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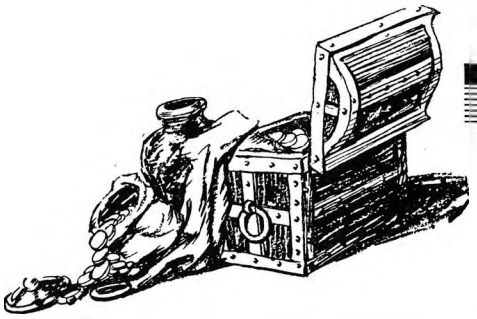

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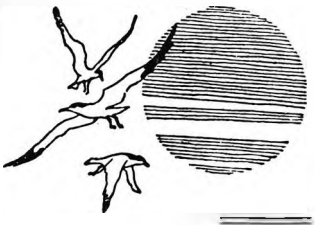

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A. A. Proctor
EDITOR

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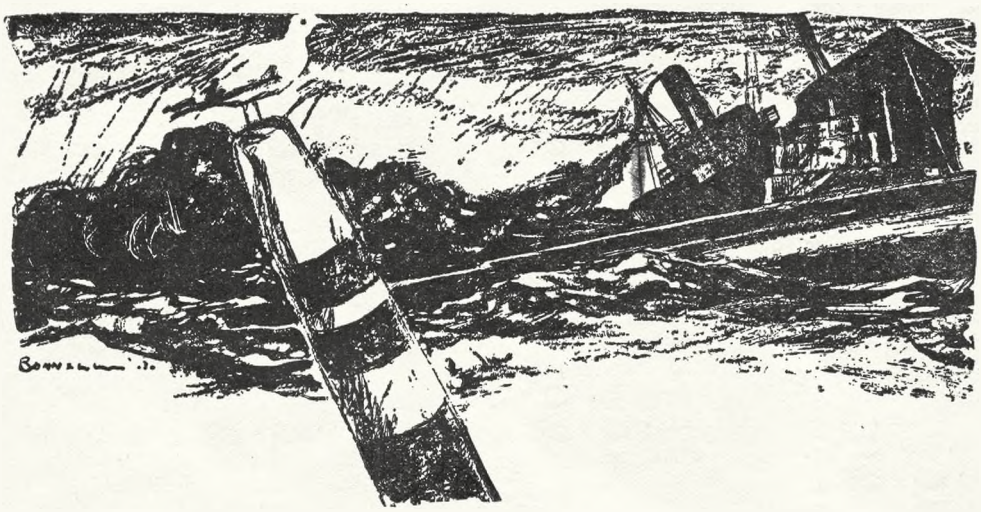


A Story of the War Spies

By ARED WHITE

"UNBREAKABLE!"

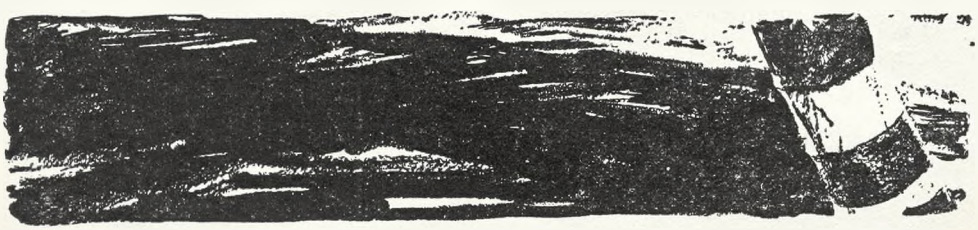
The word against which he had been fighting stubbornly for ten days dropped finally from Captain Elton's lips, an involuntary exclamation, an acceptance of his defeat. He stared vacantly at the sheets of figure symbols on his desk, the secret tongue of the Imperial German navy in which it talked nightly to its agents and submarines across the seven seas. There was no use carrying the struggle further. He had exhausted his resources.

