the Gulf side of Santa Rosa Island.

We use a white line and about No. 4 hook and sand fleas for bait. These sand fleas bury themselves in the beach, but there is a certain movement of them back into the water with receding waves that wash up the beach. The pompano come up close through those deeper swash channels where they lead toward the beach, so there are some places that are more favorable than others for the catching of this king of edible fishes. Fresh pompano broiled over charcoal in its own juices only is a gastronomic delight that can not be conceived of except by experience.

—FRED SNODDY

SOME further information on rough diamonds:

Washington, D. C.

Permit me to contribute a few words to the discussion on rough diamonds that has been going on in Camp-fire for some time. There are so many popular misconceptions about this precious stone that it is thought that some information

about it might be of interest. Have been a mineralogist and petrologist for many years, have visited the diamond field at Murfreesboro, Arkansas, and have been up in the Paraguassu diamond region of Bahia, Brazil, several times, on the hunt for "black diamonds" (carbonadoes) used in drills.

Mr. Blair and (I think) one or two other correspondents are quite correct in stating that a rough diamond is without any sparkle or "fire," but that it looks like oily or greasy glass (having what is technically called "adamantine luster"), and that the brilliancy is brought out only by proper cutting and polishing. The great brilliancy is due to the very high refractive power or index (property of bending the light rays), which causes light passing into the stone to be refracted out again if the cutting is well done, but without glow or any emission of rays such as those in the ads of cheap diamond rings. It is a popular but wholly erroneous notion that diamonds glow or emit "fire."

Another popular but equally erroneous notion about diamonds is that it is difficult to break them with a hammer, a belief that has caused the destruction of many a fine stone, as when cities were looted in the old days. Diamonds are very hard, so that they can *scratch* any other substance, but they are not tough, but rather brittle, apart from their cleavage.

Diamonds, by the way, differ much in hardness, those of Australia and most of those of Brazil being especially hard. Also, a diamond is not the most valuable of precious stones: A large well-colored ruby or a large and almost flawless emerald is worth more than a diamond of the same size.

As to the luster and the possibility of diamonds being "cast aside (by the inexpert) as worthless," it may be of interest to relate the little known story of the discovery of diamonds at Murfreesboro in August, 1906, a locality that I visited as a consulting expert soon afterward. They were first found by a long, lean, typical "cracker," who was so ignorant and illiterate that he could not read or write, or even sign his name He was searching for copper minerals in the greenish earth, which much resembled the "blue ground" of Kimberley, and was struck by the appearance of a crystal different from the many quartz crystals scattered over the surface. Later in the day, going into town mounted on a mule, he spied another such crystal lying in a rut in the tall grass alongside the road. He pointed out the place to me later. This discovery shows that a rough diamond is easily distinguishable, by its luster, from a quartz crystal, even by an inexpert and ignorant person. , The deposit is now being worked and has produced several hundred diamond crystals. It is the only locality in the United States where diamonds are found in place in their native rock, which greatly resembles that in which the South African diamonds occur.

—HENRY S. WASHINGTON

THE sperm whale as a scrapper. Is he ever found in northern waters?

New York, N. Y.

In re the letter from H. I. Englehart in the Oct. 15th issue wherein a sperm whale is defeated by a swordfish and a thrasher shark, I can not help feeling that the whale *must* have been of some other variety than a sperm.

Bullen, in his "Cruise of the Cacholot," says there is nothing in the sea that a sperm whale fears or has need to fear. He also tells of a sperm that defeated a swordfish and two orcas, incidentally eating the swordfish.

I believe the "right" or Arctic whale, on the other hand, has been known to succumb to such attacks and have its tongue eaten. In addition, I did not know that the sperm whale frequented the Arctic Sea, though I may be wrong on this, and I admit I draw all the above from reading only.

—HENRY H. WOOD

OUR Camp-fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The spirit of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

If you are come to our Camp-fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Robinson Crusoe

DANIEL DEFOE placed his immortal hero on an Atlantic island —probably Tobago—although the original castaway was Alexander Selkirk on Juan Fernandez in the Pacific There could have been no *Man Friday* on Fernandez. And who, in spite of accuracy, would prefer a Crusoe with goats alone?

Request:—"Why is the Chilean Island, Juan Fernandez, always spoken of as 'Crusoe's Island'?

I was reminded of this from having lately read an article in an issue of a New York paper's magazine section, which says that in October there will be all kinds of doings to commemorate the book, (I suppose) at the Pan-American building in Washington.

I have just again—within a year—read Robinson Crusoe, and made a few notes from his own journal.

