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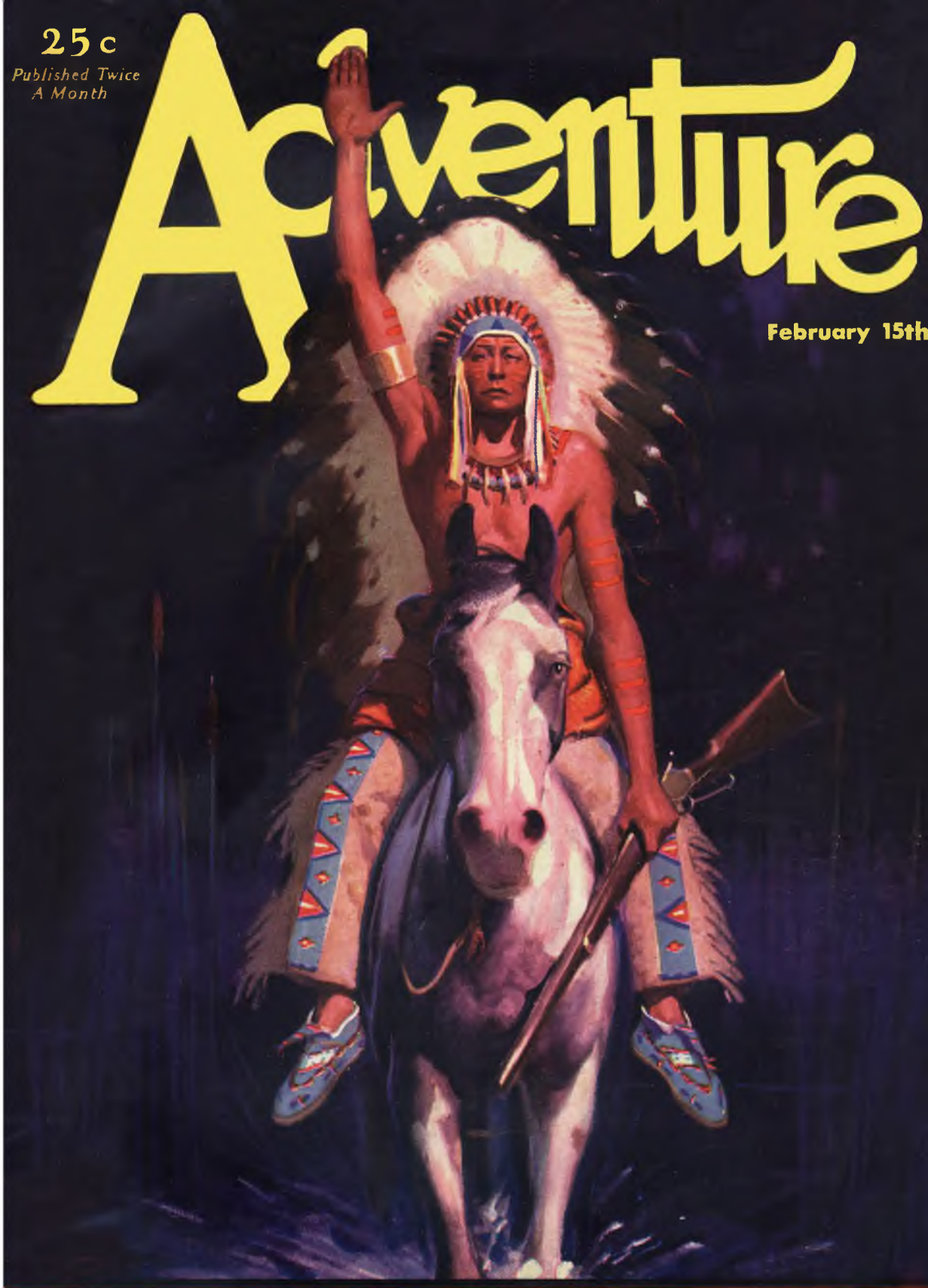

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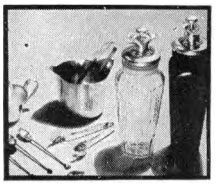

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CONTENTS

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for February 15th

A. A. Proctor
EDITOR

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Captain Harnigan

AN AIDE galloped up the road, swung back in his saddle and jerked the horse haunch-down and stirrup to stirrup with General Watson. The aide flung up his gloved hand in a hasty salute and cupped the hand to a side of his mouth as he yelled to make himself heard above the clatter of muskets and banging of a nearby battery:

"General Grant's compliments, sir! And you are to send as strong a detail as you can spare to seize and hold Meeker Hill until reenforcements can be moved up!"

The aide jerked his horse about, leaned forward with drive of spurs and galloped headlong down the road.

General Watson for a long minute peered with a troubled look into the battle smoke that sprang from muskets of the ragged line of men behind tufts of brush, behind rails, stumps, in little holes, hastily scraped out where, prone, they loaded and fired.

Again and again through the morning the general had galloped along his staggering lines as they reeled back from the yelling charge of gray clad men that came out of the wood. Now the line was holding, but must be weakened by the withdrawal of a detachment to seize Meeker Hill.

He turned in his saddle and stared toward Meeker Hill, topped with a white colonial house, surrounded with locusts and elms. So far the battle had not touched it; but now, because the

By GORDON YOUNG

A Story of Civil War Days

commanding general had detected some move on the part of the enemy that gave the hill strategic importance, it was to play host to war.

"As strong a detail as you can spare," the aide had said. General Watson did not feel that he could spare a man; yet orders were orders. He would send two companies from Colonel Goss's regiment.

He detested Colonel Goss who, a mere politician, having organized a volunteer regiment, had got himself elected colonel; and, who having been a Congressman, had friends at Washington. But there was a certain Captain Harnigan in Goss's regiment; and Harnigan, for all of his weakness for whisky, was a soldier after General Watson's heart.

More than once the jealous Goss, politically crafty, had tried to get Harnigan disgraced, removed from the regiment, even court-martialed; but the general had quietly squelched Goss's crafty moves.

As usual during a battle, Colonel Goss was found in a sheltered position. General Watson in person gave the following order:

"Detach Captain Harnigan with Companies K and J. Tell him General Grant says to take possession of Meeker Hill and hold it. And you, sir, return nearer your regiment and stay there."

Captain Harnigan was lying out on the firing line. Within hand's reach of him on the right was a stump. Behind the stump was a private with a broken leg. Harnigan and the private had gathered four of five muskets and some cartridge boxes from dead men. The private loaded the muskets and passed them out to Harnigan, who played bullet-tag with a pair of wily Rebel sharpshooters who had snicked Harnigan's blouse, knocked off his cap and kicked dirt into his face.

Colonel Goss sent his orderly to find Harnigan. The orderly paused close to a tree and had word passed along the line that the captain was to report at once to the colonel. When word reached a soldier who lay to the left of Harnigan, that scamp called:

"Hi, Cap! Ol' Puff Belly wants you! Bet he wants to ask your 'pinion if the tree he's behind is a safe place to stay!"

Harnigan paused long enough to fire the two loaded muskets by his side, then rolled over and sat up.

"Time for you to go to the rear, Pete. Get your arm round my neck."

Harnigan, with the wounded man hanging to him, walked slowly rearward with no more attention to the whistle and slap of bullets than if they had been flies.

The two Rebel sharpshooters who had been knocking dirt into Harnigan's face yelped banteringly through the smoke. Their words were lost in the battle noise. But they would not now shoot at the man they had for an hour been trying to kill. The Civil War was preciously rich in incidents of such unmilitary gallantry. General Grant himself, wandering alone about the hills of Chattanooga to have a look at the terrain he was soon to fight over, once got near a Confederate picket camp and, instead of being shot down, was greeted with the shout: "Turn out the guard for General Grant!" Grant answered quietly, "Never mind the guard!" saluted, and rode away.

Colonel Goss's idea of a military order was not unlike an address to men who were about to vote instead of shoot. He said:

"Captain Harnigan, a crisis has arisen, and General Watson, at the suggestion of General Grant himself, has appealed to me for a man who can be depended on to do his duty in a situation that may become extremely perilous. I have recommended you. The general and I, after consultation, believe that the key to this battle lies in seizing and holding Meeker Hill, so—"

Meeker Hill was topped by the Meeker house, a white colonial mansion, with a great chimney towering from a fireplace that was big enough to have roasted a small ox. For a hundred years Meekers had lived on this hill, like a baronial family, wealthy and proud with land and slaves. All the men of the family were in the Confederate army. All the women were at home, praying, sewing, writing poetry and superintending the slaves at plantation work. They hated the Yankees as they, the Meekers, being good Christians, hated the devil and his works.

The battle had been going on all morning, much of it in full view, without bullets or shells falling near; and the Meeker household, in prayerful excitement and the firm belief that the Confederates could not possibly be defeated, watched the smoke clouds that rolled across the valley. Now and then they saw the moving dots of men sway forward in a charge, and from time to time the colorful splotch of a flag.

Then, through the willows on the creek bottom at the foot of the hill, men appeared, charging straight for the house. As they got near, it was plain that their dusty uniforms were blue. Their faces were so powder smoked that they looked like negroes. Many were bareheaded and, the day being hot, some were without blouses. All were ragged from the nip of bullets and tear of brush.

To the amazed Meeker women, who suddenly seemed forgotten of God, these looked like ruffians of the worst type; and all the dreadful stories of Yankee barbarity seemed confirmed in the appearance of these young village and farmer boys from Ohio. In the lead was a long legged, black bearded fellow who swore godlessly but with great cheerfulness as he urged the breathless men up the hill.

The Meeker ladies withdrew in great alarm from the veranda into the house, expecting no mercy, but locking doors and windows as an anxious gesture of protection. Every Southern newspaper related that the Yankees were ruthless thieves and would leave a battle at any time for loot.

But now the Yankees, led by the tall barbarian, took shelter in the grove before the house and faced the valley.

CAPTAIN HARNIGAN walked among the men, swearing at them as familiarly as a trooper at his horse. He complimented Slim Jones on having a shape that could get full protection behind a fence rail. He drank from the canteen of Hal Wilkins and made a slight grimace of disappointment, for Hal, somehow or other, often had good smooth old Southern applejack in his water can. Harnigan swore affectionately at Buck Rany for coming along when there was blood oozing from his shoulder; and he told the two boys, Tubby and Jerry, who, busy as terriers after a rabbit, were scraping a hole with half canteens:

"Make it deep and roomy, sons. I may want a place to hide myself pretty soon!"

Harnigan walked off to one side to get a better view of the valley through the trees.

A voice called shrilly at him—

"You ol' black Yank, you!"

He turned and looked into the bright angry eyes of a young girl. Her dress was a loose garment of faded muslin and did not fit. She was barefoot. Her loosened curly hair hung about a thin flushed face.

"Miz Meeker wants you dirty Yanks to git! Go on, git!"

She flung her arm with much the same gesture as if frightening chickens out of a garden patch.

"Now, now, Miss Meeker! I've heard a lot about Southern hospitality, but—"

"I ain't a Meeker! They'd have fits they heared you call me one o' them. I'm a Craner. But now that there's a doggone ol' war an' me left alone with all my men folks in the army, I'm livin' here. An' Miz Meeker wants you Yanks to git! She won't have you here. You goin'?"

The wild little Craner girl seemed to think that everybody, including the rascally Yanks, would obey the stern and queenly Mrs. Meeker.

"Sister, Mrs. Meeker will have to talk to General Grant about that. He asked us to come here and stay awhile. We get paid for minding General Grant."

"You'll git licked! It takes three Yanks to lick one sick Rebel. You are all cowards! You only come here 'cause you knowed there was nobody but us women folks."

She said it in breathless defiance, repeating what she had heard and firmly believed.

"You've been reading the Richmond newspapers," said Harnigan rebukingly.

"I ain't. I can't read. But I hate Yankees!"

"Bad lot, Yankees. As you say, it makes the Rebels sick to fight 'em."

"Oh, I never. 'Taint so an' you know it!"

"Um-m-hm, sister."

"Don't you-all call *me* sister! An' are you goin' to git?"

"Can't we stop awhile and rest? Long climb. Out of breath. And why didn't Mrs. Meeker come herself to tell us to git? Why send a child?"

"I ain't no chile! I'm goin' marry Zack Zimmerman jes' as soon as this doggone ol' war is over. You black Yanks might jes' as well quit fightin' now an' save yourself worse lickin's than you've had a'ready."

First Sergeant Boyle came up. He had an undershot jaw and a bayonet scarred face; and like all top soldiers, past or present, kept his tongue rough as a file. He grinned at the wild little rebel and snarled cheerfully:

"That's the way, Miss Reb! Lay into him! He's a terrible coward, this big Yank. He won't fistfight a woman!"

"You look a coward too," said the Craner girl defiantly.

Boyle grinned at her, but spoke to Harnigan.

"Cap, some of our galoots are hankerin' to sneak round back of the house and raid the chicken yard. They wanted me to ask you."

"You jes' leave them chickens alone!" the Rebel maid shrieked. "Some of 'em are mine that I brunged up here when

I come. I won't have no black Yanks eatin' my chickens!" With hasty afterthought, "Ner Miz Meeker's! She may be crippled, but she has the niggers lift her wheel cheer down off the porch an' push her around all over the place."

A lone shell came with long drawn scream and burst high overhead.

"Somebody's told them we are here," said Boyle. "They've wheeled a piece into position and are trying for the range."

The girl shrank aside and stood staring upward.

"Matter, sister? Looking for the hole it left in the sky?" Harnigan glanced up. Then he swore and turned to the sergeant.

"Boyle, if shells start coming, we can't let those women stay in the house. Look at that chimney. It will crash through like a landside from garret to cellar."

A second shell came and fell lower, shattering the tops of tall trees, showering the earth with leaves and broken branches.

"Go keep the men steady, Sergeant. Come on, Miss Reb. We have to get your folks out of that house."

"Miz Meeker leave that house of hern for a Yank's say-so! Never!"

"If that chimney comes down on top of her, she probably won't leave it, ever."

"Our men won't shoot at the Meeker house." She shook her head emphatically. "Why, it's Colonel Meeker's house. They won't shoot at his house."

"Have it your way, sister. But, being bad shots, they're liable not to miss it."

"They're better shots than you ol' Yanks. All Confederates is."

Captain Harnigan went up the veranda steps.. The girl followed, keeping well behind him as if purposely out of arm's reach in case he turned and grabbed at her. He knocked on the door.

"They won't open it!" the girl said shrilly, a little proudly, as if keeping the door closed in his face would show the Yank how unimportant he was.

Harnigan shouted roughly, knocking—

"Open this door!"

At that moment a shell exploded at the edge of the grove, jarring the earth. Harnigan turned from the door and crossed the veranda, peering and calling—

"Anybody hurt?"

Men yelled at him:

"Naw! Missed a mile! They can't hit a flock of barns!"

Harnigan jumped back and banged impatiently on the door.

"Open this! I'll break it in!"

"Ruffians!" said the voice of an angry, cultured woman.

"That's Miz Meeker!" the girl warned him.

"Madam," Harnigan shouted, "no one will molest you. Open this door."

Voices hummed in panicky excitement behind the door. The cultured voice rose imperiously, edged with impatience at having to repeat—

"Open the door!"

The door opened and a popeyed negress stepped back, terrified and curious.

Harnigan entered the room and stopped short. It was dim after the sunlight. He blinked, peering; and noticed the huge, high mantel, the oil portraits of stern gentlemen on the walls, the crystalline glitter of a great mirror and the thick folds of portières before a far doorway. Three or four women in attitudes of half defiant fear were grouped near and behind the wheel chair of a woman who faced him with head lifted. Her dark eyes were bright with a look of fever. Her slim white fingers held a slight, ivory headed cane.

Harnigan spoke bruskly.

"Madam, you must leave this house. Shells are beginning to fall and will certainly strike the building. If the chimney comes down it will crash through and—"

"This is my home," Mrs. Meeker replied calmly, with rising inflection.

"And this is war, madam. A battlefield, or soon will be. This house is the least safe place in the whole range of the rebel guns."

"Our brave men," said a shrill, tall woman who seemed to have gone to seed in spinsterhood, "will never fire upon this house."

"Not willingly perhaps, but accidents happen in a battle."

THE pale lady who sat erect in her chair replied—

"I would no more think of leaving my home, sir, than my husband, Colonel Meeker, would think of leaving his post."

"But, madam, Colonel Meeker himself would not remain in an exposed position longer than was required by military necessity."

"Sir, you consult your own timidity regarding an exposed position and contemptibly impute the same cowardly sentiments to Colonel Meeker!"

The tall spinster behind Mrs. Meeker's chair murmured approval, then rapidly and shrilly exclaimed:

"To leave this house would be to show a lack of confidence in our brave boys. I, for one, will not insult them by running away."

"Please be quiet, Henrietta," Mrs. Meeker commanded. "And to you, sir, I can say merely that the responsibility of this home has been placed in my hands, and I shall not abandon it. If you choose to flatter your valor by forcibly ejecting women from their home, proceed, sir! Otherwise, sir, I remain."

"Aw, damn!" said Harnigan helplessly.

The gaunt Henrietta, conceiving that to be the oath of a foiled villain, exclaimed—

"Your rage intimidates no one, sir!"

And the little Craner girl, thrusting out her face and clenching her fists, came close to Harnigan and cried—

"Don't you cuss her!"

Nothing but profanity and lots of it could have expressed Harnigan's feeling.

"I can't do more than warn you," he said, and turned toward the door.

The thin whine of a shell grew into a rushing shriek. Harnigan, battle-wise, instinctively knew that it was about to strike somewhere very near. He swayed back with tense, expectant listening.

The house rocked and shook as if hit by a thunderbolt; and the lightning-like shock of the exploding shell seemed to lift the dwelling momentarily into the air, shatteringly. Plaster and wood and bricks showered down in the fall of the huge chimney that toppled through the shattered roof. Some of the women's voices rose in screams as they tried to flee.

Harnigan rolled over and struggled dizzily. He arose from the debris, wiping at his eyes with a sleeve. Some one was groaning. A darky began to howl in prayerful terror.

The Craner girl scrambled up unhurt from near the open door and stared, bewildered. It was almost beyond her comprehension that disaster could fall upon the Meeker mansion, which had been to her a kind of symbol of what was permanent and inviolable. Now she stood in the midst of its ruins. The portraits of the ancestral Meekers had been shaken from the walls. The beautiful mantel was broken into bricks and mortar. The wide mirror that had reflected the charms of tall men and beautiful women from colonial days was splintered into fragments. Mrs. Meeker's chair had been wrecked by a falling beam. She lay, as if dead, on the floor.

Soldiers came running with First Sergeant Boyle in the lead.

"Hi, Cap! You hurt, Cap?"

"Dusted up a little. That's all. What's going on outside?"

"Nothin', so far. Guns just peckin' away a little. But when we saw this 'un hit the house, we come."

"Clear this stuff away. Some of these

women are still alive."

Harnigan dropped to his knees beside Mrs. Meeker. He thought she was dead.

Another shell shrieked overhead. The Craner girl shrank aside with hands to her ears; but the soldiers, after a second's listening, knew that it would strike beyond the house and ignored it.

"No wonder the damn Rebs fight like hell!" said Harnigan to Boyle, who crouched by him as they scraped plaster from Mrs. Meeker. "Anybody'd be scared to come home, defeated, to these women."

Mrs. Meeker opened her eyes and shuddered. She protested with weak pushing of slim white hands and vague murmurs as Harnigan, with arms about her, arose, lifting her.

"Two dead, Cap! Smashed like bugs," said a private. "Awful for women to be hurt."

"Quick, boys. Get them down into the cellar. That's the safest place. What's the way to the cellar, spitfire?" Harnigan demanded of the Craner girl.

"Ain't she dead?"

"You don't kill this kind! Nor scare 'em. Lead on, an' be quick. We haven't much time. Your big brothers may start coming up that hill any minute!"

They went through the shattered house and down the steps leading into the cellar, which was a sort of commissary for the Meeker mansion. It was deep and wide, piled high with the food wealth of a great plantation, never before touched by war.

For days the Union troops had been living on hog fat, fried hardtack and coffee. Even Harnigan's eyes ranged hungrily at the choice array of hickory smoked hams hanging from a beam.

"Oh, the Meekers never thought you ol' Yanks would git this far South!" said the Craner girl disconsolately.

"Fetch down some bedding," said Harnigan. "Slim, go back upstairs with this girl and bring down some bedding."

"You bet, Cap."

A few minutes later Betty Craner stood by, trying to be suspicious, but merely hopelessly perplexed, as she saw the tall Yankee captain, with hasty but gentle hands, arrange Mrs. Meeker in a sheltered corner of the cellar. He seemed as anxious as if bending over his own mother.

"Any whisky around here, Miss Spitfire?" Harnigan asked.

"Whole keg of it!" said the girl, pointing.

"Ah-ha!" Hal Wilkins commented softly, fingering his canteen, ready to pour out the water.

The keg sat on a low bench with a tiny spigot in place. Harnigan shook the keg. It was almost full. One of the men brought him a glass. He turned the spigot, let a few spoonfuls of whisky run into the glass, and knelt by Mrs. Meeker, lifting her head on his arm.

A moment later, glancing over his shoulder, he saw men huddled about the keg with their canteens ready.

Harnigan swore, arose, jumped at them, knocking Hal Wilkins's canteen flying.

"You damn fools—we do our drinking after a battle, not before! And never loot the homes of women when they're lying hurt!"

Harnigan, with angered strength, seized the keg, heaved it up head high and smashed it on the stone floor. The rich liquor spurted and splashed, then flowed about their feet.

"All out and into line. These women are as safe here as we can make 'em. Skedaddle, you devil's sons!"

"Get along," said Sergeant Boyle.

Harnigan slipped on the wet stones and fell, landing in the puddles of whisky. He arose at once, dripping, swore at his awkwardness and followed the men.

Shells from the Confederate battery were singing wickedly and exploding above and about the grove.

"Get down and stay down!" Harnigan called, standing out where he could get a good view. "They're warming us up

before the charge. I can see men being moved this way."

"Aw, how can we stand a charge," a soldier wailed, as if letting his thoughts slip into words.

Men booed the fellow jeeringly.

"Hold your gab, Peak!" said the hard faced Sergeant Boyle. "Cap hear you talk thataway, he'd stick you on his sword—same as a steak he's toastin'!"

EVIDENTLY the Confederates too had suddenly decided that Meeker Hill was of military importance. Through the smoky haze of the valley Harnigan could see the rush of skirmishers being sent forward toward the foot of the hill. Shells fell rapidly, bursting with the crash of thunderbolts. Trees were shattered, and again and again shells fell in the ruined house.

Harnigan felt a tug and turned. The Craner girl in her torn, faded muslin, her face pale with wistful anxiety, said:

"Miz Meeker is a-beggin' for water an' the pump won't work, an' she jes' keeps sayin', 'Water, Betty! Water!' "

Harnigan stared at her with amazement. She had come out in the midst of the shells to tell the Yankee Captain that Mrs. Meeker wanted water.

He roughly pushed her up close behind a tree.

"Wait there, sister!" He walked across to Sergeant Boyle.

"Anything in your canteen, Sarg? Good. Let me have it. We'll never in God's world lick these damn rebels till the last woman of 'em dies of old age. They don't know what fear is."

Harnigan gave her the canteen, saying:

"And don't you come out of that cellar again. I'd hate to have to spank Mr. Zack Zimmerman's future wife, with a battle going on."

"Sp-an-nk me!" the girl gasped in astonishment. "Oh, if I could spit poison I'd bite you. I'll come out 'f I want —an' I do want to see you black Yanks git licked!"

"Yanks won't retreat with a pretty girl watching 'em. So stay away!" Harnigan called after her.

Sergeant Boyle came up on the trot.

"Lord, Cap, but you smell drunk. The Rebs are formin'."

Harnigan laughed and slapped at his whisky soaked clothes.

"I don't mind the smell." The roar of the battle was rising in the distance. "Grant's shaking things up over there."

"An' a column's deployin' an' headin' this way—to shake things up!" said the sergeant.

Harnigan looked about for any sign of reenforcements from the Union side. There was none. He and the sergeant went along behind the line.

"Now, boys," Harnigan called cheerily, "remember that one man in a hole is as good as five outside. So we've got those fellows almost outnumbered. And it's a hell of a disgrace to be licked by inferior numbers. Here they come!"

The skirmishers were on the hillside. Behind them a column deployed. The distant battery for a minute or two threw its shells more rapidly at the hilltop, then, as the Rebels advanced up the slope, ceased firing. The Confederates came slowly at first, then went into a trot, and a little later broke into a run with the wild yip-yip that has gone down in war records as the dreaded Rebel yell.

From the shelter of the hilltop muskets cracked with a ragged volley. Thick smoke spurted out and swayed lingeringly among the trees. Sergeant Boyle bellowed cheerily, and Harnigan called from man to man with cool approval. His men bit at the powder end of cartridges, slammed home the ramrod, clicked on a cap, threw musket butt to cheek, took a second's aim and fired; then with feverish haste loaded again.

The Rebels aimed, fired and came on, seeming to load as they ran. Their bullets swept like a volleying swarm of angry hornets.

Slim Jones, leaning far from behind his tree to aim at an officer, shot. He

paused a moment, watching, yelled, "I got 'im!" and fell dead.

Harnigan jumped for Jones's musket, emptied the cartridge box, loaded rapidly and ranged from tree to tree, firing. Men dropped out of the charging line, but the Rebels came on, bravely thinking that the Northern men were about three times as numerous as they were —and not caring.

The man Peak squawked, "We can't hold 'em!" flung down his musket and bolted. Other men leaped up indecisively; but the hard faced Sergeant Boyle was on top of them with fists and oaths.

"Hold that line!" he roared, and the next instant fell dead. But the men remained in line.

Harnigan leaped after the running Peak; and as he dashed by a corner of the veranda he had a blurred glimpse of a pale face in the midst of tangled hair, peering wide eyes. The wild little Craner girl had come out to see the Yanks get licked.

Harnigan caught Peak, knocked him down, took a firm hold on his collar and simply dragged him back through the whiz and slap of bullets, dumping him behind a tree on the firing line.

"Damn you," said Harnigan, "die where your folks'll be proud of you! Run again and I'll shoot you myself!"

Fat little Tubby lay dead in his hole, and the kid Jerry sobbed nervously as he stood bolt upright, loading and firing as fast as he could. Hal Wilkins was sprawled on his back with outflung arms. Man after man whom Harnigan had treated as a younger brother was down. The Rebel line swayed and sagged under the rapid fire, but came on, yelling.

The Rebels were right at the edge of the grove. If they entered it, there would be no holding the hill against them. For one thing, they would have shelter too; for another, they would see how few the Yanks were.

Harnigan glanced anxiously behind him. There were no reenforcements; but the next instant he bawled, "Help's come, boys!" and cheered. The weary Yanks, with no look behind them, cheered and shot the faster. Harnigan took a deep breath to deepen his voice, yelled, "Fix bayonets!" then drew his sword and charged through the line, and with click and clatter of bayonets men swept out of their holes and from behind trees, emptying muskets as they came.

The shattered Rebel line swayed back. The howling Yanks raised the cry of reenforcements, and this looked like a counter-charge. The Rebels broke, turned and fled.

The squawk of a girl's voice rose from the rear—

"Oh, you cowards!"

She, knowing nothing of war's trickery, knew only that she had seen the Confederates run from the Yanks.

The begrimed men flung themselves about on the ground, hastily taking what rest they could.

They were half triumphant that they had beaten the charge, but depressed that there had been no reenforcements, because they knew the fight was not over. It was a saying among Yanks that dead Rebels were the only ones that didn't return to the charge.

Harnigan, carrying a wounded man to shelter behind the house, passed near Betty Craner, who stared at him sullenly.

"How many Rebels to lick a sick Yankee, sister?"

She frowned, not answering. The world seemed suddenly all askew. Beliefs were shattered, and things that were inviolable in her simple faith had been wrecked.

THE battle roar in the distance was rising. Grant, "the hammerer", was pounding with the full weight of his armies, and the shock of mass movements could be seen far off in the valley; there was a tidal surge of retreating Confederates in the direction of Meeker

Hill. The battery, strengthened by other guns, opened furiously, pounding the grove. It was now plain to any one who had a bird'seye view of the battle that whichever side held Meeker Hill for the next hour would have an advantage; and the Rebels had reformed at the foot of the hill to charge again, with strong lines of reenforcements hastening up to follow.

"Here they come!" Harnigan's boys called one to another; and many yelped the fighting slogan that they had heard in battle, and stolen, from the wild Rebel Texans:

"Hurray for hell! Who's afraid of fire!"

"Cap," said Sergeant Thomas, now the senior noncom, "what'll we do if that column moving this way across over there joins in the charge?"

"Just keep on staying right where we are, Sergeant."

Sergeant Thomas saluted and turned away, fully understanding the order.

The Rebels were already yip-yip-yipping as they came running up the hill.

Harnigan, peering anxiously behind him, was confident that the commanding general would send reenforcements as soon as they could be moved; and he saw a column of blue move out of the woods at the double quick; and over to the left battery after battery, with terrific gallop of lashed horses, came in a headlong race to get into position on the hilltop before the Rebels won it.

Harnigan cursed cheeringly, hastening from man to man. They lay flat in shallow holes or hugged the trees.

"We don't have to lick 'em—just hold 'em! Ten minutes! Hang on! That's all."

Rapid fire tore into the charging line. The shock of it thinned and checked the center, but the rebels closed in and came on. Harnigan's men rose up from sheltered positions, the better to load. There was no stopping that surging rush, but the Yanks stood fast. The Confederates came on like a wave. It was hand to hand work with bayonet and musket butt, even the tussle of gripping hands and smash of fists.

A half mile and more away a quick thinking artillery officer swung his horses about and went into position right out in the open, exposed to all the Rebel batteries within range, and began to throw grape and canister into the second and third lines of Confederates who were on their way up the hill. Five minutes after he opened fire the battery was smashed, and every man and horse killed or wounded; but he had swept the slope of the Rebel supports and the hillside was strewn with the huddled dead.

On the hilltop the handful of Yanks refused to surrender. They knew reenforcements were just behind. Harnigan emptied his revolver and threw away his broken sword, beating at men with a snatched musket. Stabbed and shot and beaten, he went down—and got up, fighting blindly.

Harnigan's detail was practically exterminated when the rolling lines of Yanks came up and charged, and the fight on the hilltop became a mêlée. Then batteries got into sheltered position and showered the slope with shells, driving back the newly formed Rebel lines that had started up. More reenforcements came from the Union side and the Rebels were swept down from the top of Meeker Hill.

And so the day ended in another of Grant's victories; costly as always, but victory.

General Watson had been killed. Colonel Goss, as the senior colonel of the brigade, assumed command and quickly rode to Meeker Hill to accept the congratulations of all officers for the heroic stand that had been made by men of his regiment.

And Captain Harnigan, out of his head, mad of eyes and thick of tongue, still cursing and urging men to fight, was overpowered by affectionate hands and led before Goss. Colonel Goss stared at the wild face, saw the blood, but smelled the whisky.

"Drunk—again!" said Goss, eager to believe just that. "Shameful! Place him under arrest!"

Harnigan, not unconscious, but battle crazed, was carried away.

LATE in the afternoon a short man with a close clipped brown beard, wearing an old slouch hat and a Cavalryman's old coat, rode slowly up Meeker Hill on a beautiful black horse. He had weary, brooding eyes and, except for the half sad look, his face was expressionless. His aides and officers were excited by the victory and jubilant. The general on the black horse, with a half smoked cigar between his fingers, had almost the air of one who had lost instead of won.

The dead were being carried away. Soldiers were digging graves down on the hillside, burying both the men in blue and the men in gray. Soldiers who were resting under arms rose wearily from the ground, stared and cheered as the general rode by. The hand with the cigar inattentively touched the brim of the slouch hat, but his sad face did not light up. He had learned that victories over the fierce Confederates must be paid for with a dreadful price of blood; and his aides and officers knew that the general had the tenderness of a woman, almost a woman's dislike for blood.

Colonel Goss, beaming proudly, stepped forward, strutting, as his fellow-officers made way.

The general looked about with a slow, wandering gaze, and at last fixed the enigmatic, troubled look on Goss's fleshy face, and said quietly—

"Your men made victory possible, Colonel."

That was all, but a lot from the taciturn general.

Goss saluted proudly, all aglow with the praise.

"The name of the officer who commanded here?' the general asked.

"Captain Harnigan, General. A brave enough fellow when sober—but he was hopelessly drunk all through the fight. It was only at General Watson's order that I detailed him. I knew his weakness. Why, Private Peak, one of the few brave boys who survived the fight uninjured, tells me that Harnigan hid in the house there and drank whisky while the battle was going on. I have placed him under arrest. He was insanely drunk and—"

From the rear of the group of officers a shrill scream arose —

"That's a lie!"

A wild little girl with tousled head and tattered muslin dress jerked herself through the restraining arms of officers who snatched at her, and she came defiantly right up to the stirrup of the general.

"I hate you black Yankees worse'n the devil an' wish ever' last one of you was dead! But he's a liar! That there captain wasn't drunk a-tall. I seen ever'thing 'cause I stood out out here watchin' and a-prayin' you Yanks'd be licked—an' you would've been but for him. He didn't touch a drink. He carried pore Miz Meeker in his own arms down to the cellar, an' when them Yank soldiers found the whisky keg, he heaved it up an' smashed it, then slipped in the puddle so he smelt drunk.

"He fought like a Confederate, he did! An' that soldier that said he was drunk is a liar. Worse'n a liar! He run away onct and the captain drug him back. He run away again—I seen 'im—an' hid down in the cellar with Miz Meeker—"

Officers had tried to silence the screeching little Rebel, but the general's hand moved in a quick, short gesture and they stepped back, letting her alone.

"But, ah, surely, General," said Colonel Goss in an injured mellow voice and the same tone with which he had often pleaded for votes, "you can not give credence to an insane little Rebel, who must get pleasure out of discrediting our victory!"

The general said nothing. He baffled

politicians, busybodies, enemies of all kinds, and even friends, by his amazing faculty for saying nothing. He listened attentively until little Betty Craner had told her story, then saluted absent mindedly, turned and rode away.

That night the commanding general in person went among the wounded and dying, where surgeons worked by the smoky gleam of lanterns and candles; and from time to time he paused to question some of the men who had been through the fight on Meeker Hill.

The next morning the following general orders were read to the Nth Ohio:

"Colonel Goss, Nth Ohio, is hereby relieved from his command indefinitely and will report to these headquarters immediately. By order of Lieutenant-General Grant."

Then followed the order announcing that Captain Harnigan of the Nth Ohio, had, for conspicuous gallantry in the defense of Meeker Hill, been breveted colonel and would take command of his regiment as soon as possible.

Ship Glamor

By HARRY KEMP

When there wakes any wind to shake this place,
This wave hemmed atom of land on which I dwell,
My fancy conquers time, condition, space—
A trivial sound begets a miracle!

Last night there walked a wind and, through a chink,
It made one pan upon another clink
Where each hung close together on a nail—
Then fantasy put forth her fullest sail:
A dawn that never dies came back to me.
I heard two ship's bells echoing far at sea!
As perfect as a poet dreams a star,
It was a fullrigged ship bore down the wind,
Piled upward with white-crowding spar on spar;
The wonder of it never leaves my mind.
We passed her moving proudly far at sea;
Night was not quite yet gone, nor day begun;
She stood, a phantom of sheer loveliness,
Against the first flush of an ocean dawn.
Then, at the elevation of the sun,
Her ship's bell faintly sounded the event,
While ours with a responding tinkle went.

The beauty life evokes, outlasting men,
It fills my world from sea to sky again.
It opens on me like a shining scroll—
The ghost of God that ever haunts the soul!

A Novelette of the Palm Oil Rivers

By

ROBERT SIMPSON

"DOWN, you young fool! Get down! Do you want to lose the top of your head?"

Peter Brand drew his sun helmeted head down slowly and, leaning his rifle against the raggedly built barricade of ironwood logs and mangrove sticks, turned to meet the angry and excited light in Captain Delmar's eyes.

"When's this fight going to start?" he asked with a sour and dusty grin, as he wiped the perspiration from his face—a face that was capable of betraying the kind of boredom that only the middle twenties can adequately express. "I told you I was due to meet Kingdon at Dolaga at sunup."

"You'll be lucky if you're alive an hour after sunset."

"Will I?" Peter's expression seemed to doubt the luck of being alive at any time.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" Delmar snapped testily. "Don't you hear those damned tom-toms?"

Peter heard them. In his bungalow on Nakwi Creek where, until that morning, he had been holding forth as the supervisor of a mahogany concession for the African Merchants Company, the monotonous roll of the tom-toms had put him to sleep for several nights, just as they had evidently kept Delmar awake. At least Delmar looked as if he had not slept for a week.

"What of it?" Peter asked with the irritating inconsequence of his years. "Every time a Nakwi beats a tom-tom doesn't mean that he's going to start a war."

Captain Delmar emitted an official sounding exclamation of impatience. Everything Delmar did was likely to have an air of officialdom about it. He was the commissioner of the Dolaga district of Nigeria, a district that groped in the outer darkness of the jungle that lay beyond the famous and infamous walled city of Benin; and as Delmar was the representative of the far-reaching administrative department of the Nigerian government, he did not like being cooped up in the seamy, malodorous Nakwi village of Yeni, a full day's march away from his headquarters at Dolaga.

Still less did he like having to argue the pros and cons of such a situation with a stripling of a civilian, no matter how useful this stripling's trading affiliations might be.

"This is a serious business, Brand," Delmar said, and tried to be severe about it as he gestured toward the barricades that were rapidly being bol-

The DRUMS of NAKWI

stered here and there with salt and sand bags and with empty kerosene cases that were being filled with clay. "You just don't understand these Nakwis—their past record for treachery and trickery and all around devilishness. You haven't been up here long enough. But you can bet your boots I'm not going to all this trouble for nothing."

"I hope not," Peter said irreverently. "But why don't you just get out and head for Dolaga? Kingdon's waiting for me there and I know he would be glad to fix things up for you."

"Confound your impertinence! I told you not be an ass, didn't I?"

"I believe you did."

"And I told you also, this morning, that you'd never get through to Dolaga if I permitted you to go on. Didn't I tell you that?"

"That's what you said, but—"

"Consequently you are still here with at least a fighting chance for your life. Is that perfectly clear?"

Peter smiled slightly and glanced

around at his native carriers who were "helping" Delmar's squad of Yorubas build up the barricades. His carriers were doing most of the work and the khaki clad Yorubas were bossing the job with a familiar exhibition of official authority.

"Clear enough," Peter said mildly. "But I'm still of the opinion, humble and young as it may be—"

"Damn your impertinence!"

"—that I could reach Dolaga and get Kingdon to come up here and put things right for you."

"You're a fool!"

"Granted. But Kingdon isn't. And since you're so generous as to give me a fighting chance for my life, I'm trying to do you a good turn by telling you that all this fort building stuff is just a waste of good honest sweat. Kingdon could fix whatever has to be fixed without even rolling up his sleeves."

Captain Delmar did not make any reply this time. He did not flatter Peter's suggestion by even so much as an exclamation point. Spinning sharply on his heel, he strode toward the square built mud-and-wattle hut that, for ten days or more, had served him as a bedroom and a courthouse.

Peter thought it needed a haircut. Its thatch hung low and scraggly, almost reaching the ground in spots; but as it acted as a kind of veranda roof, Captain Delmar had held solemn court under its grateful shade.

Seated on a camp chair, with a knob-headed walking cane as a wand of authority, he had sweated out justice for crimes and misdemeanors, listened to long winded, whining complaints, levied and actually collected taxes and apportioned labor quotas for the building of roads in the district—all according to his interpretation of the law in such matters.

This law, of course, was the white man's law. And the native people did not like it. They had never liked it. Though the Dolaga district, as a whole, seemed to accept Delmar and what he stood for philosophically enough, the Nakwis, who were alleged to be a fearsome mixture of Beni, Kukuruku, Igabo and heaven only knew what else, either had no gifts of philosophy, or were just constitutionally "agin" the government, no matter what that government happened to be.

WITHIN the memory of man they had defied the ancient kingdom of Benin in its heydey, and had been duly scattered to the four winds of heaven. They had fought persistently with the Kukuruku people and had been smothered by numbers. They had been a thorn in the flesh of Nana, who had been a powerful Jakri chieftain of Benin River, and he had made several thorough-going jobs of wiping them out.

And they had also fought with the white man and had killed several commissioners, for which they had been punished in the usual way—with Yoruba rifle fire plus a few hangings of such ring leaders as were careless enough to be caught alive.

Like white ant hills, their habitations had time and again been destroyed and, like white ants, they themselves had been apparently blotted out of existence by both black foe and white. But from the Benin country to the land of Kwa, in the shadow of the Kameroons, it was well known that "there is always a Nakwi; and wherever there is a Nakwi there is always trouble and blood".

Just at the moment there was not a single Nakwi in the village of Yeni. Sometime in the night, with little or no sound to mark their going, every man, woman and child had decamped, leaving Delmar and his squad of Yoruba and his one native policeman in sole possession of the place.

Delmar, who was nervously pacing up and down the floor of his hut, trying to forget young Brand's colossal cheek, had been anticipating some such expression of disapproval on the part of the Nakwis for several days, ever since

the first tom-tom had begun to mutter tirelessly somewhere on the outskirts of the village.

Now the village was walled about with that muttering, throbbing beat, and Delmar knew or suspected that all the paths leading out of Yeni were closed, particularly those that led back to Dolaga.

Delmar knew also that when one of his predecessors, Fordyce, had been killed, the drums of Nakwi had ringed him about just like that. It was said, too, that it was the drums that had killed him; that Fordyce's heart, which had been none too good, had given out under the acute nervous strain of a ten-day siege during which not a single Nakwi had showed his face and not a shot had been fired.

Something like the constant dripping of a single drop of water, Delmar supposed it must have been, and Fordyce's nerves had undoubtedly snapped. Delmar could well imagine just what had happened to him.

Shaking fits of fear interspersed with violent bursts of temper; no sleep, no appetite, not enough water, and no escape from the crawling, crushing heat of the jungle by day or by night; nothing to do but wait in readiness, minute by minute, hour after hour for days, always tempted to shoot his way through to freedom and always hesitating, while those damned drums muttered nearer and nearer, as if they might give way to a flare of murderous action at any moment.

This was the most devilish thing about the whole business. At any moment that throbbing, rolling beat seemed likely to give way to the blood-mad shriek of a horde of Nakwis—to the thunderous roar of muzzle-loaders—to the sudden thud of torches upon the thatched roofs of the village and the crackling burst of flames that would instantly follow and trap Delmar and his little company in a circle of fire.

This, at any moment.

And in the gasping, breath taking interval of waiting—the drums. Always the drums.

They beat upon Delmar's senses, sometimes like a numbing narcotic, lulling him into a half doze because it seemed as if they might go on forever; then suddenly they jerked him fully awake as, like the slowing pulse of an enfeebled heart, the beat of the drums became slower and weaker, slower and weaker, finally making him leap to his feet, fingering the butt of his service revolver, or held him in a breathless trance waiting for the beat to stop altogether.

Then, when the tension would reach the breaking point, the drums would sound a little faster and louder, faster and louder, nearer and yet nearer, and Delmar would find himself bathed in a cold sweat and, quite probably, would hear himself saying to any one who happened to be around:

"They've begun again! Do you hear? They've begun again!"

Yes, Delmar could readily understand why Fordyce's heart had given out.

But there was nothing wrong with *his* heart. Nothing. Nor with his nerves. He was just a little rattled from loss of sleep and from the uncertainty of such action as the Nakwis would actually take.

And the chances were they would not take any real action. After a comparatively recent experience with the military arm of the service, it did not seem reasonable to suppose that even the Nakwis would ask for more of that kind of thing so soon. They were savage enough, a wild and intractable people and gluttons for punishment, but there was a limit to everything and Delmar was sure that they had had enough of machine guns for awhile.

It was when his mind ran on like this that Delmar was sure that the drums were just telling him to get out—telling him to take his tax levies and his labor levies and his white man's laws in general out of Yeni and allow the deserting villagers to come back to their homes in peace.

IN HIS quieter moments Delmar tried to believe this. And, of course, because he was the the law, he could not allow the drums to dictate to him. Nothing of the sort. A preposterous impertinence to say the least; almost as preposterous as young Brand's suggestion that Kingdon be sent for so that he could fix things up for him. What devilish cheek!

Who in thunder was Kingdon that, in a crisis of the sort, he should be so confoundedly and magically helpful? What if he were agent-general of the African Merchants Company? And what if other government officers had found his support and assistance very useful upon different occasions? Delmar would be damned if he would be that kind of commissioner.

He knew that Kingdon, who was no size at all physically, was credited with being a man of almost unbelievable bulk and importance politically; an unassuming little man who was supposed to have an uncanny genius for keeping his finger on the pulse of everything in the Niger country, from a paddle boy's love affairs to an acting-governor's need of a bit of sane advice on the after effects of opium.

But Delmar was not a paddle boy and he was not an acting-governor in danger of the opium habit. He was a commissioner with his feet on the ground, and he knew his business. He had always run his job in his own way; and he had been transferred to Dolaga because he had a reputation for running things with the least possible trouble to the higher powers at Warri or Lagos.

His districts were quiet districts, and they stayed that way as long as he handled them; and even in a district in which the notorious Nakwis were at home, it was simply a matter of patiently but firmly compelling respect for the law—of making those damnable drum-beating swine realize that you were not afraid of them—that you were there to stay and that you were going to stick it out till Doomsday, if necessary, and do it without the help of machine guns.

This, so Delmar understood, was also Kingdon's way of doing things. So it would be ridiculous for Delmar to go to Kingdon for advice or assistance of that sort. He knew all about it; had been practising his own system of pacifism for years, and it was just possible he might be able to teach Kingdon a few tricks.

Of course, he would not take the risk of allowing young Brand to go floundering on to Dolaga through the Nakwi infested jungle and into heaven alone knew what kind of Nakwi devilment. No; his duty as commissioner was to protect the lives of the few far-scattered white men in his district; and if that young fathead did not have experience or sense enough to be grateful that he, Delmar, happened to be in Yeni at this crucial moment, Brand's need of protection was just that much more acute.

Why the devil did those trading firms send out such infants and station them on such isolated posts as Nakwi Creek? There should be a law against that kind of thing. There would be a law against it if—

Delmar's thoughts pulled up sharply and he stopped pacing the floor of the hut as a bulky shadow suddenly filled the doorless dorway.

"What— Oh, that you, Kofi?"

"Yessah," Delmar's Yoruba corporal answered. "We done finis' wall, sah."

"The barricade? Finished? Oh, yes. Quite so, Kofi. Er—who told you the wall done finis'? Did I tell you?"

"N-no, sah."

"Then, Kofi, the wall is not finished. *Savez?*"

"Yessah. We go finis' um, sah."

"Good. Tell Dubla bring me small chop, one time."

"Yessah."

Kofi saluted and went in search of Delmar's house boy, who, without any regard for the drums, had already begun

preparing his master's customary four o'clock tea and fritters.

Peter Brand's houseboy was doing the same thing, except that he was indulging Peter's modest failing for canned salmon and a kind of ship's biscuit that was much too refined for any forecastle.

Then Kofi and his squad of Yoruba, and Peter's carriers, resumed work on the barricades. For a little while Peter lazily watched them, then turned toward Captain Delmar's quarters and strode directly into the hut. Delmar had resumed his nervous pacing of the floor and was evidently in deep thought. The drums muttered their monotonous accompaniment in the near distance, rolling back and forth in endless waves of sound; rolling ever nearer, as it seemed, like a rising tide that sooner or later must surely engulf this lonely outlying rock of Yeni. Delmar jerked to a halt as Peter entered.

"Oh, hello, Brand. Wish you wouldn't bob in like that. I don't like people sneaking in on me suddenly without—"

"Knocking? What am I going to knock on? There isn't any door. Don't be so darned jumpy, Delmar. Those drums are only kidding you."

"Kidding me! Kidding—*me!* You young fathead! You impertinent—"

"All right. Have it your own way. But what's your notion in keeping my carriers working overtime on those barricades?"

"Overtime!"

"Certainly. The job's as finished as it will ever be now. They are just moving things from place to place without rhyme or reason and your Yoruba are strutting around making my fellows work."

Delmar snorted.

"Rubbish! And why shouldn't your carriers lend a helping hand? Their lives are at stake and my men will protect them when those Nakwi devils begin their dirty work. Don't you hear those damned drums. Don't you realize what sundown may bring?"

Peter smiled.

"Certainly. It'll get dark and the mosquitoes in this filthy hole will be a ruddy nuisance. But you're not going to know anything about it."

"Eh? What's that? What the deuce are you talking about?"

"You're going to sleep," Peter said quietly.

"Sleep!" Delmar's eyes were staring wide, farther from sleep than ever. "Wh—what do you mean? What the devil are you driving at?"

"Just what I said. You haven't slept in a week and you're as jumpy as a Mexican bean. You're not thinking now, Delmar—you're just backing into a corner. And I have some pills—"

"What! Pills! What devilish cheek! Why, you blithering young fool, for two pins I'd tan your hide for you."

"I got the pills from the doctor in Benin City when I was having trouble with an abscessed tooth," Peter went on unhurriedly. "I haven't got the tooth now, but I still have some of the pills. And you're going to take one—maybe two—tonight."

"You— Why, it's too preposterous for words!" Delmar stared at Peter as at an utterly incomprehensible phenomenon. "I— Why, damme, if this isn't the richest moment of my life! Quite the richest, you blighted young idiot! Upon my soul, I—" Delmar stopped and began to laugh, a forced guffaw of official derision that had a decidedly hysterical note in it. "But I suppose—" Delmar could hardly speak for laughing— "you mean well. You do mean well, don't you?" Delmar's laughter almost choked him. He coughed to clear his throat. "You must mean well. It's impossible—quite impossible—that even one so young could be such a superperfect ass!"

Peter said nothing. He watched. And he saw the pretense of laughter die out of Delmar's face and saw Delmar's eyes flash suddenly in uncontrollable anger.

"Get out!" Delmar snapped in a low tense voice that quivered with passion.

"Get out, you impertinent fool!"

Peter eyed the other man up and down, then backed slowly toward the doorway.

"My mistake," he said very quietly. "You don't need a sleeping pill. You need a strait-jacket."

He turned indifferently on his heel and strolled out into the compound, his sweat streaked face clouded with doubt. His houseboy, balancing a tray, met him just outside the doorway.

"No, Beeli. Not in there. I'll eat in my own bailiwick. That loon's company would give me indigestion."

THE houseboy did not understand very much of this except the gesture that waved him and the tray toward a cone shaped mud hut that had been assigned to Peter by Delmar. This hut was like a turret at the south end of the barricades and it was supposed to be Peter's job to see to it that no Nakwis stole a march on the little garrison by coming in through the one window hole that looked out upon the village of Yeni's "public square".

The square was not much of a square, but it did represent a space which any inquiring or predatory Nakwi would have to cross to reach Peter's hut and the barricades at that end of Delmar's defenses.

At the other end, of course, was Delmar's courthouse and bedroom, which was half ringed about by a crudely built semicircular mud wall that was badly battered in spots. This wall had formed the nucleus of Delmar's barricades which, linking up with Peter's cone-like hut, enclosed a space that bore some resemblance to a Bartlett pear.

Peter ate his small chop seated on a camp chair beside the window hole, with the tray resting on an empty case of a far-famed brand of Highland whisky. The whisky had been Delmar's, and Peter, who knew just when the African Merchants Company's trading shop in Benin City had delivered two cases of the whisky to Delmar, hoped the second case was not going to make the commissioner twice as jumpy as the first one.

Just then, however, Peter was not giving Delmar much thought. He munched his ship's biscuit and salmon, stared out across the deserted, sun baked square toward clustering wattle roofed huts and the drab green, mangrove knit jungle behind them.

The huts, of course, were empty, but the jungle was probably alive with Nakwis and with the throb of their drums, and as he listened to the persistent, monotonous voice of the tom-toms, he wondered what Kingdon would be likely to do when he, Peter, did not show up at Dolaga in the morning.

Undoubtedly, Kingdon would do something even if the Nakwis did not. For, as Peter had good reason to suspect, Kingdon had not sent for him for nothing.

There was a little matter between Peter and—well, how did these things read as a rule? The Crown or the People versus Peter Brand? Something like that. In any event, it had to be settled sooner or later. And, since Peter had learned from an authoritative source quite recently that a certain heavy footed gentleman named MacGregor had paid a visit to the Liverpool office of the African Merchants Company, Peter had but little doubt that the matter would be settled sooner rather than later.

Perhaps a Nakwi would settle it. Perhaps Kingdon would make his way through the ring of drums and release him from his given word so that he would be free to skip if he wanted to. This was the kind of thing Kingdon might be expected to do.

However, Peter was not sure that he wanted to skip. He was honest with himself that way, and was not taking too much credit for not having immediately deserted his post on Nakwi Creek the minute he had learned that the inevitable MacGregor had taken up the

trail again. In point of fact, after almost a year in the jungle of Benin, Peter doubted if the strain of dodging MacGregor were worth it, particularly since MacGregor was never really dodged; just delayed.

Slow, heavy footed, but devastatingly sure, MacGregor never failed to put in an appearance. For over three years Peter had been dodging the man from Scotland Yard, and when Kingdon, all unsuspecting and because of an early intimate friendship with Peter's family, had given Peter the job of bossing the black gangs and taking care of the payroll on a mahogany concession in the Benin country, Peter had been quite sure that he had given MacGregor the slip for good.

True, the slow moving Scot had been a longer time than usual in picking up the trail again, but pick it up he undoubtedly had. And since Kingdon, who had been home on leave, had just returned to Nigeria, Peter had every reason to suspect that the order to report at Dolaga meant that the jig was surely up this time. Because, of course, he couldn't ask Kingdon to assume any responsibility in the matter.

It was bad enough that he had not made a clean breast of the whole silly business to Kingdon when he had asked him for a job.

Peter wiped the perspiration from his face, tried to spread some liquid butter and a forkful of salmon on another biscuit, poured some more tea into his cup, chucked a lump of sugar at an inquiring lizard and told himself he was not really sorry the jig *was* up at last.

No. Not really sorry. He was too damned tired. Too tired even to feel sorry for himself. The past three years had seemed like thirty and he had long since gotten over getting any kick out of being the sacrificial goat. That, he was quite sure, now, was just a lot of bunk. Not even a good laugh. But it had been different three years before.

Three years before he had felt ennobled. Three years before he had worn the girl's picture in a locket around his neck. And three years before he had said to the man the girl loved and was going to marry:

"Don't be a fool. They'll never suspect *you*. Not if I skip out. And she mustn't know now! My God, she'd die if she thought you could do a thing like this! And I'm through, anyway. Don't you understand? Through! Almost everything dad left me— Oh, what's the use of going into that? Everybody in the bank knows I've been making a perfect mess of things. Everybody knows I've been playing the market and the ponies and losing money hand over fist. But nobody suspects you at all. Good Lord, no! You're—why, you're the salt of the earth! Come on, man, buck up. Don't be a fool. Tomorrow's your wedding day, damn you! And you don't want to kill her. Do you want to kill her?"

No, the other man had not wanted to kill her. He wanted to marry her. In the worst way. And he had.

Peter Brand was not at the wedding.

Several thousands of pounds of the bank's money that did not belong to him—betting, liquor, the stock market—the usual sloppy story of stupidity and weakness had whispered after Peter's coat-tails as he had skipped out.

Over three years ago.

Now it was different, and he no longer wore the locket around his neck. He knew now, too, that he would never tell the truth of the affair to any one even if he had half a chance of being believed. He was too ashamed of himself for that. For, of all the silly, maudlin, sentimental stupidities he had ever heard or read of, he was quite sure his was the worst.

In something less than six months after he had made his ultra-dramatic and quixotic gesture, the man in the case had gone to the bow-wows completely and had vanished into the Far East, leaving no trace. Not long after this the girl had secured a Paris divorce, and when Peter, with MacGregor close

on his heels, had last caught a glimpse of her, she was apparently enjoying a series of rapid flirtations along the French Riviera.

IT WAS after this Peter had slipped away from MacGregor and had gone to Kingdon. He knew Kingdon had traveled far and high in West African trade in the interval of years since he had last seen him, and, though their families had drifted apart since Kingdon had sailed for Nigeria for the first time, Peter had been sure the little man would know him and would help him if he could and without asking too many questions. And Kingdon had.

"I don't know what's bothering you, Peter," he had said in the age-old waterfront offices of the African Merchants Company in Liverpool. "But you evidently need a chance to think it out. And I'm going to give you one. The cashier will advance you the money for your outfit and his assistant will take you around and help you shop for it. You'll sail on the *Warri* at 11 A.M. on Saturday first for Benin City. Come in and see me at 9:30 for final instructions."

This had been rather late on Wednesday afternoon. But Peter had been on the *Warri* when she had headed past Hollyhead on Saturday forenoon, and for a year, from both black and white, he had been finding out what a great little man the West Coast of Africa thought Kingdon was.

Also on Nakwi Creek, after a month or two at Benin City, he had learned what Kingdon had meant when he had said he was going to give him a chance to think it out.

Peter had thought it out, and the sum of his conclusions was that he had been a fool—a jackass—a super-perfect idiot, and his badge of asininity had been the locket he had worn around his neck.

But no more of that stuff. No, sir. All that damned foolishness was out. And if MacGregor really had finally located him and had ordered him sent home to jail by the Nigerian police—why, he deserved it! He deserved—

Peter's thoughts stopped there. Stopped with a jerk. Everything that was Peter Brand hung in a state of suspended animation for many long and breathless seconds. A piece of biscuit on its way to his mouth was halted midway, and the bit of salmon that was precariously perched upon it dropped unheeded to the floor. Peter's eyes were wide with unbelief.

Out of a bush path just visible beyond a cluster of huts, and coming through the invisible ring of drums, was a slow moving, heavy footed white man of ponderous girth and height, followed by a black boy who balanced a case of canned beef on his head.

MacGregor!

Behind MacGregor there were other carriers balancing loads upon their heads, also a colored sergeant and private of the Nigerian police; but Peter saw only MacGregor.

The gait of the man had not changed in the least and his expression, as usual, said little or nothing at all. The village of Yeni, ringed about with Nakwi drums, apparently meant no more to MacGregor than the Strand, the Unter der Linden or his native Princess Street.

Although he mopped his expansive face with a huge and obviously damp handkerchief, he walked straight toward Peter, as if the staring look in Peter's eyes were the kind of compliment his experience had taught him to expect.

Peter did not try to run. Did not even get up from his camp chair. He felt that almost any move on his part, just then, would have been sillier and more futile than anything that had gone before.

Presently, flanked by the blue uniformed sergeant and private of the Nigerian police, MacGregor's bulk filled Peter's window and, looking down at him, MacGregor said with a decided burr—

"Peter Brand?"

"Yes. I'm Peter Brand."

"You know who I am?"

Peter smiled. He did not know he was shaking visibly and that his lips had gone white with the shock of it all.

"Yes. I know you all right, MacGregor. MacGregor of Scotland Yard. Gosh! That sounds great!"

"Hunh—" deprecatingly. "I'm glad it amuses you."

"Amuses me!" Peter drew a long breath. "It isn't that, MacGregor. It's the drama of the thing."

"Is it?"

"Surely. But, of course," Peter conceded, "you can't get the wallop out of it that I do. I don't expect you to. But, here am I, a fugitive from justice, cooped up behind bristling barricades—well, at least they *are* barricades even if they don't bristle very much—in the native village of Yeni, right in the middle of the African jungle—those tom-toms beating out there—the Nakwis supposed to be ready to raise all kinds of Cain at any minute. And into the middle of it all stalks MacGregor of Scotland Yard! It's great stuff. Dramatic as hell. Why, damn it, MacGregor, I—I'm flattered!"

"Are ye?" MacGregor's eyes were on Peter's teapot. "Is that tea cold?"

"I'm afraid it is. Wait, I'll call a houseboy."

"Don't bother," MacGregor said and reached through the window for the teapot. "I never drink hot tea if I can wait for it to get cold." He tilted the spout to his mouth. "What's going on here? What's that ye were saying about barricades and somebody raising Cain?"

PETER let him have his drink of tea, and invited him and his policemen and carriers to climb in through the window before he made any effort to answer any questions. When he did make something of an adequate explanation, MacGregor's eyebrows lifted, then fell and he asked:

"Did you say Captain Delmar? He's the commissioner hereabout, isn't he?"

"Yes. Does he expect you? Or did the Benin City commissioner just tell you to look him up?"

MacGregor did not say and, as he took another mouthful of the tea, Peter persisted—

"Do these fellows—" indicating the native police coming through the window— "know why you are here?"

"Them? No. They're just a kind o' official visiting card."

MacGregor emptied the teapot as his carriers and his two policemen filed through the hut into the compound, to the instant accompaniment of shrill native chatter that was bound to make Delmar aware that something unusual had happened. Handing Peter back his teapot, MacGregor said:

"That was real kind o' ye. Kingdon told me—has he met up with ye yet?"

"Kingdon! Why, I—no. No. I haven't seen him or heard from him."

MacGregor's smile was very slight.

"Well, that lie will not do ye any harm wi' me. And, of course, I'm giving ye official warning that anything ye say may be used in evidence against ye."

Peter felt a cold tremor run down his spine.

"I see. In other words, I'm—"

"He's a fine wee man, is Kingdon," MacGregor went on as if Peter had not spoken. "Fine. And clever, too. I'm real surprised he didn't get here first."

"You—you mean he— What do you mean, MacGregor?"

MacGregor did not say what he meant, but added as if for emphasis:

"Aye, he's a fine wee man. We saw a lot of each other on the boat coming out. Is he a good friend o' yours?"

"He was a chum of my oldest brother. Why?"

MacGregor stroked his chin and nodded.

"Knew your family well, I suppose?"

"Very well."

"But did not know why you came out here so sudden-like?"

"No."

"Didn't even know you'd ever been in a bank?"

"No."

"Or how much the bank missed you when you left in such a hurry?"

"No! He didn't know a thing about it. On my oath, MacGregor, he—"

"Wheesht! I think we're going to have a visitor."

The next instant a shadow that had fallen across the doorway resolved itself into Captain Delmar.

"What's up? What's all this devilish fuss? That sergeant of police from Benin City tells me— Are *you* MacGregor?"

"That's my name," the big man said simply; and from a long, lean wallet he had carried inside his shirt, he produced several official looking documents. "I'm assuming you're Captain Delmar?"

"Yes. I'm Captain Delmar."

"Here's my credentials then if ye'd like to look them over."

Delmar almost snatched the papers from MacGregor's hand and carried them to the doorway so that he could see what they had to say.

Peter waited and another cold chill raced down his spine. If the official looking documents made any mention of him, he knew exactly what he might expect at Delmar's hands. Presently the commissioner turned to MacGregor again and, folding the papers, handed them back to him with an air that had the stamp of officialdom all over it.

"Very good, MacGregor. We can discuss—er—the more intimate details later. Has young Brand explained to you our situation here?"

"He said ye were expecting trouble o' some sort."

Delmar nodded gravely.

"Quite so. Rather serious trouble, MacGregor, I'm afraid. Quite serious. I'm not an alarmist, but those drums—they have a message of their own to the initiated."

"What are they saying?" MacGregor asked pointedly.

"Several of our fellows," Delmar went on evasively, "have been killed up here. And those drums— Did you encounter any hostility on your way through?"

MacGregor shook his head.

"No. Not a bit. But, of course, out here I'm not much of a judge of what trouble looks like. I saw lots o' snakes wriggling across the paths."

"Human snakes are our troubles here, MacGregor. And I take it that you realize that until we dispose of this particular bit of trouble, any other official business must await my convenience?"

MacGregor nodded, but there was a troubled furrow between his eyes.

"Since I had such an easy time of it coming in here," he ventured cannily, "what makes ye think we'd have such a hard time getting out?"

"Don't you hear those damned drums?"

"Surely. But I heard them as I came in, and—"

"Confound it, MacGregor! Are you trying to teach me my business?"

"No. Hardly that. Not a bit," the ponderous Scot said almost gently. "I was just wondering—out loud."

"Then you can save yourself the trouble. I'm in command here and you can consider yourself very lucky that you managed to reach my—er—temporary headquarters with a whole skin. After sundown, my dear MacGregor, it would have been different. Quite different. And I hope— What the devil's that? What's up now? I do wish, Brand, you'd tell those carriers of yours to stop their confounded yelling."

THE sudden shrill chatter that had again broken loose in the compound was even more shrill than it had been on MacGregor's arrival. Also, it held an unmistakable note of hysterical hilarity that was, to Peter at least, instant evidence of a great relief. Almost brushing Delmar aside, Peter bounded out of the hut into the compound and, not half a dozen steps from the doorway, stopped

short in amazement.

Coming across the compound from Delmar's bedroom and courthouse, and threading his way through a ragged lane of wildly excited blacks, was a little man with a sun helmet tilted on the back of his head; a quiet little man who was hardly more than shoulder high to any of the natives who were giving him such a loud and whole souled welcome.

Peter gaped; and behind him, before he could muster a word, a deep burring bass voice said with a chuckle:

"Hello, Kingdon. So ye're here at last. Man, but you're awfu' slow. I'm hours ahead o' ye."

Kingdon smiled over Peter's shoulder.

"Hello, MacGregor. You're a great man, even if you have been here just about ten minutes. Ten minutes is—" Kingdon's eyes shifted to Peter, then moved quietly on to meet Delmar's approach. "Hello, Delmar. I understand you're having a bit of trouble over Chief Dumoka's pigs?"

"Pigs! Pigs! What the deuce— Silence, everybody! Silence! Confound you, Brand, make those fools shut up! I can't even hear those damned drums!"

The native babbling quieted down to a hushed whisper and the low roll of the drums sounding again in Delmar's ears, his eyes lighted up and he looked decidedly relieved. For it was when that muttering beat would stop that those Nakwi devils would begin to make a nightmare of the hours between darkness and dawn. Hadn't poor Fordyce's heart given out? Weren't his own nerves getting frayed? And now this fellow Kingdon chattered about pigs!

"Pigs! Did you say pigs?"

"Chief Dumoka's pigs," Kingdon said specifically. "You took them away from him, didn't you?"

"Certainly. But how the deuce— What business is this of yours?"

"That's why I'm a little late," Kingdon said quietly, and glanced toward Peter and MacGregor significantly. "When I reached Dolaga I learned that the Nakwis around Yeni were drumming out a warning and a protest and that you were rather tied up down here anticipating trouble. So I thought I'd better come straight through and—" he glanced toward Peter again— "on the way I risked a few hours to make some inquiries."

"Really! That was considerate of you." Delmar's sneer did not bother to wear a veil. "And might I ask, merely as the commissioner of this district, what license or authority you have for inquiring into my affairs?"

Kingdon eyed Delmar quietly but keenly.

"I think you've been working too hard," he said simply. "Why don't you try to get some sleep and let's talk this thing over in the morning?"

"Sleep! Morning! You're mad! Don't you hear those drums? Don't you remember Fordyce? Do you think I'm going to let those swine beat the life out of me!" Delmar drew himself up sharply. "You know what they are doing, don't you? They're drumming me out! Damn them! I'll show them what's what!"

"I don't doubt it," Kingdon said, and paused a moment or two to look about him. "But in the meantime the lives of several of my concession supervisors in this section are in considerable danger, and I'd like to remove that danger if I can. That's why I took some very valuable time to make inquiries."

"Valuable time! Your valuable time! What about *my* time? And the lives of *my* men? Don't you think my time and my men are as valuable to me as yours are to you? Confound it, who is the commissioner here?"

Kingdon did not answer this. He glanced toward MacGregor, who was lighting a cheroot after having offered one to Peter, who had refused it with thanks because he preferred one of his own cigarets.

"How about you, MacGregor?" Kingdon asked. "What are your plans?"

"'His plans," Delmar broke in authoritatively, "are subject to my orders.

And your plans, too, Kingdon. Please understand that. Now that you are here, you will remain here until I consider it safe to give you permission to leave."

"I see." Kingdon's voice and manner were quieter than ever. "And I assume the subject of Chief Dumoka's pigs is barred?"

"Barred? What about it? What the devil have Chief Dumoka's pigs to do with the case?"

"Could we no' sit down somewhere?" MacGregor suggested. "I'd like to hear about the pigs, but my feet are tired. Here, boy! Bring me that case o' beef—where's that houseboy o' mine? I think we a' need a drink. What'll ye have, Captain?"

Delmar snorted, was on the verge of refusing, then grunted magnanimously—

"If you have some really good brandy—"

"Brandy!" MacGregor exclaimed. "I knew ye were a man after my own heart. When your feet are tired and you're sick in your soul, there's nothing like it. Where's that boy o' mine?"

The boy and the brandy were discovered and, presently, in Delmar's quarters, four white men sat on camp chairs and upturned cases of canned beef and drank according to their preference. Kingdon, who usually confined himself to nothing stronger than lime drinks, sat next to Peter and joined him in a whisky-and-soda.

AS PETER drank, he stared at his boots. He knew that Kingdon, big as he was in the West African world, had gone considerably out of his way to be helpful to him. He knew, too, that Kingdon, when he had arrived at Dolaga, had been suddenly faced with a larger problem than his, Peter's, freedom; and, having "risked several valuable hours to make some inquiries", was now doing a lot of silent bothering because he had arrived in Yeni ten minutes after the indomitable MacGregor.

Peter had tried and was still trying to indicate to Kingdon that it was all right; that it did not matter; that he was ready to face the music—any kind of music—Nakwi or otherwise; and then, above the droning chatter in the compound, and above the throbbing beat of the drums, he heard MacGregor say:

"What's the story about the pigs, Kingdon? What have pigs to do with this jookeriepackerie and hullaballoo?"

"Yes, what about them?" Delmar asked. "Why beat about the bush? Out with it and let's have done with it once and for all."

Kingdon glanced toward Peter.