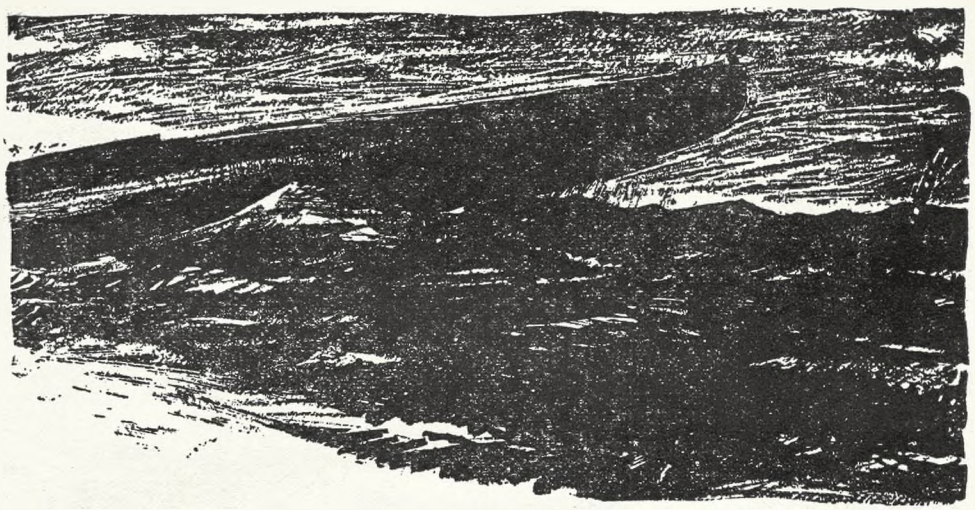
524-628-726-2244—1619—
124-26—444-918-3212—36

Sheet after sheet of these figures, arranged in groups of two, three and four. His supply had been supplemented almost nightly as the strange messages were intercepted in the air on their way to Mexico, to submarines in the Atlantic, to wireless stations in Spain and in Switzerland. Frequency tables, patient arrangement and rearrangement of the alphabet, every device known to military cipher had failed him. There was but one final conclusion. The Germans had perfected a system of communication that could not be broken. At least not academically, by rote and rule.

Colonel Rand, the American counter-espionage chief, entered Elton's littered office at the caserne. The colonel's face dropped at sight of his star operative's glum features.

"No luck, eh?" said the colonel crisply.





SUBMARINE BAIT

Elton climbed wearily to his feet and stood until Rand had seated himself, then sank back in his chair.

"Just where I was when I started, sir," Elton replied.

"Sorry to hear that, Elton," said the colonel. "We have rather an agreeable assignment for you to go to London as soon as you've broke that Boche cipher."

"I'm available immediately, sir," said Elton. "The Boche has got us stumped this time. There's nothing more I can do here."

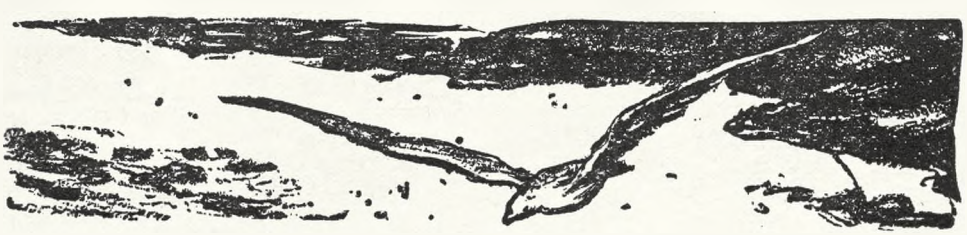
Colonel Rand eyed his assistant with annoyance.

"Didn't you tell me once, Elton, that the cipher couldn't be made that would hold water?"

"Yes, sir. That is very true. But I've been forced to the conclusion that this isn't cipher. It's enciphered code. My theory is that those numbers refer to the page and word position in a book. On that theory I've been through every book that might be available to German agents abroad. But I find nothing."

"I see. Well, does that mean it can't be found? You realize the importance of this thing, Elton. It affects the safety of our whole overseas movement, our relations with Mexico, the operation of German spies throughout the A. E. F. and neutral countries. It's worth tearing all the libraries in France upside down, if there's a chance."

Elton was studying the top of his desk



moodily. He looked up, shook his head decisively.

"It wouldn't do any good, sir. The book we need isn't in any library which we have access to at the present time."

"What reason have you for saying that, Elton?"

"Simply that the book is the new secret code book of the Imperial German navy. I'm willing to gamble on that."