I certainly would be grateful to get some dope on this, and know just how and why Juan Fernandez was picked. I know, of course, that Alexander Selkirk was supposed to have been marooned on it, but if Defoe wrote the book from that incident, why did he pick an island thousands of miles from where the book shows the scene was laid?

The article I referred to in the paper went on to say that tourists were carrying off innumerable articles as souvenirs from the island, and that Chile was taking steps to prevent such sabotage.

(Notes in Re Crusoe's Isle)

After escaping from Sallee, met a Portuguese (?) ship near Cape Verde and was taken aboard.

Arrived in All Saint's bay, Brazil, after 22 days.

Started a plantation in Brazil. Nearly four years there. Started on a voyage Sept. 1st, 1659, to Africa; stood away Northward intending to stretch over to that coast when coming into about 10 or 12 degrees N. Lat. until Cape St. Augustino, from whence . . . steered for Fernando De Noronha, course, N.E. x N. Passed the line in about 12 days' time. Last observation, 7 D. 22 M., N. Lat. before hurricane struck from S.E., shifted N.W., then N.E. Scudding for 12 days.

But next observation was 11 D. N. Lat., 22 D. W. Lon. (Farther West) from Cape St. Augustino. Thought they were near the coast of Guiana, beyond the Amazon, near the Orinoco.

Thought to stand for *Barbadoes* for repairs.

Second hurricane struck Lat. 12 D. 18 Ms. N. (Several days seem to have elapsed before the wreck.)

Sees land at a great distance, possibly 15 or 20 *leagues* bearing W. to W.S.W.

Liberates the Spanish captive. Found his ship when wrecked, (the Spaniard's) was from the Rio De La Plata bound for Havana.

This just a rough summary. R. repeatedly speaks of the great heat during the dry season drying grapes in the sun, turtles on the beach, etc. A look at an atlas would seem to show that R. C. was wrecked near Trinidad on an imaginary island. Of course I'm aware that the story is a piece of fiction, but none the less, dear to the hearts of all boys and men, too, of my taste. I know those waters tolerably well, myself, by the way.

But, as I asked, why the heck is Juan Fernandez *always* spoken of as the location of Defoe's great story? It is so evident that R. C. did not ever see the Pacific."

—T. C. MORRIS, Bridgeport, Connecticut

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—Your contentions are correct, as a perusal of "Cruising Voyage Around the World" (1712) Woodes Rogers; "Voyage in the South Seas and Around the World", (1712) Edw. Cook; "Providence Displayed or a Surprising Account of one Alexander Selkirk Written by his own hand"; also an account written by Steele after he made Selkirk's (more correctly Selcraig's) acquaintance and which appeared in 1713.

In 1718 the second edition of Rogers' book appeared and it was not until 1719 until Foe (de or D) published *Robinson Crusoe* after he had met Selkirk (Selcraig) at the house of one Mrs. Demaris at Bristol and after the castaway had turned over certain notes to him (according to the later statement of Mrs. Demaris). This was possibly to help still a rumor that Lord Oxford (in the Tower of London) had written the book in collusion with Defoe. Defoe was such an amazing sort of fellow that he might have been the actual author of Selkirk's account "written by his own hand" and he might have had some other meetings with the sailor before he was known to have met him at Mrs. Demaris' home. There is undoubtedly a great deal of fiction in Selkirk's book and there is no doubt some truth in Defoe's fiction.

There is little doubt that Mas Afuera (Juan Fernandez) was the Island upon which Selkirk lived alone for four years and four months. It was in 1703 that he joined Dampier's expedition to the South Seas as sailing master of the *Cinque Ports* galley and after an argument with Capt. Straddler was put ashore. At the present time there is a brass plate at the foot of Selkirk's "lookout" on Mas Afuera giving the main facts.

Mas Afuera is certainly not a tropical island. On my last visit there the penal colony was being removed and I do not know whether it was started again or not. At that time there was only one of the original camphorwood trees (or more correctly part of a stump) which had not been carried away by relic hunters. Some goats which were running wild about the island were said to be descendants of those Selkirk was supposed to have subsisted on.

In the West Indies there is an island, Tobago, which was pointed out to me as Robinson Crusoe's island. The climate of this island would be more in keeping with Defoe's fiction.

Anyway—you can't prove much by me. A lie or fable will always outlast the truth in spite of Shakespeare's "truth crushed to earth will rise again, while wounded error writhes in vain" as is evidenced by George Washington and the cherry tree, and a good ninety-five per cent of present humanity's beliefs. Robinson Crusoe and Juan Fernandez Island is just another one of "those things".

Boxing Tournament

SPRINKLE the heavyweight bouts through the program. Don't let the show drag past midnight.

Request:—"I am chairman of a committee putting on an amateur boxing tournament for the American Legion and as this is the first we have put on, we would like a few remarks from you regarding the rules and regulations and other things that will come up. Also any suggestions you can give us."