"You know Chief Dumoka, don't you?"

Peter's head came up with a jerk.

"Dumoka? Surely. This is his town and most of his boys have hauled logs for me from time to time. He's an unsavory old devil, but reasonable enough for a Nakwi, if you pay what you promise. His specialties, I understand, are wives and pigs."

Kingdon nodded.

"That's the man. I've known him for a number of years and I've always found that he pays what he promises, just as he expects to be paid what is promised."

"Oh, you have?" Delmar broke in caustically. "He's owed Chief Bala of Dolaga—"

"I'm coming to that," Kingdon interrupted quietly. "His debt to Chief Bala was the balance due on the marriage price for several wives. A balance that was to be paid in palm oil when three sons had been born."

"Dod!" MacGregor exclaimed. "What kind o' country is this?"

"Rubbish!" Delmar deprecated. "There was no such stipulation. There never is. And if there were any reservations of the sort in this case, they simply specified three children—not three sons. Dumoka admits these women have given him one son and three daughters. What the devil more does he want?

Does he want Bala to guarantee the sex of his ruddy offspring?"

MacGregor laughed so heartily he spilled some of his liquor.

"I'm thinkin' this is a case for a Soloman, Captain."

"Solomon, fiddlesticks! Dumoka's a Nakwi—a crafty, treacherous liar. Bala is mostly Bini and a real help to the administration of good government. Dumoka has owed Bala this debt for a long time—so long that Bala got tired of dunning him for it and came to me to ask me to compel Dumoka to pay up. So when I came down here I called Dumoka to account."

Delmar glanced challengingly at Kingdon for a moment, as if he expected to be interrupted, then turned to MacGregor again and went on:

"Dumoka said he did not owe the oil. Not until three sons were born. But this was arrant nonsense—ridiculous on the face of it—so I decided he should pay the debt and without further delay. He then said the debt had to be paid in oil and that he had no oil. He said further he did not know when he would have any oil, and obviously had no intention of ever having any. But he couldn't dodge the issue that way. Not with *me*. I asked him what property he did have, and he said pigs. So I made him pay in pigs. He howled and he raved and he whined and sniveled all over the shop. But he paid. I saw to that."

Delmar looked triumphant. The law was the law, and apparently he thought the majesty of it had been fittingly upheld. But he was not yet done. There was a burning light in his eyes as he swung suddenly and bitingly on Kingdon.

"Trouble with you trading fellows is that you can't see things as we have to see them. You fill the stomachs of Dumoka and his kind with good chop, put clothes on his back and put money into his fists when you hire his boys to do your log hauling for you. Why shouldn't he fawn upon you and show you the best side of himself and the filthy spawn who are his people?"

Delmar laughed harshly, took a long drink and went on with savage bitterness in a voice that rose octave by octave to an almost screaming crescendo:

"But our story is different. Quite. We don't feed him or clothe him. We make him obey the law. We make him pay taxes. We make him supply us with his share of labor for building roads so that this damned country of his will come out of this ungodly darkness and prosper. We make him pay his just debts.

"And because we are the law—because we represent restraint—because we demand sacrifice of wealth and labor for the greatest good of the greatest number, we are lied to, cheated, murdered in our beds, drummed out of their damned villages—drummed out, Kingdon, as I am being drummed out now!"

Delmar had come to his feet, the livid, shaking embodiment of a kind of deified authority hanging on to power by the quivering threads of his nerves alone. He spun upon MacGregor like a wild man:

"That's different, isn't it? Even you can see that that is different?"

MacGregor nodded solemnly.

"I'll admit the points of view are not likely to be the same," he said cannily. "But Mr. Kingdon strikes me as being a carefu' man, wi' a decent respect for the law." MacGregor smiled his own slight, expressive smile. "If I were you I'd let him finish his story about the pigs."

DELMAR looked at the Scotland Yard man dully, and he suddenly seemed to find that he was very tired. His hand brushed across his eyes, and as he slowly sat down again there came into his face a listening look that developed into a resigned nod as the muttering drums of Nakwi spoke to him again in that same tireless voice, assuring him that the end was not yet.

"All right, Kingdon, go on. What does Dumoka say about his damned pigs?"

So Kingdon, with a quiet nod of acknowledgment, and keeping his eyes upon Delmar, told the story of Dumoka's pigs.

Apparently Chief Dumoka was now in a most unhappy state of mind because of those pigs. Although he did not even yet concede that he had owed Chief Bala either oil or pigs, this phase of the matter had become the least of his troubles since a far greater trouble had leaped, like a sudden, scorching fire, all about him, menacing his very life.

All of the women of his own household, and every Nakwi woman who was worth her salt, had risen in revolt against him. And, most important of all, in the forefront of this revolt, was Mitchimi of Heda, the Mother of Sons.

Kingdon did not have to tell Delmar or Peter who Mitchimi was. At the mention of her name, Delmar paled, and a light of better understanding came sharply into Peter's eyes. But, for MacGregor's benefit, Kingdon explained that Mitchimi was a kind of fetish in the Nakwi country principally because she had been the mother of ten sons, all of whom had lived.

Therefore Mitchimi was divine. Her wisdom was the wisdom of the tortoise, her years were an endless chain. The light in her eyes would never die, and when she spoke all the Nakwi country held its breath and listened. She lived in the village of Heda on Nakwi Creek, not much more than a stone's throw from the bungalow that, until that morning, had been Peter Brand's headquarters.

It appeared that Mitchimi had told Kingdon that, in the Nakwi code of laws pertaining to marriage, no Nakwi woman—even those who were Nakwi by adoption—could be purchased with livestock and particularly with pigs. Rubber, Mitchimi had explained, possibly because she thought it might be useful to a white commissioner at some future time, was another forbidden medium of payment.

"Rubber?" Peter queried. "Why rubber?"

"Because rubber is the white blood of the tree," Kingdon answered, "and Nakwi women seem to have the notion that their children would be weak and anemic in consequence—white blooded is the way Mitchimi explained it. And apparently, even a Nakwi woman has a sufficient sense of delicacy to object to her offspring being, in any sense of the term, the spawn of swine."

Peter smiled and MacGregor laughed, but Delmar did not join them. He knew Mitchimi. He knew the Nakwi women; and, aside from the fact that the thought of warring upon women was not a pleasant one, he knew also that nowhere was the female of the species more deadly than in the Nakwi country.

As he looked down into his half filled glass, his mind's eye pictured a number of these women, headed by the ageless Mitchimi, passing in review before him —fit mothers of a savage and fearsome people, defiant of power and authority and ready to fight at the drop of the hat. Delmar came slowly to his feet.

"And the men, Kingdon? What's their attitude?"

"At the moment, they're standing aside. If the women need them, every mother's son of them will fight."

"Then those drums—they are— What are they saying?"

Kingdon moistened his lips and tried to get Delmar's nervous, shifting eyes to meet his.

"They are telling you, Delmar, that every woman in the Nakwi country is demanding that you get those pigs back from Bala and have them changed into oil."

"Then they do admit Dumoka's indebtedness?" Delmar asked quickly, clutching at any faint shadow of justification.

Kingdon shook his head.

"Mitchimi is not interested in the legal aspects of the case. That, she says, lies between Dumoka and Bala and you. But if Dumoka must pay—and you have decided that he must—let him pay in palm oil."

"I—I see," Delmar said and, emptying his glass, put it away from him as if it bothered him. "And—er—Dumoka? How does he stand? Where is he?"

"He is in the village of Heda."

"Heda! Mitchimi's place!"

"That's where I found him. And if something isn't done about it—well, his death sentence has already been pronounced."

"Good God!" Delmar's hand went shakily up to his throat; and he knew perfectly well that Dumoka's fate would also be his.

"I understand," Kingdon went on, "and Dumoka himself told me this—they will tie him to a mango tree—"

"Yes?" Delmar injected impatiently.

"And a girl who is still a virgin will try to earn the right to decide her own marriage price, by decapitating Dumoka with a machete, employing a limited number of strokes. In some sections of the country they test out young warriors that way."

"Dod!" MacGregor ejaculated. "What kind o' folk are they? That's no' a bonny idea at a'!" He smiled wryly. "If it's all the same to you, gentlemen, I think I'd rather be getting on about my business."

KINGDON paid no attention to this. His eyes continued to focus themselves upon Delmar, who was pacing nervously back and forth between his camp chair and a window hole that looked out in the general direction of the village of Heda; the window hole by which Kingdon had invaded Delmar's more or less elaborate fortifications.

"I had quite a talk with Mitchimi," Kingdon said mildly after a short pause.

"Evidently," Delmar said in a low, thick voice, and halted sharply. "Why the devil didn't she come to me? Why wasn't I told of all this?"

"The drums have been telling you for days," Kingdon said quietly.

"The drums? Damn the drums! Haven't these people got tongues?"

"Mitchimi said that their tongues spoke to you but you did not heed."

"When?"

"When you tried the Dumoka case. Dumoka, himself, says he warned you, but that you insisted he was lying to avoid payment, since he had no oil."

Delmar frowned and hedged, and Kingdon knew that the commissioner was now remembering certain vague testimony in the Dumoka case that was no longer vague, but was coming into sharp relief.

"Those—those damned interpreters!" Delmar growled at last unconvincingly. "They never do get things straight. If they are not actually stupid, they lie deliberately to get you into all sorts of messy trouble. What—what else did Mitchimi have to say?"

Kingdon paused. MacGregor sat up straighter. Into Peter's face there came an expectant look and Delmar had the appearance of a man who had come to a halt on the rim of a volcano. Everybody suddenly felt that what Kingdon was going to say next was going to be vitally important to all of them, and even the chatter in the compound and the roll of the drums seemed to die down so that every ear could hear.

"Dumoka's life," Kingdon said clearly, "and the lives of all of us for that matter, are in your hands, Delmar."

"Mine! What do you mean?"

"Mitchimi gives you till sundown tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!"

"By sundown tomorrow those pigs of Dumoka's must be changed into oil."

"What!" Delmar gaped and went dead white. "How the deuce can I get those pigs back from Dolaga in twenty-four hours? Damn it, it can't be done.

Might as well make it twenty-four minutes."

Kingdon glanced at MacGregor, then at Peter, then fixed his eyes on Delmar again.

"Might I make a suggestion?"

"What is it?" Delmar rasped. "You know how far Dolaga is from here."

"This suggestion," Kingdon went on mildly, "was acceptable to Mitchimi."

"Eh? You—she—she discussed terms with you and—and talks to me with her damned drums!" Even in such a situation, Delmar's pride of position climbed above all other considerations. He spun almost viciously on MacGregor.

"You see how it is, can't you! You and I are the law and they warn us with drums that they'll cut our throats! But Kingdon, here, is food and drink to them, and they tell him blandly how long they will let us live!" He wheeled upon Kingdon with as wild a light in his eyes as had ever lived in the eyes of a Nakwi. "Damn them—and damn you! If Mitchimi wants to talk terms, let her come to me."

There was a leaden pause. Peter stared down at his boots again and MacGregor, stolid as he seemed, came restlessly to his feet. Kingdon did not move.

"If Dumoka dies," he said to Delmar very quietly, "his murder will be at your door."

"At my—at—" Delmar shivered perceptibly and he turned in a mechanical fashion to pour himself another drink. "What was your suggestion?" he asked irritably.

Kingdon glanced up at MacGregor, and the Scot looked down at him expectantly.

"I suggested," Kingdon said slowly, meeting MacGregor eye to eye, "that we send young Brand through to Bala's place at Dolaga while we three remain here as evidence of good faith."

"Eh?" MacGregor exclaimed and his jaw dropped. "You're going to send him out o' here and tie me by the heels while he's—" MacGregor stopped and then proceeded more cannily. "How could ye bring me into it when you couldn't be sure I'd be here?"

Kingdon smiled imperturbably.

"You weren't brought into it, MacGregor, even though Mitchimi knew you were heading this way while I was talking to her."

"She did!"

"The drums told her," Kingdon said briefly. "Just as they tell her everything. Just as they will tell her when young Brand, who will be accompanied by two of her sons, has changed those pigs into oil at Dolaga."

HE TURNED to Peter and, extracting a bit of paper from his shirt pocket, put it into Peter's hand and spoke a little more hurriedly than usual.

"That's an order on our Dolaga beach for the oil you'll need. Turn the pigs, when you get them, over to our gang of Kroo-boys. They'll know what to do with them. You'll find Mitchimi's two sons waiting for you at the fork of the path to Dolaga, just outside this village. When you are ready to go, go out this way—the way I came in. Ready to make a start?"

"I can be ready in ten minutes," Peter said simply, pocketing the order for the all-important palm oil and coming to his feet. "I'll go out and see how my carriers feel about it."

"Just a minute," MacGregor said heavily.

"Yes?" Peter answered and stopped. "What is it?"

"Send in that sergeant o' police. I'd like to have a word wi' him."

"Surely," Peter said obligingly, and went out.

MacGregor sat down again, eyeing Kingdon with grave suspicion, while Delmar, once more pacing back and forth, seemed to be trying desperately to make up his mind about something of vital importance. Suddenly he spun on Kingdon.

"You mean, if I decide to trust our

lives in the hands of that young idiot, he'll only have to *go* to Dolaga within the twenty-four hours? He won't have to come back? The drums will telegraph the message for him?"

Kingdon nodded.

"Mitchimi's sons will see to that. Mitchimi knows no man can go to Dolaga and back in twenty-four hours."

"I—see," Delmar said slowly, his mouth twisting nervously. "Yet it seems to me—though of course, I may be wrong—but I can not seem to rid myself of the feeling that you have—well, that you have been a trifle precipitate in making up my mind for me. "After all, Kingdon—" Delmar smiled and looked like a death's head when he did it—"this is *my* business. I am the commissioner here, and I expect to be consulted in the—er—choice of my messengers and with respect to the instructions that are given them."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Kingdon said. "I assumed young Brand, if he were acceptable to Mitchimi—"

"Wouldn't you have been just as acceptable?" MacGregor broke in. "It seems to me, since she knows you so well, you would be the very man for this job."

Delmar suddenly injected himself between them.

"That is not important, MacGregor," he said testily. "The important thing is that this is a matter of law—of good government—and a representative of the government should attend to it."

Kingdon shook his head slowly.

"Mitchimi would not allow you to go," he said simply.

"I am not referring to myself," Delmar snapped. "Do you think I would demean myself to consummate a trade in pigs?"

"I wasn't thinking of the pigs," Kingdon said quietly. "I was thinking of—well, I'm very much afraid Mitchimi doesn't like you, Captain."

Delmar paused and his hand went up to his throat as if he were strangling.

"Stuff—stuff and nonsense!" he managed to ejaculate rather hoarsely. "And in any event—that is, the point is, Kingdon, you have acted with far too high a hand. The affairs of government are not your affairs. Whatever they may be in other districts, in *my* district they are *mine!* Do you understand me?"

Kingdon rose and bowed.

"I think so, Captain."

"Just a minute, gentlemen," MacGregor interrupted. "If a' our throats are in danger o' being slit, this is no' a time for quibbling. How about the sergeant o' police? Could he no' go along with the Brand laddie?"

"Quite so, MacGregor," Delmar agreed with a snap. "Quite so. Just what I was about to suggest. Thank you for making the offer. A trade in pigs is a trifle below a sergeant's rank, but I'm sure he won't mind."

"No," Kingdon said dryly. "But Mitchimi will. He won't get past the outskirts of this village."

"The devil! Wh-what—"

"I'm sorry," Kingdon said quietly. "But for the time being the government you represent does not exist in the Nakwi country—except as an enemy. If you try to send a messenger beyond your own lines, that messenger will die. Soldier, police, or even a carrier that is not vouched for."

"Vouched for!" Delmar's voice almost whistled. "Vouched for by whom!"

Kingdon paused. There was no light of triumph in his eyes, no smile of satisfaction on his lips. He knew what his answer was going to mean to Delmar.

"By me," he said, and saw the commissioner's head jerk backward as if he had been struck between the eyes.

There was silence after this, heavy, choking and suffocating. To Delmar, it seemed as if the smell of mud and thatch suddenly rose into his nostrils with smothering dryness and the tireless roll of the drums pounded in his ears like deafening thunder. For several long and painful seconds he stood stiff as a ramrod, every nerve and sinew taut and ready to snap at any moment.

"Damn them!" he breathed thickly and tensely at last. "They can't dictate to me! They can't! I'll—"

"Wheesht, man, wheesht!" MacGregor said placatingly. "Keep your head and try to get some sleep. That'll be the best way."

"Sleep! Good God! Are you all mad? Sleep! With those damn drums sneering at me! Where is Brand? Where is he? I have a message for him to deliver to Mitchimi's sons. Quite a different message from yours, Kingdon. Quite different! I'll show those swine who is commissioner here!"

Before any one could stop him or even try to, Delmar had rushed out into the rapidly gathering darkness of the compound.

"Brand! Brand! You fool! Where are you? Brand!"

Only the excited chatter of native carriers and the mutterings of his own native Yoruba answered him; this and the drums that mocked him, seemed almost to laugh at him as the black dark of the African night closed in about him. It is doubtful if he saw his Yoruba corporal loom out of the murk and come sharply to attention.

"Brand!" Delmar shrieked. "Damn you, Brand! Where are you?"

"Mas' Brand done go, sah," Corporal Kofi repeated mechanically.

"What's that? What did you say? What the devil are you talking about?"

"Mas' Brand done go, sah," Corporal Kofi repeated in the same even voice.

"Gone! Blast your lying hide! He can't be gone! I gave him no orders—no orders—" The voice trailed off harshly and Delmar's hand tugged at the collar of his shirt. "Brand!" He rushed wildly into the cone shaped hut that had been assigned to Peter. "Brand!"

But the drums alone answered him now; drums that laughed louder and louder; drums that would laugh all through the night and still be laughing in the morning.

MacGregor, with Kingdon at his elbow, stood outside Delmar's hut. The Scot looked heavily and expressively down at Kingdon, and Kingdon looked up at him.

Neither of them, just then, said anything at all.

SEATED on a camp chair outside the cone shaped hut that had been Peter Brand's, MacGregor smoked cheroot after cheroot, and watched Kingdon amble around the barricades, stopping to talk now and then to a carrier or a Yoruba in a mixture of pidgin and whatever native dialect happened to be required.

None of it meant anything to MacGregor, but since the hour was 3 P.M. and Peter Brand had been gone just twenty-one hours, the sum of Kingdon's low voiced conversations were of vital interest to the man from Scotland Yard.

The voice of the drums still spoke in a tireless monotone, rising and falling, rising and falling—endlessly. The heat of the day had been a broiling, dragging agony of copious perspiration, prickly heat, stifling and noxious odors and not nearly enough water. MacGregor's throat felt like a lime barrel, his nostrils winced at the smells, and in three more hours when the sun would drop behind the mangroves and blot out the day—well, MacGregor fingered his throat and thought of how Dumoka would die.

However, there was one thing to be thankful for. Delmar had shut up. At intervals he had damned Kingdon and Peter and the whole Nakwi breed from Mitchimi downward. All through the night, at something like half hour periods, he had damned the watch-boys, the guard in general and his Yoruba corporal in particular. Now, for almost two hours, he had retired to his hut and, so far as any one knew, was communing with himself in silence.

Kingdon had said Delmar was writing reports or letters or something. MacGregor did not care what it was. What Delmar needed was a good sleep; and

MacGregor hoped, for all their sakes, that when the commissioner did get that sleep it would not be a permanent affair.

Just then, watching Kingdon examining a shaky looking spot in the barricades, MacGregor had reached the stage where he found it dubiously interesting to consider the number of minutes in three hours of time. One hundred and eighty minutes were a lot of minutes if —well, if Peter Brand hadn't broken a leg or been snakebitten or cracked over the head, or something like that. But if he had never reached Dolaga; if he had never gone there at all; if he had somehow managed to take full advantage of one of the most ironclad getaways in MacGregor's experience, had slipped away from Mitchimi's sons, and had decided to use the situation to get rid of the pursuit of the law for good—well, now, in that case, one hundred and eighty minutes would soon tick themselves off into the dark.

MacGregor lighted another cheroot and tried to keep his eyes off his wrist watch as Kingdon came strolling toward him. Kingdon's face had a drawn look, his lips lightly pressed upon his teeth, his eyes seeming to look beyond the barricades, beyond the mangroves, far beyond Yeni and along the slithering thread of a path that ran on to Dolaga. In the past few hours he had tried not to think at all.

For a little while after he sat down, neither he nor MacGregor said anything. They had, in fact, said very little since Peter's precipitate departure; but after a few minutes, MacGregor rumbled, looking at the caked and yellow earth between his feet—

"He told me you knew his family well."

"Very well."

"But that ye didn't know he'd even been in a bank."

"Quite true. Our families drifted after I came out here. His father made a great deal of money out of a new kind of mint confection—made it suddenly and did not live to enjoy it very long. Peter must have come into some of it and, I assume, ran through it. When I gave him a job he certainly needed one. Hadn't enough for his outfit."

"Hunh," MacGregor grunted and, for several more minutes, silence fell again. The Scot watched a carrier whip off his loin cloth to swat a mango fly—watched the mango fly go over the barricades and watched the carrier clothe his nakedness again. "Don't take those lads long to get dressed in the morning." A pause. "Why didn't ye tell me, on the boat, ye knew Peter Brand's family?"

"Because it wasn't material. The material thing was that when I gave him a job he needed it. If he'd swiped a hundred thousand pounds from the bank—well, you've been on his trail long enough. You know how he lived. You've admitted you always found him in the cheapest boarding houses or *pensions.*"

"Aye, that's true. But that doesn't mean half as much to me as the fact that you knew his family."

Kingdon glanced at MacGregor in some surprise.

"Why is that important? It wouldn't be worth a bicuba in a court of law."

"A what?"

"A bicuba. Threepenny bit."

"Oh. Well, maybe not. But he's not in a court o' law yet, any more than we're out o' this pickle we're in."

"That's true," Kingdon agreed with a bothered, thoughtful look in his eyes. "But to get back to that hundred thousand pounds—odd I never heard of that bank losing that much money. It happens I know something of that bank, and—"

"The facts and the amount were never published," MacGregor interrupted. "They seldom are when it's known to be an inside job, and the thing can be kept quiet. There was a lot o' chatter and some newspaper publicity when young Brand took to his heels, but the papers never did carry the story o' the hundred thousand

pound robbery."

"I see," Kingdon said, and the bothered look deepened. "And because Peter disappeared very suddenly, it was assumed he took the money? You said it was money that was taken, didn't you? Currency?"

"Aye. Taken right out o' the vault. In instalments most likely. A little or a lot at a time." MacGregor paused a moment, glanced at a passing Yoruba, then went on. "Ye see, three men had access to that vault. Peter Brand and two others, and one o' the others had been in a sickbed for weeks before the thing happened. He was still there when the loss was found out. So that left just Peter Brand and Wallace."

Kingdon interrupted—

"Wallace?"

The detective nodded.

"That was the third man's name. He got married the day Peter Brand ran away and couldn't go on a honeymoon because the bank couldn't spare him—not with your friend Peter running off like that and the third man sick abed. Young Brand was to have been best man at Wallace's wedding, too, but when he disappeared Wallace had to get along without him."

Kingdon's eyebrows lifted sharply and fell very slowly.

"Who reported the—er—the shortage?" he asked after awhile.

"Wallace. He was a nephew of the chairman of the bank's board o' directors, and he reported the loss to him. The chairman told me his nephew was a very sick man that night."

"You mean the night he reported the matter to his uncle?"

"Aye. A very sick man. His uncle, the chairman, told me Wallace thought a terrible lot o' Peter Brand. Reporting the loss o' that money was like cutting off an arm."

"I see," Kingdon said quietly. "And just what has inspired you to be so suddenly communicative about this Wallace man, his marriage and his chairman uncle?"

MacGREGOR did not say. He looked about the compound dully, glanced at his wrist watch without really seeing it, then shrugged his massive shoulders as if to indicate that there was nothing more to be said about anything. But Kingdon could see that the Scotland Yard man was disturbed about the guilt of Peter Brand; disturbed and doubtful.

"You're quite sure, of course," Kingdon said matter-of-factly, "that Peter took that money?"

MacGregor shook his head.

"No. Not a bit. But if he didn't happen to have a hand in it himself, he surely knows who had. And, as usual, there was some trouble about a lassie."

Kingdon sat up straight.

"A what! Not a woman in the case!"

MacGregor nodded in a slightly tired way.

"There nearly always is if ye dig deep enough," he said, and sought the solace of a cheroot. "Her name was Alice—Alice Wandley—and she married Wallace. That was bad. Ye see, she changed the name, not the letter, and before a year was up Wallace and she separated."

Kingdon looked puzzled.

"But—but what has this to do with Peter?"

MacGregor did not appear to hear. He seemed to be thinking of something else, something remote from the scene and from all connections with it.

"Wallace," he said slowly and lingered on the name, "went off to the Far East. China. The girl got a divorce in Paris and your young friend Peter followed her over most o' France just to get a look at her now and then. And I followed *him*. He never spoke to her, never bothered her, never let her see him; just looked at her from a distance like a poor, hungry tyke. Dod, man, it was real pitiful to watch him sometimes."

Kingdon glanced up at MacGregor with new vision and a new respect.

"That is quite an important angle," he said quietly, after a moment or two. "But if you could watch Peter as closely as that, why didn't you arrest him?"

MacGregor smiled slightly.

"Arresting folk and putting handcuffs on them isn't the only part o' a detective's business. It's the least part o' mine, and in this case I wanted to see what young Brand would do; if, for instance, he would make the mistake of becoming suddenly wealthy and spendthrift and begin putting up at the expensive hotels the girl was stopping at. I'm speaking o' places in the south o' France, in case ye're not following me."

"I see. And did he?"

"And did he what?" MacGregor asked absently, his mind still wandering far afield even under these cramped and tensely strung circumstances.

"Did he show a sudden display of wealth?"

MacGregor pulled himself together.

"No. Not a bit. Seemed like sometimes as if he didn't have enough to eat. And then one night, very late, just as I thought it was time I took him back to England wi' me, he caught sight o' me through a café mirror and was gone like a shot." MacGregor laughed ruefully. "And I didn't meet up wi' him again till yesterday afternoon."

There was silence for a little while after that. MacGregor took a mechanical glance at his wrist watch, then appeared to become intensely interested in a carrier who was strutting about with one of the Yoruba soldier's rifles. Kingdon studied the Scotland Yard man for a moment or two, then stared at the doorway of Delmar's hut.

"This man Wallace," Kingdon said presently. "Wallace was the name, wasn't it?"

"Aye. Wallace. He seemed sore disappointed that his wife and he couldn't get along. It broke him all up and he took to drinking. Took to it bad. Then his wife left him and he went out to China."

"China—like Africa—is a big country," Kingdon suggested mildly.

"I think we could find him," MacGregor said dryly. "If we thought it worth the bother."

"I see. And the third man who had access to the vault? The sick man. Is he back on the job?"

"Oh, surely. Long ago. He's been wi' the bank thirty years and is like to be there till he dies."

Kingdon nodded slowly.

"Then it was either Peter Brand or Wallace?"

"Wallace?" MacGregor looked heavily down at Kingdon. "The man who reported the robbery? The bank chairman's nephew? A clean living, sober lad a' his life until quarreling wi' his wife drove him to the whisky bottle? Now, what makes ye think o' him?"

"What makes you think of him?"

"Me?" MacGregor's smile was the essence of evasion. "Maybe it was a drink o' cold tea. Or something the lassie said."

"What did she say?"

"She said Peter Brand had too much sense o' humor to steal. 'And some day', she told me, 'he'll get tired of running away from himself and come back to face the music; some day when you least expect him to.'" MacGregor glanced at his wrist watch again. "I hope the lassie was right."

Kingdon's eyes clouded a little and the set expression of his mouth tightened a little more. But he asked casually enough—

"And what did she have to say about Wallace?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Not a thing. Not a word. That lassie has a great gift o' silence on some things." A heavy pause. "How late is he now?"

"Peter, you mean?"

"Aye. He's not usually so slow. Didn't ye say eleven o'clock should have seen the end o' this?"

Kingdon nodded.

"Yes, I did," he said quietly. "He

should have reached Dolaga at six or seven this morning and four to five hours should have been ample for what he had to do."

MacGregor glanced toward Delmar's hut and saw that the captain was standing in the doorway. In twenty-odd hours the commissioner looked to have aged twenty-odd years. His eyes, black rimmed, stared out of a chalky yellow face like leaping fires.

"Orderly!" Delmar's voice croaked.

The khaki clad figure of a Yoruba leaped to his feet and disappeared with Delmar into the hut.

"What nonsense is he up to now?" MacGregor asked.

"I don't know," Kingdon said, and rose. "But I think I'd better see to it that he doesn't try to send that orderly anywhere. A move of that sort now would be—

"Wait! Listen!"

Kingdon's chin had jerked up sharply. MacGregor looked at him and came slowly to his feet. Every native in the compound had suddenly leaped up in a listening attitude.

"What—what are ye hearing?"

"Shh! Listen!"

So MacGregor listened and, after a few long and straining seconds, even he knew that the beat of the drums had changed; changed almost imperceptibly to a longer tempo that swayed and swelled louder and louder to a terrifying crescendo then, changing pace again, dropped gradually down to a pianissimo, only to climb once more to a fiercer, more thunderous height than before.

Kingdon was listening too; listening with a lifting, quickening smile on his lips and just a faint trace of moisture in his eyes.

"Do you hear it, MacGregor?" he asked almost in a whisper after a minute or two. "Do you hear that message? The youngster's come through all right! He's come through! Look at them!"

The carriers and the Yoruba and even the police from Benin City had suddenly broken out into loud chattering and the carriers in particular were dancing up and down and disporting themselves like none too well manipulated monkeys on a stick. They rushed toward Kingdon and yelled at him, then rushed away again, only to come back to jabber and gesticulate some more.

The Yoruba corporal saluted him, the sergeant of police saluted him, then the carriers, like hysterical children, kept on saluting him till their arms got tired.

MacGregor looked down into Kingdon's face sharply and what he saw there surprised and startled him, even beyond the important consideration of his own tremendous relief.

"I hope ye're right," he said heavily. "But—well, didn't ye *know* he'd come through on time?"

Kingdon laughed and MacGregor would have sworn the little man shivered.

"Of course I did! Never doubted it for a moment. But the Nakwis are queer and so many things can happen in this jungle overnight. So many, many things, MacGregor."

This time MacGregor was sure that Kingdon shivered.

"Let's go and break the good news to Delmar."

"Just a minute," MacGregor said.

Kingdon halted. He looked up at the stolid and perspiring detective in some surprise.

"What is it?"

"How long will it take young Brand to come back here?"

"Here. You mean—oh, you mean—er—here?" Kingdon, usually so quiet, was most unusually flustered. "Well, you can allow another day."

"That's what I figured," MacGregor said heavily. "All right. We'll wait for him. You and I. Here."

"You mean—you— Thanks, MacGregor. I'm sure—I'm quite sure you won't be disappointed."

But, as Kingdon turned to enter Delmar's hut, his step was slow and thoughtful and there was a look in his eyes that wondered.

AS IT happened, Kingdon was not asked to stretch himself on the wrack of another twenty-odd hours of waiting. Hardly more than twenty-odd minutes.

It was then that a panting messenger arrived from the village of Heda. He was another of Mitchimi's many sons and his message was for Kingdon's ears alone. There were, in fact, two messages.

The gist of the first message was that Chief Bala had been duly paid in oil for the wives Dumoka had bought, and that the contamination of the pigs had been removed from all connection with the transaction.

Therefore, Mitchimi decreed, the Nakwi law was satisfied and Dumoka, who had been foolish enough to fear the white man's government more than he had feared Mitchimi, might return to Yeni with his people, a wiser and a properly disciplined man. The white commissioner and the Yoruba men might go in peace. Palaver set.

The second of Mitchimi's messages was from Dolaga also—from Peter Brand himself—and it said:

"Tell the white man, Kingdon, that I will be back on Nakwi Creek before sundown tomorrow. Tell him and the white man MacGregor to wait."

The blood rushed into Kingdon's rather pale face when he heard this. A tingling sense of the real worth of life sprang to his very fingertips; and even Delmar's screams, sudden and alarming as they were, failed to dim the luster of the moment.

Though no one in particular seemed to have noticed it, the voice of the drums was silent.

But Delmar had noticed it. He had listened for awhile as if his very head would burst with the effort. He had stared as though his eyes would pop out of his head. Then he had laughed. And cried. And raged. Finally he screamed:

"The drums! The drums! Why don't I hear them? Orderly! Corporal! Damn you! Is this ruddy liquor making me deaf as well as blind? Kingdon! Kingdon! For God's sake! I can't hear! I can't see! Kingdon!"

It was then that Kingdon, MacGregor and Corporal Kofi, severally and together, gave Delmar an opiate extracted from Kingdon's medicine kit. Delmar was sure he was being poisoned, but presently he went to sleep whimpering like a worn out infant.

And it was after this that Mitchimi herself appeared.

She was an ancient crone with the eyes of a hawk and the gait of a grenadier; a fearsome and appalling personality wrapped in many yards of dingy print cloth with a blood-red silk handkerchief wound about her head.

MacGregor, after one good look at her, was glad Peter's message had arrived in time. However, she ignored the ponderous Scot, which was a difficult thing to do, and she ignored the existence of Delmar, the Yoruba and the Benin City police. She noticed and spoke only to Kingdon.

"Gov'ment go?" she asked tersely.

Kingdon nodded.

"One time. White commissioner sick too much."

Mitchimi seemed relieved to hear it. In that case she knew the government would get out of the Nakwi country very rapidly. So she wrapped herself more deeply in her print cloth and said:

"Be good. Nakwi man no *savez* gov'ment. Trade palaver be all ri'. Gov'ment be trouble all time." She paused and her sharp eyes seemed to look right inside Kingdon's head. "You fear Mas' Brand no come back?"

"No. Not at all."

Mitchimi almost smiled.

"All time you talk true mouth. Now you lie. What's matter?"

Kingdon hoped MacGregor, who was standing by, could not understand her.

"I no lie," he said and added adroitly, "Mitchimi tell me he come back. Mitchimi talk true all time. So he come back."

This time Mitchimi did smile.

"You *savez* quick mouth too much. You catch plenty too much head. Foh dat I come look you foh dis time. You be big man for dis Nakwi country."

Then, as nearly as Mitchimi could bow before any one or anything, she bowed before Kingdon—a sharp bending of the knees and a quick nod of the head, with her right hand outstretched, palm downward; this for all the world to see if it cared to.

Then, without another word, she turned and departed, satisfied that she had done everything she could, commensurable with her dignity and divinity, to thank Kingdon for saving her people the unpleasant necessity of cutting his throat!

Kingdon turned to MacGregor.

"Well, I imagine that's that. And your man is coming back to you—tramping twelve to fourteen sweltering hours to do it, too. How often does that happen in your profession?"

"Hunh. About as often as this kind o' thing. But I knew young Brand would come back. Knew it all the time. Which is more than you did."

"I? Well, if you gave a man a chance to run, you'd naturally expect him to take it."

MacGregor nodded and searched his pockets for another cheroot.

"Oh, surely. Every time. But Peter Brand's tired o' running. In fact—" and MacGregor smiled— "I've a notion he'll kind o' get real pleasure out o' *walking* back."

PETER'S bungalow on Nakwi Creek was not much to look at; pitch pine and corrugated iron, three rooms and a screened veranda or porch. Nakwi Creek, sullen and mangrove bound, slipped silently and swiftly past his front doorstep, and sometimes dead things had floated past and reminded him of the imminence of death in the Nakwi country.

But it all looked rather good to Peter the following afternoon, shortly after four o'clock, even though he did not know MacGregor was waiting for him on the veranda. Kingdon, too.

He hoped Kingdon was not going to haul him over the coals for leaving Yeni so suddenly. But he had taken no chances on Delmar or MacGregor or anything; and anyway, that was how he liked to do things. Animo! Edge! Get going! One time! And so he had done what Kingdon had told him to do, and now he was back ready to face the music.

At sight of him coming up the short gravel path to the door of the bungalow, Kingdon rose. So did MacGregor. He greeted them quietly and without any handshaking and, telling his houseboy to bring him a long drink, he slumped into a steamer chair between them.

There were a few desultory remarks about his journey, a joke or two about the pigs, a word about Delmar and Mitchimi and a comment on the message service of the drums. Then Peter said—

"Well, when do we start downriver?"

MacGregor did not say and Kingdon had no comment to make either. Both of them seemed suddenly to have become tonguetied.

"I suppose you thought," Peter persisted, sipping the drink the boy had brought him and looking toward MacGregor, "that I'd slope again?"

Still MacGregor did not speak. He looked out toward the black water of Nakwi Creek and kept on looking.

"You didn't expect me to come back, did you? After having a chance like that dropped into my lap?"

"Aye," MacGregor said at last, "I expected you."

"You did! Why?"

"Because you owed that much to your good friend Kingdon, here."

"But—but he gave me my chance to get away. The best chance I ever had."

"I know," MacGregor said dryly. "But I know the criminal class and ye don't qualify for membership."

"He says you're tired of running away,

Peter," Kingdon broke in quietly. "But that isn't the only reason you came back, is it?"

"No—" slowly "that isn't the only reason. I came back to say to you how sorry I am to have gotten you mixed up in this. I took advantage of you when I asked you for a job, and you've been so white about the whole thing I— well, I thought the best I could do was come back and face the music. I know you were thinking of my brother and my mother when you helped me out, but—"

"You're quite wrong, Peter," Kingdon interrupted. "I was thinking of an afternoon, a number of years ago, when your brother Jim and I deserted you shamefully to sneak off to a football match. A policeman found you bawling on a street corner and Jim and I, some hours later, found you in the police station. So I was just trying to make sure the police wouldn't get you this time."

Both Peter and MacGregor laughed, laughter without much mirth in it, and Kingdon asked briefly—

"What's the story, Peter?"

"What story?"

"The story you came back to tell me. The whole truth and nothing but the truth."

"Why, there isn't—" he turned abruptly to MacGregor. "You know, MacGregor, I can't get over the sensation of being flattered by you coming all the way out here after a small potato like me. I thought you fellows only took jaunts like this after big game. I could understand your crossing the Channel into France after me, but I didn't think that five thousand pounds would bring you this far."

"What!" MacGregor sat up straight. "What are you talking about? Five thousand!"

Kingdon had come sharply to his feet.

"What do you mean, Peter? Why do you speak of five thousand when the amount is well over one hundred thousand pounds?"

"One hundred thousand!" It was Peter's time to come to his feet, his eyes staring wide with unbelief. "Wh— what do you mean! What are you saying!"

MacGregor's practised eyes were studying Peter's face very closely.

"The shortage in the bank's funds," he said slowly, "was over one hundred thousand pounds."

"Good God! And he told me—he told me—" Peter spun on MacGregor and gripped his arm fiercely. "Don't lie to me! Don't lie to me! Because if you are telling me the truth, I'll kill the swine! I'll kill him if I have to follow him to China!"

"I'm not lying to you, laddie," MacGregor said gently. "Did ye think I'd bother wi' a case that was under a hundred thousand pounds? Ye don't flatter *me!*"

Peter glanced at him awhile and then, as if something that had been holding him together had snapped, he slumped suddenly back into his chair, burying his face in his hands.

MacGregor looked toward Kingdon and Kingdon, with his hand on Peter's head, looked expressively at MacGregor. It would have been difficult to decide which of them appeared more relieved.

LATER, when Peter had quieted down, he was induced to tell his story. He was obviously ashamed of this story and he told most of it looking straight out at the waters of Nakwi Creek. There was just one interruption and that right at the start.

"In the afternoon of the day before Wallace's marriage," Peter began and digressed long enough to explain to Kingdon who Wallace was, "I discovered what I believed was a shortage of ten thousand pounds. It was in currency, Wallace's own particular—"

"*Ten* thousand?" MacGregor interrupted. "I thought you said you understood the amount was *five* thousand."

"So I did. And I'll come to that. This currency I speak of was Wallace's own particular responsibility. I didn't really have to check it up, but I thought since Wallace wasn't at the bank that afternoon, I'd help him out. He was getting married next day and I felt he'd like to know, when I saw him that evening, that I was taking care of things for him."

Peter laughed shortly and said that the first thing he thought about when he discovered the shortage was the fact that Wallace had decided not to enjoy much more than a weekend honeymoon because the bank's cashier was sick.

Still, even with that thought in mind, Peter had been unwilling to believe that he had not made a mistake; and before he reported the matter to any one he thought he had better see Wallace first. Wallace would surely be able to explain it, because Wallace was the last man on earth any one would suspect of anything of the sort.

Peter saw Wallace that evening. He saw also that Wallace was extremely nervous about something or other; something more than just getting married; and, while busying himself with packing, was most punctilious about a legal looking strong box that he said contained deeds and other papers relating to his recently deceased grandmother's estate.

Peter recalled having seen the box before, but had never known Wallace to be so fussy about it. Also, he had never known Wallace to permit himself to take more than one drink until that evening. In addition to this, the liquor seemed to induce Wallace to express a very sudden and unusual affection for his uncle, the chairman of the bank's board of directors. Until that evening it had always been Peter's impression that Wallace had no earthly use for his uncle.

However, it appeared that Wallace's uncle had, with equal suddenness, become very generous. In addition to having been responsible for inducing Wallace's grandmother, at the last minute, to see Wallace in a kinder light and make him her heir and executor, Wallace's uncle had also given him a nice fat check for a wedding present.

Wallace, therefore, could not thank his uncle enough. If it hadn't been for his uncle, marriage to Alice Wandley would have been impossible. Utterly impossible. He'd have been a pauper. An assistant cashier and nothing more. But now it was different. Quite different. Wallace was going to give his wife the kind of home his wife should have.

And after Wallace had babbled about as much of this sort of thing as Peter could stand—after Peter had plied him with as much liquor as he thought was advisable—Peter had then and significantly put his hand on the legal looking strong box and told Wallace about the shortage of ten thousand pounds.

Peter's story paused there and Peter stared stonily out upon Nakwi Creek. Presently in a very low voice, he went on:

"I can see him yet. He looked as if he'd been poleaxed. He went gray-yellow, then green. For a minute I thought he'd at least try beating out my brains. For just that little minute Wallace was a cornered rat, guilty as he could be, but a desperate man and full of fight. Then he buckled suddenly and collapsed and began to snivel."

Again Peter paused; paused longer than before, but neither of his auditors hurried him. And again Peter's low pitched voice went on:

"I think of it now as sniveling. But I didn't think so then. Things change in three years, and three years ago—well, I felt sorry for the poor fool. His grandmother, apparently, hadn't left him very much, and his uncle, it seemed, was just as much of a swine as ever. And he said he'd done it for the girl who was going to be his wife. Only for her—to give her things she ought to have; the things she'd been accustomed to. And what would she think of him now? What could he tell her? He couldn't tell her. She mustn't know. She must never know. The shock would

kill her. If he didn't go through with the wedding—" Peter's head jerked upward and he smiled; a smile that tried to be shameless, but did not succeed very well. "And there, gentlemen, is where I rose to my full height, strutted into the spotlight and pleaded passionately with that louse to let me be a hero."

Peter laughed, did not dare look either MacGregor or Kingdon in the face and, still laughing, rose suddenly and leaned against one of the veranda uprights, his face toward the water. The laughter died sharply and, for a moment or two, Peter's forehead pressed tightly against the post.

Neither MacGregor nor Kingdon moved. The Scotland Yard man tossed away a half smoked cheroot and lighted another. Kingdon dabbed his face lightly with his handkerchief. And presently Peter turned his head.

"Wallace admitted he had squandered five of the ten thousand, mostly on the stock market, but he said he would put the other five thousand back if I'd give him a chance. I took his word for it. I told him nobody would blame him if I got out. I'd been chucking my money around like a fool—I said I was finished anyway—and if he'd go through with the marriage to—er—to the girl, everything would be all right for both of them. He said he would. He said he'd put that other five thousand back into the vault. And I took his word for it. I didn't even wait to see him do it. I lit out that night."

Peter looked shamefacedly down at his boots, then mumbled:

"Well, he went through with the wedding, all right. But—" Peter's eyes came up to a straighter level—"instead of putting back that five thousand he seems to have added ninety-odd thousand to it! He'd found a sacrificial goat and—"

"And couldn't resist the temptation to make good use o' him," MacGregor completed. "That observation o' yours, young man, solves a lot o' things." He turned to Kingdon, who was blowing his nose. "How do you send cables from an ungodly spot like this?"

"The nearest telegraph office is at Benin City," Kingdon said. "They'd take care of it for you there."

"What—what are you going to do?" Peter asked MacGregor with a normal note of anxiety in his voice.

"Nothing much. Except send a cable and go home again."

"A—alone?"

"That depends on the answer to my cable," MacGregor said cannily. "Ye see, we'll need ye as a witness, and maybe the girl would be more help if she knew it would help you."

"No!" Peter gripped MacGregor's arm. "Don't go to her! She'd get frightened! She's only been pretending to be—to be— Please don't go to her!"

MacGregor smiled slightly, looked toward Kingdon a moment, then back at Peter.

"When I see her, I'll tell her ye were asking for her," he said obligingly. "Maybe she'd invite ye to come to see her."

"I don't want her invitations!"

Peter was indignant.

"She said you had too much sense o' humor to steal," MacGregor persisted.

"She—you—" Peter gaped. Then his jaw closed with a snap. "I'm not interested in what she said."

Kingdon smiled and rose, and said he was going to stretch his legs. MacGregor thought it was a good idea, and joined him, adding that he would take care of the cable in the morning.

Something less than a minute later, when he was quite sure they were gone, Peter was burrowing in a steamer trunk —burrowing deep. When he found what he was looking for he said emphatically:

"No! I'll be damned if I will! I'm through, I tell you! I'm through!"

But he dropped the locket into the pocket of his shirt where, whatever might betide, it would be handy to look at now and then.

SEA *and* SAND

By

CLAUDE FARRÈRE

and

PAUL CHACK

THE German cruiser *Emden* has vanished.

From Hongkong to the Red Sea, ships dare not leave port. Admiral Jerram is waiting at Singapore for cable reports, not knowing where to dispatch the ten cruisers, British, French, Japanese and Russian, composing his Chinese Squadron.

For a raider that vanishes is a grave matter. When that raider is the *Emden,* commanded by Von Müller, there is good reason to fear her reappearance. On the very day of the declaration of war the *Emden* started a spectacular career by capturing the Russian steamer *Riasan,* in Shimonasaki Strait, and, after placing a prize crew aboard, sending her, under the name of *Cormoran,* to scour the Pacific Ocean.

The *Emden* then vanished a first time, to be heard from again early in September, when in the space of four days she captured two ships and sank

The true story of the end of the Emden, Terror of the Seas

six others. She melted from sight while five cruisers sought her, to emerge a few days later before Madras, where she bombarded the oil depots. A third disappearance of three days, and she was off Colombo, to capture two ships and send four others to the bottom.

Von Müller then sought shelter where least expected, at the British island of Diego-Garcia. The islanders did not know of the state of war between their country and Germany. They received the cruiser cordially. The *Emden* coaled, made necessary repairs and steamed away.

She was next heard from when, eluding seven Allied cruisers, she contrived to capture one ship and sink six more. And all this achieved without harming a single passenger, a single sailor. Von Müller, carrying on the traditions of the most gallant privateers, paroled his prisoners and sent them to ports on prize ships. Thus far, the Emden had at-

tacked only commercial vessels. Her commander proved that he could cope with warships soon enough.

Knowing that the silhouette of the cruiser was well known, he rigged up a dummy stack and, during the night of October 27th to 28th, 1914, he entered Penang harbor, where several Allied naval vessels were anchored. He sank the Russian cruiser *Yemtchoug* with shells and torpedoes, threw the port into confusion, and sent the French destroyer *Mousquet* to the bottom on his way out.

Then Von Müller vanished again.

It would have been preferable to know that the *Emden* was operating in a certain zone. In that case, shipping avoids the lanes reported as dangerous, and cruisers of the pursuing groups know where to seek. At the worst, security is purchased at the cost of a few tramp steamers, and activity increases in the regions known to be safe, in which the enemy can not appear for a period easily determined.

For the *Emden* alone is feared. Admiral von Spee, commanding the German cruiser squadron in the Far East, has elected to take his ships into the Pacific rather than to terrorize the seven seas by scattering his cruisers.

Where will the *Emden* strike her next blow? At Rangoon, at Colombo, at Bombay, at Aden or in the Malay Straights? Or again on the Hongkong-Singapore route? Or, what would be even more serious, near Australia?

In the ports of India, of Sumatra, of Java, the return of the anxious days which followed the first exploits of the raider is dreaded. During that time, the docks of Rangoon, Bombay, Colombo and Karachi offer the aspect of astonishing necropolis wherein, like dead things, vessels are huddled together with fires out. On the quays, on the docks, everywhere are piled the tea of Calcutta, rotting on the spot, the leathers of Agra and Cawnpur, vainly expected by soldiers at the front, the tin of Malacca, the sugar of Java, the wheat of Bombay, the jute of Bengal, indispensable to Australian farmers to preserve their precious harvest.

Fortunately, Admiral Jerram at Singapore is both a fist and a brain. Wise chief, he has decided to keep open, at all costs, the lane to Colombo, patrolled by cruisers. Prudent chief, he has spread the alarm everywhere. At the Cocos Islands, the cable's agents have received the call letters of the Allied cruisers in the Indian Ocean. Everywhere, everybody is ready.

NOVEMBER the 7th, 1914. There has been no news of the *Emden* for ten days. No cruiser, no liner, no tramp steamer, Allied or neutral, has reported the dreaded silhouette—the low, ominous hull topped by three tall stacks belching smoke.

Where can she be? Ten days' steaming, economizing coal, would have brought her some twenty-four hundred miles from Penang. The figure might be placed at nearer two thousand miles, allowing for time lost refueling at sea. That would bring the *Emden* within three days of Maurice Island, which she could shell without risk. Or three days away from Cape Guardafui, at the entrance of the funnel through which the shipping of the Far East spouts its way toward Europe. Or again, somewhere between Java and Borneo, or lurking in ambush in the Malay Straits; or near Natunas, but thirty-six hours away from Saïgon in French Indo-China.

There is only one clue: A month ago, the British cruiser *Yarmouth,* patrolling off Poulo-Tapak, captured two of the *Emden's* colliers. It could not be ascertained whether the raider was scheduled to meet these cargo boats before or after the Penang attack. Poulo-Tapak is about one hundred miles from the west coast of Sumatra, on the route which the raider would have followed, presuming that after the tragedy at Penang she had headed for Australia.

The *Emden* headed for Australia! The

thought is menacing. Could Von Müller have heard anything? Not probable, silence having reigned upon land and sea for three weeks. Mouths have been ordered closed on land. While at sea the voices of ships, heard by wireless operators, have been stilled. Gone are the days when, as at the beginning of the war, no merchant vessel neared a port without announcing, in clear Morse, her intention to enter on such a day, at such an hour. The lesson has been learned, for many chatterers were punished when the *Emden* sent them to the bottom.

Now, tongues are quiet. Admiral Jerram has obtained absolute silence save in case of dire need. Better still, he has locked up the undesirables. The British government has allowed at last the internment of Germans of military age, the expulsion of others. This sweep of the broom had been needed since August 4th. The drama at Penang was needed to bring it about. Now that it is done, every one feels better.

This precaution was taken just in time.

At this moment, thirty-eight vessels bearing thirty-two thousand soldiers from Australia and New Zealand, ten thousand horses and fifty field guns, are on the way to Colombo. The immense convoy left King George's Sound, Australia, on the 1st of November, protected by the British cruiser *Minotaur,* chief of convoy, the Australian cruisers *Melbourne* and *Sydney,* and the Japanese cruiser *Ibuki.*

There are thirty-eight merchant ships, a disorderly crowd! It must be recalled that heretofore these merchant ships had been accustomed to traveling alone, isolated, free, each one regulating her speed according to the power of her engine. Suddenly they are ordered to remain grouped, at fixed distances and intervals, at stations which force the engines to function at stipulated speed. This discipline, necessary to safe progress, demands of trained naval men a keen eye, long habit and unfailing watchfulness through night and day.

Such navigating is not learned in a day, nor even in a month. The routine of the British masters is upset. Therefore the file of ships lengthens endlessly. The slowest are placed in the lead, but invariably end by straggling. At departure, the columns are nearly in order. At the end of a few hours confusion starts and can not be mended.

It is even worse at night. All deem collision far more likely to occur than an attack by the enemy. Ships keep far away from their consorts. Although the showing of lights has been forbidden, lights are flashed without hesitation. During the day the convoy, which should cover seven kilometers, stretches out for twenty or twenty-five. The laggards must be awaited, close in, limping.

Imagine the sudden onslaught of a raider on this formless mass during the night: For the enemy there can be no hesitation; all are foes. She strikes into the thick of them, with gun and torpedo, then flees and vanishes in the gloom. The cruisers of the escort scarcely dare reply, for fear of striking those they protect.

An attack means disaster, perhaps twenty thousand men lost; and twenty thousand men represent the toll of a battle. What would be worse still, it would mean the eternal shame of the British navy, and the generous spirit of the Pacific dominions, eager to assist the mother country, would be cut off short.

It is hoped that Von Müller knows nothing of the convoy. Although the *Emden* is not the only one to be feared. The *Koenigsberg,* a German cruiser stationed at the outbreak of hostilities on the African East Coast, is also roaming the seas. Her latest exploit dates back to September 20th: On that day she sent to the bottom the British cruiser *Pegasus,* at anchor before Zanzibar.

She has vanished since then, and a union of the two raiders is possible.

Certainly the magnificent prey formed by the Australian armada would be worth the trouble!

On the 8th of November, at seven o'clock in the morning, the convoy is some one hundred and sixty miles southeast of the Cocos Islands. It will pass, the next night, forty miles east of the tiny archipelago. The wind comes from aft, swifter than the ships limping along at seven knots.

So near the equator the air is stifling. There is no special arrangement for men or animals, no ventilators. Some of the ships are unlivable. Men drop, gagged by the stench of the stables or the carcasses of horses, of which many die. Upon the calm water the sun flares in sheets and rebounds in burning arrows which dig into the eye and brain.

AT THAT moment the *Emden* is dead ahead, near the Cocos.

On a map of the Indian Ocean, trace two lines: One from Freemantle, Australia, to Colombo; the other from Tamatave, Madagascar, to Torres, Malay Archipelago. These lines intersect somewhere south of the equator, in the immensity of the ocean. An oasis marks their intersection, a cluster of coco palm trees emerging from the waters. These trees are visible from a distance of fifteen miles. For a long time they appear to take root in the sea, and only from very near can one behold the clod of earth that feeds them.

Here are the Cocos Islands, also called Keeling, in honor of the navigator who discovered them. Six islets and fifteen reefs surround a central lagoon; an atoll, similar to all the atolls of Polynesia. On the north are the islands of Horsburgh and Direction, two kilometers long, six hundred meters wide. On the east are New Selima, reservoir of the precious fresh water, and Gooseberry. On the south are Selima and Ross. The rest are mere stones, too small to be named on a map: The Malays call them "Poulo something or other", and that is enough.

An isolated reef emerges fifteen miles to the northeast of the circle—North Keeling. One of its capes bears the cheery name of Shipwreck Point. The perpetual surging of the corals toward the surface makes approach to the archipelago dangerous. However, on the north, between Horsburgh and Direction, there is an anchorage, Port Refuge, well sheltered from the ceaseless swells.

The swell is like the breathing of the ocean. The southwest wind, which blows all year, lifts big, rounded crests which slide quietly out of the South Seas, gently toss the ships plying from India to Australia, and suddenly meeting the insolent, tiny wall of coral, strive to scale it, are torn and drop back in a raging foam. The surf is strong on the Cocos Archipelago. At night the pounding of the waves is heard from afar. Nearer, a faintly luminous line can be discerned, the phosphorescence of the spray.

Until recently the Cocos Islands were useless. But a time comes when the most microscopic lands find a purpose. And it is noted, somewhat too late, that the British were right to plant their flag there. These parcels of coral became precious about 1900, when the Eastern Extension Cable Company decided that one more wire should link England to the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

On Direction Island the submarine cable coming from London, via Singapore and Batavia, splits into two branches, one going to Maurice Island, the other to Perth in Australia. Later, a wireless station completed the system of communication. The Cocos Islands have become an advanced sentry which can be heard from afar.

And the *Emden* is near the Cocos.

Von Müller is not concerned with the great convoy from Australia. He does not know the date of its departure, and presumes it routed directly toward

Aden. But he does think of Australia, knows that he is dreaded there.

He is aware that his raids in the Indian waters have excited public opinion at Melbourne, Sydney, Freemantle, Adelaide, Brisbane—everywhere. From there started the most violent protests against the British Admiralty which, it was claimed, did not know its business. For France is not the only country in which three-fourths of the people ignore the fact that naval warfare is difficult and offers problems often unsoluble.

In truth, if Great Britain claims to be mistress of the seas and is checked by a single raider, what does it mean? Why not station, before each important port, at least one cruiser stronger than the possible enemy? One can almost hear the street corner critics, the barroom experts!

Von Müller, truly a great man, does not need to hear to guess. That marvelous captain is also a master strategist. A famous destroyer of ships, but above all a formidable disturber of shipping, acting more through menace than deeds.

He had decided:

"I shall destroy the cables at the Cocos Islands. Australia, her communications cut off, will tremble like a leaf for the safety of the commercial lanes west and south. Admiral Jerram will be forced to yield to public opinion, and send his cruisers in that direction, barring the route of the Far East. After that stroke, I shall make for Sokotra, where no one expects me, ravage the Gulf of Aden, then fall upon the shipping bound for Bombay."

When the prize vessel, which had taken aboard the survivors of the French destroyer *Mousquet* sunk outside Penang, the *Newburn* is lost to view, the *Emden* meets one of her colliers, the *Buresk*, and both travel south.

On November 2nd the cruiser coals up near one of the islets strung out like a rosary before the West coast of Sumatra, then spends the day of the 5th in the Malay Straits. Von Müller reasons that part of the Far East shipping, to avoid falling in his clutches, shall have deemed it wiser to swerve from the direct route from Singapore to Colombo, and will pass by the Straits and the Cape.

But the sea is deserted. The wait is useless. The *Emden* steams toward the Cocos Islands; another collier, the *Exford*, is awaiting her thirty miles from North Keeling, it is expected. At eight o'clock in the evening of the 7th, the raider is at the meeting place.

No one in sight.

That is a disappointment. Two colliers should be there. Unless there is coal, all of Von Müller's splendid program trembles on its base. Fortunately, on the morning of the 8th, the *Exford* arrives. She is also astonished not to find the other collier, the *Markomannia*. But the *Markomannia* has been captured too recently by the British cruiser *Yarmouth* for the Boche agents to have had time to warn the *Emden*.

No matter, Müller decides, captured ships shall supply the needed coal. Meanwhile, he sends the *Exford* in the direction of Sokotra.

SINCE the preceding evening, the *Emden* hears a new voice, the wireless station at the Cocos. Every hour this station sends the word "urgent," followed by three call letters, always the same.

No one answers.

The message is perhaps a signal to merchant vessels; if so, these ships should have the politeness to acknowledge it. The silence slashed by an incomprehensible call is irksome. Müller liked the gossip of yore, from which he always gleaned some information. At last, on the morning of the 8th, a certain *"NC"* replies. Who is she? Perhaps the *Newcastle*. The raider listens in: The conversation is in code. Still talking, *NC* goes off. It is heard more and more dimly.

At noon, *NC* can be estimated to be two hundred miles distant, and can no longer concern the *Emden*. She is surely alone, for no one joins in the dialogue. The Germans shall be left at peace during their operations. Nevertheless, it seems best to put off until the next day the destruction of the Keeling cables. *NC* shall then be very far.

That means a day lost, twenty-four hours of useless steaming, a waste of time, a waste of fuel. The failure of the *Markomannia* to arrive at the appointed meeting place is deplorable. Still, the time can be used to rig up the dummy stack, which changes the cruiser's silhouette, and to make preparations for the landing party which shall act the next day, at dawn.

The steam launch and the two whaleboats shall carry six noncommissioned officers, thirty-eight men, with rifles, pistols and four machine guns; Von Mücke, second in command of the *Emden*, shall take charge; two ensigns shall accompany him.

Müller's orders are as follows: Destroy the wireless station, cut the cables; that of Australia first; then that of Maurice Island, then that of Batavia. Seize all code books, all documents, all apparatus light enough to be taken away. If there are troops on the Islands, turn about without attacking.

The crew of the *Emden* has been reduced, by the necessity of placing men aboard captured vessels and colliers. Von Müller must prevent all needless loss of men, in prevision of a naval combat which he may have to fight at any moment. If there are troops ashore, the *Emden* shall be content with bombarding the wireless station and cable office.

Naturally, if the station on the Island attempts to send a message, the *Emden's* wireless shall work at maximum power to interfere with the signals.

It happens that the *NC* is not the *Newcastle*. *NC* is the *Minotaur*, receiving this telegram:

Cocos Islands to *Minotaur*—relayed from Singapore. Commander-in-Chief Chinese Squadron to Captain of *Minotaur*:

> SITUATION SOUTH AFRICA GRAVE. DESPITE VICTORY OF BOTHA, UPRISING CONTINUES. DE WET AND OTHER BOER LEADERS IN THE FIELD. ARRIVAL GERMAN PACIFIC SQUADRON AT CAPE OF GOOD HOPE POSSIBLE. AS SOON AS YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS MESSAGE, TRANSMIT COMMAND OF AUSTRALIAN ENVOY TO CAPTAIN OF *MELBOURNE* AND PROCEED TO JOIN CAPE SQUADRON, STOPPING TO COAL AT MAURICE ISLAND. WE ARE STILL WITHOUT NEWS OF THE *EMDEN*. AN ATTACK BY THIS CRUISER UPON COCOS ISLAND IS POSSIBLE. GREAT VIGILANCE IS ORDERED PASSING THROUGH THAT REGION. ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT, SIGNAL YOUR POSITION, THAT OF CONVOY, AND REPORT.

At the same time as the *Minotaur*, the *Melbourne* has heard, decoded and understood. She hoists the flag of convoy leader. The *Minotaur* heads for Maurice Island and vanishes in the southwest. She continues conversing with the Cocos, which transmit news cabled from Singapore. The other British ships listen in and remain quiet. They learn for the first time of a British defeat at sea—Cradock's squadron crushed off Coronel by the German Pacific Squadron.

The *Emden* hears only the station on the Cocos, and the set of *NC*, growing weaker constantly. She believes herself alone, while there approach, silently, three cruisers, each one stronger than she. Three cruisers dead ahead, unaware of the proximity of the famous raider, which has escaped the hunters sent on her heels by the dozen, into the pocket formed by the Gulf of Bengal.

Near the Cocos the lanes of flight are numerous, that is certain! But this time luck has changed . . .

After a calm and stifling night, dawn

of November 9th breaks. Slowly, after daylight, the stragglers close in on the convoy.

Five minutes to seven:

COCOS ISLANDS TO ALL ALLIED SHIPS: A STRANGE VESSEL NEAR THE CHANNEL. SOS—SOS—SOS.

The signal from Cocos is in clear Morse.

At seven o'clock the *Melbourne* signals to the *Sydney*—

PROCEED COCOS ISLANDS ALL SPEED TO IDENTIFY VESSEL SIGNALED.

At 7:05, the *Melbourne* signals to the *Ibuki:*

HAVE SENT *SYDNEY* TO RECONNOITER COCOS. SHE WILL SIGNAL NEWS. TAKE HEAD OF TRANSPORTS. *MELBOURNE* WILL TAKE THE LEFT UNTIL RETURN OF *SYDNEY.*

The convoy is fifty-five miles north of the Islands. In two and one-half hours the *Sydney* will know the truth. Five minutes were sufficient for Captain Silver, of the *Melbourne,* to make a grave decision. The problem, nevertheless, was not simple. No problem is simple at sea in wartime, when one drags behind forty ships, more or less wheezy and defenseless. In this case, Silver must expect the worst—the *Emden* and the *Koenigsberg* together. He must obey one of two conflicting traditions. The first enjoins that he drive straight for the foe. The second forbids a convoy leader to leave his convoy. The *Melbourne* must therefore stay.

The *Ibuki* is by far the more powerful of the two other ships. And the Japanese are burning with desire to fight. But the two German cruisers may attack the convoy. Therefore, the *Ibuki* must be kept near to meet this attack, and the *Sydney* must go alone. Despite the pleas of the Japanese captain, Silver holds him at his station at the head of the line.

At 7:20, the *Melbourne* signals to the Cocos Islands—

SYDNEY PROCEEDING TOWARD YOU.

The Islands do not answer. Has the station been destroyed already?

DAWN of November 9th. All is calm. For twelve hours the *Emden* has not heard *NC.* There is no likelihood of being disturbed. The German raider will be able, at leisure, to destroy the cables and coal later. With extreme caution, Von Müller has left his collier, the *Buresk,* thirty miles to the north; he will call her when needed.

At the first light of day the lookout climbs to the crow's nest. The dummy stack is erected. A gentle wind blows out of the southwest; squalls of warm rain fall from time to time. The swell rises regularly from the sea. Between showers the visibility is good enough.

A few minutes before six o'clock the sun emerges from the waters. The indistinct mass of palms becomes an intense green. One can note a break in the white line of the surf which seems to lap the roots of the trees, the channel into Port Refuge. All seems asleep on the Islands. The native huts on the shore of the lagoon are outlined in the moist dawn. On Direction Island there are a few buildings of masonry. The mast of the wireless rears above the palms. Near it is the cable station.

No steamer in sight. A few Malay crafts and, near a small wharf, a tiny three-masted schooner, painted white. Through the glass the name can be read: *Ayesha.*

Six o'clock; the *Emden,* showing no colors, crosses the pass and anchors. Five minutes later the steam launch slides toward land, towing the two whaleboats. Come, all is well! The wireless station of the Island is silent; therefore there is no British ship within call.

Müller can call the *Buresk* without

fear. Needless to talk loudly, for she is very near. The *Emden* sends three times, at diminished strength, the signal agreed upon.

But the English station answers, in plain Morse, but softly also:

WHAT DID YOU SAY? WHO ARE YOU? TO WHOM DO YOU SPEAK?

For the people on the Island do not know the silhouette of the *Emden* from any other. And this ship, which has anchored so quietly, may be, after all, the *Minotaur,* with which there has been such a long talk the preceding day. The error is explainable, for the boats laden with men can not be seen from the station.

The *Emden* does not answer.

The Cocos station then crackles out at maximum strength the signal of alarm. The raider tries to confuse it, fails. From the sea come coded messages. Very remote, however, two hundred or two hundred and fifty miles away, the German radio men state. There is time to do the job and run.

On land Von Mücke hastens. His sailors rush into the cable office. With gun butts and axes, with hammers, the Morse apparatus is knocked to pieces, the sending and receiving sets are smashed. Red faced, obese and placid, the English manager of the station witnesses, silently, the sacking and wrecking. From burst chests, the signal registers, the code books, the important papers are taken. The mast of the wireless flies into the air, cut down by an explosion.

All that is quickly done. But the cables resist. Their sheathing of steel wire defies the ax. Petards twist them without breaking them. Sailors rush into the water, haul to shore the submarine strands of the cables, less solidly protected.

Minutes pass. Suddenly, after a warning blast, the *Emden* signals, "Make haste!"

One cable is cut at last. That of Australia. But where are the others? Seven or eight strands leave the station, disappear into the water. Some of them are spares. Which ones? How is one to know?

Quickly Von Mücke tries to find an Englishman willing to talk. But it is the *Emden* which talks, suddenly, in dots and dashes with its siren.

"Rally!"

All hands make for the boats, and the men left on guard run up to inform Von Mücke—

"Captain, the *Emden* is casting off."

That is true. The cruiser turns on the spot, toward the outlet, then starts away. From land, no foe can be seen. Then—why the devil has Müller gone off?

All the Germans who have landed pile into the whaleboats. Von Mücke, at the rudder of the steam launch, cuts short through the reefs to overhaul the cruiser. Too late, for already the first salvo thunders.

The *Emden* has fired. And, immediately, around her rise the spouts thrown up by shells fired by an adversary which the men in the small boats can not as yet see. The boats turn about. And the landing party reaches the shore. Leave it there, for the moment, to its anguish.

WHEN the *Emden* anchored at Port Refuge the raider had given up the thought of coaling. After all, the British cruiser which answered awhile ago might be nearer than expected.

The landing party has two hours' work, and by the end of that time the *Buresk* will have arrived. But here she comes, or rather here is her smoke, signaled by the lookout, over there in the north. Yet there is much smoke, and the *Buresk* usually avoids signaling her presence so openly. Perhaps it is simply a mail steamer.

Nine o'clock; All must be finished on land. The wireless mast has gone down long since. The *Emden* signals that the

work must be finished quickly. Now, through the smoke the masts of the newcomer are discerned. These masts are much too tall for those of a merchant vessel. Müller has understood at a glance, and gives orders.

"Recall landing party. Fire all boilers. Sailing stations. Make ready for combat."

If only the boats have time to come back! The *Emden* would not have too many with her full crew. The enemy, plainly visible now, has four stacks. She is, therefore, the *Newcastle,* the famous *NC:* Two six-inch guns, ten four-inch guns, twenty-five knots! Were it not for the six-inch guns, odds would have been even. Bah! What matter? Such as she is, decides Müller, that ship can be licked.

9:30. The anchor is weighed.

The boats are still near land. It is impossible to await them. The enemy is coming on too fast. Von Müller hopes to break her legs by putting a few shells full into her hull. Then he will torpedo her.

The raider opens fire at nine thousand meters. Her shells are on the target immediately and demolish the foe's telemeter. The reply arrives, poorly aimed, fortunately for the *Emden,* as all the shells throw up spouts such as made by heavy calibers. That ship uses six-inch guns only, therefore she can not be the *Newcastle.*

But what matters the caliber, if the shells fall in the water? The German gunners are superior to those facing them. Von Müller wishes to make the most of this advantage. He steams nearer the enemy, rakes her with his rapid, accurate fire.