Colonel Rand shifted in his chair and crossed and uncrossed his legs as he mulled upon the captain's disclosure.

"All right then," he agreed presently. "The British say they can't break it and if you agree it's unbreakable, there's no use following a blind trail here at your desk all summer. There's a lot of urgency about this London case I mentioned a minute ago. How would you like going over there and working with our Navy and the British for a spell?"

"The colonel hasn't told me what it's about yet."

"There's a bad leak to be plugged up," said Rand in his crisp, fast moving official voice. "Some one is furnishing German submarines with targets. Probably some German agents entrenched in official confidence. There's no other way of explaining the successes of a German super-submarine that's been spreading disaster up and down the coastline from channel ports to the Irish Sea. We're naturally interested, because they're bound to get some of our troop ships going into Liverpool if the thing keeps up."

"How long has this been going on, sir, may I ask?"

"A month now. And getting worse. British operatives haven't gotten anywhere on it. Our reports are they're simply running around in circles, stepping on one another. The navies have got a close net out. Destroyers, Q-boats, nets, trawlers and all kinds of sea hawk. But the only times the Boche submarine shows herself is when she comes up to watch the effect of a torpedo. Which shows conclusively that she knows where to find her targets without going on a blind hunt for them."

"To whom am I to report in London, sir?" Elton asked quietly.

"There's one thing I've been intending to compliment you on, Elton," said the colonel with bluff enthusiasm. "Your ability to make up your mind without wasting time. This time you've made a pleasant decision. The Navy will give you every cooperation in the world. A torpedo boat to gallivant the North Sea and English Channel if you need it in your work. You'll be met at the London station by an officer detailed personally by the admiral. A senior grade lieutenant of the line, Lieutenant Enoch Hargrove."

"Hargrove!" Elton's face lighted up with a quick smile. "That is good news, sir."

"Some one in the Navy you happen to know?"

"An intimate friend of Washington days. Hargrove was on duty with Naval Operations when I was with the Department of Justice. Hargrove's a regular he-man, sir. When am I to start for London?"

"Whenever you're ready, and the sooner the better."

Elton got up, reached in the corner for his musette bag and looped its canvas strap across his shoulder.

"I believe the colonel knows I keep my bag packed at all times," he said. "I'm ready as soon as I can have my travel orders."

AT MIDNIGHT Elton left the Paris Express at Le Havre, took a cab to the wharf and boarded a small British transport for Southampton. Instead of going below, he found a place at the rail where he would be alone, under the shelter of the deckhouse. Through the four hours of crossing, he stood peering intently into the gloomy fastness of choppy, foam flecked sea. There was nothing visible to the naked eye except vague swirls of white and an occasional glint of starlight through wind tossed clouds.

But Elton did not see even these. His mind was far under the surface of the

sea, intent upon those mad adventurers who lurked in submarines in the wake of Allied ships. Step by step he was testing a thought that had come into his mind on the way up from Paris. Slowly it developed from a thought into a definite plan, took form, substance. As the channel slipped swiftly behind, the spy quest sank definitely into a secondary place in his mind. He found himself hoping that the leak at London would be plugged by the time of his arrival. That would leave him free to put into action the far more vital venture that had shaped itself, the snaring of the German submarine itself. Audacious as the plan might sound from a mere landlubber, Elton had abandoned his last doubts of it.

On leaving the channel transport at Southampton, he sought out the official telegraph and flashed a cipher message back to Colonel Rand. It read:

PLEASE REMIND NAVY EMPHATICALLY OF PROMISE THAT I AM TO HAVE DESTROYER OR OTHER CRAFT IF NEEDED IN MY PRESENT MISSION. THIS IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE. IMPOSSIBLE ENTRUST DETAILS BY WIRE.

The telegram disposed of, he boarded an express train for London. When the morning editions came aboard, any hope Elton had of a stop in the leak before his arrival vanished. The front pages confirmed Colonel Rand's worst fear. On the evening before the daring German submarine had poked her periscope out of the Irish Sea long enough to torpedo an American troop ship jammed with artillery troops. Other vessels of the American convoy had stood by and prevented wholesale drownings while British destroyers rushed upon the German underseas boat with depth bombs. But a later attack upon a British cruiser told that the submarine escaped. And the two attacks told that the German commander continued to receive his targets from London.