—JACK JONES, Charlotte, North Carolina

Reply, by Capt. Jean V. Grombach:—I suggest you write Mr. B. Levine, Secretary Boxing Comm., Amateur Athletic Union, 233 Broadway, New York City.

Ask him to send you the latest rules and procedure on amateur boxing. As you no doubt know, all amateur boxing is three rounds and the rules vary slightly from the professional rules.

I recommend that you put some heavyweight bouts on near the beginning, as the crowd sometimes gets tired waiting for the big fellows, so that it is usually a good idea to sprinkle these bouts through the program. Also suggest you take necessary measures to prevent the tournament from lasting too long. I do not consider any entertainment a success that lasts say from 8 P.M. to 2 A.M. the next morning. I also recommend care in the choice of referee and announcer.

Tin Can Tourists

HOUSE-CAR travelers, who migrate South for the Winter.

Request:—"What is the association formed by Florida campers called? I am quite a fan of motor camping."

—C. J. VAN HOUSEN, Painted Post, New York

Reply, by Major Charles G. Percival, M.D:—You must mean the Tin Can Tourists of America, that fifteen-year-old due-less association which meets in Florida every Winter and somewhere every Autumn. Ask the next old-timer with a beard, traveling in a home-made "house-car". He'll tell you all about it.

Jade

LIKE all other stones it is extremely valuable only when of fine quality.

Request:—"For some time I have been trying to find verification of a statement made by a friend of mine regarding deposits of jade, but have been unsuccessful, so am asking the courtesy of an answer from you.

The statement was that no knowledge is on record of any such deposit, that all of the world's jade has been in use since civilized man's first contact with it and that it is equal in value to gold, by weight."

—L. C. MYERS, Hurley, New Mexico

Reply, by Mr. F. J. Esterlin:—Jade is found in China. New Zealand, Alaska and several other parts of the globe. While many ornaments and tools were made of jade in early times, this is not the source of supply for our jewelry of today.

The jade of China does not occur in any definite deposits or mines, although large blocks of this material are found. Of course, the gem quality jade does not occur in large pieces, or it couldn't command such a high price.

Jade, or any other stone, is valued according to quality, scarcity, color and size. While a small piece of fine jade may equal a like amount of gold in value, this is no standard. Almost all gem materials occur largely in poor quality. It is the few fine pieces which have the high value.

Pistol

WHERE to place a weapon in an automobile.

Request:—"I drive a great deal, averaging 1200 miles a month. I feel that protection will be very necessary this Winter, so wish to buy a gun for the car. I have had some experience with the Army .45 Colt automatic, but with no other. What gun would you advise for such a purpose? And how would you carry it?"

—ADAM GRAY, Bingham Canyon, Utah

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—For the use you suggest for a weapon, I'll recommend either of the two following revolvers: Colt Detective Special, blued finish and 2" barrel, .38 Special; or Smith & Wesson Hammerless, .38 caliber, 3" barrel.

To carry the revolver I'd recommend a holster fastened to either the steering column just below the wheel, or to the gear-shift lever. When leaving the car, I'd place the revolver in my right side coat pocket. Of course, you will secure a permit from local officials to carry the gun. And use enough ammunition in practise at close ranges to learn to use the gun, too.

The Ask Adventure section covering Oregon and Washington is vacant. Readers who feel that they are qualified to serve as experts on this territory are invited to state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure*, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.
3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

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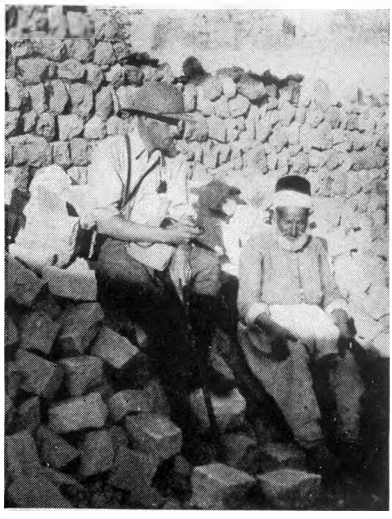

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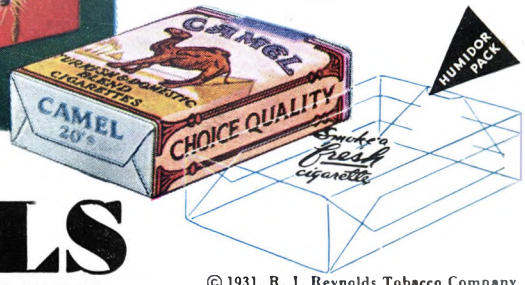

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