Seeking closer range was a bad idea; the *Emden* catches it in her turn. Her wireless apparatus is blown away. A gun is demolished. Communications between the fire-control stations and the guns are cut off. Orders must be given through speaking tubes; in the uproar of explosions, orders reach their destination muffled and distorted. Soon the German fire scatters.

After ten minutes of combat the *Emden* is very sick. A mast and a stack are down. The lyddite shells of the British sweep gunners from their guns. Aboard the privateer the quick cadence of fire slows down. The gunnery officer, the torpedo officer, are wounded. Ten minutes later the engine of the steering gear jams.

It is impossible to steer by hand, for all helmsmen are killed. The *Emden* steers with her propellers, as best she may.

Only two guns are still firing.

A torpedo may save her. Müller steams toward the Australian cruiser, to compass shooting distance. Glossop, captain of the *Sydney,* already feels he has won the game. He allows the German to draw nearer and orders a torpedo fired, which, however, misses the mark.

A bare five thousand meters separate the ships. It is time to answer, to make another try. But aboard the raider there remains no torpedo tube in condition to fire.

The *Emden* now has no masts, no stacks. She flames up from end to end. The smoke is so thick that for a moment the *Sydney* believes her sunk. The two ships are following parallel courses toward North Keeling Reef. From time to time the discharge of a gun from the German cruiser proves that she will continue to fight on to the finish.

Suddenly Captain Glossop understands that Von Müller, knowing himself lost, is going to ground his ship on the Island, to save what remains of his crew. At top speed the *Sydney* spurts to cut her off. Too late! At 11:15 the *Emden* strikes Keeling at fifteen knots. A part of the crew leaps into the water and swims for the Island through the breakers of the big reef.

The battle has lasted one hour and forty minutes. The glorious raider is a shapeless wreck. And British shipping is safe at last.

THE German flag still flies from the *Emden,* from what was the *Emden.* Nevertheless, the *Sydney* ceases firing. A smoke is in sight. Can it be the *Koenigsberg?* What a superb double stroke that would mean for the Australian cruiser.

Full speed ahead, and soon the distance is cut down; enthusiasm falls. It is the *Buresk.* The collier hauls down her flag without offering resistance. A prize crew leaps aboard her, goes below, to find the sea cocks open, bent. Impossible to close them. Water is rising in the hold already. The German crew tumbles into the boats; then four British shells speed the dive of the collier to the bottom.

Now for the *Emden.* The *Sydney* goes toward the reefs on which the raider is stranded. On the way she passes German sailors swimming and shouting for help. The boats of the *Buresk* are left behind to aid them.

Slowly the *Emden* comes in sight, a corpse now.

On the horizon she seems a big, grayish rock, roughly rounded out, vaguely crested. Or again a monstrous whale, beached at the foot of the trees which the eternal south wind has bent northward, as if they strove to flee from this specter. The waves which break upon the prone form seem lifted by the last convulsion of a marine monster.

Nearer one beholds a heap of scrap iron. There is little left to recall the details of a ship; no masts, no stacks, no bridge, no boats. The hues become precise. The hull, once white, has taken the reddish color of iron licked by flame. Here and there, thin smokes rise, remnants of carelessly extinguished fires.

The *Sydney* stops four thousand meters away to scan the wreck. From the stump of a mast hangs a square of white cloth upon which spreads a great, black cross—the German naval ensign. The sole object still intact aboard, it flies over the skeleton. Will it be necessary to fire upon this shapeless, battered hulk? Captain Glossop does not wish to do it; at his order the flags of the international code are unfurled and float gently in the evening breeze.

The question is, "Do you surrender?" and brings the answer, sent in Morse, "What is the signal? We have no more code books."

The *Sydney* insists, in Morse also, "Do you surrender?"

This time there is no answer. Glossop hesitates awhile longer, consults his officers.

"Never," they say, "will Müller consent to surrender."

It is mad. It is uselessly heroic. It is not a ship that the captain has under his feet. After such a campaign, of which nothing can tarnish the pure glory, after this last combat as a fitting climax for his past career, why bring about useless massacre?

Yet, the colors are still flying. Reluctantly Glossop opens fire.

A first salvo . . .

Germans leap into the sea, swim for the Island. Several vanish, rolling in the breakers. Fires break out. The *Emden* is not shooting. But why is her flag still hoisted? Perhaps there is no one aboard? Yes! Men can be distinguished, sheltered as best as they can behind twisted plates.

Long minutes pass.

A second salvo . . .

A silhouette advances to the stump of mast, hauls down the colors and hoists another white flag lacking a black cross.

At last!

The Australian cruiser sends toward the *Emden* one of the *Buresk's* boats carrying a message:

"The *Sydney* must proceed immediately to Direction Island to examine condition of the cables and wireless station. She will return tomorrow morning and save the survivors."

Von Müller, remaining aboard as is proper, is unwounded. His heart is heavy at the sight of all this blood.

Why has he survived his ship, flesh of his flesh; his beautiful white *Emden*, which once scattered terror and now is only a mournful wreck?

He is silent, calm as always; nothing can touch him any more. Yet the ghost of a smile lights his face when he receives the message from the *Sydney*.

"My children," he says, "all is not over yet. You know Von Mücke; he surely has fortified himself on the Island. I would not like to be in the boats when an attempt to land is made."

WHEN the *Sydney* arrives before Port Refuge, night has fallen. It is better to wait until dawn. The night passes, offshore, and careful watch is kept.

On the 10th, in the morning, the Australians find the wireless station completely demolished. One of the cables is cut, one damaged, the third intact. There is not a German left on the Island. The preceding day, at six in the evening, they started off on the *Ayesha*, the wormeaten schooner, without maps, almost without food, almost without water.

It is time to go to help the *Emden*. Hard task, for during the night the wind has strengthened, the sea is rough, and the German derelict is high and dry on the reef, on the weather side. From eleven in the morning until five in the evening the men of the *Sydney* toil. They easily pick up the Germans who have reached land.

To save those aboard is more difficult. The task would be impossible to carry out if the stern of the *Emden* had not settled during the night. The main deck is almost at the level of the crests of the highest waves. On this deck prone forms are lined up under canvas, in pools of blood. Near them men stir, faces blackened and feverish. The sun beats down mercilessly, arouses fierce thirst.

The wounded must be taken off.

It is impossible for the rescuers to come alongside; it would mean certain crushing. The boats, caught in the rollers of the surf, can barely keep afloat. It is a question of life and death, for to fall athwart a sea is to be lost. It is harder work to save these people than it was to fight them.

A boat, well handled, comes near enough to throw a line aboard and maintains her position at a safe distance through the efforts of her crew. On the lifeline the wounded slide, buffeted by the sea—three officers and fifty-three men. All come through safely. And all are choking with thirst, rush for water at once.

When this is over, the longboat leaves, to be replaced by Captain Glossop's own yawl. Glossop desired it thus, and sent her for the commander of the *Emden*, alone remaining aboard. And when, last of the eleven officers and two hundred sailors saved by the *Sydney*, Frigate-Captain von Müller sets foot on the Australian cruiser, he is greeted, according to the custom among sailors, with as much honor as if he were a comrade returning from a victorious combat.

Then the *Sydney* heads for India, dipping her flag in salute when she passes the spot where died seven officers and one hundred and eight sailors of the enemy.

Far to the north thirty thousand Anzacs sail on toward Colombo.

ALONE upon the sea, as inconspicuous as a gull resting on the water, a small white schooner sails toward the north. She carries the second in command of the *Emden* and his forty-six men.

Alone of the entire German cruiser squadron, they shall rejoin the combat forces of their country. Leaving under the protection of Ayesha, beloved spouse of the Prophet, it is on Moslem territory that they shall land . . .

Von Mücke, chief of the landing party, has given up the hope of reaching the *Emden*. Perched on a roof, he follows

the start of the drama. The issue is never in doubt; the spouts surrounding the raider are too large. He must make plans.

To start with, Mücke hoists the German flag, proclaims martial law, has trenches dug on the shore, prepares his four machine guns. Then he thinks over the situation. What is the use of all that?

To beat off a landing party? Agreed, but what after? After, it will be an inevitable annihilation under the heavy shells of the *Sydney*. He can make an effort to save honor first; then with the last cartridge fired, it will mean surrender and the prisons of Singapore or Malta until the end of the war.

That would be a sad finish. They must flee at once. The *Sydney* is not alone; the Englishmen on the Islands speak of the *Minotaur* and of many others who will surely come to investigate the silence of the Cocos station, more eloquent at this time than any call.

It is imperative to be out of sight of the Islands by the next night. And Mücke leads his men to the little white schooner anchored in the port.

The British look on and smile. The *Ayesha* is nothing but a derelict rotting at her moorings. Formerly she carried copra, but for years no one has risked himself aboard. Her hull is held together by the paint. At the first rough weather she would open up like an overripe orange.

The German officer is stubborn. He prefers making a hole in the water to surrender.

The islanders, understanding quickly that this headstrong chief, pressed for time, will take by force what he wishes, bring of themselves, with good grace, water, food, garments, mattresses and dishes. The German sailors, three-fourths of whom have never set foot on a sailing vessel, busy themselves like old salts. From the rigging, piled in a heap on the deck, they extract cordage, seize pulleys, bend sails to the yards.

At noon all is in readiness.

From the sea the wind brings the muffled roar of the guns. If only the *Emden* can hold out for awhile! If the *Sydney* comes before night, all is lost.

But toward evening, here she comes. The refraction which precedes sunset makes her appear enormous. Will she enter the port? No—she turns about and vanishes.

At nightfall a cortège leaves the bay.

The steam launch tows the *Ayesha*, which in turn tows the two whaleboats. Mücke, atop a mast, pilots the group through the coral. Course due west as soon as they are through the pass. The English have been told that the landing party will head for the African coast, and they must appear to take that direction. Then, if the *Sydney* seeks them that way, she can run awhile!

Soon the steam launch is abandoned. Course to the north, now, open sea and a handsome southeast wind. The swell is too long to bother this hundred-ton vessel. Braced on her sails, the *Ayesha* holds out; her disjointed old timbers creak at each pitch; but she soon will get back into the sea habit.

She will have time. The nearest coast that she will try to reach is some six hundred miles eastward. Which distance represents, for a sailing ship, a promenade of more than twice the length. That is easy to understand. If she attempted to go straight, the craft would have to fight against the southeast trade wind and the equatorial stream. As well say that she would remain in one spot. To sail close to the wind is dangerous for a rotten hull.

The bow is buried in spray, the stays snap in the pitch and, if the wind shifts a quarter, the spars drop on the crew's heads. What the *Ayesha* needs is a thwart wind or a blow from aft. She therefore must seek the northwest winds, where she is sure to find them, somewhere near the eighth degree south. Four degrees of latitude to ascend, two hundred and forty miles—a small matter!

Meanwhile, three officers and forty-six

men must be quartered where lived a captain and five Malay sailors. The crew crowds the 'tween deck, which is swarming with cockroaches long as a man's hand, thick as a thumb—and starving!

It is there that the German sailors try to sleep, elbow to elbow, tossed on one another at each roll. The cleverer men manufacture hammocks with rotten sail canvas and worn cordage. What heat prevails on that deck!

There are two cabins intended for officers; but they are carefully calked to serve as storerooms, to the great dismay of the giant cockroaches, which were ready to launch a mass attack. There is no galley. There is nothing except a tiny stove. So great sheets of tin are laid on the deck, fires are lighted upon them, and the men squat near, holding their mess kits, picnic style, at the end of sticks.

They cook as best they can. With sea water from the start, for fresh water is scarce. The four water tanks aboard have been filled, but three of them are so rusty that their content is of no use. They are emptied and cleaned. Rain shall refill them, if God wills! Meanwhile the ration consists of a cupful per man per day.

A methodical search of the various nooks on board brings to light some precious material: A sextant, a log, chronometers, a book of nautical instructions for the Indian Ocean, edition of 1845, a big map on which details are lacking, for it spreads from the African Coast to the China Seas. There is discovered, also, a "Forecast of the Weather", dated 1914. That weather forecast is a hopeful sign.

The schooner may have been used this year. Chances are small that her captain would have purchased that book to while away his leisure hours ashore.

All is well; with a sextant, chronometers and a weather forecast, it is possible to navigate. Christopher Columbus traveled very far with much less at his disposal.

THE course is still due north. The wind abates gradually; the swell from aft persists, and as the *Ayesha* progresses slowly, the whaleboats she is towing, pushed by the waves, show an annoying tendency to climb aboard without permission. One of them scales the taffrail of the poop and smashes it. Both are abandoned at the same time.

Blessed downpours supply water. Canvas is stretched to receive it; it is emptied into old oil tins which are poured into the tanks. And, supreme happiness for a sailor, it becomes possible to wash. The scuppers plugged, the deck forms an immense basin in which stark naked men play, splash about.

The equator is near, and dead calm starts, interrupted by raging squalls which leave after their passage many torn sails which must be repaired with the cloth garments of the sailors. Little by little, the neat German seamen who started out are transformed into bearded, ragged pirates.

The calm is worse than the squalls. The *Ayesha,* hard tossed by the swell, without the brace of her sails, rolls deeply, groans, springs her seams. Water rises in the hold rapidly. The men must pump. The only pump found aboard lacks leather washers; the cockroaches have eaten them. The piston is swathed in greased rags which the giant insects devour as soon as movement is stopped.

There is more sun than is wanted, melting the tar in the seams. Nothing is in sight; the eighth degree has been crossed long ago. It is there, according to meteorologists, that the northwest winds should have been picked up. Food grows scarce. But the northwest winds do not start until November 22nd, near the third degree south. The meteorologists made an error of a mere five degrees, or three hundred miles. Nothing important!

At last, here comes the wind, after twelve days of patient waiting. And now all goes splendidly! The *Ayesha*

speeds before the wind, headed east. Where shall she go? There is choice, and all prospects are equally unpleasant. No maps to land with, and the risk of running across a grouchy Hollander who will intern all hands on arrival.

Von Mücke decides to steer for Padang, on the southeastern coast of Sumatra. That for three reasons: First, the two ensigns with him know the channels into the harbor; and then the old logs show that the schooner is totally unknown on that side of the island; lastly, it is certain that a smart consul will be found ashore, that there will be German steamers in the port. An attempt shall be made to reach one of them. That which has been done until now has been much more difficult.

There also is the risk of meeting some British or French destroyer. The case is foreseen. She will be allowed to come near—and the Germans will then board and capture her.

Living on the old sailing ship, the men have felt stirring within them the souls of the privateers of yore. Brought up, as are all sailors in the world, on the marvelous exploits of Surcouf and Bouvet, they would like to fight ax in hand, knife between their teeth!

On November 24th, the *Ayesha* enters the channel of Fleur-de-Mer, between the islands of Siberoet and Sipara. Three days remain before reaching Padang, but already there emerge on the eastern horizon the highest peaks of Sumatra. They sail on at combat stations, rifles within reach. Loopholes have been pierced for the four machine guns.

Faith! Here is the occasion sought for. A destroyer is in sight. Sailors and weapons vanish into the hold, and every one makes ready for the leap. Von Mücke and three or four men stay on deck, an apparently peaceful group. Nevertheless, the destroyer remains afar.

They must know. One of the ensigns, who has been to Padang before, risks his head above the railing, peers through a glass. The ship is Dutch and she is called the *Lynx*. But why does she stay out of range? Has the *Ayesha* been signaled? All that does not portend much good.

Since passing the islets the wind has failed and there is barely headway. All of the 26th that accursed destroyer stays a long distance off as if she were afraid of the old white schooner. Evidently she is watching.

But the next night the *Lynx* approaches boldly. Mücke has had enough of the suspense, picks up a lantern and signals in German, "Go away —you interfere with my movements."

The Hollander steams away placidly, but remains in sight. Reason awhile: If the identity of the *Ayesha* is known, this escort is insulting, but what if it is not known? Mücke decides to dissipate all doubts of this unwelcome consort. On the 27th, at dawn, he hoists the German flag and the war pennant and signals to the *Lynx:*

"This is a naval vessel of his Majesty the Kaiser. I shall put in at Padang, stay there twenty-four hours as I have the right to do. Have you news of the *Emden*?"

"The *Emden* is destroyed," the Hollander replies simply.

BUT now Padang is near; Malay *praus* appear, with articulated mat sails resembling great fans propped on the waters. Lifting their hulls above the sea, the mirage sometimes gives them the semblance of gigantic bats strayed into the dazzling day. The hues of the great slopes of the Barisan mountains gradually turn to a vivid green.

Then the city itself rises from the sea, framed between volcanic hillocks, cones of geometrical perfection, thatched with a tangle of vegetation, with immense trees which at a distance seem to be mere brush. The deep green of the nearest slopes are seen to be spotted

with white flecks, the European buildings of the "Pearl of Sumatra".

The men of the *Ayesha* smell land. Still remote, it sends out nevertheless the odor of the tropical forest, which elates the sailors. At times squalls of rain lower their screens on this apparition, which emerges later more brilliant, as if laved.

This lush beauty does not bring a smile to Von Mücke's lips. He looks toward Padang absent mindedly, his thoughts elsewhere. Proximity to port is for him an omen of a thousand new difficulties. He knows that the government of the Dutch East Indies does not treat lightly questions of neutrality. The case of the *Ayesha* is extraordinary. By delving into the thousand and one contradictory texts concocted by the innumerable conferences at the Hague, Paris and London, a way shall be discovered, more or less legal, to intern the crew and to seize the schooner for the length of time needed by jurists to settle the problem. And meanwhile, as if by the merest chance, a British cruiser will arrive to patrol off the harbor.

Were he on the opposite side, Mücke himself would not hesitate; the *Ayesha* would be seized on arrival, anchored far within the port, with a military guard aboard.

The best thing to do is to show audacity.

Here comes the pilot's *prau*.

She circles the schooner, seeking her name. But that name has vanished under a coat of white paint. The Malay pilot climbs aboard, as if reluctantly. This gang of bearded tramps does not impress him favorably. Immediately he asks for his fee in advance.

This causes an embarrassing moment, for the war chest on board holds one shilling and two pence. Mücke, whose restless manner discourages protest, promises that the consul of Germany will settle.

"The consul of Germany?"

"Yes, old chap! Look up."

The pilot obeys. At each of the three masts now flutters the German war ensign. The canvas hiding the machine guns has disappeared, and the ragged men of a few moments before suddenly seem different, lined up neatly, rifles in hands. It is thus that on the 27th of November, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the *Ayesha* left Padang on her left, crossed Queen's Bay and entered Port Emma, anchorage of Padang, about five kilometers from the city.

Everybody has been warned. The *Lynx* long ago radioed the news. No one is astonished aboard the four German ships anchored in the harbor. The *Ayesha* sails very near the first one, moored near the entrance.

"Send us supplies. We lack everything. Make haste."

This appeal sent to the *Rheinland* is immediately relayed to the *Kleist*, the *Ninive*, the *Choising*, whose crews lined the rails, howling their cheers.

It is evident that the *Ayesha* is in no hurry to drop anchor. She has kept one sail up to pretend progress. The boats of the merchantmen rush toward her, loaded to the gunwales with clothing, food, blankets, newspapers, tobacco, maps and books on navigation. To the shouts of welcome are mingled the squeals of ten live pigs, portending future *delicatessens*.

The Hollanders are by nature methodical and somewhat slow. The supplies are aboard before the order to isolate the schooner reaches Mücke. Now, it comes—

"Absolutely forbidden to communicate with the shore."

Forbidden to go ashore! For one hundred and thirteen days, these men have been tossed hard, and the last eighteen days in particular were devoid of charm. So near, the scent of the land is more than an illusion. The forest sends forth its bewitching breaths to the schooner, which has stunk for so long of the brakish water in her hold.

The little town of Port Emma lures these sailors with all her mighty seduction, offering to them the shelter of

the red brick villas, of the white stone structures nestled beneath the green fronds of the tall palms. The tropical trees, with their magnificent fruits and flowers, tempt them with their beauty, their branches, their leaves, tempt these men who have had enough of the too blue sea, of the too white sky.

But nature alone invites them. It is forbidden to go ashore! Already the arguments feared by Mücke have started. There are orders, counter-orders, notes, protestations, letters, counter-letters. The consul of Germany is active, and the telegraph between Padang and Batavia hums constantly.

The controversy starts on the evening of the 27th.

"We are neutral," the Hollanders state.

"That's agreed. Still, here is the list of supplies and materials I need," Mücke answers. "I shall take delivery tomorrow morning. Thanks in advance."

"It would be a pleasure to oblige you," the authorities of Padang retort on the morning of the 28th, "but your vessel is a legitimate prize. The site is charming, Dutch hospitality justly famed. Here, we shall not allow you to lack anything."

Von Mücke protests:

"How dare you treat a German warship in this fashion? Behold the *Ayesha*. Does she lack credentials? We aboard of her are naval seamen, duly inscribed on the list of his Imperial Majesty's officers or down on the rosters of his crews. We fly, atop a mast, the white flag with the black cross. You have sought in vain, doubtless, the name *Ayesha* on the list of ships in the German navy. That is possible, but to my chiefs alone do I owe an accounting for the seizure of the vessel and for the events which brought me to command her.

"As for your neutrality, it is your duty as neutrals to supply to any one of the belligerents all that is necessary to reach the nearest friendly port. So I am awaiting my water, my food—and then I shall go away. The sooner the better."

As a matter of fact, Mücke wishes to avoid delay. The hours pass, giving time to Britain, to France, to Japan, to urge the Netherlands to intern the *Ayesha* for the duration of the war. The German naval lieutenant has decided, if his supplies delay too long, to start with what his countrymen have given him.

The Hollanders give him paternal advice:

"What will happen to you, you rash fellows, on such a poor craft? Consent to internment, as common sense dictates. Neutrals we are, and as such must refuse to give you maps and official documents. Then what shall you do, roaming blindly on the immensity of the seas? Humanity forbids us to let you go without medical help, while neutrality forbids our granting it. It forbids us also from adding to the defensive worth of your vessel by the delivery of a kilogram of soap or even of a toothbrush! Nevertheless, we consent to violate the strict laws of neutrality to inform you of your foes' movements. Just hear what our admiral says: 'An enormous Japanese cruiser, swift and mightily armed, watches Padang.' We shall say no more."

"All right!" Von Mücke accepts. "Keep your materials. I shall leave here as empty and helpless as I arrived. My government shall know how to appreciate your hospitality and your interpretation of the rights of nations during war."

And the commander of the *Ayesha* makes preparations to depart. It is seven o'clock in the evening. Already the anchor is coming up and men are at the halyard of the standing-jib.

But here comes, friendly and obese, the longboat of the port authorities. She brings water, food and medical supplies. A Malay member of her crew, taking advantage of a moment of inattention of his chief, contrives to slip a paper into Von Mücke's hand. It is

a note from the consul.

"Commander of the *Ayesha,* I await your instructions."

As the boat is almost empty, there is no time to waste. Mücke vanishes below as if swallowed by the aft hatchway. In the nook serving him as a room, so low that to remain there a man must sit or lie down, the map of the Pacific is spread out. After casting a glance upon it, the captain writes hastily:

"I shall cruise until December 20th near a spot three degrees twenty minutes south latitude and ninety-nine degrees and twenty minutes longitude east, keeping as close to that spot as wind and weather shall permit, never going more than twenty miles away."

The Malay takes the paper. The longboat shoves off. A steam launch tows the *Ayesha* out to sea. It is eight o'clock in the evening.

This time there is no *Lynx* on guard. Mücke, emboldened by success, has declared that he would consider as an unfriendly act such an escort. He is let alone.

On December 4th the *Ayesha* reaches the indicated meeting spot. No one is there. Ten days pass. There are few ships coming that way. Only two steamers are espied, which the schooner pursues, all sails spread, hoping to capture them. Both pursuits are in vain.

During the ten days of waiting Mücke makes plans, based on news heard at Padang. Tsing-Tao, main German naval base in China, has been taken by the Japanese. The road is closed in that direction. But Turkey has declared war on the Allies; Arabia therefore becomes, for the survivors of the *Emden,* the nearest friendly shore.

So, if no steamer comes, Mücke shall head for the west coast of Sumatra, which he shall follow to the sixth degree north. There he will find the northeast monsoon, head west, reach the Maldivas, the Gulf of Aden, Perim Strait, swerve up toward Jeddah, pushed by the last breath of the monsoon. From Jeddah he shall reach Europe by rail.

BUT on December 14th the *Choising* is sighted. She is an old Lloyd collier, sixteen hundred tons, which left Padang supposedly for Lourenço Marques. She brings no fresh information and but meager supplies. The wary Hollanders did not permit her to take aboard more than strictly necessary for the crew.

There is too much wind, the sea is too strong, to come alongside. The transshipping takes place in the lee of South Pageh Island, then the *Ayesha* is sunk and the *Choising* heads west.

It is useless to hope to carry on privateering warfare with this tub, which knocks out four knots only with an effort. Instead of coal, her fuel is a mixture of dust, pebbles and pyrites. That stuff, which catches fire spontaneously in the hold, refuses to burn under a boiler. Still, four knots seems a trifle too slow. The Chinese stokers are put to work sorting out the few lumps which are really fuel, and these are placed in reserve, to allow a burst of speed in an emergency.

Then the ship is camouflaged. The colors of the Lloyd, black hull, white rib bands, ocher superstructures, disappear under a fresh coat of paint, the colors of a Genoese company. In large white letters, the new baptism is announced on her bows: *Shenir*—Genoa. At the masthead are hoisted the colors of Italy, the royal arms painted on the white space by a clever seaman.

The sea is vast. Keeping away from the main lanes of traffic, there is no great risk of discovery. All smokes sighted shall be avoided carefully.

In twenty-four days the Indian Ocean is crossed, and on the night of the 7th to 8th of January, 1915, Bab-el-Mandeb is reached, a narrow, dangerous passage between Asia and Africa, crowded with shipping and guarded by Perim, a sentinel city. The engine of the old *Choising* turns at top speed: Eight knots,

thanks to the selected coal kept in reserve. Twenty-four hours later the lights of Hodeidah are sighted. It is claimed that the Jeddah railroad has been prolonged to that spot.

The Germans already picture themselves in the train, rattling toward Germany via Palestine, Asia Minor and Turkey.

The sailors pile into four boats. Three are rigged out in German fashion, one in Chinese style. A last farewell to the *Choising,* which is to return the two following nights to pick them up in case of an alarm, then the boats slip toward land—and run straight into the French cruiser *Desaix,* whose lighted ports simulated a pier to perfection.

The night is dark, and their wise caution allows the boats to check progress and pull away undiscovered. Soon they are beached within eight hundred meters of the shore, and bring to land on improvised rafts, weapons, ammunitions and food.

It becomes necessary now to dispatch a scout toward the town. Who occupies it at the present time? Frenchmen, Arabs or Turks? At this moment any human being would be greeted with joy. The loneliness holds something awe inspiring.

It does not last long. As if sprung from the sand of the beach, coming from no one knows where, Arabs appear. There are hundreds of them, bronzed, smelly, each of whom yells like ten men. Naturally, neither Mücke nor his men understand a word of this shouting. The *Desaix* must have bombarded them, for the turbaned chaps yell, "*Boum! Boum!*" and indicate the French cruiser. By gestures, Mücke succeeds in explaining that he had nothing to do with the bombardment. He shows one of the flags from his boats. At last, he is understood. The Arabs escort the small troop to Hodeidah.

The Turks occupy Hodeidah. Before small cups filled with thick and perfumed coffee, the situation is talked over. The sea is barred by Allied cruisers; the only possible solution is to march across the desert, as a caravan.

Atop camels, the sailors follow for three days a sandy trail crossing occasional grassy stretches, then plunge, for five more days, into the stark mountains, where each pass is guarded by Arab strongholds. It is a hard trek for these people accustomed to sea air. Several of them are worn out. Dysentery and fever come.

At last, here are the mosques of Sanaa, capital of the Yemen district—Sanaa, ancient rival of Mecca, now degraded. Impossible to go farther; the desert is barred by rebel tribes which hold the Assir zone. The Turks are not altogether sorry at this news, hoping to keep with them these fifty men who are worth a regiment. Mücke refuses to stay. He shall reach the sea without losing a single one of his sailors. Long weeks pass before all the sick are well enough to resume their roving.

It is only on March 4th that the troop succeeds in embarking at Yabana, on two Arab boats, each one fourteen meters long by four wide. This proves another hard journey. The days of the *Ayesha* now seem to have been a paradise. The men, huddled on those miserable crafts, are eaten by millions of bugs.

They tow toward the north, keeping very close to the Arabian coast, taking soundings in a labyrinth of reefs and deep waters.

Off Marka, on the night of the 17th, the native pilots themselves admit they are lost. The boat commanded by Mücke anchors; the other splits her hull on a rock and goes to the bottom. The men on her swim for their leader's craft. She is soon overloaded and sinks in her turn; all baggage is thrown over the side in an effort to lighten her. Only weapons and ammunitions are kept. Medical supplies are lost, but the sinking boat is saved.

When all hope seems gone, a stiff southern wind blows up and pushes the boat rapidly toward Kounfoudah.

UNTIL now it has been impossible to navigate inside the reef of Farsan, a barrier to the large ships of the Allies. At Kounfoudah, Mücke obtains from the Turks a larger vessel, in which it is possible to rest while traveling to Jeddah. But, reaching El Lid, the goal which seemed almost within reach becomes infinitely remote. Jeddah is narrowly watched on the sea side, all crafts are searched carefully!

But again the desert is open. Mücke enters it with ninety camels. The trails run from water hole to water hole. These holes are widely spaced excavations from which the life giving water must be hoisted forty feet to the surface. Seven Turkish gendarmes and an officer escort the Germans, and surround, as is customary, the Arab sheik of the territory crossed, a precious hostage against attack.

On March 1st, Jeddah, Promised Land, is very near. There remains but one day's journey to cover. At the last well a Turkish officer and seventeen soldiers await the caravan—a much needed reenforcement, for the Germans are shaking with fever.

Seven hours each day are alloted for rest, during the hottest period, from nine in the morning to four in the afternoon. The rest of the time, slow progress is the rule, at the wearying gait of the camels, which are hitched one after another.

That is the gait of desert caravans, the gait of tribes on the move, of nomads pushing before them thousands of cattle and sheep. Habitual progress for Orientals, for whom time means nothing; but a pace that threatens to burst with feverish impatience the brains and the nerves of Europeans.

The trip through the desert is torture for these wind loving sailors.

The country oozes ambush and treason. It is infested with bandits. Its ominous name in the native dialect is "Father of the Wolf".

During this march any shadow is suspected. Distorted by the air heated on contact with the soil, the tiny whirls of sand scaling the dunes present the semblance of a mad gallop, of a headlong charge. Each time they are seen, defense is prepared, and the constant alarms jangle the nerves of the sick men.

Von Mücke is wary. This is the 1st of April, at dawn, and he has disposed his men in two columns. The sand hillocks are within one hundred meters of one another, as if to stifle the caravan.

The sun rises. As a greeting to its first beams, a hail of bullets suddenly shatters the calm of the blazing morning, lifts little spouts of sand, plucks dried flowers, and cuts down a man.

The hills swarm with Bedouins. There are more than five hundred.

Two German machine guns immediately sweep the heights clear of sharpshooters.

The defense is organized. Four machine guns, thirteen German rifles, ten Turkish rifles of old pattern and twenty-four pistols are the weapons available.

The retreat starts, in column by ranks of six men, wounded in the center, protected by a rear guard of ten men, with two machine guns mounted on camels' back to cover the movement by their uninterrupted fire upon the Arabs, who fire ceaselessly without taking time to aim. Step by step, the column retires, without much hope. Each dune conceals a new ambush, ammunition is growing short. Surely, this must be the end.

An attempt is made to parley. A Turkish gendarme waves a white flag; firing is suspended. Immediately the Germans dig trenches. Food crates and harnesses are piled up. The most precious possession, water, is lowered into the pits. Living breastworks, the camels lie down placidly. The machine guns are set up at the four angles of the camp.

The answer of the Bedouins comes: The column must surrender its camels, its supplies, its weapons and pay eleven thousand Turkish pounds in gold.

IT IS preferable to be slain on the spot. Mücke refuses. The fusillade resumes, violent on the Arabs' side, in gusts on the German side. Night draws near. The detonations are widely spaced, the silence is broken only by the grinding sounds of the spades, digging deeper trenches for the living, digging graves for the dead.

The moon stares down between two hillocks like a sinister face. As soon as it sets, Mücke sends a native runner toward Jeddah, reported only eight hours' march away.

Will the *Emden's* landing party fail in sight of port? The heat, almost unbearable on the dunes, is terrific in the trenches. Sand kicked up by bullets is breathed and chewed; it burns the bleeding lids, penetrates into the mechanisms of the machine guns and puts them out of action.

The trenches are swarming with cockroaches, bugs and snakes. A head showing is fired upon at once by a hundred snipers, too cowardly to start the attacking, fathers of the death that ends suffering.

Then comes dawn of the third day.

There is almost no water left.

Throats burn. The torture of thirst is increased by the bewildering mirage which shows, seemingly nearby, a beautiful, cool lake fringed with palm trees.

They must break through or die. Those who shall succeed in piercing the enemy's lines will have to march eight hours longer in the leaden heat. The men share what is left of the water, what remains of the cartridges; each canteen receives a few drops, each pouch a few bullets.

The time has come. Heads emerge from the trenches. There is no shooting.

On the dunes appears a white flag. Then between two hillocks advances a cortège—seventy camels, a great red standard on which are embroidered in gold verses of the Koran. In the lead, on a white she-camel, rides a tall young man, thin, thoroughbred, with jet-black beard and tressed hair. His cloak is pure white, his coat is green trimmed with gold; his turban is made of golden tissue, as if to make his immense, dark eyes seem deeper.

His escort, speckless riders wearing cloaks of saffron and gray-blue, colors that recall the tints of Kairouan rugs, halts in silence, while the chieftain, Abdallah, second son of the Amir of Mecca, comes forward and bows.

He begs the German commander to accept his greetings and his apologies. An unfortunate misunderstanding is the sole cause of the attack. Will the chief deign to accept the water brought on his camels and proceed to Jeddah without fear?

The Bedouins, attackers yesterday, have vanished as if the sand had absorbed them.

At Jeddah, where his troop arrives diminished by three dead, one of which is an officer, Mücke, despite the wounded, the sick and the fact that his ammunition is three-fourths spent, announces his wish to cross the desert, as the British ships blockade the coast. The amir agrees to this plan. The Germans shall go to Mecca, from there to Medina.

Everybody having thus agreed, on the 9th of April the Germans suddenly board a *xebec* and hoist sail. The Turks protest in vain. The craft leaves, reaches the open sea and, after three brief stops on the way, arrives nineteen days later at Cherm Munaibura.

The land route must be resumed now, but it leads through friendly Turkish territory. On May 6th the German column reaches El Ula, on the Hedjaz railroad, which takes it to Aleppo. After crossing the Taurus in carriages, Von Mücke and his men arrive at Constantinople on May 23, 1915, Pentecost Day.

These iron willed seamen took one hundred and ninety-five days to join, free and unvanquished, the armies of their country.

All Is Vanity

By JAMES W. BENNETT

OUTSIDE the shop the gray dust of Peking eddied and swirled. From the open doorways came the rattle and clang of the artisans of Metalworkers' Lane. Old Waung was cunningly pitting the surface of a small bronze horse, to sell it as a relic of the Sung Dynasty. He turned to me and said sententiously:

"If you would achieve your heart's desire, you must sacrifice your heart's desire." Then he added—with somewhat more relevance than appeared at the moment, "This person hears that you were nearly killed yesterday at the great Bell Tower in the Tartar City."

"Now, how in the world did you learn *that?* It wasn't in your newspapers?"

"No, not newspapers. I am not a scholar; I could not read them. But news carries in this Peking dust. How, I hardly know. I heard that after you had struck the bell several times and had begun to descend the steps of the tower, fifty soldiers appeared."

"Your Peking dust was a bit misinformed," I answered. "There were but two soldiers. They evidently thought I was up in the tower to spy upon their fortifications. They grew quite reasonable when I told them that I had a mania for tapping bells. That never had I struck a bell so sweet and glorious in tone as that one."

"And they removed the unpleasantly pointing fire-sticks from your stomach?"

"Yes."

Old Waung spoke musingly:

"Yet what you said to them was true, I believe. The bell *is* sweet in tone. It was made by an ancestor of mine."

He shook his grizzled head.

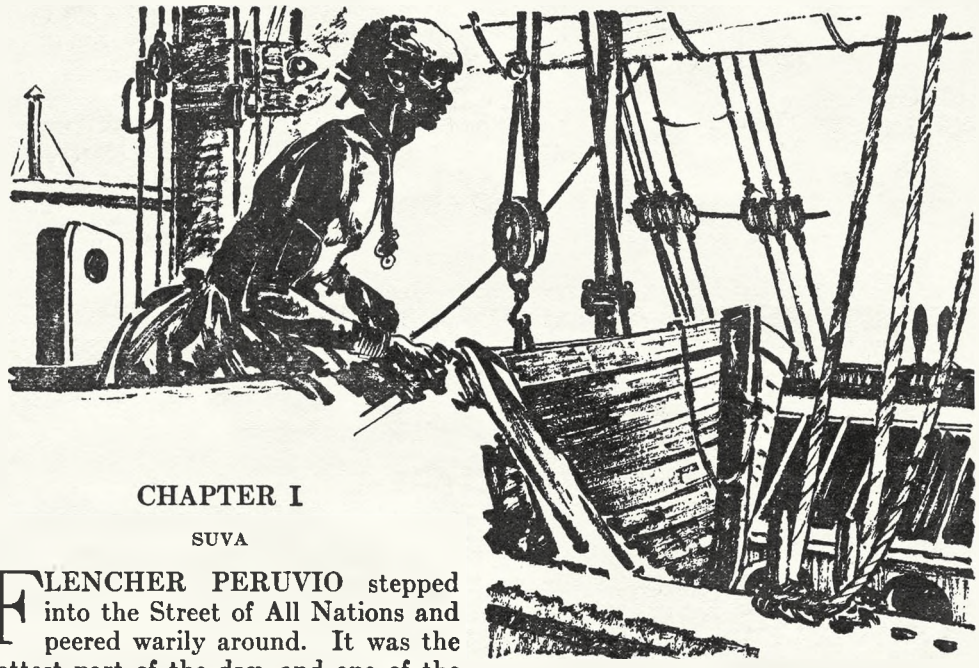
"At what a sacrifice! The great Ming emperor, Yung Lo, ordered this bell to be made. My ancestor worked with exceeding care, for the monarch had told him it must be the finest bell in the world. He brought together only the purest metals, although the bell was to weigh fifty tons. He cast it, but it came out flawed. Again he cast it and again it contained an ugly flaw. He begged for patience and tried three times more. Each time he failed. The Son of Heaven grew angry and threatened him with death if he failed the sixth time.

"The bell maker had a daughter, beautiful as the sky at dawn, lovely as a willow in a breeze. My ancestor valued her above all other things, even his bells. Learning of the emperor's grim threat, she went to the temple of the metalworkers and asked guidance of the gods. They gave answer. Hearing their oracle, she grew very pale but she did not falter.

"The next day, just before the cast was to be made—while the metal was white hot and molten—she leaped into the cauldron. Her father dared not hesitate. He made the cast and this time it succeeded. Perfect in shape was that bell and with the most beautiful tone the world has ever known. That is why I repeat: 'If you would achieve your heart's desire, you must sacrifice your heart's desire.' And yesterday, you heard the tones of that bell, whose voice has the sadness of a woman's."

I nodded as though in agreement, and did not tell him that the bell, hanging in its tall tower, which I had apparently risked my life to tap, was not the one into whose bronze body the fragile bones of a Chinese girl had been fused. *That* bell, with its human sacrifice, was housed in an obscure temple outside the capital, thick with gray dust, silent, deserted, uncherished.

Beginning a Glamorous



CHAPTER I

SUVA

FLENCHER PERUVIO stepped into the Street of All Nations and peered warily around. It was the hottest part of the day, and one of the busiest streets, and for those very reasons he had chosen time and place.

He was a lean, powerful fellow of indeterminate age, black haired, keen faced, with eyes that glittered with an intensity which a critic might attribute to tremendous passions, if not madness. A red gleam smoldered in those eyes, too, glowing and dulling as if fanned by a gale inside the man. A pretty, slim, half native girl clung to his arm, and she matched his fierce grace with a feline beauty of her own. If there were a difference between them, it lay in his wariness and her outspoken contempt of everybody on earth except themselves.

"Come on, Flencher. You act like you're scared of your shadow," she said impatiently.

"Shut up!" he growled, dodging into an alley between two native shops. "I can fool 'em by changing the rig of my ship and painting her different, but I can't change the rig of my mug, Flamette."

A lean, swarthy man with too-wise eyes swung along on the opposite side of the street.

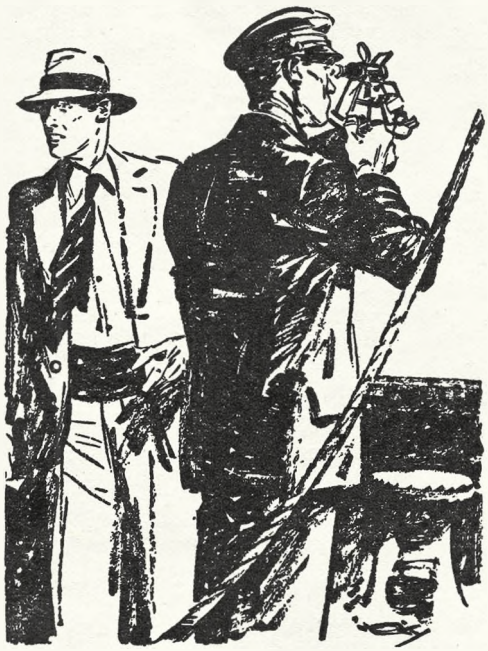
"Look, there's Yule!" whispered the girl, grabbing Flencher's arm.

He thrust her back savagely, his eyes fastened with an evil glare on the passing man. They stood there, watching, while the hubbub of the street surged around them.

Meanwhile, in a different part of the street, Peter Rowles reflected on the clamor and the smells; they bothered him.

Peter was a student, not an adventurer, and these scrambling shopkeepers annoyed him. He had soon realized that the frizzy, ferocious aspect of the island blacks was not so much a mark of demoniac flesh hunger as the result of lime shampoo, and that sharp,

Novel of the South Seas



By CAPTAIN DINGLE

FLENCHER'S ISLAND

gleaming teeth were much more likely to be found sunk into a piece of sugar cane than into a strange white man's drumstick.

He had learned not to run from a seductive, full bosomed and thick lipped black damsel, who really only wanted to sell him more pineapples than he could carry for a shilling, and not, as he at first feared, to lure him to a dark couch later to be his bier.

But this street of shouting shopkeepers, besieging him on all sides with East Indian brass, native tobacco cut with murderous knives from long twists, Chinese foods and silks, made his head ache.

He had seen enough of Fiji anyhow. He now wanted to get away to Penrhyn, and no ship ever seemed to go to that little known island. He had been told that he might find an irregular island trader in the Street of All Nations, and the racket of it bewildered him.

He dodged a Chinaman with a bunch of live chickens tied by the feet, and cannoned heavily into a girl, a white girl who, in spite of her worried eyes, looked like a picture of cool, fresh loveliness. He apologized shyly, and his heart thumped at her friendly, smiling response. He blundered on, and the crowd divided them; but the girl's image blotted out all else, and he collided with many more people before he stopped for breath under a shade tree at the end of the street.

Flencher Peruvio had seen that encounter. He stepped out of his alley, staring rudely at the girl, and Flamette's color deepened, her eyes blazed. She tried to pull him back.

"Huh! Scared to be seen, but you can chance it for a fresh face!" she told him. "Look at me. That's enough for you."

He shoved her away and stalked through the crowd, following the girl of Peter Rowles' adventure. Flamette started after him, but stopped, furious as a trodden cat; she turned and hurried in the direction taken by the man Yule.

IT WAS hotter, and Peter was dustier, and Suva seemed to have become the entry port to Hades, when he wandered once more along the wharves. He had tried every place suggested to him, but he was as far as ever from getting passage to Penrhyn Island.

For nearly a year he had explored the Islands, happy in the hunt for strange and rare plant life. He had collected a wonderful variety; Fiji had astounded him; he was ready to go home, though not particularly eager, simply because there seemed nothing left for him to find. Then, just when he had packed up and was waiting for the steamer, he had heard of Penrhyn as a place offering specimens yet strange to him. And since he would rather linger on in the nomadic life of the Islands than go back to stuffy laboratories and city streets as long as discoveries remained to be made, he had set out to go to Penrhyn, and now was up against a dead end. Nobody seemed to be bound that way.

Under a shed lay some of his specimens, boxed, ready for shipment. He sat on a case, gazing gloomily out across the sea. Not many craft lay there. The steamer had gone some days ago; here and there a trading schooner or sloop, sun blistered and bruised, lying lonesome or encumbered with boats, according to the length of her stay, swung to her anchor.

Beside the wharves only one vessel lay, and he had pestered her skipper until the native watchman no longer permitted him on board. There was a fairly large brigantine lying off the wharf, but she was Sydney bound, so they said. There seemed nothing to do but wait for the next steamer and travel prosaically home, leaving those fascinating new specimens to live and die on Penrhyn. He lighted a strong native cigar and brooded.

The Islands were overrated. That conviction grew out of the first puff of smoke. As the cigar burned down, he wondered why he had ever given another island a thought. All islands were alike. Squalid, heat blistered blotches in mid-ocean. Black men, black women, black or brown babies. Fish, yams, crabs, sweet potatoes; bugs, smells and missionaries. Lizards that fell in your soup, and cockroaches as big as the butt of the cigar he tossed into the water. Native food, or stuff out of cans, and tepid rain water to drink where there were no rivers. Damn the Islands!

Peter turned stubbornly to the town. The exotic flavor of everything around him got into his blood again. He'd comb every low groggery before he gave up. *Somebody* must be going to Penrhyn sometime, and the more he encountered obstacles the more stubborn he became, for there was a bit of the blind unreason of young science in Peter.

He entered several drinking shops, and each time he emerged from their gloom into the sun's glare he was blinded for a moment. Sometimes he stumbled, though he drank nothing stronger than lime squash. But with each new failure his obstinacy was reenforced, and each emergence was made with greater headlong impetus. He asked the white proprietor of the last place he tried, and with a wink over his shoulder the man suggested a possible house of call which he had not yet visited.

"If you ain't dyin' to leave Suva, or ain't runnin' from the police, sonny, I don't advise you to ship with nobody you'll meet there. But if go you must, it's the only chance I know."

Peter left that place in a rush—and again blundered full tilt against a vision in cool white linen, a girl who walked with a healthy swing, whose lips smiled, whose face required no paint, and in whose clear eyes was now no worry. Again he apologized, awkwardly, blushing to his hair roots, and she laughed like a good sport.

"It is blinding, coming out of those places, isn't it?" she said. "Please don't feel so sad. I've been bumped into by

everybody, black or white, from the waterside to here, and really you didn't hurt me a bit."

She passed on, and left him feeling as if he'd been grilled on a grid and afterward plunged into a sparkling woodland spring.

FLENCHER PERUVIO sat with Flamette in a most secluded corner of a high hedged garden behind a very dingy groggery. On the table—which was not between them, for the girl sat on his knee—were glasses and a gold topped bottle. Flamette's anger was fast fading. Her eyes sparkled, but not with that sort of passion. Flencher was a skilled hand.

"All you have to do, my pretty, is to clean up everything here and be on board at noon tomorrow," he said.

"I'm going right on board with you," she told him sharply, and her eyes grew hard for a moment. "I know you!"

"Sure you can, if you like." He laughed, filling her glass and holding it under her pretty, impudent nose. "But I'm going on board at noon. There's a buzz about that somebody's got wind of me, and I'm taking no chances. And don't think I'm leaving you on board all night without me. I know you too, you little devil! Noon it is, and watch your step." He kissed her roughly.

A hardbitten, dirty white glided like a ghost to their corner.

"Say, Flencher, there's a funny little feller inside wants to go to Penrhyn."

"What the hell's that got to do with me?"

"Thought maybe you'd want to talk to him," the dirty white returned greasily. "He's one o' them aggericulture sharps you always been wantin' to meet. He's been 'most a year in Fiji, pokin' around to find two weeds an' make 'em grow fruit an' vegetables on the same stalk, or somethink. It don't matter if you—"

"Send him out—if nobody's around," ordered Flencher, and without ceremony dumped the girl from his knee into a chair.

She spat like a cat, and he silenced her with a savage oath. To the table came Peter, groping again in the heavy shadows after the sunlight outside. Flencher examined his appearance before Peter could see anything in the darkness.

"What d'you want with Penrhyn?" asked Peruvio. Peter thought that his voice sounded like a mellow, well cast bell rung while the rim touched steel. "No trade there. What are you—missionary?"

"Nothing like that." Peter grinned, hopeful at last.

"They'd eat you raw if you was. Tourist? Eat you alive. What's your game? Who are you?"

"My name's Peter Rowles. I'm not afraid anybody'll eat me, cooked or raw, sir. I've been studying plants and soils for a year, and want to see what Penrhyn's got. I understand it's different."

"Plants and soils, eh?" Peruvio's tone changed. The man had an air of deeper interest than such men usually had in things of the soil. "You mean you are one o' those sharps who can take a stick o' this and a leaf o' that and make 'em produce things you can eat?"

Peter laughed at the quaint notion. But he was very glad to meet such interest, and to satisfy curiosity if it would gain him a passage to where he wanted to go.

"Perhaps not that exactly, Captain, but I have succeeded in developing fruits and other foodstuffs from the wild species so that instead of the poor, chancey wild things the natives depend on, I can grow really heavy crops of worthwhile food. But my chief work of course is discovering and classifying rare—"

"Oh, sure," Flencher interrupted him, and his tone was less interested. "Have a drink. Gimme your glass, Flamette."

He took away the girl's glass, tossed

out the dregs and poured Peter a full one, which Peter drank to consolidate his chance, all oblivious to the girl's offended glare.

"I've got a lot o' land myself, down along," said Flencher. "Been looking for years to find somebody who knows beans from yams. Leave a fellow in charge, and he goes native or goes souse. How much stuff have you got?"

"Four cases, besides my luggage," said Peter. "Not a big lot."

"Anything good?"

"Depends what you call good, Captain. I've done some real work on breadfruit and plantains. Developed some fat beauties. But altogether my cases are no bigger than a full sized trunk. Are you really going to Penrhyn? Can you take me?"

The girl whispered fiercely, and Flencher pushed her from him impatiently.

"Sure I'll give you a passage, Mr. Rowles. That's right, ain't it? Peter Rowles? All right, then, Peter Rowles, put your traps aboard my vessel after dark, and be on board yourself. Don't sail until noon tomorrow, but I don't want anybody to see me taking passengers, because I've been overrun with people wanting to go with me and I've had to refuse 'em. I only take you because I like your work. Understand? *Scorpion*. Only brigantine in port. After dark, and I'll send out word. No coming ashore once you're aboard."

"What shall I pay you?" Peter inquired rather timidly.

The girl's dark eyes were gleaming like a tiger's under her frowning brows. Clearly she didn't like Peter. Luckily the passage was not a long one. Flencher chuckled and kissed the girl's angry eyes.

"Oh, anything you say, Peter. Anything. Ten pounds? I find grub, and liquor in reason. Too much?"

"Fine," Peter agreed, and hauled out his wallet and produced the bills before the chance slipped from him.

Flencher took the money carelessly and handed it to Flamette. The fire softened in her eyes, and she swiftly put the bills where they would get warmer and be safer. Her good humor reappeared, and she even smiled at Peter as he doffed his hat and turned to leave.

In turning he faced a leaning, peering figure, and had to duck hurriedly aside to avoid another collision. He tripped over a table unseen, and fell into a bush, his ears tingling to hear Flamette's shrill laughter. Then, before he could pick himself up, her laughter stopped as if something had her by the throat.

"Yule!" she screamed.

From his knees Peter saw swift drama. The lean, swart man with the too-wise eyes thrust forward menacingly. Flencher, a broad shouldered, narrow waisted, lithe devil of steel springs and rawhide, overturned the table, bottle, glasses and girl in one mad crash, and stepped forward to be met by a fist like a lignum vitæ block at the end of an arm with the drive of a mule's leg. The blow took him flush on the mouth. But Flencher kept his feet. Except for a red trickle his expression never changed. But the red glow in his eyes leaped into fire, and his body flashed into a thing of merciless malevolence.

His left hand gripped the other's biceps, his right slipped to the wrist and, with appalling and graceful ease, he twisted Yule around, the arm doubled up behind his back. Thus he forced his assailant through the bushes to a low railing, overhanging a gully used as a dump. Peruvio could simply have tossed the man over, and another man might have been satisfied with such a victory. But not Flencher Peruvio. He got his man across the rail, put his knee into the small of his back and twisted the tortured arm until the bone cracked. Yule gritted his teeth, but the twisting went on, and he screamed in agony, cursing horribly. Then Flencher hurled him over the rail and turned to Peter with a grin.

Peter stood astounded at his first experience of life in the raw. Inno-

cently he had believed that men only fought after noisy wordage. Men he knew, mostly college men, had noisy quarrels but, even when noisiest, rarely fought. He had never imagined that men could fight to kill or maim with so little preliminary. He stared dubiously at this terrible man coolly wiping blood from his face and smiling at him.

"You saw that?" Flencher said. "Glad you did. Don't go smacking me in the puss, Peter. I'm a quiet, soft hearted fellow, but I don't like being smacked in the mug. Now run along and get aboard. Perhaps I'll give you lessons on the voyage. Useful. What's up, Flamette? You in love with Yule?"

The astonishing man dismissed Peter with a gesture, and again took the girl on his knee, calling for more wine in a voice which speedily brought it. Peter went thoughtfully away and collected his belongings.

CHAPTER II

THE FLENCHER

IT WAS cool, and the air was languorous, sitting on the *Scorpion's* deck in the darkness. Peter had seen his berth, and felt glad that the passage was a short one. He had come to Fiji, and visited Tonga, by steamer; never had he experienced the smaller craft of the Island routes; the accommodation for passengers aboard the *Scorpion* brigantine struck him as primitive, to say no worse.

But there was a sort of thrill, too, in the low beams, the swinging oil lamps, the paneled little berths opening directly from the small saloon with its narrow table and swivel chairs. Every sound within and without the wooden hull was muted into something different from other ships' noises.

A small, wizened white steward had received him and shown him his bunk with a most lugubrious air and few words. The few words spoken gave no impression of gladness or warm welcome.

Peter took to the deck. The cabins were hot and stuffy. He knew the smell of copra and dried fish, and most of the island cargoes; one gets them all hanging about Suva's wharves. There was a totally different aroma in the *Scorpion's* interior. It was queer at first, and soon became unpleasant. The night air on deck was cleaner, less puzzling.

The wide decks lay like a pool of hush, out of which grew two lofty masts, festooned with cordage, lined with the bone-white of furled sails. The breeze crooned in the gear. Overside the tide chuckled. Now and then the vessel gave a gentle sheer, and her iron cable grunted at the hawsepipe. On the forestay a lantern glimmered. Of life there seemed to be none. Now and then, as impersonal as the grunting cable, Peter believed he detected moving shadows forward which might be men; but he could not have sworn to it.

Ashore he could hear the tinkle and rhythm of music and voices. Suva was waking into night life. On other vessels too were voices, singing, laughing, hailing. Only on the *Scorpion* lay silence as of the dead. Peter didn't mind. He puffed delicately at a strong native cigar, and soaked in the thrill of an unaccustomed situation. He was almost sinking into a dozy dream, when without any sound a white clad figure on rope soled feet took a seat beside him and a pleasant voice accosted him.

"You must be Peter Rowles. I'm Eli Maxon, mate of this hooker. I suppose you know what you're in for?"

"Good evening," said Peter, turning with a start and peering at the man's face. It was a smiling face, with full lips and frank, wide eyes. There was a suspicion of irony in the voice which was not as pleasing as the rest of the man; but that was no doubt a small matter. Peter welcomed the chance to chat. "I wondered at seeing nobody on board. I saw the steward, of course, but he—he didn't—well, he didn't seem very pleased to see me, Mr. Maxon."

Maxon chuckled. Peter thought how

like the tide that chuckle was.

"Poor old Jinks! Jovial Jinks, he's called. More kicks than ha'pence he gets. But he's the man for the job. The Flencher thinks no end of him. Where might you be going, Mr. Rowles —if it's no impertinence?"

"Penrhyn."

"Penrhyn!" There was frank surprise in the ejaculation. Then, quickly, "Oh, yes. We often give a fellow a lift, even if it's out of our way." Again the tide-like chuckle. "You're a friend of the Flencher's?"

"Hardly. I never heard of him until six hours ago. Is he famous? Many of these Island skippers are, I believe."

Peter lay back, blowing out little trickles of smoke. He missed the close and curious scrutiny that Maxon favored him with.

"Famous!" It was almost a whistle at the end. "Who told you to ask him for a passage?"

"A pubkeeper. There seemed to be an idea among the men in the hotel that I was doing something foolhardy in speaking to Captain Peruvio. It was nonsense. He was quite pleasant—except for one little incident which didn't concern me. Offered me a passage without any fuss."

"What was the incident?" The question was put sharply.

"Oh, the captain was sitting with a girl, and a man hit him in the face. There was a short scrap, and the man got his arm broken. It was quite a short, quiet affair. I was much more excited about it than the captain. The way he handled his man was terribly cold and effective."

"Who was the girl? Flamette?"

"I think so. Yes, I heard him call her that. She looked like a rather fast lady, I thought."

Maxon swore softly.

"Better not let him hear you say that, unless you can do with an arm less. What was the man like?"

"Tall, very lean, most noticeable eyes—"

"That's the joker! There'll be hell popping sure enough. Didn't he put up a fight?"

"He had no time. He struck the captain on the mouth, drawing blood, then everything happened in thirty seconds. He was over the rail and into the bushes in that time. I never saw such pure savagery in a man who showed not the least trace of anger a moment before or after the event."

Maxon lighted a pipe, leisurely, with great attention to complete combustion. He smoked in silence for a minute or so, then asked carelessly—

"Ever been sealing?"

"Afraid I haven't," returned Peter drowsily.

"Whaling?"

"No."

"When sealers get out on the ice, they slaughter the seals until they have a heap. Then the real dirty work starts. They slit open the seals, disembowel 'em and skin 'em. When they've finished, they look like mad butchers. Flenching, it's called. Same with whales, only more so. Blood and grease, and men reeking like a shambles. Flenching. That's it."

"Horrible," murmured Peter.

Mr. Maxon got up and stretched lazily, then drifted forward, where shadows moved again. As he went, he called back softly—

"That's why the skipper's called Flencher."

TO TELL the truth, Peter Rowles was far too comfortably sleepy to give much importance to the mate's remark. He went below, undressed and climbed into his narrow wooden box of a bunk, only vaguely aware of a mild repugnance concerning the business of flenching seals. Perhaps Peruvio had been a noted sealer. What of it? There was nothing of blood and grease about the *Scorpion*. At least the little vessel was clean as far as a casual inspection showed.

The mate, too, was no red butcher as

he had appeared so silently beside Peter on deck. White clothes and rope soled canvas shoes did not fit a butcher. As for Flencher Peruvio—Peter began to sink into a deep slumber, well satisfied to be snug in his bunk aboard a vessel bound for where he wished to go.

A gentle jar almost beside him spoiled his first venture into sleep. He sat up to listen. The jar was repeated, increased to a bump, and Peter tried to put his head through the porthole. It was too small, though his head was no larger than a fairly intelligent head ought to be; he heard voices. Of course, a boat coming off. To be expected when a ship was within a few hours of sailing.

He lay down again and settled himself deliciously. A voice cried out. It was almost a yell, but was swiftly subdued. A drunken sailor, thought Peter. He felt entirely indulgent toward drunken sailors. Why shouldn't they get a little tight? A sailor's life was no bed of roses; anybody knew that . . .

Somebody came into the saloon, noisily, swearing because of the noise. There was the clink of glass, the guggle and plop of liquid poured from a decanter or bottle. Then a door softly shut, and silence. Peter sank deep, fathoms deep, into a foamy sea of unconsciousness.

When he awoke Jovial Jinks was at his side with a mug of tea and a piece of hardtack. The sun poured in through the port, there was a freshness to the breeze; the tea moved about in the mug as if a juggler were playing with it. There was a rumble of activity, a chorus of sounds, a movement.

"Are we sailing?" cried Peter, and tumbled from his bunk on to a leaning floor. The tea went over his bedding. "I wish you'd called me sooner, Steward!"

"Soon enough," moaned Jinks, trying to sop up the tea which was already but a stain. "I suppose you want another mug. That'll be trouble."

"Never mind the tea. Bring some hot water."

"Shaving?"

"Of course. I want to get on deck before Fiji's out of sight."

"Might as well get used to cold water. The captain ain't fond o' coddlin' passengers," Jinks said mournfully. "Have to hurry up, though, if you want to wave to anybody."

Peter ran on deck, biting into the biscuit. The *Scorpion* was turning on her heel for the open; the pressure of her backed headsails had given her the slant that capsized Peter's tea and told him she was moving. He looked first toward the shore. There seemed to be a commotion there. He fumbled in his pocket for the monocular glass he was never without, and focused it.

A boat was being hauled out from under the wharf. Above it, gesticulating fiercely, was the girl, Flamette; beside her, a tall, lean man, with one arm in a sling.

The man appeared to be trying to persuade the girl. She behaved like the wildcat Peter had believed she could be. Her piercing scream came across the morning quiet like a witch's curse. The boat was by the steps, and she sprang into it; but the man shook his head at her gesture inviting him to join her. She screamed at him, then, and the boat began to follow the brigantine, clumsily, inadequately oared by pressed oarsmen more used to canoes. Peter watched, entranced. At his side a cool voice said—

"Give me that eyeglass, Rowles."

He turned to see Peruvio, dressed in new white drill, shaved and brushed like a dandy, fresh as the morning itself. Looking, in brief, as little like a mad butcher as possible. He took the glass from Peter's fingers and fixed it upon the boat. The *Scorpion* moved fast now. There was a creaming line along her glossy hull, and sail after sail was loosed and set by a lusty white crew. That Peter saw, and was mildly surprised, for he had assumed that all Island vessels were worked by natives. The boat had no chance. With the unaided eye Peter could see the girl stand up and shake

her fists, and her shrill voice again came pealing over the water.

"Thanks," said Peruvio, handing back the glass.

He paid no more attention to Peter than if he had been a bollard, but went to stand beside the wheel and con the vessel out. When she met the ocean swell outside, and threw up the first jeweled spray, he left the wheel and joined Peter. His eyes laughed, but a dancing devil lurked behind the merriment.

"A passenger miss the ship, Captain?" asked Peter.

"One, yes. I don't think the other wanted to come. I'd have waited for him, if I thought he wanted to come."

"Wasn't it the man you—" Peter began brightly, then halted, biting his lip.

"The man who had an accident yesterday? That's the man. I don't really think he wanted to come, Peter."

JOVIAL JINKS appeared, with a mug of steaming coffee and a bottle of rum. Peruvio tasted the coffee, spat it out, and at the rail poured two-thirds of it overboard. He filled the mug with rum, and tasted it again, then handed the bottle to Jinks and drank the powerful liquor at a gulp.

"A-h! That's the cream for your coffee, Peter!" he gasped. "Have you had your tea?"

"He spilt it, Cap'n," said Jinks reproachfully.

"Spilt it, eh? That's no good, Peter. Have to wait until breakfast time now. Have to learn to be careful of stores at sea. Waste is wicked. Ever take a course in domestic economy? No? That's a pity. Every young fellow who expects to rub shoulders in the crowds of the world should know all about supply and demand. Must adapt demand and supply, you know. No shops at sea— Ah, good morning, Miss Crosbie! You picked a wonderful morning for your first appearance aboard my *Scorpion*. I hope you slept well?"

Peter turned, and looked into the cool depths of the softest gray eyes he had ever seen, set in the loveliest face. No, he had seen eyes as softly gray, and a face as enchanting. It was the same face, though. Miss Crosbie was the girl with whom he had so clumsily collided on two occasions yesterday. She smiled in greeting, glancing landward, turning immediately to stare aloft at the swelling sails and lofty masts, swaying across the white flecked blue of the sky.

"Miss Crosbie, your fellow passenger, Mr. Peter Rowles," the captain introduced them, and watched their faces as they exchanged the ordained inane words of politeness.

He grinned at Peter's bashfulness, then gently took the girl's arm and forced her to walk to the quarterdeck with him. Peter was left to his own devices. He somehow felt out of the picture, and walked about the decks, trying to take an intelligent interest in what the crew were doing. But to his bemused vision they were only making terrific tangles in mountains of rope; they moved about on cat-sure feet, but in cat-like silence; lean and agile they were to a man, and they took no notice of him after each one had given him one sharp, discerning glance.

Mr. Maxon was right forward, overseeing the work of three more men doing something to the anchor with small chains. Peter paused at the open door of a little house between the masts, and found himself looking into the blazing interior of a tiny galley, whose stove was red hot on top, before which a shiny black cook was cheerfully sweating and rolling dough. A fine smell was there, however, of coffee and onions and frizzling fat. It promised breakfast, and Peter realized that he was hungry. The sea air was working in him. He sauntered aft.

The girl was alone. She came to meet Peter, and her face was delicately flushed with pleasure.

"I'm so glad, Mr. Rowles. I was a little bit afraid of traveling in a vessel

like this, until I knew there was another passenger. One hears so much about the island traders. But after all, it's something to save the time, isn't it? I'd have to wait at least three weeks for a steamer."

Peter was puzzled. There were no regular steamers plying to where he wanted to go.

"Was there a steamer in three weeks?" he stammered. "I never heard about it, and I've been trying to get a passage for I don't know how long."

"Of course. There's always a steamer for Tahiti. I just couldn't wait for it. I was so glad when Captain Peruvio offered to take me."

"Tahiti?" Peter's ejaculation was very much like Maxon's at mention of Penrhyn.

Before another word was out, he caught the eye of Captain Peruvio in the companionway, and for the life of him Peter could not have said another word more.

"Breakfast is ready," said the skipper, and led Miss Crosbie below to the saloon.

Peter followed, bound to have some word of explanation. But he was not going to make a fool of himself. After all, a skipper who was good enough to go out of his way to land a fellow on Penrhyn might go farther and take a lady to Tahiti. That the places were far apart meant little to Peter, whose grasp of ocean immensities was somewhat weak.

The girl seemed happy about it anyhow. As she took her chair she asked brightly—

"How long will it take to Tahiti, Captain?"

Peter could have sworn that there was red in Peruvio's eye as he glanced down the table at him, but there was only the kindest of interest in Peruvio's voice as he answered:

"Don't worry, little lady. You'll be at your journey's end quite a long time before the steamer could have got you there."

CHAPTER III

WHERE TO?

WHATEVER the Flencher's claim to fame, his powers of conversation were beyond question. He talked like a radio announcer, with all the assurance of one impervious to retort. He talked well, and was as pleasantly positive about Miss Crosbie's Tahiti as Peter Rowles' Penrhyn. He knew both; and when breakfast was over nothing remained to be said about either. He had advised Peter where to seek specimens to the best advantage; he had suggested to Miss Crosbie where to stay while waiting for her steamer, and moreover had undertaken to give her a note to the master of the best steamer, a friend of his who owed him a favor or two.

Jovial Jinks moved about the table on noiseless feet, and his solemn visage hovered above pot or dish like a warning. The food was good, and Jinks was clean; but the one thing that stood out in Peter's mind, when he went on deck, was that nobody had spoken a word all through that meal except Peruvio. Not one word did he recall speaking, not one could he swear Miss Crosbie had uttered. Peruvio's speech had not only flowed on like a voluminous river, not swift but irresistible, it had anticipated questions so that, while Peter could not remember having spoken, neither could he recall any possible question which he could have asked about Penrhyn which had not been answered unasked.

"A remarkable skipper!" mused Peter, puffing at one of the strong native cigars he affected.

He had never cared for tobacco; but since arriving in the Islands he had found, in the course of his labors, such a multitude and variety of unpleasant insects that he had determined to smoke to discourage them. It was characteristic of Peter Rowles that, since his first mild essay in chase of Lady Nicotine made him terribly ill, and he meant to persevere, he went on to make his next

attack by way of the most powerful form of the weed he could get. If tobacco discommoded bugs, he meant to discommode them properly. His own inconvenience was but temporary. Peter rarely permitted an inconvenience to annoy him for very long.

He was a bit puzzled now. Several things puzzled him about Flencher Peruvio's *Scorpion,* and he was beginning at the near end to unravel the skein. No hurry. But he wanted to speak to Miss Crosbie some time soon. When all was said, he could not give himself any other reason for that desire except curiosity. Ever since he had run up against her in the street, he had wondered about her. The manner of her coming on board was not calculated to diminish the wonder, for it must have been very late, and unexpected, since Mr. Maxon had not mentioned another passenger.

His puzzlement regarding the *Scorpion* also was mainly due to curiosity. Ever since this day of sailing broke for him he had seen no man of all the crew —and they were white except for the shiny black cook—who looked as if he dared open his mouth to speak. Even the pleasant mate was dumb but for giving the merest essential orders. And Flencher Peruvio certainly had given no intimation that he ruled his ship harshly.

There was, of course, that affair of the futile boat chase, with the obviously angry Flamette, who missed her passage; but in the Islands those little mishaps might easily occur. If one might secure a passage so unexpectedly, one might lose one with equal unexpectedness.