Elton felt a quickening of the pulse as the train drew into the station at London. Not merely that London was the threshold of this new adventure with the German secret service, but it was a rare pleasure to see a familiar and friendly face from home. In Hargrove he knew he would have an agreeable and dependable ally for carrying out his own daring plan. He knew that Hargrove would begin by ridiculing his designs upon the German super-submarine. He knew, too, that Hargrove would join him in the end wholeheartedly.

Lieutenant Hargrove loomed out of the depot crowd the moment Elton stepped from the car and greeted him with a quiet handclasp and a brightening of light blue eyes, a manifestation that in Hargrove was just as eloquent as the blustering slap on the back of a more effervescent type.

"Glad to see you, old landlubber," said the lieutenant quietly. "Afraid you might miss connections at Le Havre. Pleasant trip?"

"Glad to be ashore, Skipper," replied Elton, seizing the other's hand. "I had a pleasant trip across and a profitable one. Developed a pet idea of mine to complete satisfaction and am rearing to put it into effect."

Hargrove ignored the reference and piloted Elton through the crowds to an awaiting staff car. People yielded them a ready right of way. Army and Navy were everywhere, but there were in these trim, mild mannered young men a quiet efficiency, an indefinable air of part and purpose in the great adventure, that caused people to step aside and stare after them.

"I've been hearing rumors of some great work you've been doing in the A. E. F.," said Hargrove, as the staff car began threading its way through the precarious traffic. "There's an official story current on the grapevine that you even made your way into Germany lately and returned to tell the tale."

"It was not a pleasure trip, however," responded Elton with a deprecatory smile. "As for my work, German conceit on the one hand and German secret service stupidity on the other, are more responsible for anything I've put across

than any brilliance on my own part."

"Modest as ever, Elton," said Hargrove. "I will say in defense of the German secret service, however, that they haven't been noticeably stupid up this way of late. There's a right merry rumpus on in deep official circles over this Boche submarine that the Britishers have nicknamed the *Black Shark*. You've got your job all cut out for you."

"You mean hunting for the leak in London?"

"Of course. That's the most important entry in the log at present. With some German agent wirelessing targets to a submarine in British waters, and with a submarine on the job that is smart enough to land those targets, the situation is not merely dangerous—it's intolerable!"

Elton's face dropped.

"Frankly," he said, "I'm a lot more interested in landing that Prussian submarine than in running down some dumb German spy here in London."

Hargrove turned quickly and searched Elton's face.

"For the past two hours I've been suspecting you, Elton, of some weird scheme or other," he replied. "It struck me the moment a wire came in from your G.H.Q. saying you were to be supplied with a ship and crew if needed in your work. Now you confirm it. Well—forget it! That spy mystery has the wheel and the admiral will hear of nothing else until that is disposed of."

"I suppose, then," said Elton, "that I'm expected to step in and wind that thing up in a jiffy, after the British intelligence service has flopped, eh? A pleasant prospect, for fair."

Hargrove chuckled softly.

"No, really the British aren't expecting anything of you. They're still depending upon their own infallibility. But if you can clear it up, you'll be performing a real service and you can figure on the king pinning a D. S. O. on you."

"Then give me the situation as it stands just now, and tell me where and when I'm supposed to fit myself into the picture."

"Situation unchanged. The leak's been traced to the British operations bureau. Important shipping instructions continue to reach the commander of the mysterious *Black Shark*. How? Heaven knows! Every possibility has been reasoned out, but no results. Why, man, everybody's under suspicion. Lucky thing you just reached England or you'd have been under suspicion yourself long ago. It's developed into the greatest under cover spy chase on record. And not a clew. Our service is directly interested because British destroyers are being tipped as they leave port to convoy our fast transports into Liverpool. We've lost one transport already, as you know, and more to follow if the leak isn't plugged."

"But what's being done about the real cause of the trouble, the submarine?" Elton prompted.