He strolled along the sunny decks. The high land of Viti Levu lay blue astern, Ngau ahead. The seas rolled in long, sleek swells, crested only by the whip of the breeze, having no vice in them. The brigantine leaned over with a gentle slant that only made walking a pleasant test and no adventure; a mist hung about her bows, and now and then a volley of sparkling spray shot with a rattle into the foresail, and a spray bow wreathed her head with beauty.

Every stitch of canvas strained full of forceful wind; the cloths were bleached and fined with long service, yet stout and able from seaman-like care. From flying jib to mainboom end, from foreroyal to the tack of the forecourse, and through the wide spaces of the mainstaysails the wind poured with a thrumming harmony, and the sunlight and shadows danced cheerily. A mile distant a cutter plunged, heavily laden, for Suva port; over the crest of Ngau a steamer's smoke faintly clouded the blue.

One or two men on the main hatch plied palm and needle on a new sail. Peter stopped by them.

"Fine morning," he said. The men glanced at him, and bent again to their sewing.

"It's a fine morning," Peter said again, a bit cooled by the reception of his first greeting.

"You can't prove it by me, sonny," one of the men growled, and turned his back on Peter. The other man never looked up.

Peter strolled away, his curiosity intensified. The after part of the vessel was bare of life, except for the man at the wheel; Peter's slight familiarity with ships warned him that the helmsman was not supposed to be a conversationalist. He stepped to the galley, remembering that the black cook at least had looked like a happy soul who might enjoy a chat.

"Fine day," he ventured.

The cook grinned all over his shiny face, his vast mouth opened as if he would talk, but no sound issued forth. Peter spoke again, getting irritable at such a scurvy reception of simple civility. The black face split—it ought to have roared with that cavernous sound box—but the cook only grinned and shook his head, pointing to his mouth. Then Peter saw the man had no tongue. Hurriedly he slipped a cigar into the ready fist, and went from the vicinity of the galley at a pace suggestive of nervousness.

BY THE low break of the quarterdeck he paused and sat down. Just in front of him were the lifeboats, two of them, smartly painted white like the *Scorpion,* with her name on their glossy hulls, securely lashed to the deck with gripes. A third boat was there, lying unfastened, not like the others, having no name. It was a rough, scarred, weed grown boat like a hundred others he had seen in Suva; like the one in which he had come on board with his baggage.

Vaguely surmising, guessing that this must be a boat picked up at sea perhaps, Peter dismissed it from a mind already too cluttered up with curiosity. His cigar was getting down to the bitter end, and he tossed it over the rail, feeling that he had smoked it too far.

Somewhere out of sight forward a yell pealed out, and another. He heard a white man's voice uttering oaths in a cold, cutting tone. He heard the swish and crack of some flogging implement and two more piercing yells. Then silence for a moment; and presently two Fijians crawled out from the forecastle and began to work furiously with sand and canvas upon the bulwark stanchions abreast the foremast.

Mr. Maxon stepped into view, idly swinging a bunch of knotted rope ends, his pleasant face showing no concern or further interest. At sight of Peter he smiled and tossed the rope ends on top of the galley.

"Stowaways," he uttered laconically as he passed, and Peter stared at him in fascination.

From where he sat he could see the red weals on the naked backs of the Fijians. Mr. Eli Maxon fell to pacing the quarterdeck with complete nonchalance, softly whistling between his teeth, looking, at each forward turn, like a blessed cherub whose mission in life was the comfort and well being of black seamen. Peter tried to add two and two, but failed to make less than five. Then Miss Crosbie emerged from the saloon companion, and Maxon turned short of his distance to smile and greet her, offering to fall in step with her.

Peter almost stood up. He kept his seat, for she smiled quite pleasantly at the mate, but declined his escort, coming toward Peter as if she wanted particularly to see him.

"I'd like to walk a bit," she said and, when Peter stepped out beside her, added quietly, "Have you sensed anything queer about this ship, Mr. Rowles?"

Peter certainly had, but he was not quite sure that what he had sensed was strong enough to discuss at short notice. The girl saved him any evasion. They were passing the odd boat, and she stopped, her hand on the broken gunwale, her eyes, wide and bewildered, fixed forward upon the industrious Fijians.

"Stowaways, the mate says," remarked Peter.

She turned and fixed his gaze with hers. Then she looked closely at the boat.

"It's queerer than ever!" She glanced toward Maxon's back and swiftly took Peter's arm, urging him to walk again. "They are no stowaways," she said, and uneasiness trembled in her speech. "They are the boatmen who brought me on board last night. That is their boat." The girl bit her lip, and her hand trembled on Peter's arm. She stopped, leaning against the bulwarks. "Oh, I wish I'd waited for the steamer. Do you think he would land me again?"

Maxon had stopped at the break of the quarterdeck and was watching them. Peter took out another cigar and contrived to light it with an air of carelessness. His heart thumped madly, for this amazing girl was asking him for counsel and, if what she said about the boat and the Fijians were true, she might have excellent reason for needing guidance. He needed some himself, for he certainly had sensed something queer about the *Scorpion* and it was growing less roseate by the minute.

He was about to open out and give his views upon a few matters, when Pe-

ruvio came on deck and glanced around at the several bits of land in sight. Mr. Maxon stiffened up and stood almost at attention.

"Bring her to north!" the skipper ordered the helmsman.

"Trim braces and sheets!" shouted Maxon, and men swarmed to drag the yards around and flatten in the fore-and-afters.

With the wind forward of the beam, the brigantine leaned more steeply, and she began fairly to hum through the seas, flinging the sprays higher and shouldering the swells heavily with the bluff of her bows.

"Now I'm sure there's something wrong!" said Miss Crosbie, and marched aft to confront Peruvio himself.

Flencher Peruvio met her with a suave grin and took her arm with all the familiarity of an old friend.

"Captain Peruvio!" she cried, brushing his hand aside. "You are not sailing toward Tahiti! Please put me ashore!"

Peruvio's laugh echoed among the windy spaces aloft.

"What a romantic little lady you are. You flatter me. I wish I had the courage to run off with such a lovely and courageous woman. Believe me, I've been seeking for such a one as you all my life, but never hoped to encounter one. Come, I'll show you the chart, and tell you something about Island navigation. Have you never heard of the Trades? The bustling working wind? They do blow one way, you know, but one must seek them. Sometimes in apparently impossible directions. I hope Mr. Rowles has not been filling your head with nonsense?"

Even at a considerable distance Peter caught the sudden change in tone; in the instant that Peruvio turned his way he detected that red flash in his eyes that had burned there when he broke the arm of the man Yule. He heard the girl's spirited retort.

"Don't *you* talk nonsense, Captain! Show me about these Trade winds, for I'm not a bit comfortable."

Maxon stepped forward a little way.

"Better find something else to amuse yourself with, Peter," he said softly, and immediately turned aft.

Peter's patience blew up. He shouted back excitedly:

"Amuse myself! Godfrey! The whole lot of you, and your silly ship, amuse me! Miss Crosbie's right. There's fishy business afoot!"

What else Peter might have said was cut short by the bobbing forth from the companion door, opposite to and out of sight of Maxon, of the head of Jovial Jinks. Jinks' visage was as lugubrious as ever, he seemed to be full of the sorrows of the world, but he conveyed to Peter by shakes of the head and winks of the eyes, and other facial contortions, that it were better for him to save his breath to cool porridge yet to be served.

Peter shut up, as much because he knew that only Peruvio mattered as on account of the dismal steward's warning; and to blow off some of the accumulated steam, so that he might approach the skipper presently with a cool and balanced mind, he grabbed for a backstay and swarmed up hand over hand, swinging by one hand midway between deck and masthead for a full minute before he descended.

At the sheerpole he paused again, and chinned himself, one hand at a time, three times before dropping lightly to the deck. It was about his only gym accomplishment at college, possible because he was light of frame as well as wiry of limb; but though he thought little enough of the stunt, it seemed to fascinate Mr. Maxon. And one of the two seamen who had earlier rebuffed him called out guardedly:

"Keep that up, young feller. It'll be useful."

Peter grinned. It was something to have broken through the wall of silence. He swelled his chest and walked aft. The mate would have spoken, but Peter marched straight to the saloon. He

meant to have a chat with Captain Flencher Peruvio, whether with Miss Crosbie or alone. He stepped into the little sea parlor full of fight; he halted at the end of the table and stood there blinking.

Flencher and Miss Crosbie sat opposite each other. Across the dining table lay a broad drawing board, and scattered over it were scores of grotesquely shaped pieces of colored wood.

"This must fit there," cried the girl, pushing a piece over.

Flencher tried to fit it, then shoved it away with a shake of the head.

"Any good at jigsaw puzzles, Peter?" he asked, without looking up.

CHAPTER IV

TEETH

FOR a moment or two Peter found himself so taken aback that he could not for the life of him speak one word of all he had come to say. The little saloon hummed to the racing seas outside, and every nail and panel, beam and floor jiggled or squealed to the strong stress of the wind pressed hull.

Down through the open skylight poured the sweet breeze, and the sun made a ragged pool of gold on the red tablecloth, running back and forth, fore and aft, 'thwartships as the ship's angle constantly changed. Now it touched with soft radiance the fair hair of the girl; now it poured over the black glossy head of the Flencher; it dappled the scattered pieces on the board, and it hovered for an instant exactly upon the completed scrap of the jigsaw puzzle. In the shaded side of the cabin quarters Jovial Jinks moved silently about his domestic affairs.

"Take a seat and lend a hand, Peter," Flencher said, not looking up.

The girl picked up a ragged piece and tried to fit it. Peter glanced at her face. It was alight with interest in the game. But it was no game to Peter. He had conceived a doubt, and that doubt must first be cleared before any such trifling business as puzzles came into the picture. He, remembering very vividly that veranda scene and the cold completeness of the Flencher's methods, and being no man of physical action himself, cleared his throat rather nervously as he started to speak.

"I want to have a word with you, Captain Peruvio," he said.

He tried to make his voice commanding, but Peruvio apparently had not heard him. He coughed, feeling suddenly as if the motion of the ship and his strong cigars were making him sick. Yet he knew neither of those things was responsible for the funny sensation of heavy emptiness that dragged at his solar plexus. He gripped the table edge to give himself moral as well as physical support. If only Miss Crosbie would realize that he was there on her affairs as well as his own; if she would only take her eyes from that asinine puzzle and look up. Nothing seemed important to those two at the board; even the Flencher looked as if his ship might founder for all he cared if only he might fit a bit of unsymmetrical wood into a space obviously not meant to take it.

"Neither Miss Crosbie nor I are satisfied—"

Now he had struck the right note. Flencher glanced up sharply. A shadow fell across the skylight, and toward that the glance traveled on.

"Better come up, Cap'n. Looks dirty beyond the islands. And there's one of those damned planes making for Suva. She'll pass almost over us," the mate called down.

As he withdrew and closed the skylight leaf, a few drops of rain fell dully, heavily, like drops of grease.

"Carry on with the puzzle, Gytha," the Flencher told the girl as he rose.

Even his motions in rising made Peter's throat contract. They were like the motions of a great cat emerging from a tangled thicket. Peter started to run on deck ahead of him and was

hauled back with a grip so inexorable, so casually applied, that it frightened him.

"Stay here and help Gytha, Peter. I'll call you if I need you."

Flencher laughed and slithered up the stairs. When the companion door slammed shut, Peter found himself, much to his bewilderment, sprawling in a chair where he could swear he had not sat of his own volition. To make his mortification utter, the girl laughed gently and helped him to a more natural seat.

"Compose yourself, Mr. Rowles. There's really no cause for uneasiness," she said, and returned at once to the puzzle.

"I must say you take it very casually," retorted Peter angrily. What made him do so he did not know, but he let the words tumble out helter-skelter, and trembled as he cried, "A few minutes ago you were as uneasy as I am; now you seem pretty chummy with the fellow, letting him call you Gytha!"

"Poor Peter!" she said softly, but she was laughing. She turned the chair next to hers, inviting him to take it.

"That is rather sudden," she said, "but after all, it's scarcely worthwhile making a fuss about it. I did give him a sharp scolding, you know, but he showed me the chart, and the pilot book, and a diagram of winds and currents, and he convinced me that it's silly to criticize a sailing ship for the track she makes. Sit down and help me do this puzzle. It's fascinating."

Behind them Jovial Jinks flitted about. He muttered to himself in a graveyard sort of tone:

"Hell, no less! I can feel it in my bones! Him and his silly puzzle! But he'll never do that one—try as he may, he won't. Not that one!"

"Why, Jinks?" asked the girl, swinging around in her swivel chair.

"I never said a word, miss! I ain't speaking!" Jinks whispered, and vanished into his pantry, slamming it with a bang.

Gytha Crosbie laughed and shuffled the puzzle pieces.

"You can't tell me there's nothing queer about this ship," grumbled Peter, idly fingering some of the jagged bits. "They warned me, when I was going to ask him to take me to Penrhyn, that he'd eat me body and bones, and here I find him playing the goat with a kid's toy! And there's something about the crew, too. How about your boat, and the natives who brought you on board? If you ask me, it's going to be a long way to Tahiti—"

"I wish you wouldn't be so dramatic, Mr. Rowles," Gytha said sharply.

Peter glanced at her. There was a hint in her voice of an undertone of resentment, as if she very badly wanted to remain composed in her mind and Peter was threatening to ruffle her. The sun had gone from the skylight. The daylight seemed to have died too. Somewhere, just like the humming of a giant cockchafer, a distant drone filled the invisible skies. Then it grew darker. A slashing torrent of rain drenched the decks. The *Scorpion* leaned steeply, until the sea roared and swirled in the lee ports, turning the glasses into whirligigs of green. Bits of the jigsaw puzzle slipped to the floor. A door swung and banged.

A ROARING voice on deck was followed by the thunder of canvas; men yelled; a whip-like cracking of a split sail; squealing of blocks and chirruping of parrals. The ship leaped; the seas slapped at her flanks; now and then the rudder stem thumped in the trunk and a quiver ran through the saloon. Jovial Jinks flitted from cabin to cabin, screwing tighter the ports. When done, he silently lighted the big lamp above the table and again vanished, having said nothing.

"Help me pick these pieces up," said Gytha calmly, and Peter found himself on the floor beside her.

Once her hair tickled his nose. He

sneezed, and they both laughed. When they took their chairs again they were warm and cheerful through sheer community of labor. She carefully pushed to one side the part of the puzzle that had been fitted together, and heaped the rest of the pieces to the end of the table.

"Go up and see what's happening," she suggested.

Peter gladly obeyed. He wanted nothing better than to see what was going on. He took the short stairway in two long steps, and the force of his grab for the door handle almost broke his fingers. It was locked. He swore rarely, but he swore now. He stepped across to the other door. That was locked too. And he could see nothing through the port glasses for the rain and spray. He beat on the door, but nothing came of it, and he returned to the saloon.

"Now will you believe there's something funny about the ship?" he demanded grimly. Gytha smiled, but wanly.

"Oh, please let's not rush to conclusions," she begged. "It's stuffy enough down here without adding to it by getting hot and bothered. I expect everything will come out right as soon as we get out from among the islands. Captain Peruvio showed me on the chart what a maze we must thread before we reach open sea. Tell me about Penrhyn. Tell me anything to help pass the time until we can get outside for air."

"Suppose you tell me something," returned Peter stubbornly. "I want to get to Penrhyn, and Peruvio only promised to take me as a favor. But Sydney is where he said he was bound for, and if you ask me, it's a darned long way off the track for Tahiti. I'd like to know how you got here, and what pretty song and dance he gave you—"

"I wish I had your romantic soul." She laughed at him, and some of her lightheartedness crept back. "Really he gave me no song and dance. The only thing that rather took me by surprise was the suddenness of our sailing. I'll tell you how I met Captain Peruvio."

The door of the pantry opened a few inches, and was put on the hook by a hand that apparently had no body attached to it. The girl turned at the slight sound, but immediately faced Peter again. She was not uneasy in that closed space where all sounds seemed to roll in one great diapason; but the tinkle of the brass hook was different, and caught her ear. She let her gaze wander to the glass of the skylight, and there it stayed, as if she were fascinated by the pelting of the rain.

"I was impatient to leave Suva," she said. "For a year I have been living with my brother, who was trying to make a dead plantation pay. I was trying for most of the year to get him to come home before he lost every penny; but he was infatuated with the idea of bringing things out of the earth, and though he knew no more about growing things than a babe unborn he persisted until he fell ill. He died a month ago, and there was just enough money left after burying him to take me out. Pennies count, you know, when there are few of them; and when I was told I might get a small sailing vessel to take me to Tahiti without waiting for a steamer, I jumped at the chance. It saved me hotel expenses, and the fare was only half. But, until I met Peruvio, there seemed to be no sailing vessels going my way.

"It was chance that threw Peruvio at me. I had just been told by the last trading vessel skipper that there was nothing doing, when Captain Peruvio accosted me. Told me he had heard me talking to the other skipper. Apologized for his butting in. Said he was going to Tahiti and offered me the chance. Of course I jumped at it. He said he was sailing today, early. But when I had arranged for my baggage to be brought on board he insisted that I send it at once, and come on board myself. That was rather early in the evening; but I didn't mind that, since he said that, as soon as he had cleared up some business,

he had nothing to wait for, if the wind was fair. I was on board just before midnight."

"You seem satisfied!" grumbled Peter. "What if he isn't going to Tahiti at all? How about your boatmen and their boat? How did it happen that Peruvio was so handily on the spot when you were asking for passage to Tahiti? How comes he to be suddenly Tahiti bound, when an hour or so before he was bound in another direction?"

"I confess all that seems funny," said Gytha quietly. "The boat part particularly. And I admit I felt a little bit queer when he brought me down here in the dark, and never woke the steward or anybody to show me my room. But he whispered to me that it was a rule of the sea, and his rule, never to disturb sleepers without cause; and when he lit my lamp, and told me to sleep well, and showed me the key, I felt foolish because of my doubts. Then I found that a woman had traveled in my room before. It still smelled of her perfumes. Some of her old clothes were still in the wardrobe. I put them out on this table, quietly. They were gone this morning. I expect he sent them ashore, don't you? Anyhow, if one woman can travel safely in the ship, I suppose another can."

"When we sailed this morning, a woman was dancing mad on the wharf, and tried to follow us," said Peter, roughly. "He pulled out hours before he meant to. I know that. Now he's locked us in, and we're not out of sight of Fiji yet. I'm going to make him land us!"

PETER rushed to the companionway doors again. He might have been knocking on the cliffs of Patagonia for all the result. What he could see of the outer world through the fogged ports told him that the ship was caught in a fierce blow; the companionway-house was a cavern of uproar from the wind and sea. Now and then a vague blur passed which might be Peruvio or anybody else. Whoever it was paid no attention to Peter's pounding on the doors.

"No use that way," he told the girl. "Let's try these doors. Jinks! Ho Jinks! Can't we get out of here?"

The steward remained invisible. Peter tried the pantry door handle, for the door had been quietly taken from the hook and closed. There was no reply, but the sound of a turning key in the lock sent a little tremor through Peter. He shrugged, assumed a determination he did not feel, but must persuade the girl he had, and began to examine all the other doors except his own and Gytha's. As he opened the first he found her beside him, her hand on his arm.

"This is the captain's," she told him. "This is where he showed me the charts and things."

There was no other door here besides that they stood in. Peter glanced around the place. It was fairly roomy for so small a vessel, and much more luxurious than his own cramped berth. The bed was a real bed, and no bunk. The lamp was of heavy silver, and had a fringed yellow shade. Books there were in profusion, and pictures. The books seemed to show a certain taste; so did the pictures, but Peter hurriedly decided that was a bachelor's taste, and no fit taste to invite a nice girl to share.

He turned from the room, pushing her before him, hoping she had not too closely inspected the pictures. As he turned, he saw the telltale compass above the bed and stepped back to glance at it. In a moment he forgot about Peruvio's taste in art. He took the girl's arm and dragged her to the bedside.

"Look! Look at that! We're sailing almost *east!* Now are you convinced there's something rotten about this business?"

Blankly she met his gaze. Dumbly she followed him out. When he attacked a door beneath the stairs, she was at his side, and when the door opened, and he turned to let her look in, he saw her fine eyes glittering with rising anger, saw her

lovely face grown hard with the tense lines of chin and mouth which revealed the fact that though she might be slow to take alarm, she could most decidedly face a situation when called upon.

Together they entered what was once a trade room. It ran the full breadth of the ship, and extended beyond the mainmast. Shelves surrounded it, and a small hatch in the deck above, with a batten ladder against a stanchion, obviously gave access to it when required. Now that hatch was tarpaulined and wedged, and Peter knew the boats were griped down over it. It was almost black dark. Two small and grimy port lights in the sides admitted the only dim light there was. But, even in the darkness, Peter made out what seemed to be curious objects to find in a trading vessel.

"Look at this!" he called out.

The girl groped beside him. Her hand followed down his arm until her fingers touched his, and then the object he grasped.

"It's a plough, isn't it?" she queried. "My brother tried to use ploughs, but he couldn't get the blacks to work with them. They prefer their own old tools." She laughed shakily. "They couldn't understand ploughs any better than the Chinamen understood the first wheelbarrows. Remember? Loaded up the wheelbarrow then carried it on his head. But perhaps there's some enlightened soul who perseveres with modern implements. What else is there, Peter?"

She used his name perhaps unconsciously; he noticed it, and his fingers trembled under hers. But she was not to know that he had been smitten hard by that first accidental encounter in Suva; and Peter was no light chaser of women to try to follow it up just because they were locked together in the cuddy of a beastly old Island brigantine. He stepped farther inside and gashed his shin on a wicked steel harrow, doubled up and lashed with wire. He swore softly, and the very human note amused Gytha. She pretended to be shocked. Her hand pulled at his.

"Come out of it, Peter. You can't find a way out in the dark except the way we came in. We'll have to try some other—"

Abruptly the ship jerked to an even keel. There were fierce cries, the thunder of shaking sails, Peruvio's voice pealing in bitter rage. Then shots.

"Do you own a pistol?" demanded Peter.

"Y-es—I have one—"

"Get it! I haven't one!" snapped Peter.

Gytha went to her room and turned out her suitcase. In a few moments she was back. Her face was white.

"It's gone!" she whispered.

CHAPTER V

THEATRICALS

FOR a moment neither could find words. The vessel resumed her heeling angle, the rattle and crash of gear stopped and the sound of running seas again made the interior rumble. Flencher's voice spoke once—a bitter, brief note, then all was quiet above except for the boom of the wind and the creaking of the stressed ship.

"He'll be coming down soon. I'm going to bring him to a showdown," said Peter. He regarded her whimsically. "I suppose your pistol really has disappeared. I know what girls are. Perhaps you stuck it right down at the bottom of a trunk?"

"I did not!" She spoke sharply, evidence of nerves. Her eyes were big and bright, her mouth trembled slightly. "I hate the things. But since I was persuaded of the need of a pistol in the wilds, you may be sure I kept it handy. My suitcase and handbag have been rifled. I know how I packed them. Whoever did it was after that gun. Nothing else is disturbed. Just the pistol and box of cartridges."

She spoke the last to his back, for Peter was going up the stairs. The

cloudy ports on one side gave imperfect glimpses of a slaty sky. On the other side there was the faintest shade lighter in the outlook, though as yet there was no lessening of the ship's sailing angle.

Every now and then a crash far forward was followed by a slashing torrent of broken water as the ship thrust her bows into a big one; after a short breath, there was the rattling patter of flying spray hurled against swollen canvas. It had a rhythmic regularity, as if the *Scorpion* had gained beyond the lee of the Islands and was meeting the long surges of the great open sea. Of land there was no sign; it must have been near at hand to be seen through those salt frosted glasses.

Peter heard Peruvio's voice again. It was but a word, and Maxon answered it with noticeable civility. Steps approached the starboard door, and Peter stood close to it, ready to step out and demand an explanation of many things. Particularly he wanted to know why he was locked in the saloon like a child. That rather chafed him; if anything, more than the very palpable irregularity about Peruvio's promise to take him to Penrhyn in a vessel already sailing in the opposite direction.

The door handle rattled, and he was all ready to burst forth. He waited, all keyed up; and Peruvio entered by the other door, fooling Peter by the simplest trick. Peter swung around and faced him, trembling with anger. Had he not been so angry, he would have taken warning perhaps from Peruvio's eyes. Peruvio was laughing, but it was an ugly laugh, and not in the least due to humor.

"What's the meaning of this, locking us in?" Peter began.

The words he wanted to say would not come easily. He was too angry. He tried to oppose Peruvio's way, and really meant to enforce a reply to his demand. Peruvio uttered no word. His hand shot out, gripped Peter's shirt at the breast, taking skin and flesh and hair and cotton together, and stepped down the stairway into the saloon to jam Peter into a chair with chill ferocity.

Peter gasped, then jumped to his feet in fury. Gytha stood at the other end of the table, aghast at the glitter in the skipper's eyes, trying to tell Peter in signs to keep silent. Peter was beyond signs. He never saw Peruvio's eyes. His own eyes were cloudy with rage, and if Peter's rages were rare, they were all the more blind when they seized upon him.

"You can't pull this silly theatrical stuff in this day and age!" he shouted, shaking a daring fist under the Flencher's nose. "I want to know where you're taking us. I have no time to go gallivanting over the Pacific. Neither has Miss Crosbie."

Peruvio had turned contemptuously, and now stood in the doorway of his own berth, reaching inside for a bottle of rum from the rack. Peter raved at his back, and even seized his jacket, trying to turn him, but the skipper stuck the bottle to his mouth and swallowed a good many times before he returned the bottle. Then he paid attention to his angry passenger.

Peter Rowles had never in his life been handled like it. He had been no better or worse at ordinary athletics than any other healthy man who never aimed at being a star; he had done his bit in a moderate way at wrestling, football, boxing and gymnastics, and as long as such things only applied to others, or were discussed rather than practised, Peter believed that in a turn-up he could do himself credit. Had he not been so angry, he might have recalled a fierce moment of raw savagery in the garden in Suva; but for all that, he was taken aback and rendered helpless with panic when Flencher gripped him by the elbows.

"Oh, stop it!" cried Gytha, her hands to her face.

The pantry door opened silently. Jovial Jinks reached out, grasped her hand and dragged her inside without a

word. Peter was spared the humiliation of an audience.

Peruvio dragged his arms together behind his back, and Peter's desperate struggles could not prevent it. He felt his hands crushed in one of Peruvio's, as if he had put them in a vise, and swiftly his feet were made to trot to the door under the stairs. The door was opened, and he was flung inside, among the ploughs and harrows, the unseen gear of all sorts. The door was shut and locked behind him, and he was in black gloom unlighted by any ray of clear day.

He was all but stunned by his fall. His elbows and knees were skinned, and his head rang from a blow against something which his groping hands told him was a bundle of pick-heads.

He sat down, for the ship's motion seemed intensified in the hold, and the darkness and the dizziness from his aching head combined to make him feel rocky on his legs. It was like being inside a drum that was beaten by a giant. The bilge, churning not far below him, turned his stomach faint. He lay down. It was all very puzzling. But of one thing he was now convinced—theatrical or not, Flencher Peruvio's deeds matched his reputation.

For the first time, Peter experienced real fear, and it was not all on his own account. That girl out there was in a tougher spot than he was, if she only knew it.

"The man must be a maniac!" he muttered.

THE strong wind died, and the Pacific rolled greasily under a vivid sun that dried the *Scorpion* until she shone bone-white. Steam drifted up the bleached cloths of the sails, and the last dark stretches of saturation disappeared. No land broke the blue expanse of sea; the brigantine moved forward in a circle of dazzling sun glow which advanced as she advanced. Smoke rose from the galley cowl, and black Naka sweated luxuriously over his stove, his shining face one broad smile as he stirred a stew more fitting for a sealer among ice than for a sun bleached brigantine in a welter of heat.

The *Scorpion* ought to have appeared as a happy ship, making good way in speckless weather after a hard blow; but her decks were lifeless, almost. At the wheel stood a stony faced seaman, who kept his gaze very noticeably on his work, from luffs to compass card, to windward and back to the luffs; giving a spoke of helm, meeting the vessel, checking her; steering expertly, with supreme familiarity.

Flencher Peruvio lounged at the weather rail, staring ahead with fierce eyes that burned in a face drawn with pain and flushed with rum. He seemed to be outside the ship, for all notice he took; but the helmsman never once let his gaze wander from ship to master. That was queer. The seaman was a stout, hard, square jawed fellow who gave no indication in his physical appearance of being capable of fear.

Beside the fore scuttle, out of sight of the quarterdeck, another seaman sat hunched up. A shipmate with a slush tin dressed terrible bruises on the sitting man's head and breast with a gentleness amazingly incongruous in one so rugged. Farther forward, chained to the windlass, one Fijian boatman crouched in the blazing sun. He looked as if he had been beaten into dumbness. Presently the wounded man stood up, stepped out and tried his limbs. Flencher saw him.

"Come aft, you!" called Flencher harshly.

He never moved from the rail, nor did his expression change as the man made his way painfully toward him.

"Go below and tell Jinks to give you a good drink, then turn to and watch yourself in future."

The helmsman's eyes flickered from his duty for an instant, then fell to the compass card again. The injured man made no reply, but made what speed he could to obey what was a staggeringly

unexpected order. He wiped his dry lips with the back of a hairy hand as he entered the companionway, and grinned like a gargoyle with a broken mouth.

Flencher gave no further sign of interest. When the man returned and went forward the skipper gave him no glance. To one seeking to fathom the depths of Flencher Peruvio no light might appear. The man was an enigma as he lounged there at the rail of his vessel.

"What are you doing to Mr. Rowles?" Gytha asked the skipper at supper.

Flencher had been drinking hard ever since Maxon relieved the deck and he came below. Any other man drinking as hard would have frightened the girl into frozen silence; but Flencher was revealed as a curiosity in this as in other things. The more he drank the less forbidding he seemed. Though she had not dared to speak of her own affairs, she felt brave enough to put Peter's case before him.

"Interested?" He grinned.

One sinewy hand slid across the table and gripped hers. She shivered, but realized how hopeless it was to try to break that grip.

"I'm interested, of course," she said. "We are fellow-passengers in your vessel, and if you are able to lock up one you're quite likely to imprison the other. What right have you to do either?"

"We won't speak of rights, my dear." She felt ill at his tone. "I'm master here, and if a man tries to bully me, I'll put him beyond bullying. You should be worrying about your own position, not his."

"I'm not worrying about my position, Captain," she said with a smile which caused her a terrific wrench. "I know you are not even seeking those trade winds you spoke about. But that you will prevent my reaching Tahiti I do not believe. You dare not. This is today, and not last century. You can't keep Mr. Rowles locked up either. Why, as soon as you enter a port, you'll be in hot water!"

Peruvio's redshot eyes never wavered from her face. In them lurked a devil, and she was not foolish enough to misunderstand it. Gytha Crosbie had courage. She believed the man was mad; but a madman can be outwitted if played shrewdly. She had not been long enough aboard the *Scorpion* to realize what a vast difference lies between a madman in a law abiding community and a madman at sea, in absolute command of a ship. She expected a sharp retort to her challenge. Instead he released her hand, laughed and rose from the table.

"Some girls would make a howl," he said. "You don't. That's why I like you. That's why I'm taking care of you. You need have no fear about Rowles, either. I need him, as I need you. I can't have people shaking fists under my nose; that's why he's in the trade room. If you were to shake your fist under my nose, Gytha, I'd lock you up too. But you won't. And Rowles will be free tomorrow. Now let's get on to that puzzle again. That's important."

"Oh, you and your silly jigsaw!" she cried, exasperated. "What about Tahiti? Do you imagine I shall just lie down and let you carry me anywhere you like just because you stole my pistol?"

"Been looking for it already?" he mocked her. "I just got it in time, eh? Well, lady, that was only for your good. If you had given it to Rowles, he'd be dead now, and then where would you be? But don't get fretful. I told you, as I told Rowles, that my business wasn't Tahiti or even Penrhyn way, and I'd go out of my way to land you. But business comes first. After we have made one call at another island, I promise you that the next stop shall be your destination . . . Oh, Jinks!" The lugubrious steward appeared like a ghost. "Clear the table, you dog faced swab!"

Peruvio took another stout drink of rum, and got his board, scattering the table gear to make room for it. The voice he used for the steward was utterly unlike that he had been using in speaking

to her. Gytha glanced fearfully at him as he arranged the jigsaw pieces. She sat down to the board without another word. She was wise.

JOVIAL JINKS took food into the trade room, with a lantern. Peter had fallen asleep, from foul air and darkness as much as from weariness. The steward's foot aroused him. He started up, memory reviving his anger.

"Easy does it," said Jinks, pushing him back to a seat on the bundle of pick-heads. "Easy, my lad. Swaller yer grub and gather yer wits. Ain't you had enough o' cuttin' up didoes?"

Peter was hungry. He had eaten nothing since breakfast, and the hot coffee cleared his head. He ate without knowing or caring what, and the steward stood with his back to the door.

"What is he up to, locking me up, Jinks? What's Miss Crosbie doing? I want to talk to that—"

Jinks stopped Peter's outburst with a gesture. The lantern swung from a hook in a beam, and the smoky shadows danced crazily. Jinks himself looked like a gnome, leaning forward, his skinny hands gesturing.

"Listen, my friend. Have you seen one man aboard this yer hooker as looks human?"

"Yes, one. The cook."

"And perhaps you know why he looks human?"

"No, I don't. I don't know why anybody should look human in this—"

"He looks human because he ain't got no tongue to get him in trouble. That's why," said Jinks deliberately. "And he had a tongue once." A short interval while picking up the tray, then, "I stand to lose my tongue, too, yappin' to you like this, Mr. Rowles, but I'll take my chance this once. You ain't in no danger, nor the lady ain't, so long as you keeps clear o' Flencher's business. If he arsks you to do blinkin' jigsaw puzzles, you blinkin' well do jigsaw puzzles. Same as the lady is now. If you want to see trouble, you go on shakin' yer little fists under his perishin' beak, and I can't keep on tellin' yer."

Jinks laid hand on the door.

"You'll be let out tomorrow," he said, then turned the handle, muttering to himself, "Him and his puzzles! That's one he'll never finish, that is!"

Then he was gone, the key was turned, and Peter was in darkness again. He had a cigar, and lighted it. He tossed away the empty matchbox and rummaged around for a soft spot for the night.

There were rats in the trade room. They came out for the crumbs of his supper. Peter was nervous, hating rats. In the end of his bed one sat, hunched up on top of the bundle of pick-heads, which seemed to discourage it. There were cockroaches too, huge, obscene things as big as his thumb, for which even steel pick-heads had no terrors. His flesh crawled as they swarmed over him. He heard four bells struck on deck and, having kept track of the hours since Jinks' visit, knew it was only ten o'clock. Already his muscles tortured him. When he stretched, a rat ran over his foot; his hand, groping for an easier place, crushed a roach, and the foul smell sickened him.

Long before dawn grayed the deadlights Peter knew how good was the advice of Jinks. He'd make no more trouble—for awhile.

CHAPTER VI

TUG LAMMAS SPEAKS

THE Flencher was suffering for his sins. Peter had been released from the trade room several days, and still the skipper groaned in anguish in his broad bed. Doubled up with stomach tortures, which he should have known better than to invite, since the same result always followed a spell of rum drinking, he still managed to drag himself on deck to keep track of the navigation; and when he emerged from the companion-

way his stubborn will forced his agonized body to walk upright. If men thought that his haggard face traitorously revealed weakness, they had but to meet his eyes to be convinced to the contrary.

Gytha avoided him during the first day of sickness; fearing him more than she admitted, she wanted to keep clear of him. But when he sent a plea to her she entered his room, for a day of suffering, such as she knew was his by the irrepressible sounds beyond his door, broke down the barriers of her fear and touched the compassion within her. As soon as her eyes fell upon him she shivered.

"I think it serves you right," she said first, while holding his wrist, having rendered him speechless with her little thermometer. "Too much rum, my friend. I was expecting this."

She removed the thermometer and pursed her lips thoughtfully. She felt a little bit resentful toward him, apart from the case in hand, for she detected in his pained eyes a gleam of amusement, and she rather prided herself on her sickroom efficiency. The man was laughing at her!

"There's nothing the matter with you," she stated with sudden sharpness. "Stomach ache, that's all. I'll send the steward in to you. I can do nothing."

He clutched at her hand, but this time she eluded him, and she heard his chuckle turn to a moan of real pain. She could feel sorry for him, but only out of his sight. He was suffering, she knew that, and it was more than mere heartburn, or simple stomach ache. She sent the steward in, and heard him come out in a hurry, while she went through the ship's medicine chest. There were only the stock items of all commercial emergency kits there, plus plenty of drenches and lotions for bugs and fevers.

She knew of only one swift remedy that might ease him, and that was a simple domestic dose of the cook's baking soda. As for a cure, that was beyond her skill and must remain in his own hands. For the present she wanted to stop those horrid sounds which became doubly revolting from a man of such tremendous physical force. She found soda in the pantry, and gave a big spoonful to Jinks without telling him what it was. He believed it was something from the chest, which was always a mystery to him.

"Make him swallow it," she said. "Take some water in, make him put it dry on his tongue, and wash it down; then tell him he must be quiet. I'll look in later."

That had been three days ago. She had taken the book from the chest and read up on all sorts of ailments, hoping to find something that fitted him. Nothing seemed to touch on his symptoms; she persevered with the humble soda whenever the pain intensified, and it did seem to ease him. But he could eat nothing, and to keep his fire burning—as he explained to her with a wry grin—he drank more rum. He did, however, control the quantity. And there was never a time, during all his illness, when those on deck dare be sure that he was safely out of the way. He appeared on deck like a ghost, and as noiselessly.

Between spells of excruciating pain, he made the girl read to him, and he showed a curious taste in his literature. He had a disquieting preference in art, and she refused at first to read in his room. When next she went in, he had taken down some of the more candid pictures, and mockingly begged her to sit down and read now. She was afraid of his choice of books, but he handed her, surprisingly, a treatise on the effects of alcohol on the human body, and there was never a smile on his face, either.

Feeling certain that he was making a fool of her, she began to read, and presently read with entire sincerity, for there was no doubt whatever that the man was listening like a student. Next time she read it was a modern work on agriculture; then he swung to the other extreme and handed her an old volume of piratical lore. She grew more deeply mystified each day.

So much of her time was spent in trying to soften the tortures of Flencher Peruvio that Peter sought companionship elsewhere. She had whispered to him what Flencher had told her about carrying them to their destination after making one call, and he was inclined to wait and see. Now that the man was down on his back, Peter was not quite as bitter toward him. The locking up in the trade room rankled, but, after all he had heard about these Island skippers, perhaps he had come off fairly well. Many of them were tough; some were mad. Too much rum, of course; and unlimited power within their bulwarks.

Eli Maxon made his own hay while the sun shone. He admired this girl who seemed so competent to keep the Flencher quiet. Whenever she went on deck for a breath of sweet air, if the mate was on watch, she was sure of company, even though Peter Rowles might be invisible. Perhaps it was due to his interest in Gytha that Maxon paid little attention to Peter, and Peter found himself enjoying the freedom of the ship.

Ever since the morning they left Suva, Peter had wanted to get a man to talk to him. Only one, of all the forward crowd, had uttered a word in his hearing. That was Tug Lammas—the man volunteered his name—and he had only spoken on that occasion when Peter, to blow off steam, played monkey tricks with a rope and showed that his slender arms were sinewy.

Naka, the shining black cook, always had a smile for Peter; but since hearing why Naka smiled so readily Peter scarcely wanted to make him smile. In fact, Naka's smile could make Peter shudder more easily than the fiercest glare of the Flencher.

On a sparkling afternoon when the *Scorpion* scarcely made a ripple to log six knots before a gentle fair breeze, Tug Lammas was working over the bows, and Peter lounged along and sprawled on the deck between the knightheads. To anybody aft, Peter was only partly in sight, Tug not at all. Maxon walked the deck gravely, bearing himself with dignity against the appearance of Gytha, whose footsteps he had heard on the stairs. With her emergence from the door, Maxon's interest in mundane things diminished to the speck of vigilance which would warn him of Flencher's coming.

"TUG," ventured Peter, "you are the only man of all the crew I've heard open your mouth. I believe the rest are dumb. Scared dumb. You're not, eh?"

Tug never glanced up from his work. He spat heavily into a smooth, rising swell, and passed several turns with his serving mallet around a jib-guy before he spoke. Peter was afraid he had drawn another blank, and sighed. It was such a glorious day, all hands should be singing and making merry on the hatch, according to the rules.

There were dolphins at play before the sharp cutwater; a little jet of clear water spurted up where the stem entered the sea; the vessel gently sank her bows, and gently lifted them out of glossy mounds of water which scarcely broke at her passage; two tropic birds hung aloft like pictures pasted on the blue, and the sun-shot sails were dazzling in their purity, breath taking in their apparent life, swelling with soft, warm air.

Peter was caught in the spell; Tug's voice, floating up over the bows, startled him.

"Didn't see the way Bill Blades got beat up, did you?"

"No," said Peter quickly.

He was going to get a man to chat! But Tug said no more for a long period, chewing his quid and serving his wire as if no Peter existed. After perhaps five minutes:

"Bill never will see proper out of that eye." Two minutes more, and, "Got his breastbone nigh busted, too."

"But what for? Who did it?" Peter wanted to know. Tug's deliberate speech irked him, but he saw that Tug was not to be hurried. The answer

came sharply enough now.

"Who? Who could!" Tug laughed horribly. "Oh, he's a ducky, is Flencher! Not as mad as some think, he ain't."

"Why did he beat Bill?"

"See the Fijian chained up, ain't you?" snapped Tug savagely. "Two there was, wasn't there? Boatmen from Suva—harmless niggers as ever was. One jumped overboard in the channel. Bill was supposed to keep his eye on 'em while close to land. One jumped 'fore Bill could stop him. Flencher shot the poor swab, sure enough. Ain't no fear he got ashore. But Bill got beat up, just the same."

"But I don't understand why he kidnaped those boatmen and stole their boat, Tug."

Tug looked up and glared his disgust.

"Then you ain't arf as smart as I kidded myself you was. What d'you s'pose he got that woman here for? What did he give you a passage for? He ain't going nowhere neither o' you wants to go." Then, as if Tug's feelings overpowered him, the seaman shook his serving mallet like a club, and almost shouted, "He's spillin' the whole b'ilin' o' beans! He ain't got no business messin' about with a decent woman. Flamette was his sort. Six months she been with him—and now he dumps her gear ashore at midnight, after tellin' her to be aboard at noon next day. She who's been expectin' to get her share in—"

"In what, Tug?"

Peter was trying to be patient, but Tug had suddenly realized that he was letting his tongue wag too freely. Two more seamen came forward, stepping over Peter to look down at Tug. They said nothing, but climbed over the bows and started work on other parts of the head rigging. Tug appeared to have forgotten Peter, who was unwilling to be forgotten.

"What's the good of saying anything if you stop short at the part that matters, Tug? There's a lot of darned silly mystery about this ship, and—"

"Silly mystery, is it?" grunted Tug. "You'll change yer tune about that before long. Have a chance to try them arm muscles, you 'will. I see you got bowels, my laddie buck, and that's why I chanced a lot to tip you a word. If you ain't a fool, you'll forget all about silly mysteries where the Flencher's concerned."

"Shut up!" growled one of the other men, and that was all Peter heard from him for a long time; but it shut up Tug completely.

Peter looked over and saw nothing but three bowed heads, and three pairs of husky shoulders swaying as three pairs of brawny arms wrapped tarred marline around three wire stays. He had heard enough to arouse more than curiosity. Tug had mentioned "messing about with a decent woman." That could only mean Gytha Crosbie. Tug had said something about Peruvio never intending to go where she or Peter wanted to go. He had been willing to believe Flencher's assurance to Gytha that after one call the *Scorpion* would turn about, but Tug had got him worried.

He stood up to go aft, determined to confront Flencher even in his bed. Perhaps that would be the better way. As his shadow fell athwart the men, Tug jerked his head up to utter a final word.

"I ain't achin' to lose my tongue, laddie. Don't you go yappin' to Flencher!"

Peter did go aft, but he refrained from confronting the skipper in his bed. In fact, he felt that it might not be very good for Tug to confront the man at all.

He found another cause for gloom. Mr. Maxon was making headway. He and Gytha leaned over the weather rail, abreast the wheel, and he was spinning her some sort of yarn which apparently amused her tremendously. Her laugh was light and carefree; as they leaned together, their hands were touching on the rail, and Peter saw him deliberately cover hers with his. She did not at once remove it. She was looking up at the hovering birds, which he was no doubt spinning his yarn about, and her face was softly colored, her eyes glowing with

interest, her lips smiling.

Peter leaned against the same rail, not far from them, listening to catch some word of Maxon's which he could, in his deeper knowledge of birds and things, dispute. Maxon's voice sank to a murmur, then ceased altogether. Up from the after cabin hatch stalked Flencher, sextant in hand, looking like a death's head with eyes of flame.

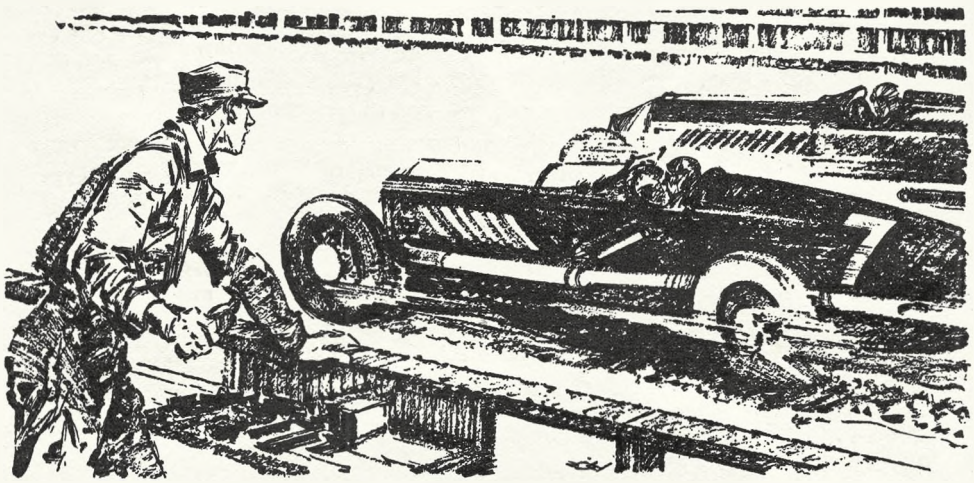
"Go to the chronometer, Maxon!" he said harshly and, giving no notice to the girl or Peter, braced himself against the rail and began bringing down the sun.

The mate ran below briskly; Gytha looked over the other rail. The helmsman kept his eyes rigorously on his steering. Peter stared at Peruvio's back in fascination. Never would the man cease to fascinate him. The more you hated him, the more you found to admire in him, even though it must be the admiration due to super-devilishness. Here he stood, alone, and so occupied as to be helpless against attack; in a ship full of hatred for him, the man showed contempt in every move he made. Peter's eyes would not leave the back of his head, that black haired head, full of madness yet so full of indisputable courage.

Something flashed across Peter's vision. Straight past Peruvio's black head it darted. Like a flash of light it was, and Peter scarcely succeeded in following it. But it flickered once, and he gasped at what he believed it was; he doubted the evidence of his senses. Then it hit the sea, many yards astern, with a plop, and Peter knew it was what he believed it was. He stood quivering. That was a knife, and Peruvio never knew how near to death he was.

TO BE CONTINUED

A Story of the Speedway



Barrel 'Em and Bend 'Em

By T. R. ELLIS

FOR the benefit of those who may not be familiar with the jargon of race drivers, I might say to begin with that a barrel is a cylinder. When one of these speed merchants is said to "barrel 'em", it means he has a heavy throttle foot that makes his cylinders pop hot and plenty frequent. So frequent, in fact, that he almost has to bend his car to get it around four turns to the lap without meetin' himself comin' back or mowin' down several-odd yards of guard rail, which last is bad business for both driver and car.

On any track in the country, when the race is tight, you'll see Millers, Duesys and a Frontenac or two hit the turns all in a bunch. The crowd in the grandstands will be on their feet and goin' wild, and over in the pits the mechanics and owners will pound each other on the back and cut loose the speedway war whoop, "Barrel 'em and bend 'em!" Out on the course a couple high speed pilots may be slowed up permanently, but you can bet your rain check a track record is goin' overboard and a new speed king is in the makin'.

That's speedway — and it hasn't changed since the days of Oldfield, Disbrow and Burman. Which brings me my story.

On the second day of July, several years back, I'm sittin' in a hotel lobby up in Midtown, Oregon. I'm readin' over an entry blank, which I already know by heart, wherein the management of the Midtown Speedway informs me that the annual 100-Mile Speed Classic is to be held two days hence. All of which is like rubbin' salt in a cut, because I got a perfectly good Miller Special, with plenty of revolutions under the bonnet, all tuned up and nobody to drive it. Leo Heisman has been performin' that service for me, until one of

his relations died and left him so much money that he is henceforth and forever ruined as a race driver.

I can't drive it myself on account of a contract I got with the Skipper, that bein' the title me an' my young son have tacked on my wife. The said contract was made about four years before, on the day Jerry, Jr. was born, when the Skipper had run a close race and taken the checkered flag a short car length ahead of the black speedster that catches up with all of us sooner or later.

Shortly after she gave me my choice of wrapping a big paw around one of Jerry's pudgy hands or around the taped wheel of a race car, but made it clear that I couldn't do both. From then on Jerry Lewis, Sr. is an ex-race driver, with the accent on the "ex".

About the time I'm feelin' pretty sorry for myself, somebody plunks down in the seat beside me and says—

"Mr. Lewis?"

I admit the charge without much interest.

"I am tol' you look for some one to drive your race car."

That kinda perks me up and I give him a look-over. What I see ain't so bad. He's tall as I am, but not quite so lanky. Blue eyes, and not the washed out kind of blue, either. Black hair, not plastered down, and a three-inch scar on the left side of his face. Even that scar don't keep him from bein' good lookin'. In fact too good lookin' to be a race driver, so I says:

"Wrong, buddy. I'm not lookin' for some one to drive my race car. I'm lookin' for a race driver."

"I think I could perhaps qualify in both places," he says, with a funny little accent I can't quite place. There are lots of Italians, Spanish and Portygees up and down the coast, but he don't sound like any of them. He seems to guess what I'm thinkin' for he says, "I am French."

He didn't need to be so darn cocky, so I say:

"Oh, yeah? Why brag about it?" No answer to this. Then I ask him—

"Ever drive a race car before?"

"But certainly—" stiffly—"several."

"What kind?"

"Peugot, Renault, Mercedes, Hispano, Sunbeam," he recites calmly.

That's a hot list of automobiles for any one race driver to have handled in a lifetime, so I take it with a sack of salt. I've had would-be race drivers tell me they'd driven everything from the first Farman biplane to one of Gar Wood's speed boats, only to find out they couldn't drive nails.

"In France?" I ask.

"Yes."

"Ever drive a Miller?"

"No."

"What makes you think you can?"

He's gettin' warm under the neckpiece now and his answer shows it.

"Why I think so," he says, "should not interest you so much as whether I can or not."

"Right!" I snap back. "But when you stop to think that I got eight thousand dollars tied up in a race car, and that I never saw you before, I figure it kinda gives me a right to ask."

All the answer I get to this is an armload of silence. While I'm still tryin' to think up something extra sarcastic to say, Al De Gama comes into the lobby and over to where we're settin'.

"Hello, Jerry," he says. "How long have you been in town?"

"Two years—since day before yesterday," I answer.

"Find a driver yet?"

"I don't know The gentleman on my right seems to think he'd like a take on that chore. Mr. De Gama, meet Mr.—er—"

"Smith," says my prospective pilot.

"Yeah, Smith," I add. "Good old French name."

Al blinks a couple of times, then grins a funny little tight smile, and says—

"Glad to know you, Mr. Smith."

"I have heard of you, Mr. De Gama," says Smith.

"Think of that, Al," I chirp. "Here's

a guy that claims to be a race driver and he has actually heard of the great De Gama—the egg that holds two-thirds of the dirt track speed records and has a mortgage on the other third."

With this burst of would-be sarcasm the Frenchman stands up and those blue eyes of his spit sparks.

"Mr. Lewis," he says, polite as an iceberg, "I am sorry to have bother' you. I will go now."

"Whoa—hold it," I yelp, gettin' to my feet. "Listen, mister, if I've stumbled over your dignity, I'm sorry. Sit down and let's talk it over."

That kinda holds him for a second and that frozen flame look seems to soften a bit, but he still stands as if he don't know whether to smile or tell me where to go. Then Al comes to my rescue by droppin' a hand on the Frenchman's shoulder and sayin'—

"C'est bien, mon vieux."

Then he spits out a mouthful of French that sounds like a Paris gendarme givin' directions, and just about as understandable. Boy, howdy! You should have seen that Frenchman's face brighten.

"You are French, m'sieu?" he asks.

"No," says Al. "Italian. But as I said, Jerry, here, isn't near as hard as he likes to sound. Unless I am much mistaken you will be out at the track this afternoon trying out his car."

Comin' from Al like that, this sounds suspiciously like a hint, so I look at my cards and call for a new deal.

"Sure," I tell him, "and if your name is Smith, which we know it ain't, or Brown, or White, or John Doe, your troubles are your own. If you can handle that pile of junk I call a race car, she's yours. C'mon, let's go to the track."

He hesitates a moment, to say goodby to Al De Gama, then puts on his hat and follows me across the lobby of the hotel.

"Well, so long, Smith, and good luck with the Miller," says Al, startin' for the elevator.

ME and Smitty, as I call him from then on, ramble over to the garage. There I walk him back in the rear, peel the tarp off of Betsy and say—

"There she is."

That Frenchman just gasps, for if I do say it, Betsy in her flaming red paint is one smart lookin' race car. He rubs his hands with a kinda caressin' motion, from the point of her nickeled radiator shell clean back to the pointed tail, then looks at me with a quizzical grin, and says—

"This, then, is the 'pile of the junk'?"

I just grin back and say nothing. We roll the car out of the stall, hook it on behind my touring car with a tow bar, and start the three-mile drive to the track. About halfway there, Smitty opens up the conversation.

"What kind of car does De Gama drive?"

"Miller Special," I tell him, "same as this one. Except, of course, for a few speed gadgets of his own."

"Is he, then, so fast?" he asks.

I glance at him to see if he is really serious, then proceed to enlighten him.

"Plenty fast. Believe me, Smitty, I know whereof I spout. Me and this Al De Gama have ambled around plenty of race tracks, mostly with me lookin' at his back and prayin' that his rear tires would stay on. In my day I was no slouch myself."

"I know," says Smitty quietly. "I have heard that this Jerry Lewis, sometimes called Lightning Lewis, used to, as you say, go places."

"You've heard of me?" I ask, tryin' to sound modestly surprised.

Just as I'm gettin' all swelled up about it and start to tell him how good I really was, we get to the front gate of the speedway grounds and meet Red Shafter, with his blue Duesenberg in tow, on the way back to town.

"Hi, Red," I yell. "How's the track?"

He pulls up alongside before answering:

"A little oily, Jerry, but fast. Is this

your new driver?"

"Yeah. Smitty, this is Red Shafter. He drives a Duesenberg because a Miller is too fast for him to handle."

"That's what you think," shouts Red, "but you've washed plenty muck off that can that was thrown by the back wheels of a Duesy."

"Aw, calm yourself, Red," I says, "before you burn a valve. Anybody on the track?"

"Freddy Lyons and Jack Buxton. Dizzy Davis was, but he was just hookin' up his tow-bar when I left. I'm gonna bust that ape one of these days. When he gets on a track he thinks he owns it."

"Better wait awhile, Red, and let me do it. He'd make three of you and I'm more the type."

While we're standin' there Seth Bowman pulls up drivin' Dizzy Davis's tourin' car and towin' his Frontenac. Seth is a local garage man and a rabid racing fan. Some of the gang keep their cars at his garage when they're in town, and whenever the front gates are open and there is a car on the course, Seth always has his big Comet tow-car there to help anybody that might need it.

"Hi, Seth," I yell. "How's tricks?"

"So-so, Jerry," he says. "How's it with you?"

"Just fair, Seth. When did you break into the racing industry?"

"Not me." He grins. "I had to go to town in a hurry and Davis asked me to take his cars in. Said he'd bring the tow-car in later."

"Huh! Dizzy's gettin' big hearted in his old age."

"Aw, he ain't so bad."

Which is as close to pannin' anybody as Seth ever comes.

With that I slip into gear and we roll up to the edge of the track. Here we have to wait awhile, as Buxton and Lyons are blastin' around the course pretty fast. In the meantime I point out Dizzy Davis, sittin' on the runnin' board of Seth Bowman's tow-car, and tell Smitty:

"Watch that guy, son. He drives that white Frontenac we passed at the front gate. I don't like him personally, and I don't like him any better as a driver. I wouldn't go so far as to say he'd ever deliberately fenced anybody, but several of the fellows think so, and funny things can happen on a racetrack."

Smitty just gives me an understandin' look and is silent. I dive in my bag in the back of the car and pull out a clean white suit of coveralls and toss 'em to him. He has a helmet and a pair of goggles, but I dive into the bag again and pull out a pair that are the apple of my eye.

"Lemme see your glasses, Smitty."

He hands them over without a word. They're beautiful things all right. Silver mounted and curved to fit the eye socket snugly. Swell glasses—for an aviator. I hang them on the wheel of the tourin' car and hand him mine, sayin'—

"Better wear mine, son."

He looks a bit doubtful.

"But, Mr. Lewis," he says, "you don't unnerstan'. In France we have the—. how you say?—superstition, about the glasses."

"Yeah, Smitty, I know. We have it here, too, and nobody has it any worse than me. But look, boy, your glasses are single lensed. Mine are double and non-shatterable, and in competition these cars sometimes throw small stones. I've known several guys that lost races because their glasses broke at the wrong time. Another thing: no one has ever worn these but me, and I had a lot of luck with them. The day I cracked up I was wearin' a pair given me by a salesman, and if I can give you the luck along with the glasses, I'm sure glad."

He nods his thanks and takes them without a word. I'm glad he understands just what it means for one race track nut to hand another a pair of glasses, and it kinda makes up for me bein' so nasty in the hotel lobby.

When the track is clear I pull across to the infield side and into a pit as far

as possible from Davis. Buxton and Lyons come up to look my new driver over while we're unhookin' the tow-bar. I introduce Smitty, sayin':

"Smitty, this is Lyons and Buxton of the Grady team. They drive Fronty's because old man Grady's education was overlooked in the rush. They're pretty good eggs, though, and I never heard of 'em boxin' anybody yet."

The Frenchman turns his million dollar smile loose at 'em and shakes hands. Then I suggest that we take a walk around the track.

THE Midtown course is one of the finest racin' outfits on the West Coast, to my way of thinkin'. The track is a mile oval, set about a quarter of a mile from the main gate which fronts on the San Francisco-Portland highway. The surface was originally yellow clay, but it has been packed and rolled and oiled until it's nearly black and almost as hard as concrete. The grandstand, which takes up about two-thirds of the outside of the front straightaway, is of timber, whitewashed and with the seats built in. This side of the plant is cut off from the track by a heavy wire fence about fifteen feet high, which stretches clean across the lot, and has a gate at each end of the grandstand.

During races the gates are kept locked and that always makes me breathe a little easier when I'm racin' here, because I once nearly hit a man that was runnin' across a track, and even now my hair sticks up through my hat when I think about it. On the infield side of the course, facin' the stands, and just about as long, is a four-foot board fence, marked up and down with red stripes to show the width of the pits. Another wire fence, set about twenty feet in from the edge of the track, runs all around the infield and serves the purpose of corralin' the spectators an keepin' them from tanglin' up with any race cars that might decide to hop the inside bank.

Taken all around, it's about the safest speed bowl I know, so far as the public is concerned, and as for the race drivers —well, I don't know of *any* place where the insurance companies break an arm writin' policies for 'em.

I point all these things out to Smitty as we trek around and he takes 'em in silently. As we come by Davis and the tow-car I'm intendin' to pass him up, but he walks out in the middle of the track to meet us.

"Hi, Jerry."

"Hello, Dizzy," I say shortly. "This is my new pilot, Mr. Smith."

Smitty mumbles a couple words that might mean anything, but as Davis steps up to shake hands the Frenchman is busy tyin' his shoe lace. Dizzy acts like he don't notice it, but he turns red and sticks his hand in his pocket. Then he turns to me and says in his wise-guy tone:

"Well, I got the wop's number now. Looks like my race from here out."

This burns me up, and he knows it. I figure I'm about the only man on the West Coast that can call De Gama "the wop" and get away with it, but I manage to keep my voice down, and say:

"You know, Dizzy, I was afraid of that."

"Yeah," he says, ignorin' the heavy sarcasm. "I busted his track record this afternoon by a full second."

"On whose stopwatch?" I ask suddenlike.

"Why, mine, of course."

"That's what I thought," I says, grabbin' Smitty by the arm and startin' toward our pit.

When we get out of earshot, I look at the Frenchman curiously.

"How come you don't want to shake hands with that guy?" I ask.

"Is he a friend of yours?"

"Not while I'm conscious."

"Well, I am to drive for you, and if he is not your friend, he is not mine," the Frenchman explains simply.

That's the kind of loyalty you read about in books, and I felt sorta cheap

when I thought how rotten I'd acted toward this egg just a couple of hours before.

"Watch him," I tell him again. "He noticed it and, believe me, he won't forget it."

"I am not afraid of cattle," Smitty answers.

We roll the speedster out from behind the tourin' car. Smitty puts on my glasses and adjusts them to his eyes, snaps the catch on his helmet and slides 'em back up on his forehead. He stands up on the seat, then slips in under the wheel as if he had been drivin' this particular hack all his life. I spend a few minutes explainin' that the gas gage is in gallons, not liters; that the speedometer is in miles per hour, not kilometers, like it is on French cars. Tell him how much air pressure to carry on his tank and show him the gage for that. Then I wind up the lecture thus:

"And listen, son, this can is fast. Don't try to hold her throttle open, because you can't do it on this track. Take her around as fast as you can handle her, but remember, eight thousand bucks is a lot of dough to me, so try and stay inside the fences. Take five or six slow laps to warm up. When I flag you with my hat, cut 'er loose until I flag you again. Got that?"

Smitty twists his back a couple times to settle himself in his seat, and gives me a grin that looks as happy as the one the prodigal son must 'a' packed around on his second day home.

"For sure, I know," he says. "Eight t'ousan' bocks is many francs, and heaven is give Frenchmen only one neck. I think I stay in between the fence all right."

I flip the motor over a few times and she takes up her song without a splutter. Smitty pulls his glasses over his eyes and hunches over his wheel. I give the car a little shove, the driver a slap on the back, and he is on his way. As he goes out of sight into the turn, I get rather nervous. For the first time in my life I've set somebody in my race car that I never heard of and never seen drive, but every move he has made and everything he's said has been so natural, that it hadn't occurred to me.

That thought makes me feel a little easier. Anyway, it's too late now to do anything about it, so I walk down to the white startin' line in the center of the front straightaway, pull out my stopwatch and wait for developments. The said developments develop all right, but not just the way I expect.

Smitty comes by the first time at about forty, swingin' the car back and forth across the full width of the track, tryin' out his wheel to see how quick it answers. Well, I'm not worried about that, for I know the Miller handles like a baby buggy. The next time around he is cranin' his neck out both sides to see if the wheels track all right, and if the exhaust is smokin'. The third time by he just waves his hand, and I can see he is satisfied and settled down to business. I back up to the edge of the track, turn over an empty oil case and squat, listenin' to the steady moan of the motor as Smitty cruises by, doin' between forty and fifty.

I'm sittin' still takin' it all in when I hear the whirr of a starter and look down the track to see Dizzy Davis in the big tow-car. That surprises me some, for I thought he'd gone to town long ago. In a minute he pulls by me, drivin' close to the inside of the track. The Comet is one of those big 1919 models, clumsy lookin', but with worlds of power, and I see Seth has built a new steel crane on the back of it, which makes it look about twice as long as a box car. I follow him with my eye as he pulls up opposite the gate at the south end of the grandstand, then forget him.

MEANWHILE Smitty has been around six or eight times and I get ready to flag him to blast her loose for a few laps. As he goes by I give him a wave with my hat. The Miller's exhaust roars

back at me, and he is in the south turn before I can get my stopwatch shifted to my right hand. I twist around to watch the north turn, waitin' for him to come out. As he broadsides out of the curve, comin' like the mill tails of hell, I hear a yell behind me.

I spin around in my tracks and freeze!

Seth Bowman's Comet, with that steel crane stickin' out yards behind, is stalled straight across the track! Dizzy is runnin' up the track toward Smitty, swingin' his arms and yellin'. I try to shout but can only whisper:

"For God's sake, stop, Smitty! Stop!" But I know he can't stop.

Smitty flashes by like a red streak. I get a flash vision of that likable Frenchman broken and mangled under the twisted wreck of what was my beautiful race car. Somehow I get my feet movin' and run toward the Comet with my eyes closed, and my heart chokin' me so I can hardly breathe. Then I stop and listen. I don't hear any crash. Just the steady cracklin' bark of the motor, and I open my eyes in time to see the red tail of the Miller sail on around the turn again and into the back stretch.

I'm still kinda stunned and think maybe I'm seein' things, but as I get to the Comet I see that Davis has overlooked a bet. There is just enough room for a car to get through between the nose of the tow-car and the fence.

Personally I wouldn't have tried to drive a tourin' car through that hole at five miles an hour. Smitty had taken a race car through at nearly ninety. Judgin' from the wheel marks, he couldn't have cleared it more than two inches on either side. And a few minutes before I had had doubts about his bein' a driver!

While I'm leanin' weak-like against the radiator cap of the Comet, tryin' to get my breath back, I see Smitty comin' out of the north turn again, all slowed down for a stop. Then I see Davis. He's comin' down the track toward me sayin' somethin' I can't hear and don't try to. In two jumps I close up the space between us.

You've heard of guys seein' red? Well, don't believe it: everything goes black. He must 'a' put up a little fight for when it's all over I got a little lump on the side of my chin and my left ear stings like the devil. But the next thing I remember I'm back off about five feet from where he's layin' on the track with a cut over his left eye and a little stream of blood tricklin' out the side of his mouth. I'm suckin' the knuckles of my left hand and got my right cocked for another sock. I take my fist out of my mouth long enough to say:

"Get up, you murderin' louse! Get up!"

"I tried to stop him," he says.

"Yeah!" I yell. "After you damn well knew you couldn't."

He don't make any move to get up. Just raises up on one elbow and says—

"Aw, you talk as if you think I done it on purpose."

"Think, hell. I know you did. Get up, before I jump in the middle of your lousy carcass."

"Easy, *mon ami,* easy," comes Smitty's voice from in back of me where he is sittin' in the car, cool as the devil.

It sure makes me feel good to see the kid parked in the driver's seat, grinnin' as if nothin' had happened. I put an arm around his shoulder and ask—

"You all right, son?"

"But, sure," he says, lookin' me in the eye, an' grippin' my other arm. "Everything is all right. Forget about it."

Then he holds out his left hand for me to see it is perfectly steady.

"Forget nothin'," I explode. "I'll—"

"Forget it, of course," supplies a quiet voice on the other side of me, and I turn around to see Al De Gama. "You might as well," he goes on, "because you can't do anything about it."

"I can break his damn neck."

"And go to jail," suggests Al sweetly. "Now listen, Jerry, I've been up in the grandstand for twenty minutes, and I saw the whole works. Just now I looked

inside the Comet, and the switch is still on."

"Which proves what?" I ask.

"Figure it out for yourself," he answers. "If the switch had been off you could claim that he killed the motor; but with it on and the motor dead, he can claim it stalled accidentally."

"It stalled, all right, no question about it, but I'll bet my race car against yours it didn't stall accidental—and I'll let you be the judge."

"No bet," says Al promptly.

I have to admit Al is right. Anyhow by this time I'm cooled off some and feel tired. I guess I'm gettin' a little old for so much excitement.

Davis scrambles to his feet, givin' me a cyanide look, and wobbles uncertain-like toward the Comet. He gets into gear and nearly jerks the rear end out gettin' it off the track.

"And that," says Smitty, "takes care of that. Shall we put *la belle* Betsy through some more paces?"

I look at Smitty, then at Al, and demand—

"Say, Al, what do you foreigners use for nerves when you want to get excited?"

Al laughs and Smitty gives that shoulder shrug that made the French famous, and says—

"It is all in the work of the day, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"It is not," I tell him. "Besides, I'm starved. Let's go to town and take on a whole alphabet of vitamins."

SEVEN o'clock the next morning finds us at the track again. Smitty is out buzzin' around the course like a big mosquito, and has turned in several fast laps when I flag him down for a conference. He stops the Miller in close to where I'm sittin' on the runnin' board of the tourin' car, and says—

"Well, how goes it?"

"Fine, Smitty; but listen. Go out now and take two or three laps as if you were gettin' ready to qualify. When you're ready to cut loose hold up your hand and I'll time you. After that come in and we'll have another pow-wow."

I give him a little shove and he's off again. He tours a lap or so to get rollin', then that Frenchman really starts to drive. Down the front stretch, the exhaust chatterin' like a battery of machine guns. Through both turns so fast I get a kink in my neck tryin' to follow him, so I just get the stopwatch ready and watch the north curve, waitin' for him to signal. A couple more laps and he sticks up his arm. I snap the watch as he streaks over the line. In and out of the south turn he flies, down the back straightaway and into the north turn.

I watch the seconds, tryin' to estimate what he'll do it in. He comes out of the turn without a slide and across the line again as I snap the watch and look at it. Betsy's exhaust spits and backfires a few times as he takes his foot off the throttle, then takes up a low whine as he tours around again slowly. I rub my eyes and look at the watch again. Thirty-nine and three-fifths seconds.

Smitty rolls up slowly to where I am standing and before I can open my mouth, he says:

"I think I can do it a little faster than that. I have skid a little going into the back stretch."