"Everything! We've got every destroyer out we can spare. The British have concentrated every available destroyer, trawler, mine sweeper and Q-boat in their navy. The English Channel and the Irish Sea have been divided into patrol areas in the search for the *Black Shark*. They're shooting at everything that suggests a periscope and churning the sea with depth bombs. But just consider the difficulty, Elton. That submarine can lay on the bottom all day and slip up at night. When she needs supplies, all she has to do is chase over to Belgium. And with targets and warnings furnished from London, she doesn't have to prowl about endlessly on the surface. Finding her is like hunting for that proverbial needle in a haymow, or in half a dozen haymows. Can't you see that?"

Elton reflected upon Hargrove's picture for some moments.

"Of course, as long as they go about it that way," Elton said enigmatically.

"Well, Mister Landlubber," rejoined Hargrove, "just how would you go about it if not that way?"

"No matter," said Elton. "In any event I'll admit that the first thing that's necessary is to find the Boche medium of communication. I was hopeful the Eng-

lish would have that attended to by this time. Let's hope I'll play in better luck than they. Where are we bound for now?"

"For the beginning place of the trail, and the end of it too, as far as any one's been able to find, the office of a naval operations assistant. That is unless you have something you wish to do before you settle down to business."

"No, I'm as ready now as I'll ever be. Let's get at the game at once."

THE HOURS until mid-afternoon Elton spent in sketching in the general situation in order to convince himself that the leak was a grim reality rather than a figment of overwrought imagination. Having satisfied himself first hand that German espionage was really at the bottom of the trouble, he concerned himself with all known details of the leak. These were maddening in their meagerness. One significant fact alone fixed itself upon his mind. Every ship or order that had been betrayed was handled by a particular sub-section of the operations bureau having to do with naval convoys for troop transports and supply ships.

But, as Hargrove had said, the trail began and ended there. The officers and men of that sub-section had been investigated from the date of birth, shadowed and observed for weeks in their every movement. No clue. Nor was there any tangible trail to be found along the channel of communication, among the men who carried the messages and orders, or sent them by radio to British naval stations. A theory that the Germans had got hold of the British naval code and were tapping the wires had been exploded when the secret code was changed without causing the slightest hitch in the *Black Shark's* mad operations.

Elton spent the second day with the chief of the vital sub-section, a tall, raw boned, taciturn commander of the line; thorough, prosaic, unimaginative, who dotted every *i*, crossed every *t* and weighed every thought with ponderous deliberation before putting it into words.

From Commander Althorn, by the exercise of patience and perseverence, Elton gained a mass of minor detailed information in the course of a ten-hour interview. The *modus operandi* of sending orders was simple, direct, effective. The commander received his orders from above for supplying needed convoys. He personally charted the course of all convoy destroyers, timed their arrival and departure, fixed the time and place of meeting transport or supply ship at sea and personally prepared the ship movement orders. Having done this, he personally handed the orders to a trusted warrant officer who encoded them, reduced the code to cipher, had the result typed in duplicate, took one copy direct to the signal officer for transmission and delivered the original to Commander Althorn for record. The commander placed the one record copy in the vaults of the records section where they were kept under a time lock available only to high officials.

As for the warrant officer and other personnel in Althorn's section, the commander argued that there was no chance of a slip there. The warrant officer was an old file, holder of a V. C. As for the typist, she had been in the bureau for ten years and could not pass along the information if she wished to. Not only was she not allowed to make an extra copy of orders, but she was even required to turn over to the warrant officer the carbon paper used in making the single duplicate copy. Since she worked at a desk directly in front of the warrant officer, Althorn was certain his assistant would have been attracted by any suspicious actions on the part of the typist.

As for remembering what she had written, that was impossible in view of the intricate technical details involved, including ship locations in terms of longitude and latitude and all the other intricate minutæ of movement.

The commander also emphasized another point, when Elton developed an unusual interest in this phase of the work. British operations had shadowed the

typist for more than a month. Her every movement was known. But not once had her conduct been anything to arouse the slightest suspicion. She lived alone in a small apartment which she had occupied for ten years past. To this apartment she went direct at the end of her daily work, got her own dinner, read for a time or knitted, and then retired.

She did not so much as have a caller from among those living in the same apartment house during the month she was kept under detailed observation. Her home had been searched for wires, secret passages, had even been watched in her absence. Her purse and personal effects had been searched while she slept.