"Huh! Well, don't bother—I got a weak heart. It happens that you have just clipped two-fifths of a second from De Gama's track record."

He don't seem to be much impressed, so I shout—

"Well, say somethin'. It ain't exactly a crime to bust a track record. In fact, it's considered quite a trick in some of the backwoods sections of this country."

"How long ago has De Gama set this record?" asks Smitty.

"This time last year."

"We are not sure, then, that he will not break it again tomorrow?"

"We are almost sure that he will."

Smitty rubs his hands thoughtfully up and down the wheel for a minute or

so, then asks the old question.

"Tell me, how much chance do you think we have to beat De Gama?"

"Good grief," I wail, "are you gettin' it, too?"

"Getting what," he asks, startled.

"This bug about beatin' De Gama. Listen, Smitty, in this country Al De Gama is the dirt track king. In the East, on the board speedways, he generally runs into a lot of tough luck, but when the board track stars get on a dirt track with him, they eat Al's dust and like it. For six years I was content to take second place or less behind him when we were on the same track, and I was money ahead by doin' it, too. I always had a car to drive and a few dollars, when lots of mighty fast pilots were borrowin' gasoline money to get out of town on. If you take second place and the fifteen hundred dollars that goes with it, I'll be tickled to death."

He looks straight ahead for awhile, then says slowly—

"I don't suppose even that will be easy."

"You're mighty right it won't. Tomorrow afternoon you're goin' to find out what it means to drive in really fast company."

He nods seriously, and I can see it is soakin' in, so I go on:

"Now, look; this is what you do. You go out here this mornin' and drive. Take the turns high, low and in the middle. Drive the track fast and drive it slow, but drive until you know every inch of it. After while some more of the gang will be out. Drive behind and watch how they drive. When you get tired park the car in the pit and sit down by the turn and watch every car that goes by in practise. Every pilot has a place where he likes to drive the turns. Some go high, some low and others at different places. Find out what cars they are and where they take 'em. You're a good driver, Smitty. I don't have to tell you that, but don't be like Dizzy Davis and get the idea that there aren't any more. I'm goin' to town now, and I'll be back at noon and pick you up. After that you don't drive another lap until you qualify tomorrow afternoon."

"*Bien*," he answers all this. "I will do it just that way."

And I knew he would.

IN THE afternoon we hunt up Dan Lafferty, who is Three-A Contest Board representative for that district. Smitty registers and gets a driver's permit for himself and a stiff jolt of three-star Hennessey and best wishes for both of us. We loaf until supper time and attend the drivers' meetin' after. Then we go to our room and I get out the Contest Board rule book and drill Smitty on the flag signals until he's perfect.

The next mornin' I wake up to hear Smitty warblin' in the bath.

"Hey, you," I squawk, "my name is Cæsar, and I'm gonna divide a Gaul into three parts, if you don't shut up."

He comes out and sits on the edge of the bed and smiles.

"*Pouf!*" he says. "I am scare. Besides, I have save your life."

"Oh, yeah?"

"But sure! If I don't wake you up, you are sleep until you starve to death."

It's about ten o'clock so I roll out and get dressed. After a bite to eat we stall around the garage for an hour or so and get to the track about noon. The grandstands are already half full and a steady stream of fans is pourin' through the gates. The place is all dressed up with flags and streamers like a flagship at a fleet review. The management always has an Italian flag or two put up for Al De Gama, though he has been an American citizen for fifteen years that I know of. I guess he must have slipped a bug in some one's ear for, as we pass the grandstand, I see a big tricolor in the middle of the section reserved for the band. The Frenchman sees it too and, swallowin' hard, sends it a snappy

salute. Then he smiles.

The starter assigns us to pit No. 7 and in a few minutes one of his assistants comes around and paints that lucky number on both sides of the Miller's bonnet and tail. I unload the tourin' car of the extra wheels and tools, and park it in the infield. In a few minutes the announcer gets his megaphone in action and the qualifyin' begins.

The first five or six cars make the time limit of forty-five seconds all right, but nothin' sensational. Then Red Shafter turns in a lap at forty and three-fifths, and, as his blue Duesenberg glides into the pit again, the crowd gives him a big hand. Red, for all his half pint size, is a good pilot and well liked. Lyons and then Buxton, of the Grady team, are called out in order. Lyons turns it in forty-one and a fifth and Buxton in forty-one and three-fifths. Then Smitty is called out.

My heart is pumpin' like a triphammer, though it shouldn't, for I've seen plenty of qualifyin' laps run off in my time. Smitty gets his instructions from the starter, nods and is on his way. He holds up his hand for the flag on the second round and the green buntin' is snapped as he goes by. My red Miller howls into the south turn like a hound dog after a rabbit, and as he starts down the back stretch a sorta subdued rustle of excitement goes through the crowd. He rounds the north turn and flies down the front stretch and under the starter's checker and is on his way around to our pit again. The announcer swings his megaphone on the crowd and bawls:

"Car-r-r No. 7. Miller Special-l-l. Driver Smith. Ti-m-m-e, forty seconds fl-a-at. Ty-ing the track rec-cord."

Smitty gets a big hand, too, as he rolls in. Lyons and Red Shafter both come down, pound him on the back, and say—

"Nice goin', old man."

I tell him his time and he looks disappointed.

"But I made it faster than that yesterday," he says in disgust.

"Yeah, I know," I tell him, "but it's a good thing that you didn't today. Whatever time is set De Gama will beat it, and it's just as well if these birds don't know how fast you are."

We walk down to the startin' line where Dizzy Davis is listenin' to the starter. He's gone in a second and takes his green the next round. It seems as if he had no more than gone into the south turn when he has cleared the back stretch and is comin' out of the north. His white Frontenac fairly screams as he comes down the front straightaway and takes his checker. The announcer sings out his message and the crowd goes wild. Thirty-nine and two-fifths and a new track record.

Smitty looks at me in amazement.

"Sure he's fast," I tell him. "Make no mistake about that. For all his crooked disposition, he's plenty fast."

"And you think De Gama will beat that?"

"Huh!" I snort. "Watch him."

By this time Davis is back in his pit and feelin' pretty proud of himself. As me and Smitty walk by him on the way back to the car, he sings out:

"How'd ya like that? I told you I'd take that wop into camp."

Just as I get ready to crack back at him, De Gama's yellow Miller streaks under the green flag with a roar. He goes down the back stretch like a yellow flash of lightnin', rounds the north turn and takes his checker. The crowd is frantic as the announcer shouts:

"Car-r-r No. 2. Miller Special-l-l. Driver De Gama. Ti-m-m-e, thirty-ni-n-n-e seconds, fl-a-at. A new track rec-cord."

Dizzy looks at me and his jaw drops.

"How'd you like that?" I ask sweetly. Then I yelp, not so sweet, "Listen, monkey. When you beat Al De Gama I'll be sittin' right beside him—up in the grandstand some place."

The timers and scorers have their heads together as me an' Smitty get back to the car, where I back him up against the pit fence for final instructions.

"Here's the dope, son. Listen close. When the race starts, take it easy for a few laps until I give you a go ahead signal. By that time it's a cinch De Gama will be in the lead and the rest of the cars will be strung out around the course. Then take 'em one at a time, but remember you have a hundred miles to do it in, so take your time and pick the place where you want to pass them. When you get behind Al's yellow Miller, stay there. If you try to pass him, he'll set the pace so fast that you won't be able to keep up. If his car should go out of the race or make a pit stop, then, boy, drive like hell—for every man-jack on the track will be poundin' your tail. That's all, kid, and good luck."

IN A FEW minutes the announcer calls the startin' order and we shove the Miller up to the line. Al and his yellow job, No. 2, take the pole position; next to him is Dizzy Davis and his white Frontenac, No. 5; then Smitty in my Miller; and last in the front row is Lyons in one of Grady's Frontys, carrying No. 3. In the second row Red Shafter's blue Duesenberg, No. 1, has the pole, then Buxton in Grady's other Fronty and Phil Mace of Portland, drivin' a Rajo Special. From there on the rest are local boys who have built up some fast jobs of their own.

The starter comes along tellin' 'em all about keepin' in line durin' the parade lap, and warns Al to take 'em around slow until they get the startin' flag. Then he stops and gives Dizzy Davis a special warnin' about tryin' to beat the flag. Dizzy growls a bit, but the starter says:

"Remember, I've warned you. If you cross that line a wheel length ahead of the other cars, I'll disqualify you, and I don't mean perhaps."

Then he backs up a bit and yells—

"Wind 'em up!"

Owners, mechanics and helpers spin cranks and a dozen race cars take up an impatient cracklin'. Here and there in the mob one of them spits out a roar as a driver tries his throttle. Helmets are buckled and glasses slipped into place.

I try to shout a last word of encouragement to Smitty. He nods to show he understands, even if he can't hear me.

The starter points at each driver in turn and as he gets the last answerin' wave he steps back and flags Al. The noise of the motors gets louder and they start rollin'. The track and grandstand are hidden for a few seconds in a haze of blue smoke and as it lifts the last of the line is goin' into the south turn.

I cross the track to the starter's platform and stand there as he unrolls his flag. They sweep into the back straightaway, still in perfect order, and he points across the track.

"Nice lineup," he says, "if they hold it."

"Swell," I agree.

They come out of the north turn still arranged like a troop of cavalry on parade. The starter steps over to the edge of the course, holdin' his flag high above his head in both hands. As they cross the line it comes down and up with a snap, and the race is on.

As the stands quiver under the barrage of exhausts I run back across the track to my pit and jump up on my tool box to watch 'em around the first lap.

They go into the turn in a bunch and I hold my breath until all twelve of them are on the back stretch. De Gama's a few car lengths in the lead, then Davis, Buxton, Red Shafter and Smitty. The rest of them are stringin' along in twos and threes. For three or four laps they hold nearly the same place, with Al increasin' his lead a little. Each time Smitty goes by I give him a "hold it" sign and he stays where he is. I buy a couple hot dogs and sit down on the tool box to eat and take advantage of the breathin' spell.

Two of the local entries are in their pits already and a third one is clankin' along on three barrels while his mechanic is makin' frantic motions for him to come in. One of them looks kinda blue

as he walks by my pit, so I sing out:

"Hi, son. Out of the race early, ain't ya?"

"Yeah."

I hand him one of my hot dogs, make room for him on the tool box and he squats.

"What happened?" I ask, though I could've told him.

"Oil line went democratic—bearin's all shot," he answers, tryin' to sound like a race driver.

"Oh, well," I says, lookin' at the grandstand and talkin' to nobody in particular, "maybe these kids will learn after while that fifty dollars worth of parts and an old roadster don't make a race car."

He looks at me in disgust, then gets up and walks off, munchin' my hot dog.

By now I remember I got troubles of my own and hike out to the edge of the track to check up on things. Two more of the local boys are out and Lyons is coastin' into his stall with a dead motor.

Whir-r-ram-m-m! Old fox De Gama shoots by, leadin' the pack by a quarter of a lap. *Whon-n-ng! Whong!* Davis and Shafter pass, hub and hub, battlin' for second position. Then Buxton and Mace and last, Smitty, lookin' anxious at me, like he's wonderin' if I've forgotten to signal. I look up at the scoreboard and see that thirty-three miles are gone. The next time by I give Smitty a "go get 'em" highball and let out a whoop. And does he go? I mean he really unhooks that car! In just five laps Mace and Buxton are sucked under and left somewhere in the rear in their private battle for fifth place.

The roar from the crowd tells Davis and Shafter that somethin' is goin' on in back of them and as they round the turns they snatch quick glances over their shoulders to see the red Miller closin' up on their tails. There ain't much they can do about it, as they're havin' a tough time holdin' what they got. I shoot another look at the score sheet. Forty-five miles are under the belt.

I go out to the edge of the track and give Smitty another "hold it" sign, then relax a little while. The minutes click by and the score sheet says fifty, fifty-five then sixty miles have gone by the board. Over half the race is gone. The Italian is still holding his quarter-lap lead, Davis has strengthened his hold on second place by about four car lengths, and Smitty has closed up within thirty feet of Red Shafter. I give Smitty another highball, he gives me an O. K. salute, and buckles down to take 'em in. He pulls up steadily on Shafter and they turn the seventy-second lap with Red holdin' the blue Duesy close to the pole with Smitty a few feet to the rear and a little to the right of him. He's in perfect passin' position and I expect him to go by on the next lap, but it it don't happen that way.

AS they slide out of the turn enterin' the seventy-third the right rear tire on the Duesy lets go with a bang. The car swings broadside to the right, Smitty jerks the wheel of the Miller hard to the left and is through the hole like a shot, missin' the guard rail by a coat of paint.

Red pulls the Duesy back down to the left again and she smacks the rail, bounces out and hits it again and comes to a stop near the north end of the line of pits. He crawls out from behind his wheel and waves his arms to the crowd to show he ain't hurt. I know, without lookin', that the blue Duesenberg is through. After two such wallops against the guard rail, all the tires in the world wouldn't put it back in the race.

Red walks up to my pit still shakin' his head in a kinda bewildered way, so I grab him and sit him down on my tool box until he can pull himself together.

"Tough luck, kid," I tell him.

"Boy," he breathes, scared-like, "I thought I was a gone goslin' that time. I knew Smitty was ridin' me hard and when I gilhoolied out to the right, I just closed my eyes expectin' him to hit me dead center. When I opened them again

he was halfway down the stretch. How he got through, I don't know."

There is nothin' now between Smitty and Davis, and only Davis between Smitty and the back end of De Gama's yellow wind burner where I had told him to keep the nose of the red Miller parked. They go into the eightieth lap and Smitty is right on the tail of the white Frontenac. As they come out Davis pulls the lousy, murderin' trick I have been half expectin'. He slows up for a split-second, waitin' for the Frenchman to come up on the right side, then swings wide in a deliberate attempt to hub him and send him into the fence.

It would have worked, too, only the Frenchman wasn't there. In the turn Smitty had pulled over to the pole and when Davis did his fake slide to the right, Smitty pulled up alongside of him on the left. They blast down the front stretch and Smitty's front wheels are just even with the driver's seat in the Frontenac. As they pass the grandstand Davis looks back over his left shoulder. The Frenchman brings his thumb to his nose and twiddles his fingers, and his white teeth flash through the oil and dirt on his face. The crowd rocks with a laugh that ends in a roar. I look at Red and he looks at me with his lips puckered up in a soundless whistle. You can bet your Sunday hat we didn't laugh.

All this time they are gradually closin' up on De Gama, and the three of them are just about to lap Buxton and Mace, which will put these two an even mile in back of the flyin' leaders. They come down the front straightaway on the eighty-third lap, so close that one charge of birdshot would have hit all five of them. They dive into the south turn on the eighty-fourth and for a few seconds are out of sight in a smother of dust and exhaust smoke. As the cloud lifts, the white Frontenac and my red Miller tear down the back stretch, wheel and wheel. About a car length behind them is the yellow Miller, and forty feet back are Buxton and Mace. When I realize just what has happened, I'm so nervous that Red has to light a cigaret for me.

Al De Gama, the dirt track speed king, had gone into that turn in first place, and come out third!

Red pounds me on the back and shouts:

"Man, oh, man! Look at 'em go! Barrel 'em and bend 'em!"

I shake my head at him, cup my hands over his ear and yell:

"They'll never stand it. Too damn fast."

He nods and hollers:

"Somethin's gotta give. I'm glad I'm outta *that* race."

They come by again and the hole between them and De Gama has opened up quite a bit. Dizzy is lookin' over his shoulder more often now and I can see that he is scared, and scared plenty. The crowd in the stands is on its feet and goin' wild. Another round and the Frontenac draws a burst of speed, from God knows what reserve, and gains about thirty feet on Smitty. Goin' into the south turn again Dizzy turns to look once too often. *Crash!* Flyin' timber and a cloud of dust. The crowd screams and points. The white Frontenac has gone through the rail.

I give Smitty a "hold it" sign as he flashes by, but he don't see it. On the next round I give him another—with the same result. It's my turn to be scared now. I glance at the scoreboard. Eighty-seven miles gone—thirteen to go. I turn to Red and groan:

"See if you can flag him down. I can't."

Red waves his arms up and down across the track, but Smitty pays no more attention to him than he did to me. He's drivin' like a maniac now. I watch him around every turn, expectin' each lap to be his last.

Buxton and Mace have eased up a bit, content to save their motors and tour into third and fourth place. Smitty passes them on the back stretch as if they're anchored. Now he's slowly

crawlin' up on the yellow Miller and this ain't near as easy as passin' the other two. Second place or no second place, De Gama is still spittin' the breeze like a champion. I'm hopin' Smitty won't try to rub it in by passin' him again. He pushes my red car up to within a car length of Al's tail, slows up and stays there. They go around two laps like this. I take heart and go out again and signal him to hold it. This time he nods at me and grins as if he was tickled to death with himself.

All of a sudden the old savvy hits me right between the eyes. He's in the position I told him to take before the race, and he don't know he is leadin' the race by a full mile!

As he ends his ninety-ninth lap the starter flips a green flag in front of him and he ignores it. The next time around the green is waved at Al, and the checker at Smitty. He still pays no attention and keeps right on blastin' around on the tail of the yellow Miller. Red Shafter looks at me, startled-like, and yells:

"Whadda ya use to stop him with? A shotgun?"

I shake my head at him and yell—

"Watch."

As they come out of the turn this time and tear down the stretch, the starter waves the checker again and Al sticks up his right arm in acknowledgment. This time Smitty raises his arm, too, and as they cross the line he backs off his throttle to give Betsy the first rest she's had in a hundred and one miles. Red looks at me, and as the light breaks he sits down, hard, on the tool box.

"Well drown me for a turtle!" he gasps. "He thinks he's in second place."

The new speed king and the ex-speed king coast around to their pits and, as my Miller rolls to a stop, I stick a cigaret in Smitty's face. While I unclench the fingers of his left hand from the wheel, he says:

"I have drive where you tell me, but it is take a long time. For awhile I think I am never get there."

"You done a swell job, son," I tell him, with a grin, "but you didn't take second place."

He slumps in his seat and looks so disgusted I ain't got the heart to kid him about it, so I say—

"Tonight, Smitty, we split first money."

He sits up and gives me a blank stare. About the time it begins to soak in, De Gama comes up, grips his hand and says:

"Congratulations, old man. You drove a wonderful race. No one could have beaten you today."

Smitty finally gets the idea and his smile breaks through as he says—

"You mean I have won?"

"And broke a couple records doing it," Al assures him. "But I am not surprised. You have beaten me before, you know."

Things are comin' pretty fast for both of us. I am speechless, but Smitty manages to gasp:

"Where? When?"

"Two years ago, in France, I finished fourth in a race you won. Remember?".

I'm wonderin' what it's all about when Al notices my mouth is open and says—

"Jerry, let me introduce Jules Moreau, two times winner of the French Grand Prix."

"Jules Moreau," I yelp. "Not the guy that lost his nerve after a crack-up and was booed off half the tracks of Europe?"

"The same," says Al, "but if he's lost his nerve, I hope I lose mine in the morning."

"My friends," says Smitty, and his voice is kinda shaky, "Jules Moreau is not lost his nerve, but everybody in France is think so and that is worse. Maybe this American called Smitty, who will drive for Jerry Lewis now, is going to be a better driver than Jules Moreau, *n'est-ce pas?*"

I try to take Smitty's hand and murmur the polite words my wife has taught me for such occasions, but instead I find it's my time to sit down—hard—on the tool box.

SITTING BULL

By STANLEY VESTAL

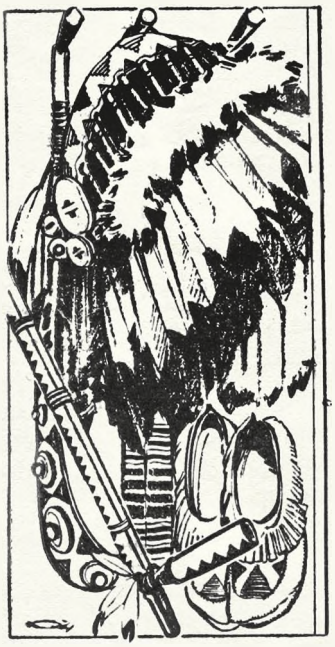
AFTER Sitting Bull surrendered in 1881 he was held prisoner of war at Fort Randall for nearly two years and then sent to Standing Rock Agency at Fort Yates, North Dakota. The Indian agent there was Major James McLaughlin, an ambitious Scotch-Irishman, who disliked Sitting Bull from the start and did all in his power to break the chief's tremendous influence. Sitting Bull made an earnest effort to walk in the white man's road; farmed, raised cattle and chickens, lived in a log cabin and sent his children to school.

But he would not accept the idea that he was only a private individual. He insisted that he was still chief of his people and that it was necessary for him to look out for them. He was not afraid of Senators and Commissioners and did not hesitate to stand up to them and tell them the truth. In this way he managed to keep the land-hungry whites from getting Sioux lands for a song, and protected his people in every crisis until McLaughlin finally engineered the land cession of 1889. That was a hard blow at Sitting Bull's prestige, and his jealous rivals, who hoped to rise by the aid of McLaughlin, pressed their advantage.

In 1885 Sitting Bull had gone with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, and two years later it was hoped to send him again—this time to Europe. McLaughlin would have been glad to have him out of the way, and—if she had wished—Mrs. McLaughlin could have gone with him as interpreter to Queen Victoria's Jubilee. But Sitting Bull refused to go; he was afraid his people would be imposed upon in his absence. This refusal made him no friends at the agency.

Yet there was nothing they could hang on Sitting Bull; he was a law abiding man. And so finally, in June, 1890, McLaughlin recommended his arrest on general principles. The recommendation was not acted upon. However, there was hunger and dissatisfaction at some other Sioux agencies that Spring, due to graft and bad management, and that Summer the Ghost Dance was started.

The Ghost Dance taught that the Messiah had returned to earth, this



The last of three articles on the great war chief of the Sioux

time in the flesh of an Indian; that the Messiah was coming from the West with all the nations of Indian dead, with buffalo and horses; that He would remove or destroy the white men, and all the Indians, dead and living, would be reunited on a regenerated earth. All that was required to bring this about was to dance the Ghost Dance regularly until He came—only a few months. The starving Sioux turned to this new religion gladly. It combined the ideas of Christianity with old Indian ideas. And it was the best religion those Indians had ever known.

The dancers wore sacred garments, usually made of old flour sacks, painted with symbols of their religion. They danced in a circle, men and women together, and the leaders threw them into trances in which they saw their dead relatives. Sitting Bull had just lost a favorite daughter, and was pitifully anxious to see her. And so he took part, also, and allowed his people to dance, contrary to the agent's wishes. As the Indians feared troops would try to stop their dancing, some leader had a dream in which it was revealed that the sacred garments or Ghost Shirts would be bullet proof. This dance came to Sitting Bull's camp in October, some months after McLaughlin had recommended his arrest.

About the same time troops were sent to Pine Ridge Agency, and the frightened Ghost Dancers there fled to the Bad Lands, scaring all the pioneers out of the country. The U. S. Census shows that in 1890 the whites in North Dakota outnumbered the Indians seventeen to one.

The Ghost Dance was front page news. Buffalo Bill, who knew Sitting Bull well and knew that he was harmless and a good friend of his, persuaded General Nelson A. Miles to give him an order for Sitting Bull's arrest. It would be front page publicity for the Wild West Show. But when Buffalo Bill turned up with his order at Fort Yates, McLaughlin delayed him, with the help of the officers at the Fort, and tried to get the order rescinded. For McLaughlin wanted nobody coming on his Reserve to arrest one of his Indians, because it

would seem as if he himself were incompetent; in fact the papers were saying that already. The officers at Fort Yates also wished Buffalo Bill to fail, because he was not a soldier, only a civilian scout. Also, they feared for his safety.

Therefore they joined hands with McLaughlin and entertained Buffalo Bill in relays all one day at the officers' club. But Buffalo Bill had great capacity, and started for Sitting Bull's camp next day, armed only with a wagonload of candy. Then McLaughlin sent Indians to deceive Buffalo Bill and keep him from reaching the camp, until word from Washington could arrive. The order was rescinded.

However, General Miles could not be balked. The War Department issued an order for Sitting Bull's arrest, and McLaughlin had to accept the order. Yet he was anxious to save his face, and persuaded the military officers that the Agency Indian Police could make the arrest, with the troops in reserve. And so the plan was laid. Meanwhile, Sitting Bull had been invited to Pine Ridge Agency, and wrote to McLaughlin asking for a pass. McLaughlin then feared that the chief might run away, and the arrest was hastened. But Sitting Bull had no intention of running away from McLaughlin any more than from Custer.

He knew he was to be arrested two days before the police came, and had his bodyguard on duty all one night, waiting.

Catch-the-Bear, leader of that bodyguard, was the mortal enemy of Lieutenant Bullhead, acting chief of the Indian Police. That night Catch-the-Bear swore he would kill Bullhead if he came to lay hands on his chief.

THAT was December 13th. On the 14th the Indians danced and, being tired that night, kept no guard. It was that night the police prepared to take Sitting Bull. Bear in mind that Sitting Bull's arrest had nothing to do with the Ghost Dance: That was only a pretext, official camouflage brought forward later. The arrest had been recommended long before the Ghost Dance was started at Sitting Bull's camp, and was pushed by Buffalo Bill and General Miles for reasons of their own.

Had the troops gone after Sitting Bull, there would have been no bloodshed, in all likelihood. But Sitting Bull's friends could not endure to see the Metal Breasts (as they called the Indian Police) come into their camp bearing arms and carry off their chief. There were many personal enmities involved, many tribal rivalries; yet the real issue was not the Ghost Dance, but the struggle for domination between the agent and the chief.

Also, the story that Sitting Bull was a medicine man and priest of the Ghost Dance is another piece of official camouflage, and the men who repeat it will always be found to have some connection with the party opposed to Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull was no more a medicine man than was Sir Conan Doyle. Both of them had lost dear ones, and both were eager to talk with them again. Sir Conan used the indoor seance; Sitting Bull's seance was an outdoor dance. That was the difference.

There was no more reason for sending troops against the Ghost Dancers than there would be to send troops against the Seventh Day Adventists. But to the uninformed public, all Indian dances looked like War Dances; and Army contractors, land poor settlers, and frightened tenderfeet were all ready enough to see the soldiers come marching West with a good fat payroll. And so Sitting Bull came to his end.

On the night of December 15th, 1890, he lay down on his pallet with his elder wife, and slept soundly. Outside on the flat around his house, and among the naked cottonwoods along Grand River, the conical tents of the Ghost Dancers, like white steeples of a new church slowly growing from the earth, awaited the coming of men in blue coats, who

were to stamp that rising church back into the dust.

Long before the members of the new church fell asleep, preparations had been making, and these continued through the night. Of all these we catch brief glimpses:: Of a white haired, self-important, determined man standing on a chair at the agency, talking to a gathering of stalwart, steady, silent Sioux freshly outfitted with ill fitting blue uniforms, soft black hats, cartridge belts, shining metal badges on their breasts, and guns of different patterns . . . Of a mixed blood woman methodically tearing a bolt of white cloth into strips to be used as mufflers by the police, so that they would know each other in the darkness; of officers' call at midnight at Fort Yates, the hot coffee and rations in the mess-hall, the rumble of wagons and cannon and the creak of saddle leather as the Cavalry pulled out on the forty-mile ride to Grand River.

Of Jack Carignan, the schoolmaster, and four policemen slipping through Sitting Bull's camp in the darkness, to take Lieutenant Bullhead's women and children to a place of safety; of the gathering of the Metal Breasts at Bullhead's place, the reading and interpretation of McLaughlin's order for arrest; of the long hours spent by them that night at the house of Gray Eagle (Sitting Bull's own brother-in-law) just across the river from the chief's camp, and of these policemen heartening themselves by telling war stories and recounting *coups*.

Of Gray Eagle volunteering to go with the police to arrest his brother-in-law; of a huddle of policemen about a crucifix, while Bullhead led in prayer, and some of them anxiously wondering whether the Ghost Shirts might not be bullet proof, after all. Of the iron heels of forty horses striking fire from the stones of the dry ford, while the coyotes yapped a warning from the hills; of the quick trot forward, the swift, galloping charge, like the charge of an enemy, upon that sleeping camp . . .

It was the dark hour before the dawn. Suddenly Sitting Bull, sleeping soundly, felt the beat of a hundred galloping hoofs against the ground on which he lay, was vaguely aware of the loud outcry of barking dogs rushing toward his cabin. The hoofbeats stopped, some one called out. He heard the dull bang of a rifle butt against the cabin door, which flew open, letting in the chill night air.

The chief's wife beside him uttered a startled exclamation; the room was full of men in the darkness, the sandpaper sound of moccasins shuffling all around them. A match flared, lighting up for an instant the rough, chinked walls of the long room, the gray canvas sheeting stretched halfway up all round, the low beds, the stove in the middle of the cabin, the kerosene lamp on its wall bracket, the white mufflers and glinting badges of the Metal Breasts. Sitting Bull sat up.

At once the chief felt the hands of several men grab his naked shoulders and arms, lifting him from his bed. Another match flared up, and men pounced upon the carbine, the knife, the revolver lying under the blankets of the old warrior's bed. Some one lighted the kerosene lamp.

Sitting Bull saw that Weasel Bear was holding him by the right arm, Eagle Man by the left. One of the police had grabbed Weasel Bear in his excitement and now loosed his hold. They lifted Sitting Bull up. Lieutenant Bullhead laid his hand on the chief's shoulder and said—

"I am holding you for arrest."

Sergeant Shave Head said—

"Brother, we have come for you."

Red Tomahawk declared—

"If you fight, you will be killed here."

He threw his arms around the chief from behind; the three of them held the old, naked, unarmed man as if he had been a bird which might fly away. To all this Sitting Bull only said—

"*Hau*— yes."

Crowfoot, the chief's son, was nowhere to be seen. The two old men who had been sleeping there got up quickly and

went out without a word. The Metal Breasts were relieved to find no bodyguards in the cabin. Nobody had much to say for awhile. Nobody but the chief's wife, who stood there, scornful, half dressed. She spoke her mind freely—

"What are all you jealous people doing here?"

The agent had given strict orders that no women and children were to be killed.

SITTING BULL, as usual, had been sleeping naked—as warriors always did—and had to be dressed before he could be taken away. The police picked up such garments as they could find—an issue shirt, dark blue woolen leggings, and threw them at the chief. But he could not put them on, the way they were holding him. They were young men, most of them, new to police work, excited—anxious to get their prisoner away before the whole camp was aroused. Weasel Bear snatched up a moccasin and held it out to the chief. The woman laughed. Said she—

"That's mine!"

Weasel Bear saw that it was a woman's shoe; he dropped it. Most of Sitting Bull's good clothes were in the other cabin, and his wife went after them. Already people were gathering outside; they could hear her calling to her sons—

"Boys, they have come for your father; saddle the gray horse."

That was the old gray circus horse Buffalo Bill had given him; it could do tricks.

All this time Sitting Bull was in the hands of the policemen, who were trying to hurry him into his clothes, one pulling on a legging, another forcing on a moccasin, while the old man, hopping on one foot, swayed to and fro in their arms, protesting:

"You need not help me, I can dress myself. You need not honor me like that."

To dress a man for an occasion was an honor among the Indians; it had been done for Sitting Bull before.

But this time it was soon apparent that these policemen were not trying to honor the chief, the way they dressed him. He began to complain:

"I was resting easy, and you wakened me. Why couldn't you wait until morning when I would be up and dressed?"

It annoyed him, made him angry, to be handled so. The door was wide open, the police kept coming and going, everybody could see the way he was being treated, and he heard some of them saying things which angered him. Yet he did not refuse to go. He told them to saddle the gray horse. White Bird and Red Bear were told off for this duty.

The officers kept hurrying him, offended his dignity, and at last he became indignant and balky. He tried to sit down on the bed. But they held him; they picked him up. They started toward the door with him in their hands, half clad as he was, with one legging about his ankle. He objected then:

"Let me go. I'll go without any help."

They paid no attention; they kept lugging him along toward the door. His dignity would not endure being dragged out in front of his friends and followers like a dog; he spread his arms and legs across the doorway. That delayed them for a moment. Eagle Man had to kick his legs aside to get him through the door. They carried him outside. Up to this time Sitting Bull had said very little; the Metal Breasts had done most of the talking. They had mishandled him, taunted him, hurried him, thrown his clothes at him, kicked him.

Yet, they say, the old chief showed no fear whatever. As Little Soldier puts it—

"Sitting Bull was not afraid; *we* were afraid."

And good cause for that. No Indians had ever gone into a Hunkpapa camp and carried off a chief like that before; it was brave to the point of foolhardiness. Those young policemen knew that Sitting Bull's friends were hard boiled, seasoned warriors, afraid of nothing. And outside in the darkness they were

waiting — Catch-the-Bear, Strikes-the-Kettle, Brave Thunder, Spotted Horn Bull—all desperate men. The police pushed Sitting Bull through the door, carried him out into the dark, hazy, starless night.

Once outside, the chief was allowed to find his feet, was pushed forward. One of the police kept punching him in the back with a revolver, urging him forward, while others kept fast hold of his arms, and Red Tomahawk embraced his waist from behind. They kept trying to advance through the angry throng ahead. Sitting Bull did not resist, but kept squirming to avoid the blows, saying:

"*Hau, hau.* You have come for me. I have to go. I am going."

But the only answer was another punch in the back and the command:

"Shut up. Keep quiet. Do just as we say." They shoved him along, but were able to advance only a few steps from the door; beyond that point they could not go.

Sergeant Eagle Man, unusually noisy that night, kept shouting:

"Stand back, make way. Get out of here!" and shoving against Sitting Bull's deaf-mute son, who, very much excited, pulled and shoved Eagle Man, making horrible noises in the darkness.

And as the police forged slowly forward, the terrible wailing of women was mingled with the deaf-mute's unearthly gibberings.

Sergeant Shave Head gave the command—

"Get round this man; make a circle round him."

The police obeyed, but it was of no use. The angry mob of Sitting Bull's friends grew in size every moment as men came running from the tents, guns in hand. The indignant Hunkpapa blocked their path, almost surrounding the police, who were easily recognized in the dimness by the white mufflers they wore. The gray horse had not been saddled; they had to wait while White Bird went after it. Gray Eagle gave him a rope, and he set out. Behind every stump and bit of cover he saw a man with a rifle, but he went to the corral and brought back the horse. The police stood still, tried to go no farther. Perhaps they were glad to have the cabin at their backs. It looked like fight just then, and who can tell how many of those Christian Indians had a fear at heart that the Ghost Shirts might turn out to be bullet proof?

Women were wailing, children crying, men shouting taunts and insults at the Metal Breasts. It was too dark to distinguish the speakers, but the policemen knew many of the voices:

"Kill them, kill them. Shoot the old policemen, and the new ones will run."

Strikes-the-Kettle, that dangerous fighter, was crying:

"Leave him alone; let him go. You're only boys. You're just youngsters; you can not fight. Let him be!"

From outside the semicircle, where she was pacing up and down, the shrill voice of Mrs. Spotted-Horn-Bull rose high above the babble of the restless crowd, taunting the police.

"Here are a lot of jealous men—jealous *women!*"

There was the chink and clash of sleigh bells as two of Sitting Bull's bodyguard rode up, their saddlery studded with bells, to circle that angry crowd, looking for a possible target. So many were in that milling throng in the darkness, so many called out, that no man can remember all that was said. But it was plenty—strong words. They stood and wrangled for ten minutes.

Inside the cabin, Bullhead's men had had everything their own way: they would have been wiser to shut the door and stay there until the troops could arrive. But they had come outside and, outside, Sitting Bull, though firmly held by both arms and around the middle, was actual master of the situation. They could kill him, but they could not carry him off against his will. One word from him would start the fight. But, as he had always done, he listened to his peo-

ple before he made up his mind: that was his job, as chief.

There was plenty to hear. One of his wives chanted a song, which well expressed the mood of his supporters:

> "Sitting Bull, you have always been a brave man;
> What is going to happen now?"

When he heard this, some believe, he made up his mind not to go. Meanwhile, White Bird had brought up the gray circus horse, with a cowboy saddle on its back, ready for the prisoner. The police began to shove him toward the animal.

THE crowd grew noisier, every man encouraging his neighbor. The police, who had been so sure of themselves inside the cabin, now began to change their tune. They tried to pacify the Hunkpapa, and in this they were backed up by some of Sitting Bull's friends and relatives. Gray Eagle, who had volunteered to accompany the police to arrest his brother-in-law, now came forward and said:

"Brother-in-law, do as the agent says. Go with the police."

But when Sitting Bull heard his own brother-in-law speak among those enemies, and saw his white muffler, he would not listen. He cried out:

"No, I'm not going. Get away. Get away."

Gray Eagle replied:

"All right. I'm through. I have tried to save you." Gray Eagle hurried over to the chief's other cabin, found his sister, said, "Cross the river to my house. Do not stick up for your husband. He is in the wrong."

She answered yes.

That, says Gray Eagle, was his part in the affair.

Books say that Crowfoot, favorite son of the chief, broke in upon his father, saying—

"You have called yourself a brave chief, yet now you are letting yourself be taken by these Metal Breasts."

But none of the living policemen I know have any recollection of this incident, and it does not figure in the earlier official reports of the business.

Jumping Bull, Sitting Bull's adopted brother, the captive whom he had saved when a lad, and who was sometimes called Little Assiniboin, tried to soothe the indignant chief. Said he:

"Brother, let us break camp and go to the agency. You take your family, I will take mine. If you are to die there, I will die with you."

He-Alone-is-Man, a policeman, also pleaded with Sitting Bull to go peaceably, they say.

"No one will harm you. Do not let others lead you into trouble."

Many so advised him.

The policemen honestly wished to take the chief with them. It would have been a good, strong feather in Bullhead's cap, if he could have carried off the chief of those Hunkpapa alive, without a fight. He gave Sitting Bull the message given him at the agency—the bait prepared to lure the chief to a military prison. Observe the nature of that bait, and then check it with the motives which (McLaughlin says) animated Sitting Bull. Said Bullhead:

"Nobody will be killed. We came after Sitting Bull. The agent wants him. The agent is going to build him a house at the agency, so that, whenever any of his people need anything, the chief can get it for them right away."

Shave Head said the same thing. Sitting Bull hesitated.

The policemen kept punching him toward the saddled horse, saying—

"You have no ears."

Two of them held him by the arms, and Red Tomahawk, armed with a revolver, held him around the waist from behind. In front of the chief and a little to his left, covering him with his rifle, Lieutenant Bullhead stood where he could see his men. All about the chief stood the police: One Feather, He-Alone-is-Man, Little Eagle, Shave Head,

Hawkman, Magpie Eagle, Weasel Bear, Eagle Man—more than forty in all. White Bird held the horse. Every one was standing still, and their steaming breath began to be visible in the graying dimness of the chill dawn. They were all set to go.

But just then the policemen near Bullhead saw him turn his head sharply to his right. Some one in a gray blanket, carrying a Winchester, was coming round the corner of the cabin, growling like a bear, as warriors did when they intended to attack an enemy. It was Catch-the-Bear, leader of the chief's bodyguard, and every one present knew of his threat to kill Bullhead.

"Let him go! Let him go!" he was crying.

He tossed his gray blanket up on top of a sun shade, or arbor, made of poles and brush as he passed, and came on, walking menacingly around the cordon of police huddled around Sitting Bull. Catch-the-Bear held his rifle in both hands, slamming it across the belly of each Metal Breast in turn, thrusting his face into each of theirs, looking for his enemy. There was an old grudge between the men. Catch-the-Bear passed them by in turn. He was looking for the lieutenant.

Looking Elk, one of the police, grabbed Catch-the-Bear by the shoulder, jerking him back, saying:

"Brother-in-law, don't do that. Don't say that!"

But Catch-the-Bear shook him off, shoved him away.

"Don't call *me* brother-in-law," he growled. "Don't say that to *me*."

They heard Catch-the-Bear's seven-shot rifle click as he threw a cartridge into the chamber.

Sitting Bull looked toward Catch-the-Bear, the commander of his bodyguard, chief soldier in his camp. Close beside him were Strikes-the-Kettle, Brave Thunder, Spotted-Horn-Bull, Blackbird, all his fearless warriors, itching to attack these Indians who had turned against their chief. Sitting Bull must have seen that the fight he had been expecting, perhaps hoping for, was about to take place.

He saw that his people wished it, and that set him free to follow his own desire. How could he bear to surrender to a lot of other Indians, Yanktonais, Blackfeet Sioux, and especially Hunkpapa (his own people) who had once been his subordinates? Old friends of his say that his dignity would not permit it, any more than it did when Johnny Brughier and the Cheyenne scouts went after him on the Milk River in '77. That is what Sitting Bull must have been thinking. And now here came Catch-the-Bear, and thinking give way to action. Catch-the-Bear kept coming down the line of policemen, demanding:

"Where is Bullhead? Bullhead, come here!" Bullhead was no coward. He answered—

"Here I am."

Then Sitting Bull suddenly cried out in a loud, resonant voice:

"I am not going. Do with me what you like. I am not going. Come on. Come on. Take action. Let's go!"

It was the order his friends had been waiting for.

Immediately Catch-the-Bear threw up his rifle. The flash lighted up the startled faces. *Tchow!* Bullhead, hit in the leg, went down on his back, turning as he fell and shooting upward at Sitting Bull, who was twisting in the arms of his captors. The bullet struck the chief in the back on the left side, between the tenth and eleventh ribs. As he reeled and staggered from the impact of the lieutenant's lead, Red Tomahawk shot him from behind. Both shots were close together; either would have been fatal. Sitting Bull, instantly killed, dropped like a stone.

Some one of his friends called out to the police—

"You've been trying to do it, and now you've done it."

In an instant police and Hunkpapa were mingled in a general mêlée.

Strikes-the-Kettle shot down Shave

Head, and then the firing was like the hard and rapid clapping of hands. It was all together, the smoke and dust and darkness hid everything. The confusion of that hand-to-hand fight was terrible. Men were shooting and clubbing each other, scuffling and stabbing there in the gray dawn. White Bird and others flung themselves down when the shooting began, and rolled back and forth to avoid bullets, until they could get round the corner of the house and fire from behind the projecting log ends there. It was a bloody fight.

And in the midst of all that tragedy, the old gray circus horse, hearing all the shooting, imagined that he was back in the Wild West Show with his master and Buffalo Bill, and began to do his tricks again. He sat down gravely in the middle of all that carnage, and held up one hoof.

That frightened some of the policemen worse than the guns: they thought the spirit of Sitting Bull had entered into the sitting horse! All around him bullets were flying like angry hornets, yet the old horse came through without a scratch. He was later bought back by Buffalo Bill, and was ridden by the man who carried Old Glory at the head of the American troop of Cavalry at the World's Fair in Chicago. Some readers may have seen him there.

WHILE the horse was doing his stunts among the dead men, most of the police took cover behind the cabin, and their enemies took to the timber along the stream. The firing was very hot. Bullhead, wounded in the right arm, the right knee, and through the body, said:

"Get some quilts and make a bed in the house so that I can lie down. And cover me up." The police carried their wounded into Sitting Bull's cabin—Bullhead, and Middle, and Shave Head, whose bowels protruded from his ripped belly. They carried in their dead also. The floor of that cabin was slippery with blood.

While they were moving the mattress to make a bed for Bullhead, the police found Crowfoot, Sitting Bull's son, hidden there. Crowfoot was a schoolboy, about seventeen years old. A policeman called out—

"There's another one in here."

The boy sprang up, crying:

"Uncle, I want to live. You've killed my father. Let me go."

They called to Bullhead where he lay, covered with blood, mortally wounded.

"What shall we do with him?"

Bullhead answered—

"Kill him; they have killed me."

Red Tomahawk struck Crowfoot as he fled. The blow sent the boy sprawling through the door. Policemen outside shot him dead. They showed no mercy.

People who complain that the Sioux would not give troops a stand-up fight should have seen the field after that mix-up. It is true that often the Sioux tried to avoid fighting the soldiers; it was the soldiers who came looking for trouble, as a rule. And the white men were only a side issue to the Sioux, a nuisance. But, say the old men, if you want a hard fight, a real scrap, pit Sioux against Sioux, Hunkpapa against Hunkpapa. Then the fur will fly. The old men speak truth. For when this fight was over, within a few minutes, and within a radius of fifty yards, twelve Sioux lay dead, and three more were severely wounded, two of them mortally.

Around Sitting Bull's body lay his faithful bodyguard: Catch-the-Bear, Blackbird, Chiefs Spotted-Horn-Bull and Brave Thunder, his "brother" Jumping Bull, faithful to his promise to die with the chief. And there too lay Jumping Bull's son, Chase-Wounded, and the boy, Crowfoot.

Of the police, Little Eagle, Hawk Man, Arm Strong (Broken Arm) and Afraid-of-Soldier (Warriors-Fear-Him) were already dead. First Lieutenant Bullhead and Sergeant Shave Head were mortally wounded, and Private Middle was hard hit, and later had to have his

leg amputated. White Bird had been hit on the police badge; the badge saved his life.

Red Tomahawk, taking command, sent for the troops. Had the troops not arrived, it is likely that not one policeman would have lived to tell the tale. Yet at first the policemen wished they had fought it out alone, for when the troops did come they began by shelling the policemen! Later a white flag showed them their mistake, and the troops joined forces with the police.

What happened then gives the complete lie to the story that the Ghost Dance was a war-like dance, or that Sitting Bull and his people would have resisted his arrest, if troops instead of Indians had been sent for him. Though the Ghost Dancers outnumbered the combined forces of troops and policemen and were well armed, though they were all excited by their battle with the policemen and thirsting for their blood, not a single soldier was wounded.

As the official military report states, "The Indians fell back from every point upon the approach of the troops, not showing any desire to engage in hostile action against the soldiers." In fact, they left their families in the hands of the soldiers. They had no quarrel with the white men whatever; the wars with the whites had been ended for nearly ten years. The troops were held back so that Sitting Bull could be arrested by the agency police, to save the face of the agent, who was being declared incompetent in the press. And the police knew very well that they would have a fight down there; otherwise why send forty-odd men to arrest one man almost sixty years old?

Only one demonstration was made after the troops reached the valley. A single horseman, wearing a Ghost Shirt, paraded back and forth within range to show off his courage and test out the power of the shirt to turn bullets. He was fired at, but not hit, and rode away after a few minutes when he had completed his little experiment, probably to join Big Foot's band and to fall at Wounded Knee a few days later.

Had the troops made the arrest, there could have been no bloodshed. But, in that case, the credit of Major James McLaughlin and of the Indian Bureau must have suffered. And so the Indian police went first—"to avert bloodshed!"

Red Tomahawk generally gets the credit for killing Sitting Bull nowadays. But Bullhead was just as positive that he himself did it. As he lay in the cabin, covered with blood, he said to his friend Weasel Bear:

"Look after my family in the future, and advise them. Never forget, I killed Sitting Bull." And again, when Turning Hawk came in to see him, he repeated, "I shot Sitting Bull. He is dead. I killed him."

And then Shave Head, crouching on the quilts like a wounded wolf above his broken body, spoke up—

"They have killed me, but I got one of them all right."

Red Tomahawk also put forward his claim. The Army surgeon reported that either shot would have proved fatal to the chief.

That was a hard fight. When a check was made of the ammunition left to the police, it was officially recorded that these forty-three men, some of whom had not less than 120 rounds of ammunition each to begin with, had left altogether only 210 revolver cartridges, and 260 rounds for their rifles. Red Tomahawk, Iron Star, Cross Bear, Hawk Man, Weasel Bear, One Feather, Iron Thunder, Black Prairie Chicken, and Spotted Thunder had not a single round, and the ammunition of their dead comrades had all been used up. These are official figures.

WHEN the troops appeared, the relatives of John Arm Strong, the policeman, found his dead body lying in the stable, which he had defended. They wailed terribly. One of them, Holy Medicine, was enraged at Sitting Bull, whose friends had killed his kinsman.

He picked up an old neck-yoke lying on the ground and, going over to Sitting Bull's body, beat it savagely.

When it came time to return to Fort Yates, there was a dispute among the police. They did not wish to put Sitting Bull's hated body into the same wagon with their own comrades. But Sergeant Red Tomahawk had his orders, "Bring him in dead or alive." He said they must do it, and there was only one wagon. Then the policemen decided to throw the chief in first, and lay their dead comrades on top of him.

About the middle of the day the men in uniform, the wagons and the ambulance, set out for Fort Yates and Standing Rock Agency. And thus Sitting Bull was carted like a dead dog toward the stronghold of his enemies, with four dead men riding his mangled, blood soaked body over the prairie ruts. That night the command rested on Oak Creek, and at 4:30 P.M. next day, December 16th, his body was turned over to the post surgeon at Fort Yates.

Sitting Bull was so hated by the mourners that they would not consent to have a public funeral, or to allow him to rest among the dead policemen in the Catholic cemetery. He was not a member of any recognized Christian sect, and his body was in the hands of the military. It was decided to inter him in the corner of the post cemetery.

Mr. J. F. Waggoner, then a soldier at the fort, detailed for work in the carpenter shop, made Sitting Bull's coffin. He says:

"Sitting Bull surely was a fighter, a thinker, a chief and a gentleman. He had eaten many a meal in my house, and I can not but speak well of him."

When the box was finished, they took it to the Dead House and put the body into it. Says Mr. Waggoner:

"We buried him just as he came in, wrapped in a blanket stiff with blood. He was not scalped. He had seven bullet wounds in his body, and his chin was around under his left ear. He was a big man; he filled that box chock-a-block. They had to sit on the lid to close it."

They loaded the long box on a two-wheeled cart, and an old Army mule named Caesar drew the cart down the slope to the post cemetery. Military prisoners had already dug the grave. It was the middle of the afternoon, December 17th, 1890.

At the open grave, the lid of the box was lifted, and five gallons of chloride of lime were poured into the box, and on top of that a suitable amount of muriatic acid. Then the lid was nailed down, the box lowered and the grave filled. The fumes rose up in a fog between the loose earth and the walls of the grave, even before it was half full. And so Sitting Bull was buried—in quick lime—like a felon!

Says Mr. Waggoner:

"We laid the old chief away without a hymn or a prayer or a sprinkle of earth. Quick lime was used instead. It made me angry. I had always admired the chief for his courage and his generalship. He was a *man!*"

But the triumphant agency faction at Standing Rock overestimated the credulity and misjudged the temper of the great American public. They were a little too blatant in their self-satisfaction. They soon had the press attacking them from all sides. A man of Sitting Bull's fame and stature can not be shot down, unarmed, and buried in quick lime without some recoil upon the officials responsible for such a disgraceful affair. Such papers as the New York *Herald* and the Chicago *Tribune* made no bones of calling the whole business "cold-blooded, premeditated murder."

Meanwhile, there was a rumor that McLaughlin—or other authorities—had sold the chief's body for exhibition purposes. McLaughlin spent the rest of his life combatting this rumor, defending his actions. But sometimes he met a man who would not shake his hand. Naturally, he felt abused and slandered. Yet he never told any one that Sitting Bull was buried in quick lime; that fact was never officially brought forward,

though it would have answered all the yarns about the use of Sitting Bull's body for exhibition purposes. One would like to know why.

But, as a matter of fact, quick lime often preserves a body, instead of destroying it. For water is the agent of decay, and quick lime dessicates a body. This is what happened to Sitting Bull's corpse. Only a few years ago his grave was secretly opened.

A FEW years ago the Fort Yates Commercial Club erected the cairn of stones which stands at the foot of the chief's grave. This labor made necessary some disturbance of the surface soil. There is excellent authority for the statement that one night while these improvements were going on, a man (whose name has been withheld from me) opened the grave with the help of a friend. He found the complete skeleton there, skull and all, well enough preserved to show the horrible mutilation of the head. This secret exhumation disposes finally of the story that Sitting Bull's bones were put on show. The only part of his body now above ground is a lock of his hair among the private papers of Major James McLaughlin.

After this investigation, the two friends closed the coffin, covered the grave, and tamped in the earth solidly, so that no trace of their work remained. There can now never be a reason for another exhumation, for the work of these two men proves absolutely that the accusation aimed at Major McLaughlin is false. Sitting Bull is still in his grave.

And so, on that slope facing the sunset, the old warrior was laid to rest, wedged into the rough box they had made for him, side by side with the white soldiers. That, one may believe, was a more fitting tomb for him than the Catholic cemetery up the hill, where the men who shot him down are lying. For Sitting Bull had no hatred of the white men, only distrust; and if that distrust increased as he came to know them, was it Sitting Bull's fault?

For a long time there was only a wooden marker at the grave, and tourists continually whittled it away. But finally official malice was weakened by time and death, and now there is a modest tombstone with the words:

SITTING BULL
Died
Dec. 15, 1890.
Chief of the
HUNKPAPA
SIOUX

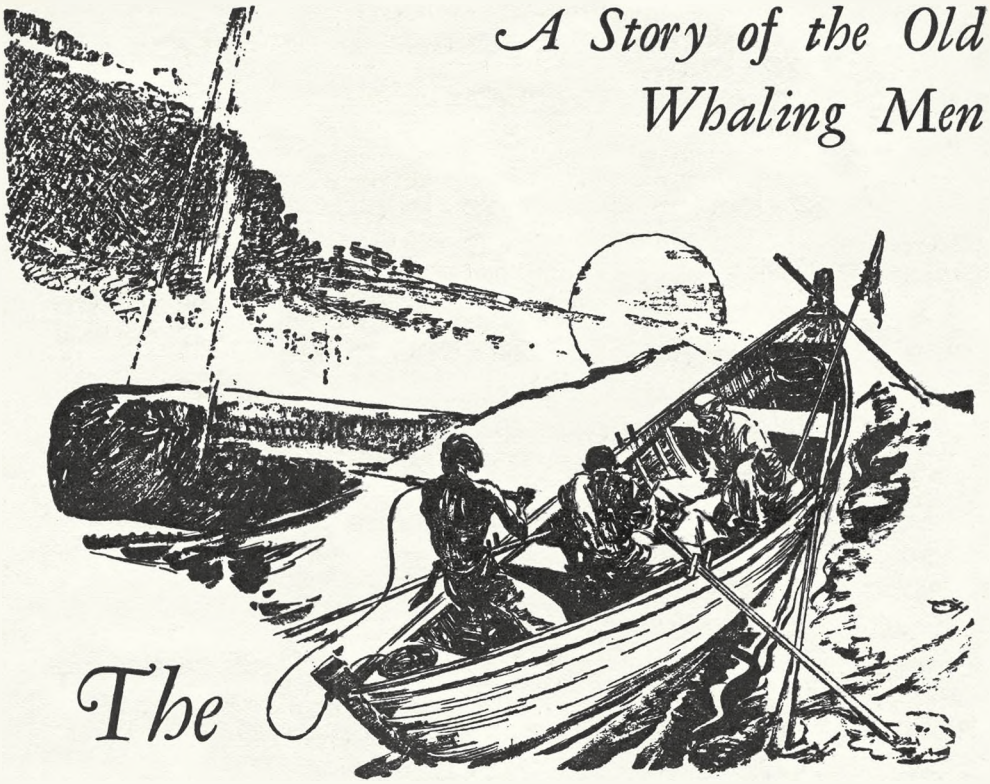
In time we may expect a great monument worthy of this most famous of all the sons of South Dakota, that beautiful country which he loved so well. The white man's hatred for Sitting Bull has fallen from him, even as the soldier dead who once slept around him have been taken away. Good cause for that. We owe a great debt to our old enemy.

For it is not the smooth path, but the rough trail, which makes us what we are. It is not our friends, but our foes, who have most to do with shaping our character. Consider what the history of America would have been had there been no native peoples on this continent when the white man came. Only a dull chronicle of plodding clodhoppers, moving each year a little farther into the vacant wilds, carrying along their imitation European customs and ideas, their outworn European culture, unchanged and unchanging—rubber stamps!

But as it was, thank heaven, we had a Frontier; and, as historians keep telling us, it was this Frontier which shaped America, molded a nation unlike any other. That Frontier made America—and the Indian made the Frontier!

Sitting Bull, leader of the largest Indian nation on the continent, was the very heart and soul of that Frontier, the strongest, boldest, most stubborn opponent of European influence. When the true history of the American Republic is written, he will receive his chapter. For Sitting Bull was one of the Makers of America.

A Story of the Old Whaling Men



The Teakwood Chest

By FREDERICK HOPKINS

"SO THERE," says I to the younger Mr. Mellish, as I passed the telescope back to him, "there goes the crew of men I'd expected to gather here in Honolulu for my Summer whalin' season in the Arctic. I s'pose there ain't a halfway decent sailor left in the Islands, let alone a whaleman. That big yacht has got 'em all! Is she a private yacht?"

"They say so."

"Where from?"

"From Mazatlan and the coast of Mexico."

"I could use her men," I says. "I really don't know what I'm going to do for a crew this season."

The younger Mr. Mellish laid his eye against the glass again and picked up the vessel we'd been looking at—a big white steam yacht, very spick and span, just making her way out of the harbor under her own steam.

"There's a plenty of whalemen left," he says, lowering the glass, "such as they are. You can find all you want wandering along King Street and the waterfront."

He put the spyglass under his arm and looked back and forth along the street.

"I see three of them right now."

I peered out to where he pointed. There were three men standing bunched together on the edge of the sidewalk. Better dressed than most sailors. Spanish creoles they looked to be. Smart but shifty.

"Where from?" I says.

"From Mazatlan. Able seamen and good whalemen, as I'm informed."

"What's all this I hear about Mazatlan?" I says. "Seems to me a good many cap'ns are making Mazatlan as a port of call just now, and a good many men are shipping to Honolulu from there. What do you know about it, Mr. Mellish?"

The elder Mellish sat back in his chair.

"There may be a little gossip about shipments of gold from Mazatlan at the present time. 'Twouldn't be surprisin'. Maybe they're even sending gold out of Mexico in ships bound to Frisco or Valparaiso by way of Honolulu. Personally, I don't know anything about it."

"I s'pose there may be gold hid somew'eres round Mexico and the Gulf of California," I says. "The Forty-Niners wouldn't have found it so easy to transport. Even now there ain't any real responsible shippers for dust or bullion. As for gold, all I can say is, I ain't seen any."

"And you never will, in my opinion," the younger Mr. Mellish says, as he closes the spyglass and shuts the window. "We'll make our minds easy, Cap'n Buckminster. The gold will never bother us!"

"It's the last thing that worries me," I tells him. "I'm after a crew. S'pose I've got to take those three creoles, but I ain't enthusiastic. I'd rather have Kanakas."

For a Kanaka makes a good sailor. Why not? Born in the water, as you might say. Swims before he walks. Why wouldn't he make a sailor? So he does, if you watch him. Able bodied, of course. Lazy, too, but what of it?

Only one fault I've got to find with a Kanaka. He's liable to go crazy 'most any minute. Full of whims. No way of knowing what he'll do next. Most likely he'll kill himself, if he can't find somebody to do it for him. Far's I can judge, a Kanaka thoroughly enjoys suicide.

That's the way it was with Joe. He was like that! Wust I ever see! Strictly speakin', Joe wa'n't a Kanaka. He was a Maori from New Zealand. But it don't make much difference. They're all pretty much alike—all the Polynesians. There's a screw loose somew'eres.

But I'm gettin' ahead of my story. Up to this time I hadn't ever seen Joe or he me. Where was I? Oh, yes!

So I says good day to the Messrs. Mellish, and I walked out from the counting room, still thinking about the crew I'd got to find. And I strolled down King Street and along the waterfront till I come into one of the streets where the Chinamen in their little shops can talk enough pidgin English so's a man can understand 'em and trade with 'em.

The little shops all stood open, and in one of 'em a black man was bargainin' with a Chinaman for a teakwood chest. The black man caught my eye, and I stopped at the door of the little shop to watch him.

He was a tall, straight man, this black man; and he stood like he was on parade, but easy and as if it come natural to him. A big man. Seven foot at the very least! And with it all a mane of fine, silky black hair, falling wavy 'most to his shoulders and cut off square. Figuring in his hair, he stood most eight foot tall, and broad accordin'. He was dressed very neat—a suit of white duck, starched and pressed, leather slippers on his feet, everything shipshape. No hat.

The teakwood chest stood on the floor between 'em, and the black man looked it over.

"What is your price for it?" asks the black man.

NOW this was a good chest, carved with a Chinese dragon and bound with brass and with inlays of ivory and mother-of-pearl. Very fair size it was; about as big as one man would shoulder easy.

"Tlenty-five dollar," says the Chinaman.

The black man shook his head.

"I don't want to pay so much. I will give you ten."

The Chinaman begins to splutter:

"Ten dollar no can catch. No ploper. S'pose you like tlenty dollar, velly good."

"Sorry," says the black man. "I don't care to pay more than ten."

"How can catch?" says the Chinaman. "No plofit." He shrugged his shoulders. "S'pose flifteen dollar."

"Ten dollars is a fair price," the black man says. And he puts his hand in his pocket.

This was too much for the gink. He threw up his hands.

"Hi—yah! Well, s'pose must catch!" And he reached for the gold piece which the black man offered him.

I stepped into the shop.

"You got a good chest there, son," I says. "I'll take it off your hands at that figger, if you like."

"Thank you," answers the black man, "but it suits me very well."

And he opens the chest, puts inside it a bundle that he'd been carrying, and he shuts and locks the chest.

"Tell me, son," I says, "were you on that big white yacht that's runnin' away so fast from old Oahu? You're not a deserter, are you?"

"I shipped in the yacht only to Honolulu," he says. "I'm no deserter. I'm on my way home."

"Where do you hail from, son? What's your name?"

"My name," says the black man, very dignified, "is Hinale, meaning Moving Cloud. But I don't expect you to remember that. I am a Maori from Cook's Straits, New Zealand. Most people call me Joe."

"Cook's Straits is some ways off," I says.

"It's a long time since I was there," says he. "My home is in Lahaina at the present time."

Lahaina!

Seems 's if I could smell it now, that same sweet smell of flowers and breadfruit and coconut comin' out to us from shore. Always used to make us sick, that smell of land, after the long stretch of salt water. And those squalls off the island of Maui! One of 'em picked up my old pet hen off the deck and carried her over the foreyard. Ain't seen her sence.

"Son," I says to the Maori, "what are you figgerin' to do? Are you going to sea again?"

He brushed back his long hair with his fingers.

"I don't know. Possibly I may."

"Don't s'pose you'd think of shippin' on a whaler."

"I have shipped on whalers in the past."

"Then look me up. My ship, the old *Corinthian,* will be lying at anchor before many days off Lahaina. We're goin' to the Arctic for a short season. If you want to come with us, I'll give you a berth as third mate. What have you got for reference? Though it wouldn't make any difference."

The Maori lifted up the teakwood chest and set it on his shoulder.

"Do you happen to know the Reverend Mr. Cameron, the seamen's chaplain at Lahaina?"

Did I know the Reverend Cameron! Lord, yes!

"Why," I says, "you ain't converted, be you?"

"I took religion," says the black man. "Took it some time ago. I go to the stone church. And I belong to Mr. Cameron's Sunday School. In fact, I teach a class of boys during such times as I remain on shore."

"Married?" I asks him.

"Not yet."

"Any family? Father living?"

"My father was killed in battle on the cliffs of Haleakala many years ago."

"Well, look us up, bark *Corinthian*, Cap'n Buckminster. You'll find we ain't all of us Sunday School scholars; but sech as we be, we'll be lyin' off Lahaina. Look us up."

"I will."

And with his teakwood chest on his shoulder the Maori walks off up the street.

"Cap'n Buckminster?"

'Twas those three creoles. Had been layin' for me outside the Chinaman's little shop. Waited for Joe to get started off, then spoke to me.

"Cap'n Buckminster, I believe?"

"Well?" I looked 'em up and down.

"We understand you want whalemen for a northern Summer season."

"So I do. Where'd you hear it?"

"We saw your ship."

"Experienced?" I asks 'em.

They give me a story 'bout themselves. I cut it short.

"All right. See Mellish & Son. They're my shipping agents."

They all three touched their hats as I left 'em.

TIME was when more'n a hundred whaleships used to make Lahaina as a port of call 'tween seasons, twice a year. There wa'n't a hundred ships there now. But there was a dozen, which was doin' pretty good.

Every ship was shorthanded due to desertions. Naturally, we couldn't hardly keep the men on shipboard all the time. We had to let 'em go ashore. There'd be more or less in every crew would desert at the Islands, and all I could do would be to take the best I could get to fill the places of the deserters. At that, I watched 'em pretty sharp till we were twenty miles or so from shore.

'Twas late one afternoon. The *Corinthian* was anchored in the harbor off Lahaina, and I was a-settin' in a chair on the quarterdeck smoking a Spanish cigar and waitin' for the boats to bring the men back.

Maybe I was kind of dozin' off, for I recall I had a dream—one of those vague dreams you forget soon 's you've dreamed 'em. Well, in this dream somebody was looking at me, I couldn't quite make out who 'twas.

As I looked I woke, and there in front of me I saw a girl's brown head. She was standing outside the rail, holding on to it with both her arms. A pretty girl with curly black hair and great dark eyes and the water running down her smooth brown skin.

Fur 's I know, she may have been there some time, waitin' for me to wake up. All I know is, there she stood outside the rail, drippin' wet and smiling at me.

It didn't take me long to wake up.

"Did I disturb you?" she says. "I am sorry." And she climbs over the rail on to the deck, all dripping.

How was she dressed? Well, she had a grass basket slung over her shoulder with squid and seaweed in it. That's how she was dressed. And a pink flower in her hair.

Fust thing she done, once she was aboard, was to feel in her hair to see if the pink flower was still there. It was. And next she took a little bundle of *tapa* cloth that she was carrying, and she unrolled it and she wound the strip, a couple of yards long—she wound it, I say, round her waist. It came down to her knees. So now she had on her best Sunday clothes.

Then she introduced herself—

"I am Kaala."

"Miss Kaala," I says, "I'm pleased to meet you."

"Kaala, daughter of Kapalama of Maui."

"The same. What can I do for you?"

"Tell me about Hinale," she says. "Is he sailing away with you in your whaleship?"

"Hinale?"

"Perhaps you call him Joe."

"Joe? Yes, Joe has shipped with me

and I'm expectin' him. Why, what's the idee? Any reason why he shouldn't?"

"No-o," she answers, wringing out the water from her hair. "There's no objection."

"We're sailing to the north'ard," I says, "for a short Summer season. Expect to make this port again within six months. Will that suit ye?"

"Yes." She give a great sigh. "He told me so."

"Joe is your partic'lar friend, I s'pose," I says. "Likely you'll get married. Well, I ain't surprised."

"Our house is built," she says. "Hinale built it. It is thatched with fine grass and in it he has put couches of pounded *tapa* and wreathed them with ginger-flowers and with hala blossoms and the delicate bloom of the coconut. The house is ready."

"Then what are you waitin' for? I wouldn't wait too long if I was you."

"There was a time," she goes on, "when we two, Kaala and Hinale, swam out each morning with our *wili-wili* boards through the surf and rode back side by side on the crest of the wave. But for all that, I am still dwelling in the house of my parents."

"Ain't it most time to settle down?"

"I work for the missionary," she says, "for Mr. Cameron. I help in the house and take care of the children."

"So that's where you learned English? You talk it very good. Are you converted too?"

"Yes," she says. "Hinale and I are both of us good Christians. We have given up the old religion."

"I wouldn't wait much longer, then," I says. "When the v'y'ge is over you better marry and settle down. What's the trouble?"

Kaala took her basket of squid from her shoulder and set it down on deck.

"For one thing, he is of the royal class."

"What of it?"

"On the beach where his fathers fought, the skulls of thousands of men washed and mingled with the sands, and human bones were piled like seaweed among the rocks. Hinale's fathers were warriors. Their gods were the old gods."

"So Joe feels like he ought to kill somebody, does he?" I says. "He feels like he ought to do some fighting? The Reverend Cameron will tell him what he thinks of them idees. He'll set him straight! He'll talk to him like a father! Joe'll have to listen!"

"He'll listen," says the girl. "Hinale wishes to marry. That is not the trouble. There is an old man."

"An old man?"

"An old, old man. A *kahuna*, a sorcerer, one who prays you to death!"

"Sho!" I says. "Is Joe scared of anything like that?"

"This old man is a witch," she says, "and he sits all day in the shadows among the lava blocks, eating spiders!"

I had to laugh.

"Wuss and wuss! Clean crazy!"

"He is an old, old man. His name is Keahua, and he remembers long ago, even before the missionaries came to Maui. Then the old gods were powerful, and the great stone temple stood on the lava breadth behind the village. Within its walls five tall wooden idols raised their awful shark mouthed heads. The missionaries broke the idols and the temple fell in ruins, but even now, on the appropriate nights and at certain stages of the moon, the old gods return to the temple to be worshiped and to give counsel in exchange for sacrifice."

"What kind of sacrifice?" I asked her.

"A pig, a goat, even an old time sacrifice."

I knew what she meant. They do say there's been human sacrifice on the Islands not so long ago.

"Hinale was in doubt," the girl goes on, "whether he should marry and remain at home, content with his thatched house and his taro patch and his fish nets and the white beach of Lahaina, or should listen instead to the faint voice of his father calling him afar whither the gods willed."

I shook my head.

"What a bunch of crazy idees!"

She went on:

"So first Hinale talked with Mr. Cameron, who explained to him many things. And then he talked with the old man Keahua, and no one has more knowledge of the former gods than he. On the advice of the old man he decided to take counsel of the gods, as young men had been accustomed to do before the missionaries came to teach otherwise. And accompanied by Keahua he visited the ruins of the great temple on the proper night in the full of the moon, taking as sacrifice a pig as well as other food."

"I'm certainly surprised at Joe," I says, "doin' anything so foolish!"

"It wasn't foolish," said the girl. "As they approached the temple they noticed that the eyes of the pig turned red. They heard the sound of the drums, the music of the nose flute and the whistling gourd, and the voices of the priests as they chanted their incantations."

"All imaginary!"

"No, it was real. Hinale heard it all."

"He's dreadful superstitious," I tells her. "You too, Kaala. You ought to have a talk with the Reverend Cameron."

She shook her head.

"Mr. Cameron wouldn't understand. So Hinale and the old man climbed slowly up to the temple on the lava breadth, carrying their offerings. From what had been the outer chamber of the temple sounded the mournful *hulas* sung by the victims who, blinded and with their bones broken, awaited death by strangling over the grooved stone of the altar.

"They reached the temple, made their sacrifice, and Hinale asked his question: What did the gods desire him to do?"

"Crazy 's a loon!" I says. "So you all be!"

"The gods spoke to Hinale at last," said Kaala, "through the mouth of the old man. These were the words: *Let Hinale listen when his father speaks!*

"Hinale therefore listened at once, and listening he heard the voice of his father entreating him that they should not be separated, but that together they should embark and adventure on the ocean.

"So now Hinale has left his thatched house and has put aside his surfboard and his perfumed mats, and with the spirit of his father he sails away in your ship, leaving me alone!"

"Does that worry you?" I says. "What do you think of my wife? I don't s'pose I've seen her three years, all told, out of the thirty we've been married. You get used to it. Joe'll be back before you know it, and you'll be getting spliced."

"Perhaps so." She stood up, unwrapped the strip of *tapa* cloth from round her waist and rolled it tight. Then scooping up the squid that were writhing about the deck, she put 'em back in her basket, pressing down their slippery arms, and hung the basket over her shoulder.

She looked back at me.

"I wish you a good voyage, Cap'n Buckminster. Come back safe!"

Climbing upright on the rail, she jumped off into deep water, feet fust. I stood by the rail and watched her as she swum away, the little pink flower showing in her hair.

SOON afterward a double canoe come out through the surf. A long canoe it was, with outriggers and two rows of paddlers. As it neared the *Corinthian* the steersman give a slap with his steerin' paddle on the side of the canoe. The men lifted their paddles all at once to t'other side, and up comes the canoe 'longside, pretty 's you please. Off steps Joe in his starched white duck clothes, barefoot, his long silky hair waving in the breeze. With his teakwood chest on his shoulder he clomb the ladder and come aboard.

"Hello, Joe!" I says. "You can go below any time and pick out your bunk."

Joe turned to me.

"Have you any objection to putting this chest in your cabin, Cap'n Buckminster?"

"Why, no," I says. "Give it here, Joe.

I'll keep it for ye." And I took it into my cabin and set it down in a corner.

So Joe went below and the double canoe shot off from the ship without hey, yes or no, and in a minute 'twas through the surf and ashore again.

An hour later the *Corinthian* pulled up her hook and sailed out from the harbor of Lahaina, manned by one of the wust crews I ever see on the deck of a whaleship.

That's what I mean—the *wust!*

A good part of my old crew had left me. There they were, I s'pose, hidin' in the woods round Lahainaluna, waitin' for the *Corinthian* to get out of sight.

In place of 'em I had to take whatever I could get—Lascars and Malays—anything at all! Thought myself lucky to find a few Portageese and Bravas.

Wust of all, in my judgment, were the three Spanish creoles from Mazatlan. Excellent sailors! For that reason I mistrusted 'em, specially their leader, Baldebago—Andreas Baldebago—very polite, smooth and slippery!

Bad as my crew was, we took some whales. Give a man all he can do and you occupy his mind. So I worked 'em hard, had no special trouble, and six months later I sailed out of the Arctic, meaning to make port at the Islands again, discharge and transship my oil, recruit and sail once more.

'Twas then I sent for the Maori one day down into the cabin.

"Joe," I says to him, "it's reported to me the crew is consid'able worked up over this teakwood chest of yours. The talk is it's a treasure chest and full of gold. How 'bout it?"

"No, sir, Cap'n Buckminster!" says the Maori, shakin' his head. "That talk is wrong! The chest ain't full of gold. For one thing, I couldn't lift it if 'twas full of gold, and you see I can lift it easy enough." And he picked the chest up from the floor and set it on the table in the middle of the cabin.

"That may be so," I says, "but whatever 'tis, it must be something vallyble, or 'twouldn't be a treasure chest. You see what kind of a crew I've got. What chance would a treasure chest have with men like that? I don't want a mutiny on my ship, and this crew would just as lief mutiny as not. I've got to say something to 'em that'll satisfy 'em."

"Tell 'em," says Joe, "that whoever touches the chest, the spirit of the dead that dwells inside will come to him at night in the focsle and will kneel on his breast and strangle him."

"Sho!" says I. "This crew wouldn't be scared by any such yarn as that. We've got to think up something better."

"Something better?" Joe repeats. "They say the chest is full of gold? Wait! I'll show you, Cap'n Buckminster!"

With that, he reaches into his pocket, fishes out a key, unlocks the chest, throws the cover back and takes out a bundle wrapped in brown *tapa* cloth. Then closing the chest, he lays the bundle on it.

"My father!" says the Maori, as he turns down the four corners of the large square of *tapa* cloth colored in yellow and brown in which the bundle was wrapped. "I have my father with me!" And gripping the object, he held it up so's I could see it.

'Twas a man's head!

Looked almost like a livin' head, it did. Man of middle age, very savage. No beard. Reddish-brown skin, smooth and shiny like as if you'd basted it with oil. Covered with tattooin', blue, black and red, in all sorts of figgers and wavy lines. Lips drawn back very scornful, showing sharp white teeth. Long black hair growin' on the head, combed straight back, oiled and tied with fiber thread. No eyes—the eye sockets empty.

"My father!" says Joe, very quiet, as he holds up the head by its long hair.

I wa'n't so surprised. Fact was, I was rather relieved when Joe passed the tied ends of the long hair over one of the hooks of the cabin wall and hung the head up on the hook.

"So that's your father, Joe?" says I And Joe stepped back and stood still,

lookin' at the head like a dog looks at the man that owns him.

"Where'd you get it, Joe?"

"Under the cliffs of Haleakala," answers Joe. "I searched after the battle, and I found him there and brought his head away."

For quite awhile we looked at the head hangin' on the hook against the wall, glarin' contemptuous over the cabin out of its hollow eye sockets.

"You better take it down," I says at last.

So Joe took down the head and put it back into the chest.

I'VE NEVER been in the habit of carryin' a great deal of sperrits on shipboard. A certain amount you got to have, rum and so forth. On this partic'lar v'y'ge I happened to have a keg of strong sperrits—*aguardiente* they call it. I got it on the island of Mahe in the Seychelles archipelago, where they make it. The keg was kept in the sperrit locker openin' off the cabin, and nobody was supposed to get at it but me.

But this crew got at it. Fust thing I see one morning when I stepped out on deck was the crew, drunk, every man more or less accordin' to his several capacity. It seems that those three creoles had stolen augers from the ship's carpenter and had fitted plugs into holes they bored through the locker wall into the cask. That made it easy for 'em to pass out the rum.

So now at daybreak there was the crew staggerin' round the deck or settin' in small groups spinning yarns 'bout the ill treatment they received from me. The mates were sober. Likewise a few of the crew, but very few.

I tried to muster 'em aft. Up comes Baldebago and the two other creoles, all perfectly sober.

"May we say a few words to you, Cap'n Buckminster?"

"Speak up, Baldebago," I says. "I'll give you one chance before I clap you in irons and stow you in the run. What is it that you want now?"

Now a whaleship ain't a reepublic; it's a despotism. And the more you give the foremast jacks a chance to argue, the wuss it will be. A knockdown and a pirate's blessing—that they can understand.

But here I had a drunken crew. So I answered, easy—

"If you have a grievance, Baldebago, I'll listen to it."

"It is this, Cap'n Buckminster: Why should we chase whales, when here on this ship is a treasure worth more than all the whales we could take?"

"What ye gettin' at?" I says.

"The treasure!" answers the creole. "The teakwood chest filled with gold!"

"But that's Joe's, ain't it? 'Tain't yours."

"How could a Maori come by a chest of gold?" asks the creole. "He has stolen it. We have as much right to it as he. Give us the chest. We will divide the gold."

"So it's gold, is it?"

"It must be! He admits there is treasure there."

"And what do you figger to do?"

"We will divide it, each man his share. Then make port somewhere. The voyage is over, each one goes his way."

"Baldebago," I says, "you know as much as I do about there bein' gold in that chest. I ain't seen any, but you may be right. But I've got a kind of 'spicion you three men are bound for irons and the run."

"Look at the crew," says the creole. "There's plenty more rum. If necessary, we'll take the chest!"

"S'pose you're wrong, Baldebago, what then?"

"I'll believe my own eyes!"

"All right," I answers him. "We'll call Joe . . . Where's that Joe?"

Yes, where was he?

'Twas some time before I see him. When I did, 'twas hard to believe 'twas him!

The Maori was standin' by the booby hatch. He was stark naked 'cept for

the *malo* round his waist—that little belt they wear. And he'd scooped up grease from the cook's slush bucket and he'd greased himself all over. He'd painted his face yellow and black and he'd rubbed grease into his hair till it stood up straight and stiff all round his head. With his own more 'n seven foot of height he looked now to be a good eight foot tall. And muscled like a lion!

In his arms he carried the teakwood chest.

"Joe!" I calls out. "Let us see your chest! What's inside?"

So Joe set the box down on deck, lifted the cover back, reached in his hand and brought out the head. Then straightenin' up, he held it for us to see.

"My father!" says Joe, very quiet, as he held up the head by its long hair.

Baldebago spoke up—

"The treasure!"

Joe paid no attention, but parting the long black hair, he passed the painted head over his own greasy mop of hair and hung it round his neck. There it swung against his oily breast, starin' at us through its empty eye sockets, very proud and contemptuous!

Joe patted his breast.

"My father—he laughs! I laugh with him!"

"The chest!" says Baldebago.

"My father will crush your skulls with stones," the Maori says. "He will break your bones over his knee."

That was far 's he got. Another voice floated down from aloft. 'Twas the lookout in the hoops at the foremast head. He seen whales in the ocean and he give the call to us.

"Blo—ows!"

Yes, there they were. Sperm whales! We could see their spouts a mile or so to windward.

Funny thing. That sobered everybody. No matter how far gone they were, that cry from aloft sobered 'em. I expect every jack would've done his part till the last dog was hung.

"Come on!" I hollered to the crew. "See them whales! There they be, large and saucy! Get to work, boys! Swing and lower!"

The men begun to kick off their shoes. The creole Baldebago grabbed up the teakwood chest.

"Hey!" I says to him. "Put down that chest!"

But the creole didn't pay the slightest 'tention to me. Boats No. 1 and No. 2 swung out, two men in each, and as they touched the water the rest of the crews slid down the falls. The tackles were unhooked, we shoved off, the masts were stepped and we sailed t'ward the whales.

One of the whales was a big one, old and full of tricks. That whale, soon 's he felt the prick of the harpoon, come up 'longside and bit off all the oars on the starboard side of boat No. 1 that the creoles were in.

And as if that wa'n't enough, that old whale give a slap with his flukes and tumbled three of the men into the water. Then he sounded and, lying on the bottom, he rolled and wrapped himself in the line.

WHILE we were picking up the men, the whale come to the surface. There he begun to swim to windward, as whales do. At first he swum slow, till he'd swum out all the line. Then he begun to feel the harpoon again and he swum faster, pulling the boat after him.

In the boat sat the three creoles, scared, not knowing what to do, the teakwood chest between 'em on one of the thwarts. And the Maori, seein' 'em, dived overboard to swim to boat No. 1. He reached it, grabbed one of the thole pins and threw a leg over the gunwale.

At that, every man of those three creoles drew his knife and begun to cut the Maori as he clomb in.

Bad as they cut him, they didn't stop him. He snatched up the butt of an oar and he swung it—once—twice!

Clip! Clip! He'd clomb in and two of the creoles were clubbed quiet. Baldebago was left, scared and dangerous, like a rat. He picked up the teakwood chest

and backed into the bow of the boat. From there he threw his knife.

The knife reached the Maori and cut a gash in his side. He looked round for some kind of weapon. A harpoon, the second iron, laid across the thwarts. He picked it up, give a holler and made a dart at the creole.

Baldebago had no room to dodge. The harpoon reached him, went through him and pinned him to the thwart. He give a few squirms and flopped limp.

At that, we in our boat let out loud yells and sprung hard at our oars. But we couldn't catch that whale, hard as we rowed. He swum too fast for us!

Pretty soon we give up trying and just sat still in our boat and looked. The ball of the sun was hanging red right on the edge of the ocean. Against it swum the whale, his head sometimes high out, sometimes deep in the water, accordin' as his flukes swashed down or up.

Back of the whale the boat follered the taut line, sending up two sheets of white foam from the cutwater. The bodies of the creoles laid limp over the gunwales, jest as they'd fell. And in the bow of the boat stood the Maori, waving the harpoon and hollerin' in his own lingo, while the head of his father bounced against him like a rubber ball.

We let out another yell. The Maori looked back and saw us. And he lifted up the harpoon and shook it over his head and give a long, loud yell, wavin' the harpoon high in the air!

After that we couldn't see distinct. The whale and the boat grew smaller and smaller. Sometimes it seemed we could hear the Maori yell—far, far away. When they rose on a sea we could make out the black back of the whale with the boat a-follerin' and the Maori wavin' his harpoon. Jest shadders, they seemed to be, against the sunset.

The sun lowered fast, as it always does over the ocean. Pretty soon it had set. We couldn't make 'em out again.

That was the last we see of the Maori. Pretty good feller for a Kanaka—or he would have been except for his crazy streak.

I passed the remark to Kaala when I happened to meet her in Honolulu some years afterward. She'd married. Married Lorenzo Cameron, the Reverend Cameron's oldest son. They settled in Honolulu. He done well in business, I understand, and they brought up a family.

"Kaala," I says, "what a foolish thing Joe done! There he was, nicely settled in Lahaina, converted and a good Christian, his house all built and you a-waitin' for him. Plenty of chance to go to sea if he felt so disposed. Everything fixed nice. And he has to go crazy! I guess the reverend would call him a backslider."

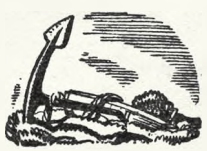
"Grandpa Cameron never understood," says Kaala. "I wouldn't discuss it with him."

"Joe didn't need to do it," I says. "He could have cut the line."

"He never would have cut the line!"

"All for a teakwood box! For a chest with nothing in it but a painted head. It makes me laugh sometimes," I says, "when I think how those three creoles were fooled! And they never knew it. They always thought there was treasure in the chest."

"Wasn't it treasure?" says Kaala. "Hinale thought it was."



Concluding

SMOKY PASS

By AUBREY BOYD

WHEN Speed Malone, the Western gambler, proposed a partnership with young Ed Maitland on the boat carrying them to Skagway in the van of the gold rush of '97, he did not disguise the truth that he was an outlaw. And Maitland accepted him only after exacting a promise that the Westerner would never draw his guns on the law while they teamed together.

Malone told Maitland that he was drawn to the North in quest of a cloverleaf shaped nugget, which had been taken from his murdered partner, Joe, in Nevada. Malone suspected a cheap gambler of being the murderer, and thought him to be in the North. The nugget had been in the loot stolen from an Overland express, years before, by Joe and two other men—who broke with Joe when he insisted upon rescuing a baby girl found wandering on the tracks after the train departed.

In Skagway, Malone and Maitland became friendly with a youthful prospector named Pete. This made them an enemy in Fallon, a trail boss who was often seen with Bill Owens, Pete's drunken partner.

The night before the trek over the White Pass started, a beautiful camp singer, Rose, hinted to Maitland of a

fortune that might be his if he would work with her: "There's a drunken fool in camp that's due to lose a gold mine . . ."

And a short time later Pete's mate, Bill Owens, was found dead.

Malone suspected Rose of being in the pay of Fallon, and he ordered her away from the partners' tent, laughing at her warning to keep away from the Pack Train Saloon. Passing the place later that night, the Westerner was forced to kill a man who fired upon him from the door. The would-be assassin proved to be the Nevada gambler Malone had trailed North for the murder of Joe, his partner.

Beyond the Pass, Malone agreed to do some hauling for Inspector Drew of the Mounted Police. And one night, while cooking supper in their frozen camp, a lame malamute strayed in, to be followed shortly after by a lone *voyageur*. The stranger questioned Malone, mysteriously asking about the dead Owens and the boy, Pete. Then, at the point of a gun, he pledged their silence about having seen him, and disappeared in the forest.

Malone and Maitland kept their word, although they aroused the suspicion of Corporal Cathcart of the Mounted, who came to their camp a little later and grilled them about a missing Siwash.

With Malone returned to Skagway on a haul, a terrific blizzard broke. And at the height of it, Maitland chanced to find Pete exhausted in the fast disappearing trail. Carrying the unconscious body to the cabin, Maitland discovered Pete to be a girl.

Meanwhile, in Skagway, Malone had been arrested, charged by Fallon with the murder of the gambler at the Pack Train Saloon. Fallon instigated a lynching party, and Malone was taken to the Golden Pass Saloon. Malone asked the singer, Rose, for a last song. And at that moment Maitland burst through the crowd, making for Fallon.

There was a sharp crack as fist met bone, and Fallon crashed backward.

CHAPTER XV

EXIT

TO THE crowd it was like a gong. A lynching was one thing; this was something more; the challenge laced their blood with a strong intoxicant.

They jammed back the circle to give Maitland room, while those behind scrambled for gallery perches on the cross beams and rafter braces of the Golden Pass.

Fallon shook his head groggily a moment, as he leaned back against the piano with his fists on the keys. A movement of one hand to his belt brought a roar of protest from the crowd—on their own account no less than for fair play. But Fallon had no intention of shooting. He pushed the gun tight in the holster and, bracing himself against the piano, leaped for his antagonist—the partner of the enemy whose neck he had noosed, Maitland.

The crash when they met was like an impact of bulls. Both men were magnificently strong and toughened by the snow trails, though weight and matured experience were in Fallon's favor. He drove in a pounding barrage of body punches, which Maitland checked with another jolt to the head. Fallon returned a vicious, twisting upward blow that caught the youngster in the midriff. It jerked his leg from the floor and left him exposed to a jab in the neck that had all the visible and audible force of a mule's kick. Maitland closed in, trying to smother the assault till the floor stopped spinning, and taking a thrashing rain of jackhammer blows to the head and body.

But the instinctive balance which a sailor learns on stormy decks must have steadied him now; he thrust back suddenly, and Fallon's foot, less sure of the glassy floor, slipped a little. The boy lashed up with a short left that cut the other's lip, and then drove home a full shouldered right, as Fallon's head snapped back. That one had weight be-

hind it. It tinkled every crystal in the chandeliers.

Bright blood spurted from the big man's eyebrow. He was tossing his head to keep the blood out of his eye, and hitting wild as Maitland welted him again and again on that side, driving him back across the floor as far as he had been driven.

"Give 'em room!" shouted the onlookers.

Speed, trying to follow the battle from his stiff necked position, barely missed hanging himself. Righting, he broke out the tune of his favored fighting song:

"For old Settin' Bull and old Wallop-e-an
Is a-prizin' up hell round the town of Cheyenne . . ."

To steady himself, Fallon clinched, and inflicted a savage reprisal in the infighting before Maitland broke his hold. The boy circled, maneuvering for a clean knockout—the only finish that might give his partner a moral advantage with the crowd. But Speed, who recognized this purpose, knew how valiantly useless it would be. Whatever the result, Fallon's posse was out for blood.

The Nevadan was one of those iron men who pay no physical toll for years of bad living. He was strong as a bull, agile as a cat, and no easier to wind than a prairie wolf. Shaken by a stiff crack between the eyes, he came back with a spring that tore through Maitland's guard by sheer weight and fury. They slipped and came up in a swaying grapple. It was a deadlock of tremendous power in equipoise; the strain was almost audible, like the bending of oaks in a storm.

Sensing a death fight, the crowd pressed in, avid as a blood hungry wolf pack. They forgot the table scaffold and the man who stood there with a noose about his neck. Only Lefty, swept backward against the table by their surge, had a glimpse of the bound boot ankles wrenching fiercely against the rope, as the crowd's buckling pressure carried him past . . .

The craning spectators saw that Fallon had sunk his fingers in the youngster's throat. With a mighty effort that carved dark cords in his own neck, he was bending him back and down. The crowd grunted and turned rigid as Maitland suddenly sagged, falling backward with Fallon's weight clamping his neck to the floor, and the man's great fist sledging his face and head. The boy's destruction looked certain, but he threw it into suspense for one last desperate minute. His hands had caught his assailant in a hold at the waist, just under the ribs, and with a lift and a heave of one knee, he unbalanced the other's weight, overturned him and twisted free of the throat hold.

STREAMING blood, he reeled to his feet, blinded to everything but a lowering savage face at which he swung with a mortal concentration, one smash after another, back and still back to the flimsy side wall of boarded canvas, which gave with a terrific crash as their combined weight struck the wood. With this support, the big man caught his balance and struck. They were out of the clear light, but the unseen blow did not sound like a striking fist. Maitland dropped and Fallon toppled with him into the wreckage of the wall. For a moment the outcome was undiscernible, till Fallon was heard cursing as he tried to get clear of the jagged break. Some of his men started across the floor to his aid; while the crowd still hovered, mute and tense, with its eyes on the lifeless form by the wall.

Out of that silence, a sudden, leaping voice cut the air like a whip's crack.

"Back away from him, you buzzards, and stay clear of my track! I'm a-headin' through this pack and I sure come loaded!"

Every eye froze in gaping, paralyzed silence at the man on the gibbet table. The noose was gone from his neck; his feet were free; a six-shooter gleamed in one hand, and in the other something

else burned with a sizzling, baleful sputter. The apparition had all the unhinging effect of a miracle, and that dancing fuse on which the crowd's stare was fastened made the menace diabolical. Dynamite!

Crash! roared the gun, and the tinkling pendants of one of Soapy's hanging lamps fell in splinters to the floor.

The crowd jumped as if dynamite itself had lifted them.

They smashed their own exits through the side walls in a frenzied rush for the outer air. Those who could not reach an opening struggled and gibbered as they looked back at that strangely illumined face in the dark—a plain target for any marksman who dared to shoot.

With Speed's jump from the table toward his fallen partner, the floor cleared around him instantly. Maitland lay alone by the break in the wall. Fallon had dragged himself away. Returning the gun to his belt, Speed pulled Maitland's body across the smooth floor to the front entrance of the casino. The crowd banked up in trampling masses to give him space. He emerged on the empty landing, a step above the lighted street, which was the scene of a wildly scattering stampede. There he paused, framing his next move.

It was now his turn to see a miracle, or what he would have called a "natural" —one of those surprises that resemble a fortuitous break before their causes are known. A rider, with two frightened pinto horses in tow, came clear of the mob. Pete, riding the black mare with a foaming rein, was shouldering and backing the broncos in to the platform. It was a superb feat of horsemanship, and Speed took the break as readily as if he had expected it.

One of the pintos grazed the edge of the step. He dropped his partner across its back, and fastened him there in a trice with a double hitch of a pack line which Pete threw him from the mare's saddle. In another instant he detached the halter line of the second bronco. The rope was already looped tight around its nose.

Mounting, he curbed its plunging close to Pete's stirrup, while he held the dynamite stick away from the mare's head. The fuse was burning close.

"Up the river canyon, Pete," he said, "and don't pull in till I hail you."

A quirt bit the bronco's flank; its flying start matched the mare's leap as Pete leaned close to the black neck, holding the pinto's head and riding both horses as one. They flashed through the checkered street lights and vanished in a drumming of hoofs. Speed checked his own rearing mount, wheeling it sidelong on its hind legs. Then, with a measured glance at the crowd, he tossed the sputtering explosive down the center of the street into trampled vacant snow.

Almost as it struck, the camp was rocked by a thundering detonation. The bronco gave a bound like a stag's, and tore after its team mate, stung to a soaring gallop by the rocketing blasts of Speed's gun. Their exit from Skagway left the spectators so stunned that they smoked into the trail and out of camp without drawing an answering shot.

Riding lighter than Pete's pair, Speed counted on quickly overtaking them in the looser snow of the canyon, but he covered several miles before he sighted them.

Pete finally recognized his shout and reined in. She was standing beside the burdened pinto when he threw himself from the saddle and struck a match close to Maitland's head. The dark hair glistened with beads of blood which the cold night air was staunching. Pete, bending over, gave a moan at sight of his face.

"He's bruised bad," Speed muttered, testing a head wound that looked like the mark of a gun stock.

"Will he die?" Pete murmured.

"Not him," said Speed, with forced optimism. "Deal me some fast cards, Pete. Where did you and Bud meet up?"

"In the storm, while I was heading

for Skagway. Cathcart came to the cabin. He said something about the dog—"

"Wanted to know where we got it, I reckon?" Speed grunted. He glanced around the snow and, catching sight of the dog a little way off, said, "Go on, kid."

"Bud wondered what had happened to you. We picked up your sled track, and followed it down with the horses. I held them at the canyon mouth while he went looking for you. Then I heard the crowd shouting—"

"And brung the horses close," Speed supplied. "That gamble, Pete, give us a turn of luck and we're goin' to play it. Without aimin' to be curious—have you any ideas of throwin' in with Fallon's outfit?"

"No!" The tone of denial was eloquent. "I'm going out, Speed. I don't want anything to do with Fallon."

"Then you can't get out this end, kid. If you leave the North, it better be by way of the river. You line back over the pass with Bud and the horses, and keep goin' till I come up with you."

"I'll take Bud over the line, of course," Pete faltered, "till he can travel. But if I made trouble for you—"

"Let it ride, kid. You're pullin' us out of real trouble right here. The marshal framed a charge on me, and his next move will be sendin' word to the Mounties at Bennett to turn us back. They'll pull Bud into it, because he was with me."

"Oh!" Pete said.

"Cathcart just needs some encouragement to open another crazy charge. Between them we're in a tight fix, unless we can beat that message. If they stopped us now and got to sievin' my record, it would be mighty bad for Bud —not because of anything he's done. I'm goin' to see him clear before I fade out of the Yukon. And I wouldn't leave you here alone, even if we didn't need your help. Can you make that out, Pete?"

As he spoke, he was adjusting the pack rope that bound Maitland to the led horse, and watching the canyon.

"All right," Pete said, with a catch in her voice.

"I'll take the dog," Speed said; and secured it. "In case I don't get through, keep to the inshore ice of the lakes. Miss the stations, if you can. Tell Bud to lash a sled under the boat; try to make the big river, and then over the Alaska line. But if we're lucky, they's a better play, maybe. So long, kid."

He held the malamute on a straining leash while Pete gulped out some parting words, and the little cavalcade broke away.

Pulling the dog with him, Speed went back down the canyon.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FORCED PLAY

EVEN for the team of Mackenzie huskies—hardiest sled dogs in the North—the trail to the summit of the pass was cruelly heavy. They were pulling an average of a hundred pounds to the dog, and the days lost through Speed's imprisonment in Skagway were days of thaw. He could see from the track he was following that Pete had found the going heavy too, though the horses were dragging no weight, and the trail was well enough packed under the storm wash to bear them.

He had the mail, thanks to Lefty, who had met him in the canyon. He had his guns, which the quick fingered thief had slid under his feet during the fight in the Golden Pass, and he could hardly be deeper in any man's debt. His discomfort at being unable to offer his bank roll in recompense was relieved by Lefty, who modestly admitted having lifted that from the marshal in the scramble. There was only one cloud on the pickpocket's satisfaction; he had failed to find the nugget.

"It was f-f-feelin' through the safe for it that most p-p-put me in the grease. M-maybe the marshal is packin' it."

Little time as there had been for words, Speed had asked him whether his services had been prompted in any way by Rose. The answer was a credible no. With a stammer that sounded sincere, Lefty acknowledged that the inspiring reason for his interest in Speed's welfare had been the hope of recovering that piece of gold.

The freight agent's dismayed surrender of the sled load and team was immediate. But, as Speed had gathered from Lefty, this smooth getaway was due to a fact of worse omen than the fight he had expected would have been. Just after their escape from The Golden Pass Fallon had left for Dyea. Evidently, with the trail as it was, Fallon believed he could reach Bennett on foot over the Chilkoot before horses could cross the White Pass.

Speed was thankful now for his forethought in keeping the malamute, which he had hitched at the head of the team. From the moment Rusty caught the pintos' trail, the huskies had never a chance to slack on the traces. The boarhound bred Mackenzies fought after the straining leader as if stung by their own contempt for the all-wolf breed, and shamed at the thought of being outpulled by a Siwash.

Still, with the best that man and dogs could do, the sun was high and the snow a damp welter long before they reached the summit. Speed had to rest the dogs and wait for dusk to chill the trail. Over the peak of the watershed the air turned colder, and on the descending grade they began to travel.

But while they were in full cry along the rim of a steep mountain bluff, Rusty suddenly broke pace, ran the sled into a drift to stop it, and nosed at the canyon below the trail. Cooling a blaze of impatience, Speed unhitched the dog to investigate; it seemed to have lost a scent.

The mountainside beneath them was covered with loose snow, unbroken except for a few smothered timber and boulder heads, and a slight falling wave in the surface that might indicate a covered ledge. He tested the snow with his foot. It dribbled away, effacing the mark. A grim surmise darkened his mind as he looked at the leached form of a great snowbank along the top of the canyon. He studied the trend of the ledge, and then converted the guess into action. Lowering himself over the brink, to feel the lapsing rock with his boot, he gave a kick and let go, pulling the dog with him. They went down in a seething white cascade, till by good chance they found a footing far down the slope and dug out. The dog struggled on to a point still farther below, almost in line with their descent.

There were still no tracks, but now Speed detected a dim shape stirring in the canyon trough, near the wall of a long gorge.

Strangely, the dog growled. A shout, in a voice he did not recognize, came from the struggling figure as they approached it. The spurred boot and sealskin coat of a Mounted Police officer showed against the snow. Starting to lift the man, Speed almost let him fall again, in the astonishment of the discovery that it was Cathcart.

"Easy, damn you," Cathcart groaned. "My leg's out."

Speed tried the knee and thigh with his hands.

"Nothin's broke," he said. "Jam your teeth together while I pull."

The patrolman suffered this excruciating ordeal with no more than a grunt, though he dropped back into the snow to recover his breath when it was over.

"How long have you been here?" Speed asked, as soon as he thought him capable of answering.

"You and your damned partner," raged the patrolman, still broken winded from pain, "will answer for this. He and his friend Pete cut down the canyon here when I called them. Wouldn't stop when I fired. Caved the snow down."

"I reckon they dug out, or you wouldn't be cussin'," said Speed hopefully.

"They pulled out with two horses through that gulch. Lucky enough to break only one horse's neck."

"Lost your own horse and gun," Speed noted. "You shouldn't have called them so sudden, Cathcart. They figured, likely, you was some one else."

"I've had enough lies, Malone," rasped Cathcart. "You're under arrest."

"Arrest?" Speed frowned. "I'm under orders from Drew to deliver a packet of mail and a sled load of telegraph gear to Tagish. Maybe he got nervous and sent you down to Skagway to trace us?"

"I'm tracing you on my own authority," snapped the corporal. "An officer of the Mounted Police doesn't need orders from headquarters to stop an outlaw."

"You need a gun," said Speed.

"Do you defy the police?" Cathcart shouted.

"I don't defy an unarmed man," said Speed. "I just say it takes more than callin' us outlaws to make an arrest. I ain't heard your reasons yet."

"Reasons!"

THE struggle in the snow had worn Cathcart's temper to a thread. He swore with imprudent eloquence.

"Outside of that," said Speed, "here I'm travelin' back with Drew's mail and freight. My pardner and Pete is trailin' ahead of me when they take a miscue from hearin' a hostile voice on the trail. Not knowin' who it was, they cut off down this canyon. You fired a gun, and with the snow hangin' like it does, the jar of that noise would be enough to start a slide. Or else the horses slipped on the edge. You was caught in the avalanche and snowed under. They dug out and went on without seein' you. Where's the outlawry and who's lyin'?"

"Your partner lied to me about that dog," fumed Cathcart. "Native dogs don't stray into this region without drivers. You lied to me about the mukluk prints. Do you still pretend you don't know what happened to that Siwash and his team?"

"The ways of a Siwash is foxy and unexpected," Speed said. "What does Drew think of this delusion of yourn about a murdered Indian?"

"Your abuse of Drew's confidence is one of the foxiest tricks ever played on the law," Cathcart declared, imprudent in his anger. "Inspector Drew will have several eye opening surprises when I report your case. Perhaps you can explain the dog and those tracks to him. And why you've concealed from the police the fact that a supposed boy you've kept in your cabin is a girl."

There was a long pause as Speed's brows knit over that poser.

"Some one's dealt you a hand," he said slowly. "You wouldn't have guessed that before I did."

"I can read facts without an informer. And did."

"How long have you kept it quiet?"

"Some days too long," snapped Cathcart. "You're arrested."

"If I'd made a break with the mail," Speed countered, "you'd have grounds to talk like that. But the way it is, you'll have to play for it, Cathcart. I'm holdin' some of a kind myself, and I'm more than willin' to back 'em. I'm goin' to go investigatin' too—uncover a twist in your hunch and break your straight. Half your case anyway. The other half is between me and a curly wolf and a jinx that's goin' to be busted for once, if it can. I don't give a flick if it raises ever' official hair of the Northwest Mounted, and shaves mine."

In spite of the pain from his leg, Cathcart made a stride with it.

"Put me on that sled and take me to Bennett!" he shouted.

"You don't get me yet," said Speed. "The first point, which I make right here, is the hours it takes you to hobble to Bennett. I'll leave you some grub, so you won't starve, but I'll be past Tagish, and so will my pardner and Pete, before you can send word through. Like you could if this telegraph line I'm packin' was already strung. Tell Drew

I'm leavin' the sled and the mail in that thick clump of shore brush a mile from Tagish."

"You'll never get there, by God!" Cathcart swore. "With the thaw this close, you can't use the lake ice. The fresh dogs I send from Bennett will run you down in the timber."

"All right," said Speed. "The game's open, and I expect you'll use ever'thin' you've got. So will I. I'm playin' the thaw."

And leaving Cathcart mouthing with thwarted rage, he dragged Rusty up the slope.

He rehitched the dog at the head of the waiting team, leaving a space of line between it and the lead husky.

"Gee over there, you damnin' clue," he growled. "You got us into this, and if you aim to keep on bein' a white man's dog, you're going to break us out. Now, mush!"

The tip of the long caribou gut whip stung Rusty's ear. Whatever the dog caught from Speed's words, its flying pace to the lake shore left nothing of which to complain.

There the whip cracked again, as the great darkling sheen of the lake loomed through dusky timber. Whimpering, the team hung back, between two fears, of which the intangible menace before them was the worse. But the Siwash leader's nose was in the wind again. After a wavering pause it drew the gee pole straight and pulled them on toward the lake.

Though the ice groaned beneath crackling sled runners and the burden in their wake, the panicked dogs seemed to sense that their only margin of safety lay in speed. Certainly no faster sled trail could be imagined. A film of moisture, left on the surface by melting snow, had refrozen into a mirror glaze which the sled runners grooved like skate edges.

Over the hum of steel and ice the only sound was the soft pad of the dogs' cat-like feet as they leaned into the tugs, speeding after the streaking, weaving shadow of a hunting wolf.

"THE dog's a wonder at guessin' ice, Bud. He don't weigh much. I'll put him in the prow?" Speed called above the echoing clatter of the floes that tumbled down the gorge.

Maitland nodded, watching the flood for a clear space in which to launch. The boat was packed with all the weight he dared carry in this narrow waterway. Pete had taken the rest on the two broncos and was riding ahead to meet them above Lake Lebarge.

Though the first run of the ice had passed, leaving gaps of clear water, the channels pinched and changed with the turns of the canyon, sometimes throwing back a muffled thunder, like the shunting of freight cars on a mountain siding. An accidental jam in the frozen wreckage would crack the boat like a walnut, for all its shallow draft and rounded hull. Broken ice guttered along the river's rim; sometimes a block would smash against the shore as easily as a case of crockery, stinging them with cold splinters and spray.

"All right, Speed. Now!"

The boat coasted over the shore ice on a sled lashed to the keel, and slid into the river with a dream-like balance, proving her quality. In spite of the danger, Maitland's heart was curiously light. He was bound for the Yukon at last with two friends he loved—three friends, not forgetting Rusty in the bow.

Of the reasons for this hurried launching, he understood only from Speed's few words, that they were evading a charge framed by Fallon in Skagway, and some peril that threatened Pete. His recollections of the ride over the pass began dimly with the fall that killed Pete's mare, and with being dragged on a line hitched to one of the broncos till he was able to trail again. She had spared nothing to get him clear; now there could be no limit to what he would do for her, even if it meant dodging the police.

The rapids on this stretch of river lay behind. Its worst hazards were occa-

sional jams in the shallows. Winning through these brought them into long spaces of clear channel.

As they neared the lake, the sunlight slanted into a broadening canyon. The ice, in its battering downflow, had dammed up against the still solid surface of Lebarge. In places the backwater overtopped the canyon walls, pouring into basins where the floes jostled in twinkling lakes of their own. At the edge of the last of these, they found Pete and the horses waiting.

They hitched Rusty and the team to the prow and, pulling the boat by the gunwales to steady it on the runners, hauled it across some ravines to the main shore of the lake.

The sun was now a red, low hanging disk over the opposite timbered shore, far to the west. It stained the thin overflow which had spread along the upper lake from the dam, to a lagoon of wine colored sherbet, already stanched and half frozen by the evening cold.

Here they regretfully unfastened and set free the plucky broncos that had carried them so far.

Lifting Pete, who protested, into the cradled boat, they hitched Rusty to the tow line and again, tugging alongside, shoved out on the great ice sheet. The boat sledded more easily, as slush ice hardened under the runners. They could have run, had they dared ignore the warning of Rusty's cannily chosen course.

Some miles brought them in line with the outlet of the river trail, which had now receded into the ruddy haze. An hour passed before they heard, far behind them, a dim and muffled baying. In the murky distance it sounded like the call of a small flock of mallards alighting in a wild rice bank.

Rusty quickened his pace, but kept the wolfish silence of his breed. A freshening wind gave them a slight advantage by blowing the scent away.

"Come on, Rusty!" Speed called.

The Siwash dog strained into a faster trot along an island shore that seemed to buttress the ice around it.

Now, looking back, they could see a kind of dancing mote in the twilight mist. Something unseen and swift went singing and skipping along the ice within fifty yards of them. A few seconds later they heard the ring of the high powered rifle that sent it.

"Come and get us, you stiff triggers," growled Speed, his shoulder tight to the gunwale as they tugged to increase their headway.

For a time the dark spot seemed neither to gain nor recede, as if the team also was careful of its footing.

Then it began to loom, and Speed gave the boat a swifter slide.

"They're game, whoever they are. Hi, Rusty! Mush, you Siwash!"

The dog more than took all the slack they gave it, till the boat seemed to be drawing them. They jerked it into faster momentum, insensible to fatigue or to anything but the mellowing cry on their track and the impending bark of another bullet. But their pace was sure to break before that of the dogs following.

It did break—in an instant, without warning, and with overpowering abruptness. A long, shearing hiss ran under them, like the rending of a sheet. The ice writhed and darted underfoot in snaky tongues. The boat lurched, shipping an icy wave of water; it reeled in a V-shaped trough between two great tipping floes, as they tumbled aboard. Maitland reached for Rusty's line and pulled the dog in, half drowned.

THEY heard a vast, indrawn gurgle, as if a thirsty giant were drinking from its hands. The boat staggered and fell with a splash, sidelong into black water. They were afloat, but slotted between the two floes—monstrous gray teeth testing the feel of the gunwales. A chance shift of pressure would crunch them into shapeless ruin, with an impersonality that intensified the horror of the threat. Fortunately the jaws

slowly yawned apart; the boat went free into widening water, and they breathed again.

Now came the shot from behind, but as to where that bullet went, they were less concerned. The crevasse that shielded them from gunfire held wilder dangers. They heard, however, far back in the darkling haze they had left, a wild goose yodeling—the tangled yelps of terrified dogs scrambling over cracking ice. This time the sound receded into the gloom.

"We've had a break, anyway," said Speed, accepting a pair of dry socks Pete had dug out of one of the packs and absently putting them in his pocket. "If they can follow this trail, they're good."

Moonlight welled pallidly through the dusk, defining a maze of frothing streets and lanes, where floes opened on dark water and changed their patterns slowly in the wind. The undersides of the gray herd varied in color as they tipped and swayed, from silver-white to gray-green, turquoise and spectral blue. Sometimes an icy hulk would tumble over bodily with a cast of spray, and set the other masses rocking.

This, as soon appeared, was not merely due to the action of the wind. It was a response to the still distant tow of the Lewes River, which was sweeping the ice, as it broke up, into the racing current of the Thirty Mile Rapids.

When the roar of the ice spate throbbed louder through the dark they exchanged a fateful look. Even if they could have forced their way ashore through loosening floes, they could not wait for the whole ice field to clear, and the chance of riding the rapids might grow worse before it improved.

"Can it be done?" Speed asked, as the maelstrom thundered close.

Maitland was doubtful.

"The boat rides shallow. Maybe."

They spoke with the quietude of men on the brink of inevitable reckoning with the unknown, for they now had no further choice.

The floes began to dip and undulate like cattle going down a runway. The gray herd milled closer, and their oars fought for clearance. When the pull of the rapids made itself felt, it came with the jolting effect of a clutch engaging at low speed with a fast gear, or like the stuttering start of a cable car. Grooved water gaped before them; the boat nosed downward with a sidelong twist that all but tore the tiller out of Maitland's grip. The careening floes began to slip and roll and smash against jutting rocks in the channel.

"Cut the sled lashing and clear it away!" shouted Maitland.

Two strokes of a hatchet severed the rawhide, and the sled fell away beneath them. Timely precaution. A cascade churned the spate, blinding their course in spray, and the deep drumming roar and crash of the torrent increased. Ice splintered in their faces. They canted to the rail in burnished troughs—to ride the next instant on horse tails of white water, lathering hurdles of destruction almost too swift for the eye to follow. Maitland steered at hazard, but he handled a boat as his partners would have guided a plunging wild horse, sensing each pitch before it came. Fortunate now his care in choosing the timber from which his rudder was hewn.

They passed the station at Thirty Mile without seeing it. If any night sentry had happened to peer at that moment into the cataract, he would have thought he was dreaming, for it was next to unthinkable that any boat could dare that frantic water and live.

Yet it still lived when the great river spread into a deeper course, and their oars found quieter ways through the slowing ice.

"Bud," said Speed, "that's one snortin' way of passin' a police barracks, and I admire it, now it's over. Next time do it some other way."

Only a few police posts had yet been built below the Hootalinkwa, and the problem of passing them was further simplified by the fact that the police

order of May 17th, which was to require all boats to report at the river stations, had not yet been issued.

"Not havin' a telegraph line down the river," Speed said, "they couldn't have a reason for holdin' us, except maybe to stop us from drownin'. But it's better to pass 'em blank, where we're going."

"Where are we going?" asked Pete, who was resting against a meal sack.

"If you're willin', Pete, we're goin' to look for the myster'ous hideout of your prospector—the man with the mukluks."

Pete sat up with a wide eyed, wan look.

"The man with the mukluks," she murmured, under her breath. "Then you saw him?"

Speed nodded.

"On Lake Lebarge last November." And he gave a tactfully brief account of that occasion, while she listened intently but with an abstracted question in her eyes. "Were you thinkin' he was dead?" Speed asked, without receiving an answer.

"Is it because of me you want to find his camp, Speed?"

"Well, it might be a good play for all of us, till we can figure how to do. Seems like it would be a safe place to make for, since no one's ever been able to find it."

The pucker deepened in Pete's eyes.

"Bill never told me where it was," she said. "How could you find it, Speed?"

"Reckon maybe I could find it, kid, if you wanted to . . . But what you know about this prospector is his secret and yours. Not knowin' much about us, you don't feel free to—"

"No," Pete disclaimed. "It isn't that." She looked over the river for a long pondering space, into a vista whose splendor was almost too bright to watch. Dawn had sprinkled hues of blood and rose and coral over the floes; their clatter was lulled to a peaceful jostling. "I'd tell you anything I could about how to get there—if I knew."

"Then that's all right," said Speed cheerfully. "We're on our way."

Some floes, crowding in on the gunwales, here called their oars into action, though the river seemed suddenly to deepen and widen. Melted snow drizzled down from high mountain faces in ribbons of smoky blue, but this did not account for the fact that the timber along the shore cliffs and the dense spruce forests along the bars were half drowned in rising water. The cause gradually revealed itself with their drift downriver on a slackening flow. Presently their eyes defined the gleam of a massive ice wall, stretched across the full span of the river, far below them. The barrier was towered with icy pyramids and rubble—a snowy masonry behind which the floes were banked in a vast, resplendent field.

The river itself—the great headstream of the Yukon—had jammed.

CHAPTER XVII

SPEED'S CLUE

THEY plied through the floes and through the top branches of some drowned spruce to a cliff head, islanded by the flood, about a mile back of the jam.

Their position appeared to be near the mouth of some tributary of the Lewes, which had thrown its frozen freight into the main river, and locked with downcoming ice from the Teslin and other branch streams to form an enormous, glistening barrier.

As the jam looked set, they landed to light a fire and cook a meal. The danger that most concerned them was that of being marooned here till they were overtaken from up the river, but meanwhile the check afforded them a rest.

"There's maybe on'y the Selkirk station to dodge between the Salmon and the Stewart," Speed said, "and then we'll watch for a creek."

He was stretched on the bank with his hat over his eyes as a shield from the sunflash.

"How do you know it's near the Stewart?" Pete asked.

Speed tilted his hat off one eye.

"I don' know. It's an idea I picked up from Rose—the singin' girl in Skagway."

"Oh—" Pete murmured. "How would she know?"

"Overheard somethin', maybe, while singin' in the camp. Did she get friendly with Bill Owens?"

"No. Bill wouldn't even talk to a woman."

Speed grunted vaguely, not altogether flattered, it seemed, to have a fellow misogynist in Bill.

"She heard somethin' from some one, or my hunch is wrong."

Pete was silent through a puzzled interval until she said—

"But if Rose only told you the camp was near the Stewart, Speed, how can you find it?"

"Magicians oughtn't never to explain." Speed smiled. "Wait till we reach the Stewart—if we do."

Maitland had a startled inkling of what the gambler meant, but here his eye was caught by a bright point in the distant ice wall. He exclaimed aloud.

The point of light changed to a bending line, and there was a roar of spilling ice on the far side of the dam.

So close on his warning that it drowned his voice, an explosion shook the cliff he stood on. Two gigantic masses of ice shot high in the air and came down with a tremendous thud on the barrier. A buckling slip in the ice wall had flipped them upward as easily as wet seeds pressed between finger and thumb.

With the enormous shock of this comparatively small displacement, the center of the great white bulkhead broke in deafening collapse.

Maitland's leap for the boat carried him over an exposed cliff, in time to recover the boat and hold it back while his partner lowered Pete by the hands and dropped her in the prow. The water was sinking so swiftly that Speed had to throw Rusty in and jump himself, landing on a floe and saved from a complete soaking only by Maitland's oar.

The wet embarkation almost fatally blinded them to another danger. A spruce tree rising out of the flood caught the rigging and would have spilled them out and left the boat hanging like a Christmas toy had the rope not been cut in time.

But they were now swept into a peril infinitely worse.

The break in the jam widened; its wings wrenched apart in shrieking ruin, and the vast débris behind it tumbled downriver in an instantaneous and stupendous surge—a hurtling, foundering freshet of racing ice that flung the landscape backward at sixty miles an hour.

Floes piled into bergs, pulverized, wedged and spilled in thunder along the shore. In midriver the rafted mass of the floes tore through with unchecked velocity. Only this saved the boat from instant destruction. They shot among scattering fragments and behind the main ice field like sparks in the tail of a comet. Of the deafening stampede they saw nothing more than the ice that hummed along their gunwales, but that was plenty. Speed was everywhere at once, fighting ice with a miner's pick—the tool he had once called useless. Maitland, with the rudder gone, used a shivered oar for a sweep. He had stopped a rent in the boat's bottom by throwing the meal sack on it. Pete was bailing out the ice and slush that toppled in.

They never knew how far the first rush carried them. They knew, however, that the real ruin would come with the first big check in its speed. Even while fighting this hopeless battle, every muscle strung to twice its normal strength and quickness, their minds envisaged the end with that cool, dispassionate alertness which is one of the merciful miracles of nature.

They heard the thundering welter first, a mile below. An uproarious stunning tumult, louder than blasts of artillery—the shock of a clash more terrific

than was ever heard on a stricken field. The smoke of this trumpeting, screaming, explosive collision blanked the canyon below and hid the river bend they were rushing to meet.

A few seconds later the boat met the great wave of the backwash and almost stood on its stern. Speed hung to the mast; Maitland threw himself forward in time to pin Pete and the dog and right their balance. They rode a seething crest of foam, sank and soared again. Now but for a skill that was Maitland's heritage from generations of adventure in stormy seas, the boat could never have kept her keel. But they rode into stemming water.

Though the floes still catapulted over the shore reefs and mowed the timber down like cornstalks, the fury of noise and spray was relenting. Only a few seconds had passed since the bulk of the ice first struck the bend, but its bulk was too much for the obstacle. A great slanting dyke the current was driving against, broke, reformed and broke again, all in an instant. The boat spun round in a giddy swirl. It scraped a piled berg of stacked floes that caromed off the reef.

For a desperate moment the boat and the berg were in the same twist of water. Speed was unable afterward to explain how he did it, but the pick's point sank in the berg, which crashed into some floes.

When they came out of the spin they were tossing among wrecked ice in the lee of the dyke. The ice stack was gone, and so was the pick; Speed was hanging to the mast with a boot hold. He fell on the reef but recovered, and pulled the boat out of the tow. They clung to this rocking harbor till the rubble of the broken ice field ran by, while the spume subsided and the mist settled over them in rain.

"Now that," said Speed, when he found his breath and voice and cast an awed look at the still smoking ruin of timber around them, "is what I call a break."

PAST the Rink and Five Finger Rapids, they were in the widening flow of the Yukon before they knew, so gradually had the river's span increased. It was merely flaked now with slush ice. A declining sun lighted the far left bank as they neared Fort Selkirk; mountains rose in crumpled, snowy folds, blue shadowed and capped with sun gold. The first flights of wild geese were winging in. Rusty nosed over the boat's rail at scents of stirring game in the near timber.

Their distant view of Selkirk waned by in the late dusk. They hugged the obscurity of the eastern bank, confident that the breadth of the river hid them from observation. Once a wrecked native canoe drifted by, overturned among ice stringers with which it seemed to have been flooded off some river beach.

Pete was sleeping when Maitland said:

"We're beyond the Stewart, now. Is this where the magic begins?"

"It's begun." Speed smiled and nodded at the dog.

Rusty was shifting nervously in the prow, and his nose kept reverting downstream with an effect of watching, not for game, but for some remembered landmark which habit had printed deep in his memory.

"The dog's your compass!" Maitland exclaimed. "But what's he watching for?"

"A creek, I figure. If he belonged to the man in furs, and if Rose's lead is true, the creek he leads us to may be one of the routes this man—Dalton, Pete calls him—used to reach his hideout. Off this bank, because there ain't many creeks to draw prospectors. The camp has never been found, so it'll likely be in a region where no one would look for gold. For us, even more than Dalton, the creek would be a good route. We can't leave tracks in it."

The creek which the malamute's rather equivocal interest led them to choose was obscured by a spruce bar at

the outlet, and was one they might easily have passed. They could have used the dog to tow the boat, but Speed preferred to omit even that track.

Snow dwindled in patches along the shore, with blood-red snow flowers pushing through. Tufts of it were melting to jeweled pendants in the willow twigs and spruce boughs, sparkling with the misty gold of dawn, and glittering bright on the highlands above. The pools had a clear, cold transparency that revealed every color in the creek floor through the ripples from the prow—a wavering patina of blue, brown and golden gray stones, packsand and gravel. As the creek shallowed, these lovely pools became fewer. The canyon, too, was narrowing, and it was plain that they were reaching the limit of the boat's draft, light as that was.

With strange providence, it was Rusty who found the place to cache it. His nose directed them to the foot of a mountain ravine, down which a thick growth of brush fell into the creek. Between the outer fringe of vegetation and the bank, a concealed runnel flowed under the brush. The space would have been large enough for two canoes, and it neatly harbored their boat when they had unmasted it.

This discovery did not look like accident. The place appeared to have been used before, and if so, it was possible that they were picking up, without a moment's pause, a hidden trail which others had searched for and puzzled over for years. Their interest in what they were about to do was taking on a tense precision, and for Pete, a wordless, doubting suspense.

"I've said the magic was simple," observed Speed. "Now we're goin' to see if it's true."

The dog scrambled up the cleft of the ravine under tangled brush. Wet snow lay scattered over the rocky slope, which they climbed on hands and knees. It was trackless, but their range of view was restricted, and they knew how invisible the mukluk trail could be.

At the head of the ravine they emerged on a blind, steep walled gulch.

Here Rusty stopped and looked at them expectantly, as if it was now their turn to take the lead. They stared questioningly from him to each other, and then at the stone walls. The dog happened to be turned toward a lightning blazed tree, but there was no legible sign as to what it could mean. Their dog star and compass had failed them. After the exasperating manner of dogs, when expected to be intelligent and communicative, Rusty merely hung out his tongue and panted amiably. Seeing that they still took no action, he sat down and started cheerfully panting again; glanced at Maitland, gave a solemn gulp and a vague thump of his tail and resumed his fatuous grinning. The reason for their delay was obscure, but it was all right with him.

"Doggone," Speed muttered, and frowned at the blasted pine which Rusty seemed to have regarded with a little more intention than the stone.

The dead tree spread its limbs close to the cliff; one of the high branches almost touched the rock face.

Uncoiling a rope from his belt, he tossed one end over the lowest branch and looked at the dog. Rusty got up, with his tail lowered nervously, and moved around in a restless half circle.

SPEED made a more careful throw at the bough and, tightening the line on it securely, hauled himself up the trunk. He climbed till he reached the limb that touched the wall, crawled out on it to the end, and dropped to a ledge. There he gave a shout of discovery.

His partner swung up the rope he had left dangling, stepped out on the high limb and joined him.

Above the ledge there was a fault in the cliff, a fissure with broken steps that offered an ascent to the summit. It seemed to be one trail of entry into the prospector's secret range; there might be others. They hoisted the dog and their

packs with the line and then hauled Pete up.

From the cliff summit, Rusty kept climbing into a high, wild country near timber line, with a certainty that confirmed Speed's guess, and by a route that grew more and more rugged. The snow was clinging and thick, but still free of footmarks.

Rusty's climb ended at the head of a snow troughed gulch, which was almost spanned by jackpines growing from crevices in the sides. It gave down steeply toward a profound mountain chasm, and seemed to sheer off into it, a hundred feet below. But the dog started cautiously down it, and they followed, checking their slide by holding to the prickly jackpines.

Where the gulch broke away, Rusty stepped to a ledge, hardly wider than a sled track, and went around the cliff face with a cringing, stealthy tread. He seemed to have been drawn to the place by some groove of habit in his dog memory rather than from anything pleasant in its associations. They came out on a widening step of the mountain, snow covered and still unbroken by tracks. A rough log cabin perched on this inward-sloping rocky platform, deep in drift which had lapsed from the cliff above.

Over the brink of the mountain step Maitland looked down into a yawning chasm. The top branches of a spruce, which had somehow found root on the precipice, lifted a little above the ledge; but, far below it, some shadowed fir trees jutting out of the snow appeared no larger than ferns. He shivered a little to think of the odds that might favor a desperate man at bay in this stronghold.

Though the cabin seemed deserted, Speed motioned them to stand back close to the cliff while he carefully approached the door. His knock echoed in the hollow chasm. A call brought no response but a cavernous return of his own voice. He looked at Rusty, who cowered back on the narrowing part of the ledge.

The door yielded stiffly to his pressure, and from the threshold he nodded to the others.

Not only was the interior unoccupied, but it evidently had not been in recent use. It exhaled the peculiar musty smell of a sealed room, mingled with the scent of skins, oiled leather and gun grease, and a pungent trace of the aroma of Perry Mason's Pain Killer—favorite panacea and beverage of old-time Westerners.

The walls were cumbered with trophies and tools, some of rather crude make: traps, dog harness, snowshoes and canoe paddles. At a glance it might have been taken for a native hut, except for more civilized touches in the fashioning of handmade chairs and tables, and the single bunk. A locked wooden chest stood against the wall. The table had a red patterned cotton cover—odd domestic detail in this wild bivouac.

Opening the stove, Speed found wood laid in it, ready for lighting. He touched it with a match, and left the door open awhile to send a fresh draft through the place.

"Ain't got back from up the river yet," he said.

His voice had a deliberately casual tone, as if he were trying to make light of a dark sign.

Deep evening quiet—the peculiar silence of twilight in mountain solitudes—hung over this strange eyrie above the chasm. Through its lonely stillness, and out of the canyon gloom below, rose the echoes of a long ululating howl; one of those abysmal sounds that give hearing to the skin of the auditor. Rusty, no doubt, answering some timber wolf. Speed looked thoughtfully around the cabin again and, coming out of an abstraction, said—

"Anyhow, let's eat."

While Pete unpacked their tin plates and spoons, he cooked supper on the stove.

Pete removed a gun stock and a half mended snowshoe from the table, and had lifted the red cover to shake it,

when she paused to look more closely at the table top.

The table boards were made of split logs with the hewn side up, and leveled off with some care. But this smooth wooden surface was discolored, tattooed and smeared with a maze of marks and drawings that almost hid the grain. The drawings had been made with lead, ink, spilled coffee, whisky, lamp soot—almost anything, apparently, that had come to the fingers of the absently pondering draftsman. While he sat eating, or musing, or drunk, during days of storm, Dalton's hands had projected on the table surface a problem in his mind.

THE drawings were alike in subject, but varied in detail. Some had been worked over and over. They seemed to represent a gulch with a stream running through it, and the ruins of an Indian settlement at one end, denoted by the scrawled words, "Siwash igloos," or "Siwash ruin." A figure like a pick was posed experimentally at different points in the gulches. There were sketches in rough perspective with figures which appeared to indicate conjectured miles between the cabin and the gulch, and ranging from eight to forty. The simulation of mountain forms was surprisingly good. Dalton had an unschooled talent for drawing, and knew mountains.

"These all seem to be pictures of the same gold gulch," Speed said.

He studied the table until burning pans called him back to the stove. When he served the rashers and hot bread, they sat down to supper with fifty confused pictures of Dalton's gold prospect staring up at them from the tabletop.

"Must have been almighty puzzled some time about where that gold was," Speed observed.

Pete could offer no comment.

"Its bein' lost," reflected Speed "would give him a kind of reason for keepin' his trail sketchy. Hidin' so deep that the old-timers took him for a phantom Siwash. Seems a bad case of gold mania—though it could maybe happen. Game would supply his grub; he was handy at makin' gear, and what he couldn't get no other way—" Cache robbing was a possible source of supplies which Speed refrained from mentioning. "How'ver, he run short of them, and havin' to keep clear of the posts as well as other prospectors, he finally sent out to Bill Owens to bring up an outfit. Which means there was a message."

"A letter," Pete said, intent on the drift of this thinking aloud. "It was posted from Juneau on the coast, a long ways from here. Bill never told me what was in it, except for sayin' he would meet Dalton on the lakes." She added, more vaguely, "It wasn't among Bill's things when he was drowned."

Speed's eyes narrowed.

"There's the leak. I was wonderin' how that singin' girl, Rose, caught the rumor in Skagway. Did Fallon maybe get the letter?"

"I don't see how he would," Pete said, with troubled restraint. "Bill had it sewed inside his coat, and no one could get it unless he gave it, which he surely wouldn't. Before he was drowned, I saw he'd cut the threads in his coat and took it out. Maybe to burn it, and protect Dalton's gold secret, because he knew he was goin' to—drown."

Speed frowned and nodded.

"Maybe that. Then where did Rose's hunch come from? And why was Fallon tryin' to corral you?"

"That wasn't because—" Pete faltered.

"He had some other reason than gold, you mean?"

His eyes, watching hers, kindled with a kind of flame, though his voice was still quiet when he said:

"That's what was drivin' you out to Skagway. And you never said."

"I don't know that it's true," Pete said haltingly. "He happened to find me when his outfit passed the camp where I worked last Winter, and I maybe imagined—there was somethin' back of his offer to help me. I wouldn't have

told you if I'd been sure. And that wasn't on'y what made me go out." The last words were reluctant and added as if to remove the wrong impression.

"What then, if not Fallon? Maybe—" he chose his own words carefully—"you couldn't find the prospector, and figured you never would?"

Pete bit her lip unhappily, and pleated the pocket of her shirt.

"Somethin' like that, Speed. It's all I can say."

"Well, you needn't say, kid," Speed said gently. "I ain't got no call to paw into your hand this way. On'y I can't help wonderin'—" he looked back at the tabletop—"about this prospector's hidin' from ever' one because of gold, and the gold hidin' from him. Look here—" he pulled a plate aside to uncover a drawing—"he has that gulch marked as on'y eight miles, maybe, from his cabin. He isn't a man who'd wander easy in storms, that's sure. Clever about mountains and trails, we all know. How could he lose track of a gulch as close as that, and marked with a creek and a Siwash ruin, so it couldn't be missed? It ain't hardly natural."

"The marks may mean something else," Maitland ventured. "A sort of cipher."

Speed shook his head doubtfully.

"He never counted on any one's findin' this cabin. The riddle was ridin' him, and he drawed pictures to clear it. Or else he was—"

The disturbing thought was left unsaid. They did not speak for awhile, but sat pondering in the gloom over empty plates. A roll of thunder shook the desolate echoes in the chasm. When it died to utter quiet, the wolf's howl quivered again in their ears. This wild rendezvous was sufficient in itself to account for Pete's fateful look, and its loneliness could have done strange things to Dalton.

Lighting a cigaret, Speed said:

"Anyway, it's a quiet place for waitin'." He blew a long breath of smoke with the clouded reflection, "If we wait long enough, somethin' is liable to show."

The word "show" had a rather weird sound, as if the gambler were thinking of something near but unsubstantial. To be more matter-of-fact, Maitland said—

"The prospector could be in the region without our having seen him."

"He could be," Pete said with a repressed quaver, "watchin' us now!"

Almost unconsciously, Maitland looked at the wall to see if there were chinks in it. Speed roused himself and gave a tousling pat to Pete's curly head.

"Let's have a drink and a game of cards," he said, more cheerfully, "before we start gettin' mental. Forget this unlucky gold talk."

While they played, however, their attention could be broken by a dribble of snow from the cliff, a groan in the draft of the stove. Through the table cover, those cryptic figures of Dalton's seemed to well up and merge with the numbers on the cards. They gave up the pretense of keeping their minds on the game, and decided to turn in, Pete taking the bunk, the two men stretching out on the floor near the doorway.

The night passed uneventfully. During the next day they found a distraction in exploring the single approach to the cabin and examining the traps and tools that lay in open view. Speed spent some hours puzzling over the table drawings. They left the chest by the wall untouched.

At intervals, in the darkness of the second night, that anguished and uncannily desolate wolf howl played vibrant tunes on their nerves. Speed thought it might be Rusty. They had not seen the dog all day; it might be revisiting old haunts, or reliving some painful memories. The howling drew close, till it seemed to come out of the chasm itself. It became too much for waiting ears. Speed went out and called the dog's name; Maitland, joining him, called too. The echoes rolled their voices into far mountains.

Strange token—the howling ceased, but Rusty did not appear.

They called again, and waited. In the quiet that followed the echoes, even a dog's footfall would have been audible, but they heard none.

It was a quite different sound that caught Maitland's breath—a crackling crepitation so faint it could hardly be called a sound at all; a sensation, like the grinding of sharp teeth together.

"What did you hear, Bud?" Speed spoke low to prevent his voice from carrying to Pete, indoors.

Maitland told him.

"Do you reckon we're both hearin' things?" Speed muttered. "It listened to me more like a louder sound way off. An echo of gunfire. Or else froze trees snappin' in the thaw."

Motionless, they listened again. The silence of the shadowed chasm mocked their ears like the stillness of a great shell.

Speed stirred abruptly.

"You stay here, Bud, and watch with Pete. I may be gone awhile, but keep that cliff end covered with the rifle. I'll call you when I come back round it."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE JOKER—WILD

HALFWAY down a lofty slope Speed paused to survey a long prospect of white headlands, shining in the dawn. The hidden canyon lay only a mile or two back of him, but he had explored several broken cliffs around it to make sure that they were empty of any lurking presence.

Now as he looked over the bright vista below, he thought of the mysterious creek gulch with the Indian ruin, so clearly pictured in Dalton's drawings. But this was not the kind of country in which one would have looked for an old Siwash settlement, abandoned or otherwise. Some of the far ravines could be imagined to resemble the general form of Dalton's drawing, but only by a distortion of fancy. Evidently, too, except for an ephemeral drainage of melting snow, there were no sizable creeks for many miles.

Sunlight, cleansed by cold and the rarefied mountain air, gave a prismatic clarity to the high white tableland and its blunt ridges. He noticed how every headland and capped boulder stood out in its brightness. Distant peaks looked within range of a pistol bullet. There was no movement in the whole expanse save where some low hanging, golden fleeced clouds cast a slowly traveling shadow over the nearer view.

What was it then that gave him so cold a sense of omen in that candid blankness of sun and snow? The jinx that had hid Dalton's gold from its discoverer? Was he falling victim to a state of suggestion—getting mental, as he framed the thought?

His vagueness was abruptly dissolved by the sight of a definite and material cause for alertness. In the center of one of the ravines, about two miles away, a pair of dark, moving specks came into view. He thought for a moment they were bear or deer, but quickly corrected that impression and his first estimate of the distance. They were men; one of them carried what might be a rifle; they were farther away than they had first seemed. They were passing through the shadow of a high, dome shaped rock which had not caught his eye before.

Slowly, so as not to betray himself by a sudden movement, he sank in the snow. The advantage of view was his, since he looked down from above.

He worked down into the clinging drift, and dug a trench ahead of him till he reached the cover of a nearby boulder, glancing once or twice over the trough as he went, to see them still in the distance. They were too far to be recognized as anything but men, but the image of Fallon had somehow leaped into his mind at the first dim glimpse of them.

Behind the boulder he waited a full minute before looking again, and drew his revolver from his belt. A pistol shot

at that distance, with mountain echoes scattering the report, could hardly be traced to its source. But their response to the sound might define his course of action.

He fired the gun once, and immediately covered it to prevent a wisp of smoke from showing.

They kept moving for an interval before the sound carried to them, and that space of time gave him a measure of their distance. They stopped, as he had expected. But instead of looking toward him, they turned to stare the other way, as he inferred from the changed position of the one who carried the rifle. The sounding qualities of the mountains must be more confusing than he had thought.

Some vague and nameless instinct here caused him to sink back for a moment into his snow trough.

When he looked again, the two figures had strangely vanished. The cloud shadows melted and spring sunlight poured in a dazzle over the distant snow. It was blank. Some weave in it, he wondered, or had they taken cover at the shot? He felt the uneasy, superstitious chill reserved for men who are hardened to mere physical danger.

He rose into clearer view, to tempt them to declare themselves.

And in that moment, with utter and confounding surprise, the roar of a gun burst on his ears from directly behind him! He dropped instantly back into shelter, stunned by the shock to his reason. The bullet had flattened next to his arm against the inner side of the boulder. This marksman was not more than a hundred yards away! Had the world turned backward and upside down?

Nothing showed behind him. He waited for a gun muzzle to appear—for some tremor, however slight, in the snow above. His hand groped for the flattened bullet and found it. At touch he knew it to be of revolver caliber. Why didn't the fellow shoot?

Then his ear, close to the snow, suddenly caught the crunch of running feet, receding from him. He jumped up and ran to the point from which the shot had come. He saw a depression where the sniper had lain concealed, the marks of his feet leading up to and away from it. A spreading dark pink stain in the pressed snow, blackening toward the edges, and a blood trail all along his course!

The fugitive had left a moccasin track, and was running toward the cabin!

Speed did not follow the track. He knew of a quicker through breakneck path, too difficult for a man with such a wound.

A wild scramble along canyon brinks and ledges brought him finally to the head of the jackpine gulch. There the absence of a blood track assured him he had arrived in time.

He whipped down the gulch and around the cliff, with a low warning cry to his partner. Maitland stood waiting with the carbine, and with Pete close by. He motioned them back to the cliff, in silence. They had heard the shots, but had no notion of what was about to happen.

After a still wait, a voice spoke from around the cliff, and close at hand—a husky, broken voice.

"Don't shoot," it said weakly. "It's your game. I'm out of shells."

Along the cliff wall and into view, covered by Speed's guns, a fur clad and moccasined figure groped its way, twisted with agony. Maitland recognized at sight the man Speed had described on Lake Lebarge.

HE HELD a revolver in his right hand—the hand that steadied him against the wall. The other hand clutched at his side and dripped blood. The red flow trickled down in a black glister over his furs, which were torn and stained with the marks of a rough trail. One might have imagined he had been shot in the hand, and was holding a strained muscle in his side.

When he raised his head and looked at them, his eyes changed strangely from the look of a fighting animal at bay to one of wild astonishment. He straightened and stared at them with his grim lips half parted, his pain lost in wonder.

"Pete!" he murmured, almost inaudibly, and studied her two friends with a frowning and perplexed recognition.

"These two men—" he gasped hoarsely, pointing at them. "Friends of yourn?"

"Yes."

"How did they find this—" the word "camp" was checked by a wincing grimace.

"They found your lead dog on the lakes," said Pete. "It brought us here."

The deepening wonder in his face was a thing to see.