"The leak is not in my department, Captain," Commander Althorn said in his ponderous, drawling voice at the conclusion of the day's grilling interview. "I have given you ten hours and twenty-two minutes of my valuable time. Tomorrow will you not please look elsewhere?"

"Thank you, sir," Elton replied politely. "I'll see what the situation looks like tomorrow."

The forenoon of his third day in London, Elton spent in an examination of his voluminous notes, in a careful summing up of every detail he had gleaned of the case. As a result of this study, he concluded that the leak must come from Commander Althorn's sub-section. He could find no basis for suspecting the commander himself of guilty knowledge. The warrant officer in charge of codes apparently was loyal. The clerical force had been eliminated by the British secret service. But somehow the orders were coming out of that office and into the hands of a German operative. Once in the hands of an outside spy, it was a simple enough matter to transmit them by a secret code to Holland, thence to Helgoland by telegraph, thence to the submarine by wireless.

Elton painstakingly wrote down a brief order for convoys to meet an imaginary transport. Then, since they had served his immediate purpose, he destroyed his notes, had lunch and drove to the operations office.

Commander Althorn shifted uncomfortably in his seat at sight of the American counter-espionage operative and laid aside a sheaf of official papers with reluctance.

"Just another question or two, Commander," Elton relieved him. "I wanted to ask you about your janitor service here, and I'll be gone in a few minutes."

The commander's patience broke its bounds.

"Do you operatives understand there is a war going on?" he said testily. "I've got much else to do. Yes, we have a janitor, an old charwoman, she used to be. Been with us since the war and she's been investigated half to death already."

"Pardon me, sir," persisted Elton. "I do not wish to annoy you, but when does she come on the job, and when does she leave?"

"I resent such interference as this with my valuable time, sir!" fumed the commander. "What possible connection could there be between a janitor and these German outrages? I gave up all day yesterday—"

Elton rose and bowed stiffly.

"Very good, sir," he said. "You'll pardon my intrusion. I'll explain this to the admiral and ask him to secure the information from you for me in writing if you wish."

"Sit down, sir," said the commander despairingly. "No need of pestering the admiral. If you insist I'll answer, but please make your visit as brief as possible."

"About the janitress, sir."

"She comes in at seven o'clock. Has four offices on this floor. Finishes her work here in an hour. Always gone and locked up by eight."

"Does she have a key to the offices?"

"Certainly, and why not? There's no records kept here, no code, no safe, no anything except typewriting machines, desks and blank paper." The commander waxed eloquent as he recounted his precautions. "I do not leave any papers of

my own in my desk, nor allow any one to do so. Scrap paper bearing information is burned by fire immediately and in my presence. The janitress, or any one else, is most welcome to any information she can find in my section, after hours, sir."

"Excellent," said Elton quickly. "Then of course you'll have no objections to lending me the keys to your office overnight."

"Why, I—I don't understand," protested Althorn thickly. His heavy mind groped for the reason of this odd request and finally accepted it blindly. "But yes, of course. It's quite all right. Come and go as you please."

Elton rose as the commander grudgingly handed him a pass key.

"I'll be here for only a few minutes," he said. "Some time between the hour your office force leaves and the janitress comes. Perhaps again for a moment later on in the evening. I'll disturb nothing. But this interview must remain strictly confidential. Thank you for your most generous and willing cooperation. Good afternoon, sir."

From the commander's office, Elton went direct to a telephone and summoned Lieutenant Hargrove to meet him as quickly as possible. When the lieutenant arrived by motor a few minutes later, Elton handed him the dummy Naval order he had written earlier.

"I know you'll have a good laugh at the efforts of a poor landlubber," he said. "But will you please work this over into proper navy form and have British operations send it in to Commander Althorn's section for encoding and transmission without delay? Be sure they treat your visit and my interest in this message as strictly secret."

"This outline of yours isn't half bad," said Hargrove. "We have admirals who couldn't do much better. But do you really believe you're on some sort of a live trail now, Elton?"

There was a bantering light in Elton's smiling gray eyes as he fixed them on Hargrove.