"The dog!" he muttered huskily. There was a choking in his throat like a chuckle; it became a desperate, blood chilling, mortally exhausted laugh. "We've won—now, kid!" he chortled in hard elation. "Beat the game with—a damn—Siwash!"

"You're hurt bad," Pete said compassionately, going toward him. "Won't you—"

His tortured face softened a little, but he motioned her away.

"I got to talk, kid—while I can. We're goin' to win—that gold—with the last trick. I see it now. I know where it is. Where no trailin' blood hunter will find it. Not with my own drawin'—not if he hunted a thousand years." He spoke quickly in an exaltation that was like madness. "And I figured I'd made my last play!" Laughing again, he reeled against the wall, almost spent.

When they would have caught him, he waved them off again.

"Get this, Pete," he mumbled thickly. "There's somethin' else I've got to tell you, kid. And I will. But—give me time—first, get this." There was an appreciable pause as he fought against the drain that made him dizzy. "The gold is—" He lost his voice and found it by sheer force of will. "I saw it—just now. Two men in the gulch. In bright snow—" His voice ebbed from him. His discolored and racked face turned gray with a deathly pallor of weakness and stupefaction at the failure of his tongue and brain to answer his will. "The gold—"

With an agonized, astonished curse at his defeat, he slumped, held rigid an instant against the wall, and then in a slow, lurching collapse, sank down.

Speed, who had taken a step to break his fall, caught him and bent over the still body. He gently detached Dalton's red fingers from their clutch at the wound in his side. What he saw drew an involuntary grunt from him, though he was far from impressionable about gun wounds.

"A pan of water, Bud, quick. And the whisky. You better not see this, Pete." He drew from his pocket a roll of bandage and had the compact ready when the water came. The bullet had gone clear through with a fearful tear; with what inward damage he could not tell, but Dalton had lost enough blood to kill two ordinary men. Swiftly, after washing the wound and folding over it a part of the bandage soaked in whisky, he passed the rest around the man's waist in a tight surcingle. Then he replaced the furs and, rubbing some of the liquor between his hands, blew fumes of it into Dalton's nostrils, and bathed his head and temples with it.

All this was quickly done, but there was no glimmer of life from Dalton, more than might be the illusion of his own hope. He could not move him from where he lay without danger of quenching even that spark.

Somberly, Speed contemplated the silent figure at the base of the cliff. Here threatened a deep, a tragic frustration of everything he had planned. The man was now, perhaps, beyond all questioning. He picked up the gun which had dropped from Dalton's hand and opened it.

"Told the truth about his last shell," he mused aloud. "He was tryin' to reach the cabin and his shells for a last

stand. But he saw our marks in the gulch. Who did he think we was at first? And where did he get that wound?"

"The two men in the snow he spoke of?" said Maitland.

"It's what I was wonderin'. I saw them too. About four miles or more east of here. He must have dodged 'em. They may pick up his blood trail; I don't know what route he used to reach here. They won't get mine, but inside an hour, maybe, they'll—"

Unaccountably Speed broke off short, spun about with a gun drawn and in a flash had leaped around the narrow cliff ledge out of Maitland's sight.

"Hands up," he shouted, "or I blast you into the canyon! Throw that gun down!"

A big gun, like a game rifle, slid down the gulch, went hurtling over the brink into the canyon, where, after a long drop, it struck the bottom with an explosive roar, which made the echoes stutter as if a battery of machine guns had opened fire.

A MAN with his arms raised came around the cliff by which Dalton had approached so short a time before. Maitland was too confounded to utter a sound. Speed's prisoner wore the uniform of the Mounted Police.

There are no braver men than the Northwest Mounted, but they are not immortal or impervious to the menace of two .45's at blank range.

Speed emptied the policeman's holster and kicked the gun behind him into the snow.

"This only makes it worse for you," said the officer calmly. "You can't escape."

"Meanin' you've got two more men over the ridge with a long range gun?" Speed asked.

"Two more—?" queried his captive, uncomprehending.

"They's two men comin' up a ravine about four miles off that way. I seen them a few minutes back, passin' a dome shaped rock. You couldn't of been one of them, or you wouldn't be here so soon."

"Whatever that means—" the officer frowned— "I demand that you and your partner surrender to arrest. What you say, as well as your actions, will go on record as evidence. I needn't tell you that disarming me blackens your case, and I'd advise you to correct that error before saying another word."

His eyes rested a moment on the fallen body by the cliff, and returned to Speed.

Here was even a more vicious twist of fate than Speed had feared. After evading the suspicion of Cathcart, who had mistaken Dalton for a Siwash, were they now, by a climax of irony, to be charged with the murder of Dalton himself?

"It looks bad, I'll concede," he said. "But you're on the wrong track. While you're stalkin' us, the real game is likely beatin' to cover. I'm tellin' you there's two more men in these mountains, and they're worth trailin'."

"Where did you see them?" the officer asked, without belief.

Speed pointed his gun.

"More than four miles east."

"You may have seen me and the officer I'm trailing with—though we came up from the western side and didn't pass a dome shaped rock. You've got your distance and bearings twisted."

"I've made a study of distance and direction," said Speed, "and when I say four miles in that direction, you can lay a transit to it."

"If it's your idea to set me on a false track," returned the officer, "you can drop it. The game's up for both of you. Should you refuse to surrender my gun and yours, and hear the warrant, you'll be hunted down to a finish. You may have heard the Mounted Police get what they go after."

Speed picked up the police revolver, emptied the shells and threw it into the chasm.

"It's a difference of ideas that makes

the game," he said. "Throw me a length of rawhide, Bud."

The request brought Maitland out of his trance.

"Don't do it, Speed," he said quickly. "Let the law straighten this out."

"You've got delusions about the law, Bud. We sure need more than we're holdin' now to do that—if ever."

Maitland shook his head.

"The truth can't be beaten."

"What the law calls the truth can beat it easy," Speed countered earnestly. "They've hanged men on nothin' stronger than looks. Take this one yer. So damned set on his play, the way he sees it, that when I say they's two other men loose on this range, he just twists his mug to signify I'm a liar. I can't argue with you, Bud. I ain't got no words but a lowdown gambler's lingo, and it don't just fit with what I'm tryin' to say. But I've got a hunch, and I'm askin' you now, if ever you trusted a pardner's word, to take mine when I say you ain't fixed to deal with the law."

Maitland was moved by the appeal, but not by its logic. His eyes were dimmed when he spoke.

"We've reached that junction, Speed, you once talked of. God knows I'll never have a truer partner, and if you feel it's the best way out of this wild charge for you, I'll help you get away. But to escape by using force against the police isn't just a crime; it's unnecessarily foolhardy. We'd be giving them the real case they haven't got."

"The case they've got looks plenty real enough for them. If I can show you that—"

"No, Speed. That isn't all. We couldn't take Pete over that route, and I can't leave her to face this alone."

Pete would have spoken, but Speed's brooding look at her checked the words.

"The mischief of you, Pete, is a man can't keep rememberin' you're a girl."

"Don't remember it," Pete said. "They're not accusin' me. All I care about is to see you get a fair break. I can stay or go, whichever you figure."

"How do you figure it?"

"I don't know," said Pete, unhappily. "It seems though like Bud's right when he says you'd give the law a case."

"You're an ornery young pair of cubs," Speed muttered, "and I always seen it. Reckon you can't help it, comin' from where you do. Well, I can be just as damned ornery."

HE PRESSED back the gun hammers, tensely watched by the officer who had followed this argument with a close personal interest. Speed's eyes lifted to a long, pendant spruce cone on the tree that lifted its top branches above the level of the ledge. Without aiming, he fired. The cone fell, clipped from the branch, and four quick bullets broke it in fragments. The remaining shells blazed at these pieces as they fell.

The outlaw waited, listening, till the last echo died out of the canyon. Slowly then he looked at the guns, rubbed a spot from one of the clean blue barrels, and handed them, still smoking, to the officer.

"It goes on record, don't it," he asked, "how freely we surrendered to the law?"

"I'll say what's true," the officer returned.

"Reckon you'll try to," Speed admitted. "You look clean strain to me, or you wouldn't have got those guns. Well, go ahead and read your warrant about our supposed shootin' of this man." He indicated Dalton's body.

"I have a warrant for your arrest," said the Mountie, "but not for killing that man. Since you've surrendered, I'll assure you that we don't railroad men, or even arrest them, on merely presumptive charges. We had a brush with this fugitive—" nodding toward Dalton—"down the creek, when his canoe collided with ours, around a bend. He jumped ashore for some reason, started shooting and got away. It's more than possible he was hit by one of our bullets. We lost his trail, and found it again, by a strange means, and it led us to this mysterious

and long-looked-for camp, where I find you."

"But then," Speed frowned in protest, "if you concede he might have stopped one of your bullets, what's the serious charge you'd have hunted us down to a finish for? Maybe you don't get the fact yet that the man who lies there is the man who left the mukluk tracks on Lake Lebarge. The man the police mistook for a native, and whose disappearin' trail made 'em suspect us of murder. There he is; you've seen him alive and shot at him."

"My warrant," said the officer, "is to arrest you and your partner for the murder of a Siwash on Lake Labarge, on or about the twentieth of last November. The native's body was disposed of through a hole in the ice, and has been recovered since the thaw."

Speed's eyes sought those of his partner and Pete, which were dumbfounded.

"Your own warrant?" he demanded.

"My warrant would be sufficient. This one happens to be signed by Corporal Cathcart of the Mounted Police."

"Well, I'm a son of a gun!" Speed mumbled to the hollow chasm.

There was noise of some movement from the jackpine gulch. In these echoes and surprises Maitland had almost forgotten Rusty. Now a slinking wolf's head nosed round the cliff and cowered back at sight of the fallen body.

From behind it, a strident, vibrating voice called to the officer who had arrested them—a voice that fell on their ears with grating familiarity.

"Get this malamute, Burke. It's the 'wolf' that picked up the blood trail. The Siwash's lead dog."

CHAPTER XIX

SPEED PLAYS A HAND

CATHCART had traveled fast and far since their last meeting, but if his ruddy, angular, deceptively awkward look had changed at all, it was a little more jerky. This first case of his, indeed, might have put a wire edge on the nerves of a veteran.

On examining Dalton, he saw, as Speed had, the danger of moving him, and bruskly enlisted the help of the two prisoners in rigging a couch and lifting him from the snow. The wounded man lay in a state that hovered on the ultimate mystery. His deep folded eyes had an odd effect of being slightly open, which may have encouraged in Cathcart some hope of his reviving long enough to speak. In any case, he could not be moved from the ledge nor left there while the illusory spark of life remained —though this might detain the police and their captives for hours.

The corporal meantime made a careful inspection of the ledge and the cabin, and talked with Pete, aside.

He then sent Burke out to investigate Speed's claim of having seen two men near a dome shaped rock east of the canyon.

The prisoners were not bound; his command of the narrow entrance to the ledge visibly prevented a chance of escape. But they were forbidden to confer together or to approach the door of the cabin.

"If you're goin' to camp," Speed suggested, "I could be rustlin' some firewood."

He indicated a rubbage of broken timber and brush blown down by storms from the cliffs above, and strewn along the inner angle of the ledge.

Though the sun was still far from setting, its rays, deserting the canyon for the upper peaks, had left a chill presage of twilight in the shadowed mountain wall.

After consideration, Cathcart agreed. He took the opportunity to speak to Maitland alone. Pete sat on a rock step by the cliff, a little distance from them, looking rather forlorn.

"It has always puzzled me, Maitland," said the corporal in a rasping undertone, "how a person of your background ever blundered into partnership with a man like Malone."

"Background?" Maitland said distantly.

"You have the accent of a certain part of New England. Gathering evidence in this case from what sources I could, I wrote privately to the Boston police about you. They were obliging and resourceful. A young man of your name and description, they informed me, went West last Summer to report on a salvage case for a firm of marine underwriters. The firm had lost track of you. They said you were a person of good birth and record, and ascribed your break with them and your disappearance to a disappointed romance."

"To a what?"

The corporal colored a slightly ruddier hue at Maitland's frown, but explained:

"To a youthful attachment that ended unfortunately. If you will excuse my seeming to intrude on a personal matter, I was told that the young lady broke her engagement with you to marry a suitor preferred by her family. The marriage occurred in September. That may have been the time when you came North, although the absence of passenger lists on the first steamers leaves the date uncertain."

So strange was the manner and so remote the circumstances in which this news was broken to Maitland, that for a moment he hardly grasped its sense. But the stab of comprehension came with the effect of something he had almost foreseen and refused to admit. He had written to Muriel from Skagway. As he had told her, the means of sending or receiving mail were uncertain, and would be, till he reached Dawson. Perhaps his letter had never reached her. Though time and silence work deep changes, it was a harsh irony that the purpose which brought him North should have failed even before he crossed the pass.

Like some grating, distant sound the corporal's voice went on:

"A misfortune of that kind can turn a man's life into desperate ways—and associations. I don't know who or what Malone may have been before he came North; no doubt, to begin with, you yourself were in the dark about him. But it might be worth your while now to say what you have learned. Some little extenuation, perhaps—in your case. The law recognizes degrees of guilt."

That was a sharp recall to present realities.

"If you really believe that wild charge of yours, Corporal, you can consider us partners in the crime. The law can't prove us guilty of what we didn't do."

"The case is proved to the hilt," said Cathcart crisply. "If you choose not to talk, it's your privilege, and funeral. The circumstances—"

"Damn the circumstances," said Maitland impatiently. "There's no case."

"Wood's kind of wet." Speed's cheerful voice cut him short.

The outlaw dropped an armful of branches near them and prepared to make a fire, midway between the cliff and the rim of the ledge.

"For a man who didn't like visitors, Dalton's havin' some few all to once," he commented sociably to Cathcart.

"Is that for the record?"

"Why, if you need that triflin' card, it's yourn," Speed said, cutting slivers of kindling with his jackknife. "I'm willin' to deal the record some better. Pervided what you're after us for is the Siwash we murdered last November, and not for the shootin' of Dalton."

Cathcart weighed this curious lead and answered it.

"Burke told you what happened on the creek. Before that, the existence of the man you call Dalton was unknown to the police, except for a belated surmise of my own."

"It makes your choosin' the creek where you met him a pretty slick guess."

KNOWING the gambler, Maitland felt the concentration behind his casual words and manner. He was opening a game, as coolly as he would have opened any game, but this time for tremendous

stakes. Cathcart's answer showed that the corporal, too, was willing to draw for cards.

"Not exactly a guess. As you've undoubtedly heard, the old-timer who came nearest to tracing the elusive Siwash of the gold legends picked up his trail in a blizzard with a team of huskies, not far from the old river post at Ogilvie. He came out in a hopelessly battered condition at the Selkirk trading station. The attack he suffered indicated that he must have run the Siwash pretty close. To me the two far distant posts seemed to offer bench marks to the position of the native's hideout, with a strong leaning toward Selkirk."

"Why off the right bank?" Speed asked.

"The region off the right bank of the river has few creeks to attract prospectors, and has, in fact, hardly ever been traveled. As you may also have reasoned. The breed would have several ways of entry and exit, but in Summer he would use a canoe route, because it leaves no track. Presumably, then, in your very clever project of using the lead dog of the murdered Siwash to trace his gold source, you struck into one of the three navigable creeks hereabouts. A distant wolfish howl led us to investigate this one. You should have tied and muzzled that dog. We were lucky enough to catch its track when it picked up Dalton's."

Speed's expression betrayed the sincerity of his admiration.

"Our projec' of usin' the dog," he echoed. "What give you that?"

"The difficulty at first of imagining a motive to fit my theory of the Siwash's murder, or to explain your having kept so dangerous a piece of evidence."

"But how could you be sure this dog belonged to the murdered Siwash? Or that the murdered Siwash was the myster'ous one of the old-timers' yarns?"

"Because I have a humdrum kind of mind, Malone, that dockets away and remembers unconsidered trifles—as you might call them. I induce and combine small facts to weave a net, which in the long run catches eagles, like you, Malone, who reason in a keen but deductive sweep. For example, there was an old report in our files, made by one of the first squad of twenty police who entered the territory in '95. He ventured the observation that the untraceable native's sled had a bend in the left sled runner, which left a slight dragging mark. The sled track which you and I saw below Whitehorse last November had that distinctive mark. The mukluk print of the driver was dimly legible through a covering of snow, and I measured it.

"Later, on the river neck above Lake LeBarge, where you camped on the return trip from a haul to Thirty Mile, I found the same footprint, touching yours. Snow was falling, but I am certain there were no tracks in the region but yours and the native's. When questioned at your cabin, you denied having seen a Siwash. Suspicious enough to begin with, though the evidence that you had lied was not positive. And that was the last vestige of the Siwash's sled track to be seen in the Yukon.

"The second trifle is that while the old-timers were tangled in their yarns about the Siwash, several of them were agreed about the lead dog. It was a nondescript malamute, though with a trail sagacity that broke the hearts of teams that tried to follow it. And its guard fur had a lurid yellowish tinge. Before the blizzard this April I didn't know you had a Siwash dog, and then only caught a storm whitened glimpse of it. Maitland's claim, too, that you had found a stray was possible, and my visit to the cabin in the storm seemed to add nothing positive at first to the evidence I had been gathering through the Winter.

"I noticed another trifle—the fact that Pete had small hands for a boy, and a way, when questioned, of crimping a cloth, as a girl accustomed to sewing might do. You, no doubt, would have instantly made the inference that es-

caped me—though I had previously learned some very interesting things about Pete. When I left the cabin, the dog had gnawed its rawhide tether and escaped. I came back after the storm to have a clearer look at it, and to test a sudden and startling conception of your motive in keeping it. But the dog had gone, and so had Maitland and Pete.

"When you found me in the snow of the pass, where I tried to intercept them coming back from Skagway, it was the color of the dog's guard fur that brought all the signs into alignment. Charged with the crime, you evaded arrest. I reported the case to Drew; the native's body was found in Lake Lebarge at the break-up; you have been traced here, and everything combines."

THE damper wood Speed was feeding into the fire made a fragrant smudge of smoke that trailed far over the canyon on a westward breeze. In the silence, a remembrance drifted through Maitland's mind that Speed had been out of his sight for an interval when the caribou was shot on Lake Lebarge. The thought was not a doubt of his partner, but a recognition of the dangerous strength of Cathcart's position.

"The hole in the net is Dalton," Speed said finally.

"On the contrary, he is the securing knot in the weave. While trying to account for the Siwash's presence on the lakes last Winter, I learned that in the previous Spring a native with a dog team had appeared at Juneau, mailed a letter and vanished again. The postmaster recalled that the message was addressed to some one in Nevada. This pointed to the strange possibility of a white man behind the Siwash—a white prospector with a gold mania, or concealing a gold secret, who used the native to trail for him and never showed himself. The message must have been to Owens. The motive I had determined for the murder almost implied some special knowledge on your part as to the general location of the hidden camp—or the dog would have been too remote a guide. The source of your prior knowledge was either Pete, or the letter itself."

Speed's mouth just perceptibly tightened.

He seemed to have neglected the fire. An eddy of wind along the ledge made the smoke waver and blow back in the corporal's face, who coughed complainingly, and peered at the outlaw as if his maladroitness with the fire was another accusing sign.

"You've picked up a link here," Speed said slowly, "between Dalton and the murdered Siwash?"

Cathcart drew from his fur coat a pair of mukluks, stiffened and shrunk by immersion in water.

"These are from Lake Lebarge," he said. "You may have failed to observe that the beadwork on the uppers of the dead Indian's mukluks are identical in pattern with Dalton's, and fashioned by the same native hand."

He passed the moccasins to Speed, who examined them intently.

"I've always maintained you had brains, Cathcart," he said at last, "but you may be on the edge of makin' one of the most brilliant misfires in the hist'ry of the Northwest Mounted."

The corporal stiffened.

"As to what?"

"Maybe you ain't noticed they're the same size as Dalton's."

"Smaller, evidently."

"That's water shrinkage."

"What would it signify, even if so?"

"That Dalton and his Siwash left the same track. It's what throwed us both out when we seen the footprints. You figured they was the Siwash's. I figured Dalton was the Siwash. Both near the truth, but wrong. I can see the mistake now, because it was Dalton I saw and talked to in our river camp."

The corporal relaxed with a dry smile.

"You'll have to do better than that, Malone. The two men couldn't leave the same track, even in soft snow, unless

their weight and stride matched about as closely as the size of their mukluks. It's too much of a coincidence."

"Then the matched bead pattern is too much," returned Speed. "Too close to be accident. So it's part of a scheme of hidin'. Dalton was tallish, but not over the height of a good breed. He lived in the open, like they do. Walked the same. He found a native whose track matched his, and used him to cover himself."

Cathcart's brows beetled in a keen study.

"Clever," he admitted, "but it refutes itself. If he carried caution that far, he wouldn't take the trail at the same time as his Indian. To be seen once together would give the game away."

"I can figure four ways," Speed reflected, "of their trailin' together, leavin' a single track and not bein' seen. With the lead dog they had. It could have been some such a doublin' game that done for the prospector who trailed them through the storm out of Ogilvie."

"You forget," returned the corporal promptly, "that that attack gave Dalton an added cause for wariness, on our account."

"I ain't forgettin' it," said Speed.

"Then here's the finishing objection. If he'd been on Lake Lebarge at the time you say, the Indian couldn't have been killed without his knowing. No other tracks but yours in the region. He was quick on the trigger, and when you met there'd have been another corpse. Yours or his."

"That's a strong card," Speed acknowledged. "But we're still alive, and we did meet."

"Then whom would you suggest as the murderer?" said Cathcart.

"I could suggest Dalton, if I believed it," Speed pondered. "He had the motive for a murder that would end the search for his hideout and throw you off his track for good."

The subtle force of the suggestion left the corporal wordless for a moment.

"If you believed it?" he queried, astonished, it seemed, at Speed's discarding a plea which would be arguable in the hands of an able defense lawyer. "Why don't you?"

"I dunno. It clicks, but it don't ring. Anyhow, gold wasn't the secret he was hidin'. The gold was hidin' from him, like you can see from his drawin's."

"What was his secret, then?"

"Somethin' else, Cathcart. If I knowed what it was, I maybe could tell you who killed the Siwash. I used the stray dog —Dalton's dog, I thought—to find the answer to the question you're askin' me now."

If there crept into Cathcart's mind here any shadow of doubt as to the perfection of his proof, his face did not betray it. He rose and went over to look at Dalton; then he returned to the fire, into which Speed was piling small pine boughs, needles and all. The twigs smoked pungently, and flared into sudden crackling bursts of flame.

"Pete tells a story," said the corporal, "intended to confirm yours, but too vague to be worth examining. While working one stormy day in the cook tent at the rafters' camp, she claims that she felt a gust of cold, and turned in time to see a face in a hood of native furs peering in at her through the tent flap. It disappeared as she looked at it, and she wasn't sure that her mind or her eyes hadn't played her a trick. That night she was wakened by a voice talking to her above the storm from the other side of the tent wall next to her bunk. The words she caught were to the effect that if she were Pete, she was to get out of the North; that the speaker was overheld in some way and couldn't take her down the river. She claims the voice that warned her was Dalton's, though she did not meet him face to face until you reached this camp. A very intangible story, to which she adds, without material proof, the statement that she later felt herself to be in danger from Fallon, who found her at the camp, and offered to help her.

"Her story," pursued the corporal,

"would be thrown out of any court as imaginary—and for romantic reasons. I know of your feud with Fallon. I questioned him, and can see a convincing reason for his interest in Pete. He had no other provable connection with the case. He camped down the Lewes early in November, far from the scene of the crime. And as Pete is unable or unwilling to tell anything further about Dalton, her story merely deepens the charge against you."

Pete bit her lip and looked wretched.

"There is one other lady," said Cathcart, with a tentative glance at the prisoners, "whose trail crossed yours. The singer, Rose. Do you conceive of using her also in your defense?"

Even the gambler's mask failed wholly to conceal his sense of doom.

"If she's backin' your hand," he muttered, "I'll throw mine in . . . Women is hellcats—except Pete."

"Her beauty leaves you cold, I would gather?"

The outlaw tossed a wet branch into the fire, which hissed and steamed, lading the crisp air with its resinous odor, and showing for an interval hardly a lick of flame.

They watched it slowly ignite, as if its combustion were the matter that engrossed them. This suspended quiet was broken by the return of Cathcart's colleague.

"Find any tracks, Burke?" the corporal asked him.

"None but our own and the prisoners'. None at all in the direction Malone spoke of. The snow's as blank as paper."

CHAPTER XX

PINE SMOKE

"THERE wasn't the trace of a footmark," Burke repeated. "Not only so, but the high dome-shaped rock Malone spoke of isn't there either."

Speed listened, profoundly puzzled. Did the very mountains shuffle their position to stack a game for the law?

"I think there's a rock of that shape, though, within a dozen miles of here," Burke said. "Only it's in the other direction and across the creek. I had a long view of it yesterday from a ridge as we came up from the river."

Cathcart scowled at Speed, with a perplexity of his own.

"If you invented that story about the two men, why connect them with a rock that so plainly isn't there?"

There was no answer.

"One would almost think," rumbled the corporal, "that your conscience had painted a picture in the snow of the police on your trail."

Speed's head jerked up as if he had been struck a blow. The shadow in his eyes gave place to a wild gleam of conjecture.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed. "It's the answer to the riddle of Dalton's gold. He saw the two men, too! That's what he meant as he leaned there by the cliff, ravin' that he knowed now where the gold was. They say a dyin' man sees clear and, by glory, it's true."

"What's true? Are you mad, Malone?"

"Pretty near. Did you ever hear of a snow mirage, Corporal?"

Cathcart's eyes dilated. There is no more deceptive illusion in the North than those rare, brilliantly reflected images, carried between the mirroring surfaces of cloud and sunlit snow. The creek and the Siwash ruin which Dalton had drawn so clearly in his pictures of the gulch where he found the gold might have been reflected from some other ravine, an unknown distance away, and thrown upon the tableland, admirably adapted as it was for such an illusion.

"He took the mirage in the gulch for real, when he found the gold," Speed said. "But, trail tired or not, he wouldn't be fooled so much about distance. He'd of found the location quick enough again if he hadn't got tangled lookin' for a creek and igloos that wasn't there. If he'd only left out what the mirage

throwed in, his drawin's would have led him to it. Today he seen a mirage of two men by a dome shaped rock. But he knowed what it was, this time, because he knowed where that rock really was. And saw what fooled him the first time."

The corporal caught the spark.

"If so, the important point for you is that the mirage today would actually place those men across the creek, and by Burke's estimate of the rock's distance, about—"

"You're gettin' it."

The two officers exchanged glances. This triangulation was in the province of things that most strongly gripped their interest.

"Might be better, though, not to track 'em," the outlaw suggested. "They'll trail this smoke."

Cathcart was plainly chagrined by his failure to read the "trifle" he had observed.

"So the reason for the smoky fire—"

"I reckoned if they was in the range, they'd catch the scent. From this high, you know how far the smell of wet burnin' pine will throw."

If the police had been intent before, their interest now fused with the prisoners' in the same tension of waiting for the result.

As it proved, the wait was not to be long. The malamute growled, its nose lifting to the West and over the canyon, in warning of a distant approach.

The inward pitch of the mountain ledge, cunningly chosen by Dalton, shielded its occupants from view by any approach. Only the smoke would indicate the position of the fire it drifted from.

Through some rock crevices at the rugged brink, the watchers presently saw two figures appear on a white slope far beyond the canyon, and below them. Nearer observation disclosed that one of the two carried a rifle. The other's easy moving gait, even at that distance, identified an enemy they had reason to remember. The two were scouting cautiously for an ascent to the source of the smoke. They separated, evidently deciding to try different ways.

Burke now stole out through the jackpine gulch, to make a descending detour and intercept the nearer man.

HIS return, an hour later, was heralded by a clatter in the gulch, and by a deep throated snarl from Rusty as the last of Dalton's visitors rounded the cliff wall.

With a manner as composed as if this were an ordinary occasion, Fallon nodded to Cathcart, while his cold, lazy lidded eyes included the ledge and those present in one discerning survey, pausing curiously for an instant on Dalton. As no one spoke, he slouched against a rock above the fire, which was now crackling brightly. His face still showed traces of the Skagway fight.

"Smoked you out," he said to Speed, with a thin smile.

"How do you happen to be in this range?" Cathcart demanded, after one of his unsettling pauses.

"That's easier told than how I found this corner of it," Fallon said. "I was talkin' with Owens once—the day before he got disheartened and checked out. He asked me to see that the kid got a break, if anything happened to him. The way he said, I guessed Pete wasn't a boy. He mentioned havin' a pardner somewheres round this part of the Yukon, and it looked like there'd have to be a pretty good prospect to bring a man like Owens North. When I see these men—" indicating the prisoners—"stringin' with Pete, it was one reason or the other. Maybe both."

"Gold had nothing to do with your own interest in her?" Cathcart asked.

"I don't claim it hadn't," Fallon said negligently. "The man who says gold don't interest him lies. But havin' a score to settle with them, you don't figure I'd set back and let them get away with it? Or even leave 'em to the police. Good as you boys are, I reckoned they'd outtrail you."

"What did Owens tell you about the prospector, Dalton?"

"Nothin' more than I've said. If I hadn't heard a far crackle of gunfire this mornin', and caught the pine smoke, I couldn't have traced the camp . . . Is that—Dalton, you call him—over there? Dead?"

Prompted by the question, Cathcart walked over to the still body, considered it a moment and then beckoned Fallon.

It would have been hazarding much to say that the wounded man still lived. Only the vitality of the question about him, and the inscrutable doubt that had obscured his existence while living, made it hard to believe him dead.

"Look at this man, Fallon," the corporal said. "It's just possible you've seen him sometime in the Nevada camps."

"Never laid eyes on him." Fallon's booming voice gave a tremor to the echoes of the chasm. And a quiver, it seemed, to the eyes of the unconscious man at his feet.

The effect was so strange that Fallon gave a backward step of recoil. The quiver went through Dalton's body like a shock. He made a terrible effort to rise; then relapsed with a broken, defeated groan, burned out by that flare of effort, and as inanimate now as a charred log.

Cathcart bent over him to feel his heart and his hands, and got up again with a deeply troubled look.

Fallon resumed his position on the rock. Cathcart, too, returned to the fire, his shadow falling across Speed, who had not moved from the cliff he stood against, with Pete sitting on a rock step beside him.

"It's a strange thing," muttered the corporal, "that no one in the North or West seems to have set eyes on this man." He raised his own eyes with inquiry again at Fallon. "You're clear and positive that you never met Owens either, before you came North?"

"Sure." Fallon rolled a cigaret firmly in his strong fingers and reached down to the fire for a brand to light it. "Ask Pete," he said, exhaling a draft of smoke. "She'd know. She never seen me before I met her and Owens—that was when the Nevada crowd started for San Francisco."

"I don't remember if I did," Pete said dimly.

With a confirming wave of the burning stick he still held, Fallon threw it back in the fire, and the corporal had the thwarted expression of one who reaches the end of a blind, dark gulch.

"But," Pete added, "just now, when I saw Fallon's face in the fire, I remembered something Speed said about there being real things behind mirages."

Cathcart regarded her in doubtful question.

"When I was small I used to have a dream about a man who looked like him."

Fallon brushed off a spark from his cigaret with a humorous gesture of resignation.

"Oh, well, Pete. If it comes to kid's dreams, mirages, fire smoke and such things, maybe I'm wrong."

But the corporal had exhausted other sources of information. Having learned something at least from a mirage and from fire smoke, he was inclined now to examine intangibles.

"A dream of a fire?" he prompted curiously.

"It was by a cliff," Pete said, vaguely watching the flame. "Somethin' like this—on'y a desert mountain butte, and dark. At night. There were three horses by the cliff. Three men, with their faces lit strong in the fire, were leanin' over some boxes and picking up bars that glinted, like gold. There was a bag, too, that clinked. They cut cards—I don't know what that was for. One of the men was Dalton, as I can tell now. The other looked like Fallon, on'y not so heavy. The third man had a bay horse. He was dressed like the others, but was someway different, and they didn't seem to know him well. He was dusty with alkali. His face was

kind of ugly—I guess you'd say scarred by smallpox. But his eyes, when he looked at me, and his voice, kept me from feelin' scared.

"The men quarreled about something. The man with the bay horse took the gold in the bag, and rode away with me on the saddle. Then it seems like the other two faded out—went some other way. That's the on'y picture I have of the man who looked like Fallon. I didn't remember it when I saw him this Spring, but maybe it was one reason, just the same, for my feelin' strange about him."

IN THE crackling firelight, Pete's listeners were oddly still. None of them moved, or uttered a sound, till Cathcart said intently—

"Is that all of the dream?"

"No. We rode a long ways. In the dream, I'm thirsty and sleepy; I think the man is lettin' the bay hunt water. It's sundown when we come to a ranch-house, but we don't go in. The man watches it from a high ground till dark. Then he leaves me on the porch, with the bag of gold, and I hear his horse ride away. The door opens and a woman picks me up; then a man comes with the lamp—Owens, I think. They talk low, like they was puzzled and scared . . . I always woke up then, in Owens' ranch-house, wishin' the man with the bay would come back."

"It ends there?" the corporal protested.

"Yes, but it kind of jumbles with things I think I do really remember. Like findin' Dalton in the barn."

"In the barn!" Cathcart echoed. "Dalton?"

"I was lookin' for eggs in the hay, with the woman, though I can't remember much what she was like. I touched a man's boot, and he sat up. The woman almost screamed, but didn't; it seems like she knowed him. Now that I can understand better, I think Dalton must have been a sweetheart of hers before she married Owens. He was in some trouble, I think, and she kept him hid.

"But then it seems finally that Dalton came out of hiding, and worked for awhile with Owens as a ranch-hand. Some men came to the ranch one day, and the woman gave me a doll she made, for telling them Dalton was my father. But it don't seem like it could be so, any more than my being a boy, like they pretended. I have a notion, someway, that Owens didn't like havin' Dalton around, and had to give him a grub-stake to go prospectin'. Maybe it was because of the woman. She had a quarrel with Bill after Dalton went. Then she went away too, and there was on'y Bill and me."

The corporal's voice twanged with a note of tension he was trying to suppress, as if afraid of snapping the thread of recollection.

"Go back, Pete—to that dream of the fire under the desert butte. The man counting gold. How did you come there?"

"I think I must have come there with the man on the bay horse. But I don't know from where, if the dream was true. Back of that, it's all confused. Things I've imagined perhaps. I was on'y a little kid, then."

Fallon laughed harshly.

"A smoke, like I said. Since when do the Mounted Police read pictures in a fire?"

"Nothing clear in that jumble, Pete?" Cathcart urged her. "Think! Even if it seems a trifle."

Pete was silent for a long time.

"This seems kind of funny," she said. "It was years later when I first went with Bill to a freight station to ship some cattle and flasks of quicksilver from a cinnabar claim he had. On that trip I saw a railway train for the first time. But in the dream I'd had before, tangled with a noise like shots firin', there was another sound, just like the grindin' of train wheels on the rails, and then the long, dyin' wail of a locomotive whistle."

Cathcart straightened abruptly to stare at Burke across the fire. In doing so, he almost brushed into Speed and looked at him in question instead, perhaps because some electric current of intelligence found a swifter contact there.

"It sounds to me," said the outlaw evenly, "like the robbery of the Overland in '83. Pete, bein' maybe three then, would be seventeen now."

"The robbery of the Overland!" Cathcart's voice rang like a struck banjo. "It's the one I was trying to remember! In the Carson Valley? Starness used to speak of it as one of the most daring train raids in the West. A United States marshal was killed. His baby daughter strayed off the train in the hold-up and was given up for lost . . ." Oddly in the flame of this revelation, he hardly looked at Pete, whose eyes were blinded with wonder. He still regarded Speed. "How well does it check?"

"I've heard," said his prisoner, "there was three road agents. They split company somewheres in the mountains. One rode alone—that would be Pete's man with the bay. The posse caught the trail of the other two. One lamed his horse and was almost caught. That would be Dalton. Dalton's partner, whoever he was, rode off with the bulk of the gold, and quit him."

"The man with the bay," Cathcart considered, "found Owens' ranch by accident, hunting water, and left Pete there. Dalton came there later, by intention. He'd planned it as a refuge in case of need, counting on the rancher's wife, a former sweetheart, to hide him. The posse were combing the ranches in the region of the robbery, never dreaming that one of the bandits, with a wild hue and cry after him, would have burdened himself with a lost child."

Burke threw a loop into the running line of logic.

"The rancher made himself party to the crime by keeping the child and the gold. That ties him with Dalton and accounts for the grubstake."

"It matches!" Cathcart exclaimed, with a note of awe at the unfolding clarity of the proof. "It explains Dalton's hiding in the North. He'd had a narrow getaway; he felt that the hunt for him would never be abandoned—wanted for murder of a Federal marshal while robbing a train. He knew he'd have to keep clear of Yukon prospectors. There were so few of them then that every man knew every other, and if he mixed with them, the frontier might show him up instead of hiding. A big bounty was out for his capture. But if he could vanish entirely, the hunt for him might slacken. He planned this hideout, hoping to come out some day a rich man, and unknown. With a gap in his trail that couldn't be filled."

In the full glow of his deduction, his eyes returned to Fallon, who was meditatively swinging his leg against a rock.

"Interestin'," said the big man, "if so. But now that Pete's in safe hands and has these unflatterin' notions about my lookin' like some one, there don't seem to be much else I can do for you."

The cool comment chilled Cathcart's blaze like a slap of spray. It seemed he had discovered the answer to a sensational mystery, but was as far as ever from the solution of the Siwash's murder. Hardly even was there adequate ground for holding Fallon as a witness.

"I think you'd better wait, Fallon," he said, after an inept pause. "We may need your testimony on some further point."

As to what that further point could be, the corporal's mind seemed to be racing vacantly, and then to slow down into an interval of blank arrest, of which the corporal's own nerves were this time the victim.

"What about the letter to Maitland?" Burke suggested.

Cathcart eyed him with a doubtful frown, as if this were an idea he had rejected.

Drawing a sealed envelop from an inner pocket, he tapped it undecidedly on

his hand and glanced at Maitland. Finally he said:

"We picked up this letter, Maitland, when we started down the river on your trail. We don't know who the sender was, as it was given indirectly to our mail runner, but its being addressed to you in care of the Mounted Police may indicate some connection with the present case. The time when it was sent may mean that the sender hoped to have it delivered to you when you were apprehended. Or it may not. I didn't deliver it, because it is our practise to withhold a prisoner from outside communication till he is examined. But in the circumstances it may be as well to alter the rule. Whatever the contents, you are privileged, of course, to reveal as little as you choose."

He passed the envelop to Maitland, who wonderingly read his name on it, and the words "Care of the Northwest Mounted Police" in a bold, unfamiliar script.

Its seal was intact. The ethics of the Mounted Police were exact, even as to the mail of a prisoner. He opened the letter and read it through.

Then, without a word, he passed it to Cathcart.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAST CARD

THE corporal read it slowly; his hand wavered a trifle as he turned the pages, but he did not change expression. He refolded it with care and returned it to Maitland.

"Do you know the singer, Rose, in Skagway?" he asked Fallon.

"I know who she is," was the guarded reply. "What's she got to do with this?"

"She claims that she knew you several years ago in San Francisco, at the beginning of her career as a singer. When she was, in fact, no more than a runaway girl from school. You promised to give her a start in the Nevada gold camps. When it came to fulfilling the promise, you weren't interested in returning to Nevada. She doubts now whether you will remember her as that young girl. Several years had passed, and she was a very different and much less easily deluded person when you next met her —in Carson City last Spring."

Fallon scowled reflectively, without answering.

"In that interval of wandering it is evident that her success was immense, though she doesn't say so. She made other men pay for her humiliation by you. Still heartfree and footloose—a woman in experience if not in years—she rode into Carson City about the time the big news from the North was fusing up to the camp. The camp was crowded with prospectors from all over the West, drawn to that railway junction by the rumor of the Yukon placers. It was a place and time for surprising encounters. The miners' world covers a great area, but the start of a gold stampede makes it the smallest of all worlds as regards the chance of meeting known faces.

"While crossing a planked sidewalk, she almost bumped into you, stepping down from the porch of the Nevada Hotel. You were looking back in a curious way at a rancher and a blond haired boy you had been talking to.

"Not recognizing her, you tried to make her acquaintance. She guessed that you were setting some game to fleece the rancher, and the opportunity of turning the tables on you attracted her a little. But while she was wondering whether the game would be worth the penalty of your company, events took a sudden and different turn. She met another man—a stranger, who stirred her emotional interest and something sincere in her which no man, till then, had ever wakened.

"That meeting occurred in a bar in Carson City where she was singing. The man stood at the bar alone, with a glass of whisky he'd paid for and forgotten. Her description of him tallies strikingly with Pete's picture of the man who rode the bay horse. Rugged; trail hardened;

his face ugly and pock marked—but fine in its way, as you can imagine the face of the bandit might be who took that risk for a homeless baby. He liked music, and Rose's singing was probably the immediate bond between them. He understood her better, perhaps, than any one ever had. As far as he could trust any stranger, he was drawn to her, but beyond that point of frank liking he seemed to resist her allure, which must have been a new and romantic experience for Rose, as well as a disturbing one.

"His attention, strangely, was centered, as yours was, on the rancher, Owens, and on Pete, though he never approached or talked to them. He just watched them, and kept you under observation, as if he were trying to decide some question about your intention, or identity. You didn't seem to notice him at all, until Rose's open preference for his company made you more observant and—whatever describes your inward feeling when you did notice.

"You entered the crowded bar that night, saw Rose talking to the man, and stepped up to the rail alongside her. She had a sense of omen, even then, standing between you two—the man she despised, and the man she was in danger of loving too well for her peace of mind. She said something or other as an introduction, even while she felt that none was needed. You and the stranger spoke in curt monosyllables, as you sized each other up at close range.

"The stranger bought a drink. To pay it, he drew out a handful of gold; and by accident or intent there fell from his hand to the bar a curiously shaped nugget—like a clover leaf. The stranger left it there, in your plain view. Rose looked at it, fascinated, still far from guessing the fateful part it was to play in her life and in what followed."

Fallon's poise on the rock unbalanced.

"She lies," he growled, "if she says I ever saw or heard of such a nugget."

"She mentions noticing a start you gave at sight of the nugget," Cathcart continued, "and a glitter of recognition as your eyes shifted from the gold to its owner.

"The stranger said, 'I reckoned you'd remember it.' And when you didn't answer, he said, 'Where's the other man? The partner you quit on the lamed horse?'

"You pretended not to know what he was talking about.

" 'The bluff isn't good,' the stranger said quietly. 'He's in the North, and you know it.'

" 'How would I know it?' you asked.

"And the stranger answered, 'Because this rancher, Owens, staked him to go North. If I can figure the how and why of that, so can you. Owens's been drinking, and it's likely he's told you more. He doesn't know who you are, and that gives you a whip over him which you hope to use. You know he has a lead on something or he wouldn't be heading North a jump ahead of the stampede. But you're going to lay off that rancher, if I have to trail you from here to the Yukon to make sure of it. Or stop you here.'

"At this point Rose says she had a sensation that guns were going to blaze in front of her. Yet you had both spoken so low that no one at the bar so much as turned to look.

"You said, 'Hell, what's the use of our quarreling? We'd both fall. I ain't framing nothing on Owens. To prove it, I'll buy you a drink.'

" 'You'll prove it,' the stranger said, 'by giving him a clean start in the stampede. You only met me once, but you'll maybe remember I always liked that kid. I'm standing back of the kid now—all the way. It don't even matter a whole lot to me if I blow the cover off the game, doing it.'

"Rose felt that the moment of danger had passed, and that it was a tactful time to make a diversion. You both seemed to have forgotten her. As she started a song, still watching you, she saw the stranger lift the nugget from the bar. But not before one other by-

stander had seen it. This was a cheap gambler of the shell rigger stamp with whom you were friendly. He came in and joined you just in time to catch a glimpse of the ill-omened piece of gold. Rose saw the gleam of envy in his eyes. The stranger left then, and you stood hunched over the bar rail, twisting a glass in your fingers,—thinking so intently that you hardly seemed to hear the shell rigger's inquisitive queries.

"FINISHING her song, Rose slipped out of the saloon. She meant to find the stranger and offer her help in whatever he was planning to do. She traced him to the Nevada Hotel, where Owens and Pete had been staying. As it proved, the rancher had taken a train with Pete an hour before, and was on his way to San Francisco. The stranger came out of the hotel before she reached it, and went up the street toward the railway track. She was following him when she heard a shot and saw him fall. A shadowy figure ran out from an alley, stooped over him an instant, and fled away into the dark. When she reached him, he was dead. Shot from cover by some skulking thief who had emptied his pockets of everything they contained, including the clover leaf nugget."

"It's a framed story," Fallon interrupted grimly, "and I could guess who helped her frame it. The on'y truth in it is that a stranger was killed while I was in Carson. It was proved at the time that I was in the bar when he was shot."

"She admits that you were in the bar," Cathcart said, "and that you were unsuspected by the authorities in Carson. They called it an alley thug robbery. Having no sure evidence, she said nothing. All she could discover for herself was that the shell dealer hadn't been in the bar when the shot was fired. He was a friend of yours, and if her suspicion was true, you were responsible for the death of the only man whose life she had ever valued.

"That same night, the big news from the Yukon came down on the wires from Seattle, erasing the tragedy from every mind, it seemed, but hers. You followed Owens and Pete to San Francisco, and she caught the same boat. She would probably have been swept into that first rush anyway, even if none of this had happened. But now she was resolved to find out the mystery behind that nugget; to discover and fulfil the stranger's purpose, and to defeat yours.

"The nugget itself told her a great deal, though she didn't actually obtain it. A pickpocket she paid to reef the shell rigger got it and kept it to himself. But, by questioning old-timers in Skagway about curious nuggets they remembered having heard of, she learned that there had been a clover leaf nugget in the loot of the Overland train robbery. Only a prospector or a detective would have remembered that detail from the dramatic news stories of the case. The reducing mill had saved out the nugget and enclosed it with the box of ingots as an odd specimen. One of those neglected trifles that may reveal much.

"From this clue, combined with what the stranger had said and with her own observations, she arrived eventually at something very close to what we have learned in another way. The marshal's little girl, who had disappeared in the hold-up, had curly blond hair and eyes of a color like Pete's. As a woman, Rose was less easily deceived about about Pete's sex than a man would be. The very name Pete—being as boy-like as possible—confirmed her inference that the little girl had been deliberately disguised as a boy. From that it wasn't far to a clearer understanding of the truth.

"She realized now that the stranger must have been one of the three road agents concerned in the train robbery. His words indicated that he was probably an extra man who had joined in the job on an impulse and without knowing much about his two confederates. One of these two was the prospector in the North. She couldn't define the

exact extent of the rancher's share in the crime, but she guessed that the stranger had picked up the child and paid Owens to care for it. She placed you in the picture as the man who had ridden off with the bulk of the gold and left his partner on the lamed horse."

"That woman has a knife in me!" Fallon broke out in fury. "She—"

Cathcart stayed him with a gesture.

"You will have an opportunity to answer, Fallon. But first hear her accusation. The hardest point for her to determine was just what the advantage might be which you held over Owens through his ignorance of who you were. As to that, though, she could see only one convincing answer. The prospector in the North, she believed, had struck gold, and being unable to record it in his own name, had sent for the rancher because Owens could take title with less direct danger from the law. You had the advantage of being able to threaten Owens with exposure unless he revealed what he knew about the gold mine. You couldn't carry out the threat, but he didn't know it. When he drowned himself in Skagway, he did so, she reasoned, through fear and despair, after yielding to you everything he knew about Dalton's location.

"This was a theory; she had some doubts of it till you returned to Skagway this Spring, and contrived Malone's arrest for shooting the shell dealer. In the excitement of that undertaking, you left your tent unguarded, and the pickpocket would appear to have been active again. She claims that in this way Dalton's message to Owens came into her possession—from your pocket."

Fallon fought against his anger.

"It's a lie figured to save her friends from hangin'—with Pete's story to fit it. They're playin' their women against me. . . If she had that on me, why wouldn't she use it before?"

"She says she still had some troubling doubts. Malone, as she learned when she spoke to him in jail, had won the clover leaf nugget from the pickpocket. It was a peculiar fact that he had had a shooting feud with the shell rigger who brought that nugget North. This, and his interest in the nugget, and his mistrust of her made her half suspect that he had been somehow involved in the train raid. If so, her theory wasn't complete. But this idea was dispelled by what he said and didn't say to you from your hangman's table in the Golden Pass Saloon. There were other complications in her position. A personal one was her feeling against Pete.

"Without intention, Pete had come between her and the first man she loved; when she recovered from that blow and caught the gleam of romance again, it was Pete once more who— Well, that doesn't concern us. The practical reasons against denouncing you openly were obvious. If you so much as guessed the extent of her discoveries, her life in a lawless camp like Skagway would be brief. To inform the Mounted Police would ruin the man in the North, expose his gold secret and forfeit the gold to a stampede. A ragged move which, even then, might leave you unconvicted.

"But when she heard in Skagway that these men were wanted on the charge of having murdered the Siwash on Lake Lebarge, she immediately sent this information to Maitland for what it might be worth in his defense."

"It surely ain't worth much," Fallon sneered. "I'm just as free to say that her thief lifted that message from Owens. That it was through her these men got their lead on Dalton's location . . . Or does she claim she can prove they didn't murder Dalton's Siwash?"

THE echo of his voice in the chasm picked up the last word and weirdly repeated it. The sound tangled with a kind of groan that seemed to come from where Dalton lay. But the prone body looked as lifeless as ever.

"No, she doesn't," Cathcart said, pondering. "She doesn't understand the Siwash's murder. Oddly. Dalton's mes-

sage seems to indicate that he meant to meet Owens in person. He mentioned in it that he had been living native style; that Owens might not know him on sight. Still, he took the precaution of sending the Siwash to the lakes in his place . . . Perhaps he didn't want to alarm the rancher by telling just how careful he had to be. Or was it—"

The corporal broke off abruptly to look at Dalton. There was an unmistakable gasping sound now from the throat of the man they had thought dead. Harsh, low, guttural words that became faintly articulate.

"No—damn good. Owens was no damn good . . . Get out of the Yukon, kid. He'll get you. Reeves will. I know you're here, Reeves? You done it, I tell you—the best Siwash in the North. *Klosh cummox him clatawa—*" The voice ran into a jumble of Chinook about a dog. "If I don't beat him to the draw, he's got me. Not the gold. The gold—" Then came a cavernous wheezing, a pitiful mockery of laughter.

The rocks on the ledge were no more inert than his hearers. His words, with uneven intervals between, sounded uncannily clear, but made no sense. Dalton was raving. Some words he had heard them speak seemed to have pierced his trance—to have struck a chord of half intelligence in his brain, or loosened, perhaps, a lock in his throat.

"Bar gold in them boxes. Throw 'em over! Over her up, or you'll scald in steam! . . . God help you, stranger, when the posse gets the trail of your bay. You're bogged down . . . Reeves! Where's Reeves? You wouldn't quit me cold here, Reeves? My horse is down. My leg—Reeves!" The wounded man was struggling to rise now, and was staring over some waste that was not this canyon. His voice was a heart broken, gasping wail. "Not after the trails we've took together. The way I've stood by you! You wouldn't do this! Reeves!" His voice lifted in an anguished death call, which wasn't loud but seemed to shake the chasm—"Reeves!"

And Dalton shuddered back into a silence from which he would never rise or speak again. His dead face was mercifully shadowed by the cliff.

The faces of his listeners came back slowly to the fire and to each other. Fallon's heel kicked idly again on his rock perch. But the corporal stood rigid, staring at him, as if the dying man's words had pierced to some half conscious vein in his own mind.

"You seem to have steady nerves, Fallon. Or should I say Reeves?" Though Fallon outfaced this without changing a muscle, Cathcart had the taut look of a man on the edge of a discovery, poised for the mental throw which, as Speed had predicted, would some day leave clever men gaping. "Having so clear a conscience, Fallon, you can stand a heavy blow, so I'll give you a charge between the eyes. You killed that Siwash in mistake for Dalton!"

Fallon responded abruptly.

"I'll answer that, by—"

"Wait!" There was an impressive ring in the corporal's dry voice. "Before you reply, I'll give the assumption its full force, so that you can respond to it fully. Let us assume that I have been wrong. After Dalton sent his Siwash to the lakes to meet Owens, and the murdered native failed to return, he came up the river himself to see what had happened. He arrived before the snowfall had obscured the native's track. Some days before the date which I, let us say, by a mistaken reading of the signs, inferred to be the day of the murder.

"He saw that the native had met with foul play. When he came upon the two partners there, and they told him of Owens' death and described you, he knew they were innocent. He couldn't fall into my error of wondering who had a motive for killing the Siwash. He saw that the bullet that killed the native was meant for himself.

"You had expected to find him waiting on the lakes for Owens. You were the partner who had deserted him in

Nevada. Between you two, whenever or wherever you should meet, there could be no argument. It would just be a matter of who shot first. In destroying him, you hoped to win a gold prospect. The mistake about the Siwash wouldn't worry you. You would feel protected by Dalton's own ruse and the secrecy it betrayed. Dalton may even have been able to picture the method of the crime. You had buried the body through an air hole in the ice; had driven down the lakes with the native's own team through the storm; had then burned the sled and scattered the dogs. One dog escaped you—the Siwash's loose leader, which ran free of harness. You shot to kill it, but only gave it the bullet burn in the foot, which still shows."

"The proof!" snarled Fallon. "It all hangs on that she-devil's claim that I was in the Overland train robbery, and her story's a frame. Where's her proof?"

"It's a gambling kind of proof," said Cathcart, watching him intently, "but good, if she makes it. She predicts that when her story is told you, as I have told it, you will disclaim any knowledge of the clover leaf nugget, as you have done. She is certain, however, that your strongest reason for trying to hang Malone in Skagway was that in killing the shell dealer and later obtaining the nugget, he seemed to have smoked too close to the secret of the Nevada crime.

"You were afraid of his interest in Pete. You were afraid of collusion between him and Rose, who could have told him enough, perhaps, about the nugget to complete the link. It seems that the nugget disappeared from the marshal's keeping in Skagway when you left camp. A telltale bit of evidence which you dared not leave at large. But a fascinating luck piece which you wouldn't throw away."

Fallon's hand, in fact, was in his pocket, and the corporal's eyes were fastened on it, guarding against a last minute attempt to get rid of the piece of gold.

"Search him, Burke!"

Fallon loomed to his feet—savage, hate maddened, yet still somehow master of his voice.

"You'll hear my answer now!" he shouted in a hoarse bellow. "That man—" he pointed at Speed—"is the pardner of the stranger who rode the bay. I've figured his trail. He's thought to be drowned, off the *George E. Starr.* He calls himself Speed Malone. Since we're talkin' of right names, that man is Buck Tracy, sometimes knowed as Buck Solo—the most notorious desperado and gunman that ever come out of the Northwest!"

While the police stiffened under the shock of the announcement he flung at them, he wheeled on Maitland with a movement swift as light.

"As for you—"

ONLY one pair of eyes caught the lightning gleam of the drawn gun. There was a stunning report. Fallon's gun went out of his hand as if he had thrown it away. With a blankly staring look, he sagged in a crumpling fall, dropped by a bullet in the brain from a gun which Speed had jerked from the holster of the belated corporal.

It seemed that his body was still falling when Speed leaped from the cliff toward the brink of the ledge where the spruce tree lifted its top branches.

The fractional margin of another instant, or of one wild shot, might have carried him over. That tree, as Buck Tracy's keen eyes had long since detected, was to have been Dalton's last resource of escape. It led to a scar in the mountain wall, concealed by the overhang of the cliff it rooted on. Had he gained it, and the river, there is no telling what the Mounted Police might have had to write on their flawless man-getting record.

But the odds were too steep. The gun he had surrendered to Burke crashed as his boot touched the rock rim, and he fell backward, just short of it.

For an instant Maitland stood dazed

in swirling smoke and echoes. Then he was struggling fiercely against Burke's hold to reach his partner.

"Let the prisoner go." Cathcart spoke, and in a curious stillness looked down on the fallen outlaw with regret.

Half lifting Speed out of a widening pool of blood, Maitland had a blurred consciousness of Pete on his other side. The outlaw leaned against their supporting arms, deeply breathing the cool breeze that eddied across the canyon.

"Speed, I'll get the—" Maitland tried to say, but his heart strangled the words in his throat, and tears rained on his partner's reddened shirt.

Speed looked up at him mistily and shook his head.

"I don't ask for no better—run of luck than this, Bud. Always figured I'd—fall in some mountain pass alone, and here—" He paused at something beyond his power to say. "We both got what we looked for—and more. On'y not where we was lookin'." His eyes rested on the burnished sheen of Pete's hair, and strayed back to his partner with a ghost of his old-time ruminating smile. "Gold is where you find it, like—Steiner said."

The strength seemed to ebb from him; he looked dimly at the wavering fire, and then in wonder at a bright glory of cloud floating across the far twilight azure overhead. It was as if a mirage had met his eyes in their last gleam of life.

But something of the same tenacity of will which had held Dalton against the cliff brought him back for a moment, and Maitland heard him say, as he drifted out on that last trail:

"Give the lady a hand, Bud. She run a great bluff for you. Tell her—I was plumb wrong—about women. Tell her—how much—I liked the singin'."

THE END

Bedouins

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

TALKING about fleas, bedbugs, Arab bandits and sundry other desert vermin, I can not help remembering with a sour-sweet smile a certain little journey of mine along the foothills of the Anti-Taurus, in northern Mesopotamia.

After tramping for two days over a Godforsaken plain, we finally reached a hamlet called Kuds-Arab, where by means of threats I forced the recalcitrant villagers to give us lodging until dawn. To make sure that none of our horses would be missing next morning, I ordered Tasim, my orderly, to place them inside the adobe hut which we had requisitioned to spend the night in, for the temperature usually grows bitter cold in the desert after sunset. And it was a lucky thing that we did, because about midnight the *kaimakam*, or sub-governor of Dey, our traveling companion, who had preferred to camp outside the *kasbah*, knocked at our door, asking permission for him and his escort to spend the rest of the night with us. Some of the villagers had stolen their horses and

most of their outfit while they were asleep.

Tormented by the legions of fleas and bedbugs which infested our adobe hut, and with my eyes smarting from the smoke of a heap of camel dung with which my orderlies were keeping up a slow fire to protect us from the intense cold of the morning, I was glad when daybreak allowed us to jump once more into our saddles. We did not even wait to enjoy the breakfast which the rascally *mughtar,* or village elder, had hastily prepared for us, apparently to appease our wrath. He realized that before another week had passed, the *kaimakam* of Dey would surely return at the head of a troop of gendarmes to get back his horses and to do a little housecleaning in Kuds-Arab, which means, to do a little throat cutting and hanging in retaliation for the way he had been treated by its inhabitants. For the Turk never forgives or forgets an offense.

After a few hours' ride we reached the outskirts of Veran-Shehir; or, to be exact, we dismounted in the spacious courtyard of the manor house of Osman-Agha, uncle and successor of the notorious sheik of the Millis Kurds, Ibrahim Pasha, who, seven years before, had perished with most of his followers during the ill-starred revolt of 1908.

Osman-Agha was a white bearded chieftain of venerable aspect. He received me at the door of his walled-in mansion, a sort of desert fortress, and treated me to a ceremonious banquet, the *plat de force* of which consisted of a camel foal roasted whole, which was served on top of a heap of *pilau* three feet high, or even higher. *Pilau,* which is sort of national dish among the Turko-Kurdish tribes of northern Mesopotamia, is prepared of barley lightly cooked and dried in the sun, then baked in butter until it acquires a taste very similar to that of baked rice.

The banquet took place on the spacious flat roof of Osman-Agha's mansion, beneath the azure sky of Mesopotamia. I was the guest of honor and, as such, naturally had first to accommodate myself, cross-legged, on the priceless Persian rug on which the table was set. This consisted of an enormous zinc platter on which the yard-high pyramid of *pilau,* with the roasted camel foal on top, rested. After thanking my host with a deep inclination and with my hand raised to my forehead for the great honor he was bestowing on me, and only after I had seated myself and asked Osman-Agha to do likewise, did he and the principal chiefs of the tribe settle down around the platter and get busy.

They—and I too for that matter—rolled back our sleeves and commenced to shape between the palms of our hands, sometimes one in each hand, small balls of *pilau.* The idea is, as it were, to catapult them into the mouth by means of an almost imperceptible twist of the tips of one's fingers. This performance is repeated with amazing rapidity and regularity. Every second or third of those greasy balls was accompanied by a morsel of roast camel that my host detached deftly with his fingers and placed, as a mark of extreme deference, occasionally into my mouth with a ceremonious, *"Büürenes, Beym."*

As soon as the banquet was over we washed our hands with running water, which means with water that the *hismetchis* poured upon them from silver plated copper pitchers, since the Koran forbids the use of still water for ablutions.

After that performance, which was absolutely necessary because our fingers were literally dripping with grease and liquid butter, we settled comfortably on the mounds of silken cushions which littered the thick Persian rugs, and sipped coffee and smoked scented cigarets, or gorgeous waterpipes, called narghiles.

Osman-Agha, our venerable host with his favorite hunting hawk perched upon his wrist, described in sententious phrases episodes of the many *ras,* or plundering expeditions, which he had led as a youth against his irreconcilable enemies, the rascally Shamar — dark

memories shadowing his face as he talked.

The reception which the Arab and Kurdo-Arab sheiks of those regions accorded me differed little, if at all, from the one just described, except of course that not all could afford sacrificing young camels in my honor. The majority had to content themselves with a flat-tailed sheep; and others, with only a goat. But not one of them ever allowed me to continue my journey without having enjoyed his cordial hospitality.

AFTER a day's rest in Tel-Armani, we started early in the morning with the intention of reaching, possibly before nightfall, the historic *kasbah* of Nissibin, from which we were separated by a twelve hours' journey across a sterile and dusty desert steppe. Luckily we met with no adventure worth mentioning, except a brush with a group of armed villagers at Ahmed-Köi, who tried to dispute the right-of-way. The sudden crackle of our Mauser rifles, which caused several gaps in their line, soon convinced those worthies of the mistake they had made and caused them to scatter in all directions, like a band of scared coyotes, looking for cover.

In Nissibin, next morning, Captain Hussein Effendi, in charge of two of our machine gun detachments, which were likewise on their way to Bagdad, came to greet me and to place himself at my orders. I took advantage of that opportunity to send our pack animals on ahead, together with his, while I, with my escort, strayed off to hunt gazelles.

Strange though it may sound, that part of Mesopotamia was, at that time at least, still a veritable hunter's paradise. Bears and wolves abounded in the neighboring mountain range of Tur-Abdin; and over those rock strewn desert steppes still roamed panthers, wild asses, leopards, cheetahs, and perhaps a lion or so, descendants of those with short, curly manes seen in Babylonian and Assyrian friezes. In the heart of the desert—so the Arabs claimed—one could find an occasional ostrich even then.

About midday we noticed along the sun baked trail several splotches that looked like blood and, scattered on both sides, about a dozen sacks. These, and the tracks of several hundred unshod hoofs which criss-crossed the desert in the neighborhood, were unquestionable signs of impending trouble. They put us instantly on the alert.

From there on we continued the march cautiously with our weapons in readiness, scanning every dust cloud that loomed along the wavering, saffron horizon. Near midnight we ran into a scouting party which had been sent in search of us by Hussein Effendi, whom a band of Bedouins had attacked that afternoon, forcing him to mount his machine guns to beat them off. When we reached the blockhouse of Kirk-Bilek, where the detachments were encamped, we heard that the sacks we had seen in the desert were provisions belonging to a picket of gendarmes whom the Bedouins had also attacked that day and knifed in order to steal their horses.

Meanwhile, we had resumed the march across the parched plain, now varied occasionally by somber rock fields and scanty stubble sometimes laced by trickles of crystal clear water.

Finally we entered a wilderness—a chaos of enormous boulders which, half an hour later, yielded to the tiny valley of Demir-Kapu, or the "Iron Gate", through which ran a beautiful, clear, trout stream. There we spent the night, lodged in a small blockhouse garrisoned by a picket of gendarmes. One of these died that afternoon while hunting with me an old water-buffalo bull, which we had located a few miles away from camp. As soon as I had downed the beast, the gendarme had rushed forward with his unsheathed knife to cut—Moslem fashion—the bull's throat while its blood was still warm. Unfortunately, during its death agonies, the wounded bull had jumped up suddenly and gored the gendarme before I could prevent it.

The most dangerous part of the route we were following was, undoubtedly, the sixty kilometers which separated us still from Auvenat, our final destination. This stretch of desert we decided to cross without making any stops, because, in the first place, there was no well or even a drop of water to be found along that section of the trail, or general direction, rather, that we were following. And then again, because those sixty kilometers were precisely the place which the rebel tribesmen used to pick out to attack and plunder the caravans, especially after nightfall. Those bandits had become so bold that they did not respect even the patrols of mounted gendarmes and irregular cavalry which were charged with the vigilance of that section of our service-of-supply line of communications between Aleppo and Mussul.

Realizing that the pack train of the machine gun detachments would not be able to cover those sixty kilometers in a single day, we placed our pack animals in the center and set out to cross the desert alone. Though it was only six o'clock in the morning, the surface of the steppe was quivering already beneath the burning rays of the rising sun. Hour after hour we stamped across the scorching plain until a rolling dust cloud below the skyline caused us to entrench ourselves hurriedly behind the rim of a hollow depression. A few minutes later we could perceive quite distinctly the galloping *harca*—for that rolling dust cloud turned out to be a *harca*, a band of roving Bedouins, out for whatever loose property they could lay hands on.

They kept approaching us at breakneck speed, their madly racing horses hardly touching the ground, their white or striped *burnouses* fluttering in the wind. The majority of them were carrying firearms. Seeing that we were "accommodated," they halted out of range of our rifles and, after a brief pow-wow, deployed and started to gallop around us like a band of yelling Indians.

When they saw that that provocation had little or no effect on us—perhaps because we were unarmed, or only armed with pistols, *quien sabe?*—they put their heads together once more and launched a frontal attack, which was exactly what I wanted, for, when they were only a few dozen yards away, we let them have it as fast as we could load our guns. Three of the tribesmen fell; the rest raced back, helter-skelter, because the Bedouin, notwithstanding his great personal valor, is not ashamed to flee in disorder when he meets serious resistance. The Turk, on the other hand, once he has attacked, hardly ever retreats, but dies with his boots on. That is why the Arabs have always been vassals of the Turks.

One of our prisoners was in bad shape; the other two were only slightly wounded. And since I alone in our party had been scratched, we continued our journey with the two lightly wounded Arabs tied to our pack animals, but not before leaving a message to the *harca* with the dying man to the effect that, unless we were let alone, we would shoot our two prisoners at once.

No sooner were we under way than the Bedouins began to gather around their dying comrade, who apparently had delivered our message to them, because one immediately left the group and approached us, alone, with upraised arms. As I judged from his personal appearance that he must be the sheik of the tribe, I met him halfway and, after listening to what he had to say, I promised to free our two prisoners before reaching Auvenat, since the precious pair, as the sheik told me ingenuously, were extremely poor, as well as honest folks, who had taken part in his expedition merely to mitigate the misery of their families.

When we neared Auvenat I ordered our prisoners to be released, and sent them back with kind memories for their genial sheik, a small gift for themselves and some picture postcards for their children, who at that very moment must have been waiting for them, perhaps weeping bitterly out there in the depths of the scorching desert.

A Story of Jean Lafitte

BURGUNDY *for* BREAKFAST

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

THERE were only five cards left and three of them were jacks, so for the eleventh consecutive time Francis St. Humbert bet on a jack. And for the eleventh consecutive time he lost. He forced a yawn and rose, rearranging the ruffles under his chin, tilting his cream colored beaver at a more rakish angle.

"You're behind, suh. So you wish to pay now?"

"No. I'll drop in tomorrow or the next day. Send an account of it up to Senac, won't you? Good night."

But Senac himself intercepted him, asking for a few words with him alone, in the office. Secretly perturbed, but with the air of a man who graciously grants a favor, Frank St. Humbert followed him. The gambler was brief and blunt.

"You owe me a lot of money, m'sieu."

"Well?"

Senac drew some papers from a secre-

tary drawer and glanced over them grimly.

"Your Bayou Lafourche place and your house in Bourbon Street are both mortgaged to the hilt, to Yankees. You haven't got a nigger you can call your own. And I've lent you all I can possibly lend on your jewelry. I don't like to seem harsh, m'sieu, but you dropped an even two thousand tonight at Garach's table, and I need that badly."

The young man was haughty, hurt.

"When you're dealing with gentlemen, Senac, you should try to behave as much as possible like a gentleman yourself. I've brought plenty of business to this miserable little hell of yours, and I don't fancy treatment like this."

"Nevertheless, m'sieu, I need that money."

"When the next crop—"

"Pardon, m'sieu, but it will be many months before the next crop is sufficiently advanced for you to raise money on it. There's still the possibility of floods, and nobody will take a chance. Besides, I need that two thousand dollars by the end of this week."

Frank shrugged. He would argue no longer with a common gambler. Coldly he assured Senac that the money would be paid by the end of the week, turned on his heel and quit the office.

The Long Room, thick with the smoke from two dozen cheroots, made him a trifle sick. Garach had put another deck into the faro box and was drawing the soda. Elsewhere the little wooden keno counters clicked as losses and winnings were recorded, and a tiny white ball spun past the black and red stripes of the roulette wheel. Frank St. Humbert was very grand, impeccably the dandy, as he strode past the tables toward the street door, nodding to right and left, occasionally touching his hat, occasionally pulling in his coat tails so that they would not brush against anything dirty.

Everybody there knew that he was one of the most elegant young men in New Orleans. But nobody, not even hawk-like Senac, knew that he was at present one of the most desperate.

Keeping the pose was a strain; and it felt good to be out on the riverfront, in the cool night air, where he could give himself over to worry without reservation.

He was in a bad position. Senac could and would make trouble if that money was not paid. Besides, it was a gambling debt, a debt of honor; it must be paid on call.

The bankers would not advance him another cent. He knew that. Personal friends might make good the losses, if worst came to worst; but Frank St. Humbert never would be able to endure the humiliation of such procedure, which would lower him inestimably in the society of the city.

Something different was needed. Something immediate, and radical. Backed against a financial wall, he had staked everything on the cards that had taken his fortune from him; he had invested, on credit, in one final fling. And now that had failed and he was at the end of his resources. Obviously Senac would not advance him any further credit—at least, not until that two thousand was paid.

Looking at him as he strolled over the cobbles by the river docks, you would not have supposed that Frank St. Humbert had a trouble in the world. He was, as always, cool and exquisite. He wore cream colored trousers, very tight, and a bottle-green tailcoat. His waistcoat was a marvel of gold powdering on light green velvet. His tiny, pointed French shoes daintily picked their way among the puddles—for it had rained recently—and under his left arm he held a very long, silver topped walking stick.

He was a good looking young man, slim, rather small, very self-possessed. In everything he did and said he was conscious of the fact that he was a St. Humbert; and he made everybody else conscious of this fact. They stepped out of his way, bowing deferentially—the darkies, the Indians, the riff-raff of the waterfront—as he strolled along

behind the docks that night wildly seeking in his mind for a scheme to avert his ruin.

AT THE Customs House he paused, attracted by a notice that was new. He summoned a flatboatman, who held a lantern for him while he scanned the notice:

> WHEREAS, the nefarious practise of running in Contraband Goods, which has hitherto prevailed in different parts of this State, to the great injury of the fair trade, and the diminution of the Revenue of the United States, has of late much increased; and whereas, the violators of the Law, emboldened by the impunity of the past trespasses, no longer conceal themselves from the view of the honest part of the community but, setting the Government at defiance in broad daylight, openly carry on their infamous traffic . . . and although process has been issued for the apprehension of him, the said John Lafitte, yet such is the countenance and protection afforded him, or the terror excited by the threats of himself and his associates, that the same remains unexecuted . . . I do solemnly caution all and singular the Citizens of the State, against giving any kind of succor to the said John Lafitte and his associates . . .

There was nothing new here. For years the authorities had been manipulating to cause the arrest of Jean Lafitte; and for years they had failed. Lafitte had a genius for organization; and because the laws against the importation of slaves were so unpopular, he also had the tremendous advantage of public sympathy. The authorities might storm and stamp, but Lafitte continued to bring in blacks and other merchandise, stolen from Spanish ships, and to sell this openly for prices lower than the law abiding merchants ever could offer.

It was, it had been for many years, an open scandal. People had ceased being indignant about it and had come to be rather amused instead. People had begun to admire Lafitte, a man who had made ruffianism the best paying business in Louisiana.

Frank read on:

> And I do furthermore, in the name of the State, offer a reward of FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS, which will be paid out of the Treasury, to any person delivering the said John Lafitte to the Sheriff of the Parish of New Orleans, or to any other Sheriff in the State, so that he, the said John Lafitte, may be brought to Justice . . .
>
> In testimony whereof, I have caused the Seal of the State to be hereunto affixed. Given under my hand at New Orleans on the 24th day of November, 1813, and of the Independence of the United States the thirty-eighth.

It was signed by the governor, William C. C. Claiborne, and the secretary of State, L. B. Macarty.

The only thing that amazed Frank St. Humbert was the smallness of the reward. Five hundred dollars was a lot of money, but certainly Claiborne and the interests he represented would be willing to pay much more than that to see Jean Lafitte dead or in jail, and his gang of Baratarians broken up. For the gang *would* break up without its leader; there was no doubt of it. Spaniards, Portuguese, mulattos, Frenchmen, the scum of a dozen nations, the outlaws of Barataria had been mere petty thieves before the great Lafitte had organized them; and now they were held together in a perfectly functioning organization by one thing and one thing only—their fear of their *bos.*

Warrants galore might be made out for him, but nobody ever dared to serve them. For years the man had been laughing at the law, and everybody in Louisiana knew where he was and how he could be reached; but nothing was done.

Lafitte and his followers got rich, while secretly or openly most of the citizens applauded them, and Claiborne and his friends were left to fret and fume alone, impotent.

Yes, certainly five hundred dollars was a petty sum to set upon the head of such a man. Probably it was the most the governor dared to offer from the public treasury. But certainly Claiborne and his friends would be willing to pay a much larger sum privately.

Frank had met both the Lafitte brothers, Jean and Pierre, some years ago at a quadroon ball. That was before Jean, at least, had become definitely an outlaw. Frank remembered their peculiar status. They knew some of the best blooded men in the city, and were known and liked by these men. But they were never introduced to the ladies.

At quadroon balls, in the cafés, they were perfectly in place; but they were never invited to a gentleman's house, except, possibly, in the absence of the ladies of that house. Their position was fixed. They were rather better than commoners; but they were not, and never could be, gentlemen. No doubt they resented this. Jean particularly, Frank remembered, had seemed annoyed because the aristocrats did not take him unreservedly into their midst.

And it was remembering this that gave Frank St. Humbert his grand idea. He himself gasped, as the plan unfolded itself rapidly in his mind; it was so daring that it took the breath from him. Perhaps it was nothing better than suicide. If he stopped to cogitate upon it he might lose his nerve. He tossed a coin to the flatboatman and hurried off to a certain house in Toulouse Street.

He was pale, obviously nervous, but still the fastidious young man-about-town, when he told a brown house servant that the matter was one of great importance and that his Excellency would do well to postpone his retirement and interview this late visitor.

And presently he was tumbling forth his plan to that tall, staid, dignified Virginian, William C. C. Claiborne, first Governor of Louisiana.

"THAT is Grande Terre, m'sieu."

Frank folded his *Courier* and shaded his eyes, staring across the bland, unriffled waters of Barataria Bay. A little earlier it had been raining and blowing a frightful gale, and being in the bay had been no different, he thought, from being in the open Gulf; but now it was quiet and calm as a mountain lake.

"Which one?"

"The one on the left. The other is Grande Isle. And that white place over to the west, where the live oaks are, is the Cheniere Caminada. You can only see it in clear weather like this."

Grande Terre was a bleak place, almost bare, salty, tough, hard bitten. The grim, stunted oak trees all leaned one way—away from the open Gulf. From the boat in which Frank St. Humbert sat there was no sign of human life on the bay side of the island, but there were gulls and terns and pelicans circling over the place in great numbers.

His boatman, at his order, took him around to the Gulf side. The petty surf offered no obstacle to an easy landing, and presently Frank found himself surrounded by the world's most celebrated aggregation of scoundrels. They were of every conceivable age and complexion. There were Catalans, negroes, Maltese, Mexicans, coal-black Haitians, mulattos, here and there a renegade Yankee, tall, thin, tanned.

Ostensibly these men were oyster fishers. Some of them actually were. But most of them were in fact pirates, neither more nor less. Privateers, they would inform you. For each and every one of them, when he sacked a ship, was backed by letters of marque issued by the Republic of Colombia through the authorities of the port of Carthagena. Colombia had recently declared her independence of Spain, and she was finding these letters of marque convenient sources of income.

To be sure, they were good only against Spanish ships. But Spanish ships, it seemed, carried almost every cargo a Baratarian oysterman could possibly desire for sale in New Orleans and the surrounding plantations. Laces, embroideries, wines, slaves from Africa . . . It was against the Federal law to import slaves, and there were heavy tariff duties on the other articles; but what did the Baratarians care for this?

Faraway Carthagena, which most of them had never even seen, had authorized them to make war on the Spaniards; this they knew and upon this they counted.

There was something else upon which they counted, too, and it was the ancient reminder that dead men tell no tales. For sometimes, it was whispered, the Spanish ships did not oblige with the proper cargoes, and sometimes these cargoes were taken from ships flying other flags. That was unfortunate; but maybe, after all, it wasn't true. Who could prove it, anyway? The courts couldn't search the bottom of the ocean for their evidence and their witnesses; and Carthagena's letters of marque were in perfect order and indisputably legal.

So they gathered around Frank St. Humbert, these scowling, gayly dressed scoundrels of all colors, and demanded to know his business. One fellow with gold earrings was fingering a pistol. Others had their right hands on the hilts of daggers.

It was no time for doubts, no time to waver.

"Show me to Lafitte, please." Frank was cold, poised.

"Does Lafitte know who you are and that you are coming here?"

Frank snarled at them.

"What's that to you? Take me to him, and tend to your own business afterward."

Suspicious, keeping away from him but always around him, they led the way to a small, low house on a slight elevation facing the open Gulf. It was made of brick, this house, and coated outside with a mixture of plaster and pulverized oyster shells. The windows were iron barred. There was a wide veranda across the front. It was easily the grandest residence in sight.

Jean Lafitte, blacksmith and master pirate, rose magnificently from a red hammock on the veranda. He was all affability.

"Ah, M'sieu St. Humbert! And what brings you out to my poor country lodgings? Sit down, sir, sit down! I am delighted with your visit. I am overwhelm' by this honor."

Frank occupied a chair brought him by a shuffling black. He twisted uncomfortably.

"You are wet, m'sieu! It has been raining. Will you not change clothes? I could lend you some."

"Thank you, no. I'm not very wet."

"But you are chilly. This breeze is chilly. A glass of wine, perhaps, to warm you?"

Frank nodded, murmuring thanks. Wine was in fact precisely what he needed most. He required not only warmth but an added touch of courage to do what he planned.

Jean Lafitte was a big man, in every way. Six feet one in his stocking feet, he was expansive; his eyes were enormous, black in a startlingly pale face; and his shoulders were huge; and when he smiled the veranda seemed to become light; when he spread his hands the veranda seemed smaller. He was clean shaven except for sidewhiskers which came halfway down his cheeks. His longish hair was blue-black, not greasy, and was combed over the tops of his ears. He was garbed in black broadcloth, richly simple, with a dark green sash as his only color. Spotless white ruffles were under his chin. On the floor near the hammock were a plain black cocked hat and a small brass telescope.

Lafitte's men, on the beach, carried many pistols and knives. The *bos,* however, seemed unarmed. Perhaps a small pocket pistol was thrust under the sash; but there was no evidence of this.

AND yet it was easy for Frank to understand, face to face with the man, how he was able to control a thousand desperados. Frank knew instantly that here was a genius—and an incalculably dangerous man. Lafitte was always quiet, always soberly dressed. These facts only emphasized his power. He

was indisputably the leader. His rule was absolute. The story of Gambi's attempted rebellion, for example, was common gossip.

Gambi, an Italian, had resented a Lafitte ruling, had taken with him more than half of the scowling Baratarians, threatening a schism. Lafitte had given him ten minutes in which to come to terms. At the end of this time an envoy had come from Gambi's group and had started to inform the *bos* that he had been deposed. Lafitte calmly drew a pistol and interrupted the announcement by shooting the envoy through the heart. This was done in front of everybody.

Lafitte, afterward, coolly told them to throw the corpse into the Gulf and to go about their business. He remained the *bos*. Nobody, since that time, had made any attempt to question his authority on Grande Terre.

But at the moment Jean Lafitte was a charming host. He served wine—cold Burgundy—which a black had brought.

"You like it, m'sieu?"

"It's delicious."

"You must permit me to give you some bottles of it, to take away with you when you go."

Frank bowed, acknowledging the gift. But he wondered whether the offer would be remembered after he had done what he had come here to do. He felt guilty, sneaky, about the business. Lafitte was a low smuggler and pirate, to be sure, and no gentleman born; but certainly he was a pleasant host, and his manners were faultless. It was a dishonorable trick Frank planned, and he knew it. The fact that the odds were all against him, that he was taking a wild chance, did not make the thing any the less despicable. He accepted another glass of wine and, sipping it, explained casually that he had come to Grande Terre to discuss the purchase of some additional slaves for his Bayou Lafourche plantation.

Lafitte nodded, waving a deprecatory hand. It could wait, this trading. Monsieur St. Humbert must be made comfortable first. Surely monsieur could not expect to start back for the city today, anyway, and meanwhile there was good wine and good food to be enjoyed. Would monsieur care for a little more Burgundy? Or would he like to try some champagne?

Monsieur clung to the Burgundy, which kept up his courage but was very hard on his conscience. No question about it, this would be a mean trick, a low trick, unworthy of a St. Humbert. Only his desperation had prompted it. What must Claiborne think? Not that it mattered: Claiborne was a damned Yankee anyway, and probably nobody else ever would know. But that didn't make it any the less hateful, this thing he planned to do.

Lafitte nodded toward the glowering heavens.

"That storm will be upon us very soon, m'sieu. Storms come so fast here. Shall we go inside?"

He gazed long and carefully through the brass telescope, scanning the Gulf. Then he thrust it behind his sash and led the way into the house.

"You are expecting a ship this afternoon?"

"M'sieu," said Lafitte gravely, "my ships may come and they may go at any time. We do not keep schedules here."

The storm broke with startling suddenness promptly after the door had closed behind them—almost as though it had taken the closing of that door for a starting signal. The wind rose, whining, then shrieking. Grimly the stunted oak trees leaned away from the shore, tenaciously gripping with their roots the sandy, uncertain soil. The palmetto fronds rattled wildly. The rain came in great, boisterous gusts, beating upon the house, beating at the barred windows as though angrily seeking entrance. Outside, it was dark as midnight.

Jean Lafitte lighted an oil lamp that hung from the ceiling in the center of the big room, and they sat at a table underneath this. A lovely *griffe*, a

quadroon girl, wearing a smart French frock and a gay *tignon,* set fresh glasses in front of them. Lafitte addressed her.

"Callalou, *ma petite,* will you tell my brother, please, that M'sieu St. Humbert is visiting us, and ask him to join us here. And bring some more wine, Callalou, and some *estomac mulatre* for m'sieu." He turned to Frank. "Pierre has only last night come from the city himself, and he was weary after the long trip. Also, I think—" and Lafitte displayed beautiful teeth as he smiled—"he indulged too heavily in Medoc before he retired. He is very fond of Medoc."

This would be the best time, with nobody else around, for action—so Frank was thinking. But still he hesitated. Perhaps it was fright: and surely any man could be forgiven for feeling fear in this position. But also there was growing in him a decided distaste for the thing he was about to do. It seemed downright indecent. Whatever else this Jean Lafitte might or might not be, assuredly he was a gracious host; it was Lafitte's wine Frank was drinking, Lafitte's ginger cake he was eating, and he sat in Lafitte's house.

He tried to make himself think of Senac's hard gray eyes, and of the merciless necessity of getting that money in order that Senac might be paid and disgrace averted. But was it fair, was it honorable, to disgrace himself privately, at the expense of a gay and fascinating host, in order to spare himself a public scandal?

Lafitte, Frank told himself again and again, was an outlaw, a pirate, a low robber. But just the same, Lafitte, sitting there pouring him wine and chatting with him about affairs in the city, was a good and gentle fellow, affable, likable. Frank took another drink. He must, he told himself, do it now. It was the logical time. He must do it deliberately, in such a way that there could be no mistake.

But at this moment Pierre Lafitte entered the big room, yawning, blinking.

Pierre was shorter than his brother. He was thicker, less active, and several years older. Jean had black hair and a light skin, but Pierre's skin was dark and his hair was light brown, parted in the middle, and low over his forehead. His eyes, like his brother's, were large, dark. His lips were full and sensuous. He wore bottle-green and scarlet.

"I am delight' that the good M'sieu St. Humber' should veesit us," he cried gayly, extending a large right hand. "It ees great plaisure."

When he smiled his left eye seemed to wink. The left side of his face was partly paralyzed, and he had no control over the muscles of his left eye. Nevertheless, jaunty and genial, he was an attractive figure, and his smile was delightful.

He took a long drink of wine, afterward smacking his lips.

"Ver' good," he muttered.

"You needed that, Pierre."

"*Ah oui, mon frère!*" He smiled at Frank. "It was a ver' wet night, las' night."

Frank smiled. He was comfortably seated, and it was good to hear the rain on the window panes and to sip wine and munch ginger cake. If it had been possible for him to forget the reason for his presence on Grande Terre, he would have been quite content.

"We will have dinner?" Pierre Lafitte suggested. "Callalou, *ma cherie,* you will bring food?"

THE dinner astounded Frank. There was a rich crayfish bisque; broiled pompano; roast *papa botte,* string bean panachés, celery fritters; rabbit *en matelote* with stewed cepas and fried artichokes; sweet potato biscuit, steamed corn bread, crumpets, black coffee; *frangipani, paté de Noël* . . .

Jean Lafitte talked lightly, pleasantly, flashing his beautiful teeth. His brother was given to loud exclamations about the excellence of the food.

"*Magnifique!*" he cried again and

again. But Frank St. Humbert was speechless. He moved in circles in which a good cook was esteemed at least a minor god or goddess, and he himself had given most of his life to the appreciation of wonderful viands perfectly prepared. This meal out in a watery wilderness, out in a labyrinth of wild sedges and oyster shell islands, was too lovely to spoil with conversation.

Pierre Lafitte beamed upon him.

"M'sieu finds eet to his taste? Ah, but m'sieu should taste her *bouillabaisse!* May the Mother of God forgive me if there ees anything so *magnifique* underneath heaven!"

They had a light St. Julien with the pompano, a little sweet Graves with the roast, sparkling Château Yquiem when the game was served, and afterward Amontillado. It all made Frank not sleepy, but infinitely comfortable. His trouble with Senac, his financial worries, were far away. He had come to this place on a madman's mission. It was not only that the plan was dangerous to the point of suicide; it was also that it was dishonorable, unworthy of him. He would have nothing further to do with his own brain child. He'd go back and face his disgrace, and lose his estates, with the same insouciance with which he had lost his fortune over the gambling tables.

That was the manner that befitted him. The sneaky business upon which he had come here was beneath him. He would forget about it, drop it. He would tell the governor that he'd changed his mind, and Senac he would instruct to do his damnedest.

The quadroon, a slim, sweet, honey colored thing, filled their glasses again. Jean Lafitte was talking. Outside, the wind had died, the rain had stopped. It was late; they had been sitting at table for a long time; and Lafitte's words were strangely loud in the big, dim room.

"It is disgusting to talk business after so good a meal, m'sieu, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Frank St. Humbert sighed. He was slouched far down in his chair, and his legs were full stretched under the table.

"I do not mean about slaves, m'sieu. That could wait until morning. I mean what you really came here for."

Frank looked up, suddenly apprehensive. All the affability, all the quiet cheer, had been sucked out of this room, and a terrible tension was evident. The quadroon shuffled away, and the door closed after her; Frank was alone with these two ruthless men. They were not charming hosts now. They had become accusers. Pierre Lafitte looked very grave; the smile had disappeared from his full red lips, and he was staring grimly at the visitor; the nerveless lid of his left eye was almost entirely closed, but his right eye was wide open and very bright, and this gave him a sinister aspect.

Jean Lafitte still was smiling, showing his white teeth; but it was a feline smile, and there was no warmth in it. Jean Lafitte talked on, softly, gently, while his grim brother watched and listened.

"That business, m'sieu, it would be well to dispose of now. Will you not speak the insult you have prepared?"

Frank faltered—

"I do not understand you."

"You understand me too well, m'sieu. It is simply that you are surprised at my knowledge. Did they not tell you, in the city, that Lafitte has spies everywhere?" He was smiling still, horribly smiling. He leaned closer to Frank and tapped the table with a long forefinger. "Let us be frank with each other. Tuesday night you lost two thousand dollars at Senac's place near the Customs House. You were deeply in debt and you were desperate. So you went to a certain house in Toulouse Street and unfolded to a certain gentleman there a plan that was dangerous, but ver-y, ver-y simple—so simple that no one had ever before thought of it."

Frank St. Humbert was sitting upright now. There was an aching feeling of emptiness in the pit of his stomach, and something seemed binding his

chest so tight that he could scarcely breathe.

"You told m'sieu the governor that he could have me, Jean Lafitte, if he quadrupled the reward. You explained your plan, first pledging him to secrecy. 'This ruffian thinks he would like to be a gentleman,' is what you said to m'sieu the governor. 'That is his weakness, his Achillean heel, you comprehend? He would do anything to be thought of quality. *Eh bien!* I will visit him, telling him I mean to buy some slaves. He knows of my blood and he will be delighted at my visit. But the interview will not go well. I will insult him; I will find some way to do this. Another person he would shoot on the spot, but with me he will become pompous. He will challenge. And I will agree to meet him on the field of honor, but only on the condition that it be far away from his domain of Barataria where his followers are thick about him.

" 'I think he will consent to meet me in some other place, perhaps the Dueling Oaks just outside the city, perhaps somewhere on the Bayou St. John, perhaps down on General Villère's plantation or in some such quiet spot. But away from his Baratarians, who could help him?'

"You told m'sieu the governor, 'He is the kind of man who would be proud to go out on the field with one of my blood. He would be honored. And at the rendezvous,' you told m'sieu, 'the sheriff and his men will await this ruffian and arrest him before any shots are fired.' "

Jean Lafitte ceased smiling and leaned back in his chair. His large black eyes glowed balefully upon his visitor.

FRANK ST. HUMBERT said nothing. Lafitte had dramatized his conversation with the governor, had told it in his own way; but he had reported it correctly. There was no doubt that he knew exactly what had been said that night in Toulouse Street.

"It was beautifully simple, m'sieu. Get Lafitte away from Barataria and Lafitte becomes just another man—a man who can be arrested. 'It will be the agreement,' you told the governor, 'that he must come with only one or two representatives. He would not be suspicious of such a condition.' And so, m'sieu, a gentleman's word was to be broken and a gentlemen's institution defiled in order to trap a man whom you considered no gentleman and so not worthy of honest treatment."

Frank St. Humbert had been foolish, a waster, a fop. But never before had he stooped to a low trick like this, compromising with his essential principles. And so never before had he steamed in such furious humiliation. Two outcasts, men upon whom he had sneered, were telling him that he had disgraced his name—and they were telling the truth! Deliberately he finished his wine and placed the glass back on the table. Deliberately he shrugged. The pose must never slip, no matter what happened.

"I suppose you will kill me," he said quietly.

"I suppose I will," said Jean Lafitte.

"If you knew all this, why didn't you kill me at first? Why did you receive me and ask me to dinner?"

"Because I wished to see how a gentleman would act under the circumstances, m'sieu. Perhaps, I thought to myself, I can get a lesson."

Frank stood up suddenly. The room swung and swayed before him. In the soft yellow light from the ceiling lamp the table, the glasses and tall decanter, the green coat of Pierre Lafitte and the black coat of Jean Lafitte, blurred confusedly; but through the blur shone clearly Pierre Lafitte's bright right eye, and the two black eyes of Jean Lafitte, and Jean Lafitte's white and beautiful teeth.

"You did it because it amused you to play with me like a cat playing with a mouse," he cried. "Very good! You have won and I have lost. I have done a low and disgusting thing, and you have

countered it cleverly. Make an end to it, man! Make an end to it! Take me outside and hit me over the head, or throw me into the Gulf, or do whatever it is that you do to men out in this beastly place!"

He was hysterical. He pressed his fingertips against the top of the table and tried to stand firm, erect. The blood was banging in his temples, and he knew that his face was red and wet.

Jean Lafitte rose slowly.

"There will be nothing like that, m'sieu. You will have your duel. You came here to insult me, but you insulted me before you came. I will challenge, as you wished. And we will fight. But we will fight here on my own ground, and with my own friends around me. My own brother, Pierre, will act as your representative and see that you are accorded honest treatment. If you are not killed you will be permitted to leave here in safety. Pierre will insure that. Promise me that, Pierre. Swear it."

"My brothair, I think eet ees undue generosity—"

"Swear it for me, Pierre!"

The older brother shrugged.

"Ver' well, I swear eet."

Jean turned to Frank St. Humbert again.

"We will fight at daybreak."

"For the love of God, man, let's fight here and now!"

"No," said Jean Lafitte. "You have had too much wine. You must sleep for a little while. You will occupy that room next to the kitchen. Nobody will disturb you until my brother summons you at dawn." He bowed, very stiff and proper. "M'sieu, I wish you good night."

Frank bowed laxly. Then he walked to the little bedroom next to the kitchen, where Pierre Lafitte accompanied him.

"If there ees anything you want," Pierre Lafitte told him, "I will be in the next room. You understan', everything ees lef' open, but you can not possibly escape from thees islan'."

"I have no intention of trying it," Frank said coldly.

"It ees well, m'sieu." He paused at the doorway, and then said solemnly, "As your represent'eeve, m'sieu, it ees my duty to warn you to get ver' good sleep. My brothair, m'sieu, ees the bes' pistol shot in the country, maybe in the whole worl'. Good night, m'sieu."

He bowed, and Frank bowed.

"Good night," said Frank.

IT WAS a long night, years long. They had given Frank a small and plainly furnished, but comfortable, room. The bed was big and very soft. But he did not sleep. He kicked off his shoes, loosened his cravat, took off his coat, unbuttoned his waistcoat—but he could not sleep. He lay in the big bed, staring through the bars of the window at a hazy golden moon which had risen over the back of the island, over Barataria Bay. His eyes were hot and dry; he closed them, and lay perfectly still, and felt his own heart beating and felt the blood pounding through his body; but he could not sleep.

He wished that he had taken more of the wine. More, or less. He had taken just enough to keep himself awake, he told himself. Or was it fear that was keeping him awake? Was he afraid? Well, if it was fear, nobody had a better right to it! At least, nobody was looking at him. Nobody but the Lafittes and their friends would see him die.

The thought of death made him cold, and he shivered. His face was still hot, but his body was cold.

He tried to think of anything but the duel that was coming. He tried to think of his friends in the city, and what they would say when he did not return. He wondered what sort of stories would be circulated about the disappearance.

Would the Lafittes have the temerity to make known the facts? Would they dare to raise the public wrath, they who were already officially proscribed? But again, would anybody care? Frank St.

Humbert caught himself wondering, as he stared at the hazy, lazy moon, whether anybody really would miss him after all, whether anybody would care that he was gone. He had been picturesque, a talked-about figure. But had he meant anything to anybody, personally, intimately?

Quite suddenly, as though at some alarm, he got up from the bed and stalked to the window. He was getting morbid! He was letting himself become too pessimistically certain of the outcome of this duel. After all, he was not dead yet. He still had a pistol to hold, a shot to fire. It was true that Jean Lafitte was celebrated as a marksman, and that he himself, Frank St. Humbert, was a notoriously poor shot with absolutely no experience on the field. Still, that did not mean that the thing was decided already. He might kill Lafitte! Stranger things had happened.

But his hopes sank as swiftly as they had risen. In his heart he knew that he was already defeated. It was more than just a matter of skill. It was a matter of spirit. This man Lafitte had him beaten before they went to the field. Lafitte was calm, cold, certain of himself; while he was afraid. Yes, he was afraid. He knew it. He hated himself for it, but he couldn't deny it.

But at least he could die well. Even before these outlaws he could handle himself as befitted his station. When the door of this room opened at the crack of dawn, and Pierre Lafitte with his sinister squint stood there summoning him to his death, he must be casual, unruffled. He must do nothing that would cause them to suspect his inward agitation. That much he owed to the St. Humberts of other times, shadowy men who were sometimes very real to Frank. Once he had disgraced their name; but only Claiborne and the Lafittes knew about that. A fearless death might do something to wipe out that disgrace.

Wildly he told himself that he must sleep! He threw himself on the bed again, refusing to look out of the window, turning his face to the whitewashed wall. He lay perfectly still, shivering, hating himself. He closed his eyes. But he could not sleep.

PIERRE LAFITTE, clad in black now and very solemn, found him in this position.

"Everything ees ready, m'sieu. You would like some coffee maybe, yes? I have ask' nigger to bring coffee."

Pierre Lafitte carried under his right arm a mahogany pistol box with silver mountings and a silver nameplate. This he opened on the bed. He informed Frank that it was his own, and the pistols were his own; his brother, he said, had never used them, had never even seen them.

"You have my word of honor for eet, m'sieu."

He showed the pistols to Frank, who examined them dully. They were lovely weapons, long and heavy, with Circassian walnut stocks with blue steel mountings: genuine Oscar Eggs, worth a small fortune. Frank lifted each in turn, balanced it, sighted along it.

"They seem the same to me," he said.

"They are ex-actly the same, m'sieu. There is not the deef'rence of a hair between them. Ah, here ees your coffee!"

Frank accepted the coffee gratefully. As he sipped it, he stared out of the barred window. The moon had long since disappeared, and the dawn was sickly yellow in a vague, gray sky. A listless breeze from the bay brought in the morning mist; the mist writhed sluggishly past the window, stretching itself, almost disappearing: it crowded itself into fantastic, bodyless shapes, becoming a deeper white, and then stretching out again, gliding back toward the water, making room for further streamers of mist.

"Eet ees light enough, I think," Pierre Lafitte said. "Shall we go outside, m'sieu? Are you ready?"

"I'm ready," said Frank St. Humbert.

They walked side by side into the big room. In a far corner, at the front, were

Jean Lafitte and a man Frank recognized promptly as one of his lieutenants and a familiar character in the Vieux Carre, short and smiling Dominick You, artilleryman, adventurer, pirate. Dominick You was very solemn now, as befitted the occasion. Jean Lafitte himself was very solemn; he did not look at Frank, and Frank only glanced coldly past him.

Pierre Lafitte drew Dominick You aside, and for some time they conversed in whispers. They looked here, they looked there, and specifically they looked, often, out of the various windows. They walked once up and down the length of the room. The room was about twenty-five feet long. They marked with chalk a short line at one end, in the center, and then a similar line at the other end.

All this time Frank stood near the door of his bedroom. His heart was beating wildly, erratically, but his face was frozen into an expression of disdain. He was behaving correctly, but the effort was sapping his strength. He kept his eyes half closed.

Dominick You and Pierre Lafitte raised every window shade and drew back every curtain; the jalousies already were open. Then they went together to the table in the center of the room, and this they carried to one side of the room. They opened the pistol case and examined the pistols. They tinkered with bullet molds, tiny scales, cleaning rods, silver powder boxes. They clipped bullets from a large lump of lead, and weighed the bullets again and again, clipping them, scraping them, until they were exactly the same.

Frank St. Humbert tried not to look at this, tried not to think of it. He stared out of a window at the sprawling, crawling mist.

The process of loading the pistols seemed to be interminable. Pierre Lafitte and Dominick You were fussy. The charge of powder in one pistol must be the same, to the thirty-second of an ounce, as the charge in the other. The balls were again inspected and found of precisely the same weight.

Frank St. Humbert never had been on the field of honor, as a principal, representative or mere eye witness; but he knew that the principals were not supposed to bother themselves with these details. So he waited, stiff and straight, gazing out of the window.

Presently Pierre Lafitte came to him, placed him behind one of the chalk lines, thrust a pistol into his left hand, the muzzle toward the wall behind him, and gave firing instructions.

"You mus' hold eet so till the handkerchief ees raise'. Then you bring eet aroun', *so*, in the right han', and you take firing position, so! But you mus' not raise eet until the handkerchief ees drop' down. My frien', M'sieu Dominick You, and mysel', we keel the firs' man who shoots too soon or steps over thees line in front of him, no matter eet ees my own brothair. You understan'?"

Frank nodded. He did not trust himself to talk. He saw Dominick You placing Jean Lafitte at the other end of the room, whispering to him. The ceremony was horrible; it was grotesque! Why didn't they let the two men shoot at each other and have it over with? This vast show of fairness was nothing but that—a show. Nobody doubted the outcome of the duel.

"Prepare to fire, gentlemen!" It was the voice of Dominick You, who stood now with Pierre Lafitte next to the table.

Frank was staring directly at Jean Lafitte, who was straight and stern, all in somber black, with a white, set face. Out of a corner of his eye Frank saw the piece of white linen go up. Jean Lafitte turned in his place, shifting the pistol from his left hand to his right. Frank moved in a like manner, offering as little target as possible. He held the pistol firmly. He was remembering that somebody had once told him that you should squeeze a pistol grip, not just pull the trigger. Not that it made any difference now . . .

Jean Lafitte was staring at him, ex-

pressionless; and he stared back so hard that his eyeballs ached.

"FIRE!"

Frank raised his pistol quickly and pulled the trigger, forgetting to squeeze. There was a terrific explosion—Lafitte had fired at the same instant—and the air was filled with smoke. The recoil threw Frank's right hand high, and he staggered back against the wall, gasping, choking.

Through the smoke, large, bland, unhurried, like a schooner looming through fog, came Pierre Lafitte. He took the pistol from Frank's right hand. He shook Frank.

"You hurt, m'sieu? You hit?"

"I—I seem to be all right."

He moved his shoulders; he swung his arms. It made him feel rather ridiculous.

"Jean—he miss you. Await my return. I will see eef your opponent ees struck, m'sieu."

Dominick You was engaged in opening windows, and the smoke was curling languidly out. Jean Lafitte stood grim and straight at the other end of the room; he kept his right side toward Frank, and apparently he had not stirred an inch. Pierre Lafitte spoke to Dominick You, and the little adventurer shook his head.

"My principal is not touched," said Dominick You. "He demands another shot."

The pistols were loaded again. The long, nerve wracking business was conducted at the table, as before. Dominick You and Pierre Lafitte whispered together, cutting lead, weighing powder, jamming in charges with brass ramrods. It took a long time, and Frank stared again out of a window, wishing that it was all over, wishing that he were dead.

Finally Pierre Lafitte returned, handed him a pistol and told him that the rules for firing would be exactly the same.

Dominick You handed his principal the other pistol. Jean Lafitte had not stirred.

Dominick You and Pierre Lafitte agreed that there was still too much smoke in the room, and they strode up and down fanning the air with unfolded newspapers. Dominick You suggested that they open the door, but Pierre Lafitte objected that this might distract his principal, who faced in that direction. It was becoming lighter, and the mist no longer floated at the windows. The air was wet and chilly. The odor of gunpowder was very strong, and it made Frank's nose and throat dry.

"Prepare to fire, gentlemen!" Pierre Lafitte raised the handkerchief.

Dominick You gazed first at one principal, then at the other, and he nodded thoughtfully.

"Fire!"

Again Frank raised his pistol and fired instantly. He did not take time to sight along the pistol barrel; he was too excited. But he could have sworn that he had pointed the weapon directly at Jean Lafitte, even so. Lafitte did not move. He had raised his own pistol, but he did not fire. He waited, utterly cold, collected, while the smoke between them drifted sluggishly toward the open windows. He waited, it seemed, for hours. His pistol was pointed at Frank's breast. His right eye was closed as he sighted along the barrel. Frank saw his lips curl in a confident, sardonic smile. There was a terrible minute of screaming silence—and then Lafitte fired.

Frank's last thought before the explosion was that at least he had stood well; he had not closed his eyes; and he looked squarely at death and kept his face expressionless.

His first thought after the explosion was one of annoyance at Pierre Lafitte, who was patting him up and down, all over his body, with large, quick moving hands.

"You are all right, m'sieu?" He seemed astounded. "You have not been hit!"

"I feel all right," Frank St. Humbert

said. He was dazed, dizzy.

Pierre Lafitte turned and said to nobody in particular, in a loud voice—

"My principal, he ees not hurt!"

Then for the first time in a long while Jean Lafitte moved. He handed his pistol to Dominick You, and crossed the room with a quick step, making the smoke swirl behind him in little eddies like the water behind a ship. He stood directly in front of Frank St. Humbert.

"My honor has been satisfied, m'sieu. The insult no longer exists. Do you demand another shot, or shall we stop?"

It was unethical, but it was handsomely done. Frank St. Humbert extended his right hand.

"I am sorry for what I did and said, M'sieu Lafitte. It was a contemptible thing, and I apologize for it. You have proved yourself a finer gentleman than I could ever be."

Jean Lafitte smiled, flashing his beautiful teeth. He shook Frank's hand warmly.

"It was only carelessness, m'sieu, and I was careless and too hasty to take offense. We will say no more about it, ever." He turned to Pierre. "*Mon frère,* I know you sent Callalou from the house for this affair, but do you think you could find us yourself some food and some of that Burgundy? My friend, M'sieu St. Humbert, enjoys the Burgundy greatly, and we will have it for breakfast for this special occasion."

Pierre Lafitte grinned broadly.

"*Magnifique!*" he cried. "Of course, I can find eet, *mon frère!* Callalou has kept some cold."

Dominick You, too, was grinning.

"I know the smell of gunpowder well," said Dominick You, "but to tell the truth, I never did like it. A little wine would clear my throat."

"We will drink to our friendship," said Jean Lafitte, smiling at Frank St. Humbert . . .

There was more of the Burgundy—six bottles of it—in Frank's boat, when, two hours later, Frank was preparing to return to the city.

"My gift to you, as I promised, m'sieu."

There was something else in the boat, too. It was an oaken chest, small, iron studded, very heavy. Frank stared at it, puzzled. Jean Lafitte explained.

"Another gift from me, m'sieu. To quiet Senac."

Frank protested—

"But I couldn't possibly accept—"

Jean Lafitte waved him to silence.

"Are we not friends, m'sieu? What good is all my money if I can not help my friends? Pay me back any time—when the next crop is in, or later, as you wish."

Frank shook his hand again, but he said nothing. Jean Lafitte, smiling, delighted as a child, waved him off.

"*Au revoir, m'sieu!* You will visit us again some time in our poor country home? Yes? *Au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir,*" Frank muttered; and the boatman pushed off.

They watched him go, Jean Lafitte and Pierre Lafitte and Dominick You, and behind them half a hundred of the cutthroats of Barataria. The *bos* was smiling genially, but Pierre Lafitte shook his head.

"I can not understan' eet, *mon frère.* You should have keel him."

"*Non, non!* He is a fine lad, Pierre, and he stood up there like a brave man when he thought there was really a piece of lead in my pistol. He will never know, and now he will always be our friend and the friends of the Barataarians. Perhaps we need many such friends."

"It seems like much trouble for only the mock duel. And eef he learn', he will be furious."

"He will never learn," said Jean Lafitte. "Nobody saw you and Dominick load the pistols and stuff in wadding instead of ball. How could he ever know?" Jean Lafitte smiled, and he nodded thoughtfully. "*Mon frère,* M'sieu St. Humbert is now my friend," he repeated. "And I like friends who are real gentlemen."

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

T. R. ELLIS, whose story "Barrel 'Em and Bend 'Em", in this issue, is his first in *Adventure*, rises to introduce himself to the members of Camp-fire:

Columbus. Ohio

Born in Texas, I attended school in Ohio, and at the ripe old age of fourteen started moving. With the exception of one foreign tour, personally conducted by my Uncle Samuel (1917-1918), my traveling has been confined largely to the States. Drove racing cars a few years and was able to trail along with the leaders, but never good enough to be a headliner. Later managed, successively, a speedway, a rodeo and an airport.

Accidentally I skidded into the printing industry at an early age, and when things broke bad and money was scarce, went back to it. Eventually graduated to the composing room of metropolitan dailies, and from there to the news room. Looked in my share of assignment books and worried my quota of city editors in the process of discovering reporting was not the highly paid, dramatic work I had been led to believe, and returned to the composing room. At present am splitting my time more or less evenly between the keyboard of a linotype and that of a typewriter. —T. R. ELLIS

A READER who wrote Hapsburg Liebe, of our Ask Adventure staff, posing a question about capturing alligators in a novel way, sends on Mr. Liebe's reply as being worthy of more general notice:

St. Petersburg, Florida

I have fished a great deal in water infested by 'gators, but it was nearly always with artificial minnows or pork-rind baits. I never hooked a 'gator. I heard of a man catching a 'gator by

hooking it accidentally with a wooden minnow. I heard of another man catching a small 'gator on a live bait (live minnow). I should say that it would be entirely within the bounds of possibility to catch a small and foolish 'gator while fishing if the bait was live minnow, frog, or anything of that nature. 'Gators are very shy, except in the mating season and when they have young, or when they are extremely hungry. No doubt their shyness is the main reason why many of them have not been hooked by fishermen.

A three-foot 'gator would be almost a baby, and could be handled easily on rod and reel unless it were in grass, lily-pads, or where it could catch to something. We have fellows here in Florida who do exhibition wrestling with 'gators 6 ft. to 10 ft. long. (I think they're crazy). 'Gators in fighting seize and hold on with their peg-like teeth and then begin to turn over and over. If one is caught in a net, he rolls the net up around him, then tears it up getting away. A peculiar thing about 'gators is that they have stupendous strength for closing their jaws, but very little for opening them. A ten-year-old boy could hold a 10 ft. 'gator's mouth shut. When 'gators are captured, the first thing is to tie their mouths shut.

Of all the things on earth to eat, 'gators are craziest about pigs and small dogs.

All the 'gators in the South are not in Florida. I knew one to be killed in South Carolina by means of a trap gun baited with a picked duck—the saurian pulled the triggers himself by pulling the duck, a wire running to the triggers.

—HAPSBURG LIEBE

FURTHER enlightenment on the subject of four-decker men of war:

Arlington, New Jersey

I was interested in H. I. Chapelle's note on four-deckers in the Camp-fire for October 1st and thought that further information might be of interest.

El Santissima Trinidad was built at Havana in the year 1769 as a 112 gun three-decker, similar to the *San Josef*. It appears that between the beginning of the year 1793 and the end of 1796 her quarter-deck and forecastle were formed into a whole deck, barricades built up along her gangways, and ports cut through them so as to make the total number of eight-pounders on that deck equal in amount to the 12s on the deck next below it. This gave her 126 guns. In addition four 4 or 6 pounders were mounted on the poop. This gives her armament when she bore Don José de Langaras' flag at Cape St. Vincent (February 1797).

In 1805 she mounted in addition four iron 36 pair (Spanish) carronodes, giving a total of 134 guns, with a broadside of 1237 lbs. Crew as a four-decker 1000 officers and men. These particulars except her broadside and number of crew are from James, Vol. II page 66. James gives the crew of "112" as 921 men and, allowing four men to a gun, the extra men needed to work the guns of a 130 would bring her crew to 1000 or over. Her broadside is calculated.

The tonnage of the *Trinidad* was about 2550 tons as built (the *San Josef* being of 2457 tons measurement and the *Trinidad* being slightly wider. As a four-decker she had the same measurment (as the shape or type of upper works of a vessel did not affect her "builder tonnage" or Tonnage B. M., as it is usually called) and was of at least 5000 tons displacement with a length of about 272 ft. Contemporary writers describe her as the "biggest ship in the world".

Another four-decker the name of which I have forgotten was designed nearly at the close of the "wooden period" as a screw 140-gun ship, but was never built, chiefly because of the obsolescence of wooden ships and the coming of the ironclad. Although as she would have been of 7500 ton displacement and nearly 300 feet between perpendiculars, it is doubtful if she could have been a seaworthy vessel, as there is a limit to the size of wooden ships.

MR. CHAPELLE makes the statement that the regular 3-decker showed four "pretty complete tiers of guns." In this he is mistaken, as there was from 75 to 100 feet out of an overall length of about 220 feet without any guns. This can be observed by any one who looks at a good picture of the old *Victory*, or of the British three-deckers. To a smaller degree the same gap in the upper tier may be noticed on the U. S. S. *Constitution*. However, a flush 3-decker, of which a few were built, showed 3 full tiers only. A typical example was the old U. S. S. *North Carolina*, laid down in 1815 as an 84, and always so rated, but actually completed in 1818 or -19 as a flush decker 102.

The quarter decked type of construction with raised quarter deck and forecastle, connected by narrow gangways working to a point about the main mast and the deck below, 30 or upper gun deck open to the sky, "came in to use about the time of the Restoration," (*circa* 1660 A.D.) though the forecastle barricades and the mounting of guns seem to have been a later adaption. In some of the later 3-deckers the bulwarks appeared continuous with the forecastle and quarter-deck barricades, while in others the fip sail, (sail along the top of the bulwarks) extended in a straight line fore 'n' aft with stanchions several feet apart supporting it along the length of the gangways. These two types might appear as four-deckers to a casual observer, but the older 3-deckers like the *Victory* (built 1765) generally showed the waist (central part of ship) somewhat lower than the two ends.

THE dimensions of the *San Josef* 112 were as follows: length guns deck (height between P-Ps) 194'3", beam 54'3", depth of hold 24'6", draught about 26½ ft., displacement 4787 tons, estimated. The *Trinidad* was certainly six or seven feet longer and slightly wider, probably 150 ft. x 56 ft.

The first 3-decker of "modern" construction, (the type represented by the *Victory*), seems to have been the *Royal Sovereign*, (ex-sovereign of the seas), as probably rebuilt upon her renaming in 1660, although the *Royal Prince* (built as an "80" in 1610) was altered into a 100 gun 3-decker in 1661 or -2. She was lost in action in 1666 The *Royal Sovereign* referred to above was burnt at Chatham in 1697.

I WONDER if any reader of the Camp-fire, can tell me where I can get information as to the displacements and dimensions length, l.w.l., and draught of the later 2-deckers or the screw 3-deckers built in the '50's. Particularly of a class of British "745" built 1802-1816 numbering about 50 ships. I have been unable to obtain any data except for the few ships that lasted until 1872, when displacement measurement began to appear in the Navy List, and even of these it is hard to obtain the dimensions.

—SIDNEY MARKS

ONE of a great many interesting letters received on the subject of mountain lions. True, we don't seem to be getting nearer any sort of agreement, but the variety of "big cat" experiences this discussion has evoked from readers makes mighty salty reading. It's unfortunate space in these columns will not permit us to print them all:

Elgin, Illinois

I heard the *gato grande*—locally, *el leone*—down in New Mexico when I was a project engineer in the Winter of '09-10. It was down in Rio Arriba County on an irrigation project which had been handed down and finally wished upon some Colorado promoters. It was known as the José Lobato Grant. Two rivers ran through it. My main camp was about two miles south of El Rito, a Mexican hamlet. Back of us was Cañon Los Angeles or Angel Canyon, and Copper Canso named because the early Spaniards had mined out a lot of copper.

We used to buy our beef in quarters, and hang it up out of reach of the smaller prowlers. Every night we could hear the pumas—mountain lion, cougars or what have you—screaming, and if you hear it you won't forget it any more than your first rattler.

WE HAD established a sanitary deadline fifty yards from our shack and the group of tents —an open plumbing affair. One of the boys, Billy Stuvell, who was recorder for one of the instrument men, fell into the door of the shack white and scared, with one suspender dangling. I asked him why the rush.

"I run into a mountain lion!"

I tried to tell him that it was probably one of a band of outlaw burros that grazed on our alfalfa stack in spite of our protests in the form of a barrage of tin cans which we set out full of water to freeze into fairly good missiles. Bill wouldn't have it. He said it looked like a Great Dane dog; which was a fair description, barring the small head this cat has.

WELL, I did the usual fool thing. I took my .32-20 Colt off the wall over my bunk and went out. It was starlight, and about two inches of frozen snow on the ground. We were up on an altitude of 5,800 feet, and it was a few degrees above zero. Couldn't get a shine from the critter's eyes, and listened. Heard something crushing down the frozen sage and shot toward the sound. It retreated, and I kept on shooting as near as I could toward the source of the sound until all was quiet and I was out of shells. I went back into the shack and cleaned and reloaded my gun, and in the morning I went out and found plenty cat sign—tracks that I couldn't cover with my two hands with buck gloves.

I sent down word to the Mexican village of El Rito that we had some visitor, and a couple of days later one of my engineers—later Lieutenant Arey D. Locke of the 108th Engineers—rode up with the mail and said:

"Come on down to the Sergeant's store. They have that lion you chased out of the corral. A Mex shot it and its mate."

I WENT out to our riding-stock corral, cornered my pony, roped him, saddled up and went to the general store about two miles up the trail, and there were two fine cats. We dragged the male on to the scale and weighed him—180 pounds of bone and muscle. The Mex had shot him through the head as he perched on a low limb. The female jumped, and the Mex caught her through the heart, using a .25 Special. He drew twenty dollars each bounty on the scalps alone. And this is the odd part: He had a little twenty-pound bulldog, all scarred and nicked up, and he told me:

"The *gato*, he see *perro*. Him vamos up tree. *Chiquito perro* (the little dog) he set down by tree. Him bark. *Leone* he afraid to move. Me I shoot him—poof! No danger. You come wiz me, mebbe we shoot more. No danger. You play wiz *gato*."

"Not for me, *amigo*," I said. "I don't want to play with any cats."

While down there I used to ride over dim

trails hoping to pick up one of those Mexican turkeys, and when I would turn back I'd sometimes find a cat had been industriously trailing me. And while I never heard of them molesting men while down there, they *do* scream, and you may lay to that!

—MAJOR R. H. BALDWIN

And to show that thrashing out this topic is not limited to our pages, another comrade sends in the following clipping from an Oroville, California, paper (name not specified). The sender says: "Both hunters mentioned are well known in this State, and both know lions intimately, so on with the battle!"

OROVILLE, Dec. 5—Mountain lions DO cry. At least C. W. Laidshaw, State lion hunter, who is in Butte County for the purpose of hunting the big cats, believes they do.

In this particular, Laidshaw does not agree with Jay Bruce, another State lion hunter, who asserts that the lions don't emit a sound.

Laidshaw himself has never heard a full grown mountain lion scream, but he has talked with many experienced mountaineers who claim to have heard the spine-twitching noise. And besides, Laidshaw points out, it wouldn't be natural for an animal like the mountain lion, which relies on its cunning, to pounce upon its prey or to escape its enemies, to emit a screech when seeking to evade a pack of dogs.

Once, Laidshaw said, he heard a lion cub scream after it had been shot and wounded.

"Old timers who knew more of the mountains than we will ever know tell of hearing mountain lions scream when the lions were much more plentiful than they are now," Laidshaw stated, "and I believe that they were correct."

Laidshaw said he had talked to a number of persons who were experienced woodsmen and who had excellent reputations for veracity tell of hearing lions cry. The lion hunter advanced the theory that possibly lions scream only during the mating season.

LAIDSHAW himself has seen tracks in the snow indicating that a lion had crouched at a vantage point and watched deer below him. Then he had bounded at them with several quick jumps, stopped quickly and watched them jump away, without molesting them.

A lion sometimes ranges over a 60 mile radius.

Laidshaw brought five dogs with him, but one of his animals was cut on both shoulders in a recent encounter with a wounded lion in Shasta County and is on the hospital list.

Laidshaw expects to get out in the next two days, however. One of the first localities visited probably will be near Merrimac, where lions have been reported. Lions also are said to have been ranging near Yankee and Big Chico Creek.

LAIDSHAW believes that in 99 cases out of 100 when someone claims to have seen a mountain lion it is something else. Sometimes it is a coyote, sometimes a deer, but rarely is it the great deer slayer. When an experienced mountain man actually sees a lion track, or the remains of a lion kill, then it is a lion of another color.

Once Laidshaw went to a locality where a hunter had returned and told of seeing a lion cross a road and disappear in a patch of brush. Laidshaw found the animal's tracks, but the animal itself had shrunk considerably in size. The signs were those of a bobcat.

It is estimated that a mountain lion averages a kill a week. Usually the victim is a deer, but it may be a calf, a sheep, a cub bear or some other animal. A lion may bury part of its kill under leaves and twigs, or it may eat only part of it and leave the rest lying on the ground. Sometimes in winter when deer are bunched up he may kill for the sheer animal joy of snapping the necks of the animals.

At times mountain lions disport like overgrown kittens. Laidshaw said he talked to a rancher who said he saw a mountain lion playing "cat and mouse" with a sheep, pushing the helpless animal over and playing with it, preparatory to the kill.

TOM L. MILLS, Ask Adventure expert for New Zealand, writes of the passing of a real adventurer:

Feilding, New Zealand

Camp-fire folks will be interested to learn that old Tom Clarke, most picturesque of pearlers, has taken his last dive off the deep end. To the slow tolling of the church bells at Broome, the pearling port of Western Australia, Tom, who was in his 70th year, was given the last honors. He was one of the real old-time adventurers, gold rings in his ears and all. And he was unequalled in the Seven Seas for the vocabulary of his "slanguage." He was the first white pearler in Broome in the very wild days and won fame by bringing up the famous Southern Cross pearl from Shark Bay. He sold the gem for $50. Today it is in the collection of the Pope in the Vatican and is valued up to $25,000.

Tom Clarke was no beachcomber. He had the gift of languages, so that he became an authority on native dialects; and so acquisitive was he in respect to lore and knowledge that he had no equal on aboriginal customs and the early history of pearling in the wildest grounds and waters in the globe.

—TOM L. MILLS

ASK ADVENTURE

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

First Flight

CHRISTENING a home-made airplane.

Request:—"A friend of mine is building an airplane, and I wish you could give me the general procedure for christening—what to say, and how to go about it. What should be used—ginger ale, beer, or what?"

—WALTER A. SIEWERT, Fellsmere, Florida.

Reply, by Lt. Jeffrey R. Starks:—About the most interesting christening ceremony I have ever seen was this one: The airplane was wheeled out on the line and headed into the wind. The engine was started up and the sponsor, or whatever you call the good looking gal who does the bottle-busting, stood in front of the airplane and let a rubber balloon out on the end of a thread so that it went into the propeller and burst. The balloon was one of those long sausage-shaped affairs. The girl said:

"Start easy, handle easy,
Light on the landing gear and on the pocketbook! . . .
I christen thee (name of airplane in question)."

It was unique and went over big.

Ammunition

POISON bullets, garlic and Spanish brassjackets.

Request:—"Reading a story called 'Gentleman Mike' which appeared in a recent popular American magazine, I came across a part which I quote partly as follows:

'I glanced at the headline: GARLIC BULLETS END LIFE OF WILLY THE RAT. So they'd landed Willy! Well, he wouldn't be missed. They'd

smeared bullets with garlic to poison the wound, a favorite trick of Italian gunmen. . .'

I am hereby asking you for any information you may be willing to give me as to the veracity of the fact mentioned above."

—ROB. GALLUSSER, Puerto Barrios, Guatemala

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—The writer of the story you allude to is misinformed. You can't poison a bullet with garlic! While I firmly believe I'd die if I ate it, still I must admit there is nothing to the story as regards any poisoning qualities of this highly flavored seasoning.

The only thing I ever really ran down in the poison bullet line was the old Spanish cartridge, used by the Spanish troops against our men in the War of 1898. This had, in some makes, a brass covering or jacket to the bullet, designed to prevent the lead stripping in the grooves of the rifle bore; it gathered verdigris badly in the tropics, and caused infected wounds in many cases.

A friend of mine stopped one in Cuba, at San Juan Hill, and limped badly the rest of his days, due to the severe condition of his hip where the wound occurred. He was finally killed with a .44 Colt Bisley—by his father-in-law, incidentally. But he told me of the facts of his being wounded, and how and where.

The writers who mention firearms in popular publications do fearful and wonderful things with the decent old smokepoles. Of course, they don't know, and don't bother to inquire. Hence some of the wild things passed out by them on the printed page.

I firmly believe that I shall some day read how Paul Revere emptied his automatic at the British as he leaped his horse over a machine gun. I think I've read about everything else in the line of mistakes on gun misinformation but that.

Thank goodness and level headed editors, *Adventure* seems to have a minimum of gun mistakes in its columns; the men who write for it seem to know what the said guns are and are for. I strongly suspect certain of our writers have used 'em in past days, as well.

Guatemala

BUDGET for four people on $150 a month.

Request:—"Would a family of four be able to live comfortably in Guatemala on $150 per month?"—HARRY GALPIN, Washington, D. C.

Reply, by Mr. E. Brugiere:—I am sure that four people can live on $150 in Guatemala, provided that they practise a strict economy in luxuries. I believe that, by simply listing a number of costs, I can give you a clearer idea of living conditions than by lengthy description. Please understand, however, that these costs are approximate and vary with place and time.

	(average)	(minimum)
Hotels, large cities	$ 5.00	$ 3.00 per day
Hotels, small towns	2.50	2.00 per day
Hotel boarding-houses		40.00 per mo.
House, in city, 2 rooms, tiled porch, yard, kitchen, latrine	40.00	25.00 per mo.
House, same in large town	25.00	18.00 per mo.
Board	30.00	15.00 per mo.
Food in market, per person	20.00	10.00 per mo.
(4 people)		35.00 per mo.
Laundry per person	5.00	2.00 per mo.
Cook, in small cities	15.00 & board	7.00 per mo.

Toilet articles 10% more than in U. S. (app.)

Clothing, slightly higher than U. S. Light summer clothes and palm beach suits generally, except in mountains. Difficult to obtain well made clothes and shoes at any price.

Cigarets, popular brands, 20 cents package. (Good cured pipe tobaccos practically unobtainable. Pipes very little used there.)

These prices, especially the lower ones, must be hunted for as everywhere else. Perhaps you will even be able to better them. Living in the country is of course even cheaper, and much of the foodstuffs you can grow yourself. The longer one lives in these countries, the easier it becomes to economize. When fresh from the States most people still have a strong desire for the every-day amusements that are really luxuries in Guatemala.

Teak

TROPICAL woods for the amateur craftsman.

Request:—"Is teakwood obtainable in the United States in small quantities, *i.e.*, inch-boards? Can it be polished? Does it work easily enough for a cabinet wood?

Will sandalwood retain its aroma indefinitely as cedar does? Will it take a polish? Where can I obtain a small quantity of it?"

—F. E. BRAKE, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. W. R. Barbour:—Teakwood is very little used in the United States. It is primarily used by the British for ship construction, and in the Oriental countries for furniture. It takes a very high polish and its original brownish color gradually changes to black. While quite hard, it can be worked easily.

Sandalwood retains its aroma indefinitely. The surface gradually dries out, but whenever a new surface is exposed the typical odor of sandalwood is as strong as ever. It is yellow in color and takes a high polish.

Both these woods are seldom found in the United States. I suggest that you write to C. H. Pearson & Company, New York.

Navigation

THINGS a skipper must know how to do.

Request:—"I am greatly interested in navigation in the Merchant Marine. How much technical knowledge is required?"
—BENJ. T. TAYLOR, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

Reply, by Lt. Harry E. Rieseberg:—An application for license as master of ocean steam vessels shall pass satisfactorily an examination in the following subjects:

1. Latitude by meridian altitude of the sun.
2. Latitude by ex-meridian altitude of the sun.
3. Latitude by meridian altitude of a star.
4. Latitude by pole star.
5. Longitude by chronometer.
6. Position by Sumner's method.
7. Day's work.
8. Mercator's sailing.
9. Deviation of the compass by an amplitude.
10. Deviation of the compass by an azimuth.
11. Time of high water at a given port.
12. Chart navigation.
13. Storm signals.
14. International code signals.
15. International rules for preventing collisions at sea.
16. Use of gun and rocket apparatus for saving life from shipwreck, as practised by the U. S. Coast Guard.
17. Such further examination of a non-mathematical character or nature as the local inspectors may require.

Abyssinia

AMHERIC is not being taught in easy lessons by correspondence; nor Galla, Tigre, Geuze and the other sixty-six dialects of the country.

Request:—"Please inform me what language is spoken in Abyssinia. Where may a grammar and dictionary of that particular language be purchased?"—No. 21972, Dannemora, New York

Reply, by Capt. R. W. van Raven de Sturler:—In Abyssinia some 70 languages are spoken, the principal of which is Amheric. Of the Semitic languages of the world it is spoken by a greater number of people than any other, with the exception of Arabic. It is said to have more than 200 letters in its alphabet and as yet is not being taught in six lessons by any correspondence school anywhere I ever heard of. Most of these 200 letters, or possibly all of them, as far as I know, represent syllables and are variations of about 40 root characters.

There is an Amheric vocabulary and grammar in existence, written by a Mr. Armbruster, the greatest English authority on the subject, but whether it is in print, or even obtainable in the U. S., I am unable to say. You might inquire at Brentano's in New York.

The next important language is Galla, a Hamitic language; then Tigre in Eritrea (Italian Somaliland) and Tigrein in the Province of Tigre in Abyssinia; also Geze or Geuze, which is the language used in the ancient documents of religious nature, preserved in Abyssinia and said to be some 2000 years old. Then follow the other 66 languages or tribal idioms of which I do not know any more than yourself, though I did have many opportunities to hear it spoken.

Cowboy

BUNKHOUSE life in Texas.

Request:—"I should be grateful for information on the daily life of a Texas cowboy. What time does he get up, have breakfast, and so forth, and how do his chores vary during the year?"—H. A. CLAUSEN, New York City.

Reply, by Mr. J. W. Whiteaker:—The answers to your question will be general—an average.

Usually arise about 5 A.M. in the Spring, Summer and Fall; around 6 A.M. during the Winter. Usually drive up the milk cows; split wood, feed their horses and then wash their hands and faces for breakfast, which is usually about 6. Usually have flapjacks, black molasses, black coffee, and sometimes have fat bacon. Or eggs, biscuits and butter is the fare for breakfast.

Fence riding, doctoring sick animals for screw worms, hay raking during the hay season for Winter feed, silos to fill with cane, wind mills to oil or springs and tanks to clean out, branding and marking calves during the season, rounding up of all stock on the range, cutting out the neighbors if any in the lot. If they are a long way from the ranch-house at noon they sometimes carry a few sandwiches of biscuits and meat, or kill a rabbit and cook it. The above covers about the day's work. During the Winter not so much work to be done. Pay ranges from $25 to $75 per month. Supper is usually between 6 and 7. There are usually bunkhouses for the hands to sleep in and store their belongings. Bunks are built-in features—the hands usually have to furnish most of their bedding.

If they are out on the range miles from the house they have a chuck wagon along and eat around a camp-fire. Unless something out of the ordinary turns up that calls for their assistance, after supper is their own time. They generally hit the hay about 9 P.M. They swap experiences, tell stories, play cards, wrestle or play some kind of instrument and sing. Very seldom have I seen so much as a newspaper on the place. They all bunk in the same building; often the bunks are in tiers of two, from four to

ten bunks along the floor. The size of the ranch determines how many are employed.

A note on horse stock farms: Horses are bred and the scrubby ones are sold very cheap to cattlemen. On some of the larger ranches in Texas mares and stallions run wild from one year to the next without being seen by men except at distances. When horses are needed some of these are caught and broken for riding and driving. Most of these are mustangs. Some are crossed with jacks for mules. Use horses for ploughing, for hack and wagon driving, cow ponies for herding—and polo in some sections.

Boxing

IMPORTANCE of powerful muscles behind the shoulders.

Request:—"Do large neck and back muscles interfere with a boxer's punch?"

—WILLIAM KLEIN, Bronx, New York

Reply, by Capt. Jean V. Grombach:—Back muscles of the proper kind aid in punching; for instance, men who have for years practised punching a heavy bag develop long sinewy muscles above and behind the shoulders which aid in increasing punching power and also help the owner to keep his hands up in defense for a long time. A large neck does not aid in punching power, but in assimilating punishment about the face; especially to take punches on the chin.

The Northwestern section is still vacant. Readers who feel that they are fully qualified to cover Washington and Oregon should 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.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 536 Park St., Chicago, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, New Jersey.

Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

Automotive and Aircraft Engines *Design, operation and maintenance.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns *including foreign and American makes: wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, *including foreign and American makes.*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons *pole arms and armor.*—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 939 Timberman Road, Grandview, Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D. Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercises, food and habits.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.

Hiking CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Camping and Woodcraft PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tennessee.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting; development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.* —VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystallography, color and chemical composition.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration work, advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman, rate clerk, General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery: tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R. (Retired), 442 Forty-ninth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 541 No. Harper Ave., Hollywood, Cal.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, Farmingdale, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.* —THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1006 E. 10th St., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ichthyology *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Ornithology *General information on birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

★**Linguistics and Ethnology** *(a) Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology. (b) Languages and the problems of race migration. (c) Individual languages and language families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Old Songs that Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON. *Archive of American Folk-Song: Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

✠**Skiing and Snowshoeing** W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "Daniel," *The World-Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Boxing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 455 West 23rd St. New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, wages, duties, addresses of all ocean lines and liners; shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Alexandria, Va.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping: names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of an American documental steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all government owned vessels.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Alexandria, Va.

★**The Sea Part 3** *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans: Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

★**The Sea Part 5** *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.* —CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean.* (*Siberian Waters.*)—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure.*

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Quartzsite, Arizona, care of Conner Field.

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands** WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross", Suva, Fiji.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States; and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City.

Asia Part 2 *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 3 *Anam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin, China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Part 4** *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn. and DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 7 *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

Asia Part 8 *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

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★**Africa Part 1** *Egypt.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT.

Africa Part 2 *Abyssinia, French Somaliland, Belgian Congo.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure.*

Africa Part 3 (British) *Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure.*

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Africa Part 8 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Box 107, Santa Susana, Cal.

✠**Africa Part 9** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

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Europe Part 2 *Albania.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, P. O. Box 303, Damariscotta, Maine.

Europe Part 4 *Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, P. O. Box 303, Damariscotta, Maine.

Europe Part 6 *Great Britain.*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, London, W. C. 2, England.

Europe Part 7 *Denmark.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson Drive, Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

Europe Part 9 *France, Belgium.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 10 *Spain.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 1 *Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 457 W. 123rd St., New York, N. Y.

✠**West Indies** *Cuba, Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—E. BRUGUIERE, 10 Gay St., New York City.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States of old Mexico, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

✠**Mexico Part 2** *Southern Lower California.*—C. R. MAHAFFEY, Finca "Flores de Italia", San Juan, Benque, Atlantida, Honduras.

Mexico Part 3 *Southeastern Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and States of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Mexico Part 4 *Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also homesteading in Canada Part 1, and fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

✠**Canada Part 2** *Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis, St., Quebec, Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungova and Keewatin.* Trips for sport and Adventure—big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts. Indian tribes and present conditions.—S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), 44 Huntley St., Toronto, Canada.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, Desoronto, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Road, Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Humers Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

✠**Canada Part 7** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.* C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Canada Part 8 *The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere.*—PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing. THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1015 W. 56th St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 1 *California, Utah and Arizona.* E. E. HARRIMAN, 1832 Arlington Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 2 *New Mexico.* Also Indians. Indian dances, including the snake dance.—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 West Roma Ave., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Western U. S. Part 3 *Colorado and Wyoming.* Homesteading. Sheep and Cattle Raising.—WILLIAM WELLS, Sisters, Oregon.

Western U. S. Part 4 *Nevada, Montana and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, P. O. Box 368, Reno, Nevada.

Western U. S. Part 5 *Idaho and Surrounding Country.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S. Part 1 *The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.* Especially early history of Missouri Valley.—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure.*

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Middle Western U. S. Part 3 *Ind., Ill., Mich., Miss., and Lake Michigan.* Also claiming, natural history legends.—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

Middle Western U. S. Part 4 *Mississippi River.* Also routes, connections, itineraries; river-steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions about working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears.—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa.

Middle Western U. S. Part 5 *Lower Mississippi River (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Middle Western U. S. Part 6 *Great Lakes.* Also seamanship, navigation, courses, distances, reefs and shoal lights, landmarks, charts; laws, penalties, river navigation.—H. C. GARDNER, 1863 E. 57th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 2 *Western Maine. For all territory west of the Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Maine Street, Bangor, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 3 *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I. and Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 1332, New Haven, Conn.

Eastern U. S. Part 4 *Adirondacks, New York.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Eastern U. S. Part 5 *Maryland, District of Columbia, West Virginia.* Also historical places.—LAWRENCE EDMUND ALLEN, 19 Maple Terrace, Charleston, West Virginia.

Eastern U. S. Part 6 *Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard.* Also sawmilling.—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.*

Eastern U. S. Part 7 *The Great Smokies and the Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon for five cents.)*

✠ *(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon for three cents.)*

THE TRAIL AHEAD—THE NEXT ISSUE OF *ADVENTURE,* MARCH 1st

Two Splendid Novelettes

INDIA—a mystery tale, with things made exciting as well as humorous by the famous bad boy of the British Secret Service.

CHULLUNDER GHOSE THE GUILELESS

By TALBOT MUNDY

MOROCCO—what happens when an ex-apache from the dives of Paris becomes ambitious to gain glory in the Foreign Legion.

A MAN OF GREAT PROMISE

By J. D. NEWSOM

And These Other Fine Stories

THE SABLE PHALANX, a story of black troops on the Mexican Border, by MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON; BLOW-DOWN, a story of the back country of Honduras, by L. G. BLOCHMAN; THE RING, a story of the Navy, by COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG; TREED TREASURE, a story of the Mounted Police, by ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON; THE SWAMP OUTLAWS, an article on the last stronghold of a notorious Southern gang, by BOYDEN SPARKES; THE TIN SHIP, a story of the air, by ANDREW A. CAFFREY; RUMBLIN' JOHN, a story of the Alabama cattle trails, by HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS; and Part II of FLENCHER'S ISLAND, a novel of the South Seas, by CAPTAIN DINGLE.

THE LEGION

GEORGES SURDEZ

Author of "They March From Yesterday"

And Georges Surdez are almost synonymous terms, for the minute a seasoned *Adventure* reader sees a story of the French Foreign Legion he automatically thinks of Surdez. The "Legion" was a familiar word for him from boyhood; he heard of the Sahara, the Tonkin, Dahomey, Madagascar from former members of the Corps long before he could read. In fact at the age of six he was taken off a train Sahara-bound. This ambition he fulfilled later, visiting every regimental headquarters in North Africa. He knows the Legionnaires from General Rollet to inmates of the Disciplinary Companies, the famous, the obscure, the good and the bad. He was the Legion's guest on Camaron Day at Sidi-bel-Abbes, rolled with the armored cars in the Desert, celebrated Armistice Day in an outpost of the Middle Atlas on the extreme border of the Moroccan dissidence zone. He has been granted active membership in the North African Association of the Legion and is a member of the Scorpion Noir, a group of Saharans. He knows French Africa from Tunis to Congo, was employed by a mahogany firm on the Ivory Coast at eighteen and has called Kita in the Sudan, Oran in Algeria, Grand-Bassam his home. YOU and WE devour his stories because of their living, throbbing reality . . .

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