"Better get your sea legs stiffened up a bit, old salty," he replied. "If things turn out as I expect tonight, we'll be afloat on the big fishing trip before this week is ended."

IT WAS just short of ten o'clock of that same evening when Hargrove received a terse summons by telephone to report immediately at Elton's apartment at the Savoy. He arrived to find the captain in dressing gown, sprawled in an easy chair, book in hand. But behind Elton's air of complete repose, Hargrove caught the unmistakable triumph that glowed in the captain's eyes.

"I've found a priceless old edition of Spenser's poems," Elton announced joyfully, holding up a battered tome for Hargrove's inspection. "It is an original printing of—"

Hargrove, who had been studying Elton's face from the moment he entered, broke in abruptly.

"Knowing you as I do, I know that you've got something important up your sleeve, Elton."

"Why, yes, certainly," Elton replied. "But we have the night before us, and I was coming to that presently."

"Nothing else can possibly interest me right now, Elton. Let's get down to business and end my suspense. What have you found?"

"What I was looking for, old salty. The German line of communication to the *Black Shark*."

"That sounds impossible. Are you sure of yourself, Elton? Remember, a lot of good men have tripped up on this case."

"Its very simplicity was enough to fool any one, Hargrove. But having reached a basic conclusion of where the leak must be uncovered, I figured out the only way it could possibly happen. It had to happen that way, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary."

"Some one of high rank involved?"

"I'd rather not discuss the identity of the guilty ones at the present moment, Hargrove. That will keep. We have something more important to consider at

present, which was the reason I asked you over tonight rather than wait until morning."

The lieutenant's face registered irritated bewilderment.

"Man, nothing's so important as locating that Boche spy as quickly as possible!" he exclaimed.

"Spies, if you will pardon the correction," said Elton with a smile. "For it happens to be plural. However, I can assure you that it is of the greatest importance to keep what I've learned a careful secret for some time to come."

"What are you thinking about, Elton? Do you forget that every day means new targets for the *Black Shark*, some of them our own transports, perhaps?"

"I've thought that out. Naturally I'm going to stop the leak, or rather ask you to do it."

"How?"

"Simply by asking higher authority not to route any more *bona fide* vessel movements through Commander Althorn's section. That will close the leak."

"But I'm sure the admiral isn't going to be satisfied, Elton," protested Hargrove. "He'll simply demand that you reveal what you know. It'll be up to him to decide then whether we should act now or later."

Elton sat back in his chair and regarded Hargrove in solemn reproof.

"Now see here, old salty," he said at length. "Have you any confidence at all in my discretion and common sense?"

"Why, yes, that's a silly question. But can't you see—?"

"I can see that the admiral isn't going to insist upon anything if he doesn't know how much I know. As long as I stop the leak, that serves the purpose until we've accomplished something of far greater importance to my service. I've simply got to have one of those submarines, for strictly official purposes of the highest order of importance, and now that I've got one almost in my grasp, I'm not going to give up the idea without a struggle. Now, then. How about a masked trawler for a little junket into the North Sea?"

"The understanding was that you were to have water transportation if necessary," Hargrove replied. "But if you tell us nothing, how are we to conclude it is necessary? Your own word is good enough for me, but with higher authority a fellow's always got to show good cause, as you mighty well know."

"If we can show a mighty lively prospect of landing a submarine, isn't that good and sufficient cause for giving us a craft that is held in service for that identical purpose?"

"Sure enough. But catching one of those Boche subs is no child's play, as any one in the Grand Fleet will tell you. It's been done just often enough that the Germans are mighty cautious. And they've been wise to these camouflaged Q-boats for some weeks already."

"There's no fish under the seas that will not rise to the right kind of bait, Hargrove."

"Just where does that statement fit into the story, Elton?"

"Merely that the subs, being manned by poor, weak mortals, will rise to the baited hook if you use the right kind of bait, and that's exactly what I've planned out in every detail."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing less than the root of all evil—gold. Here, read this little missive."

Hargrove eagerly took from Elton a sheet of paper upon which was written the following message addressed to the British naval attaché at Christiania.

> Secret. Americans establishing propaganda service in Norway to influence Scandinavian sympathy and support. Six members American mission and secret service operatives sailing Friday at 2 A.M. on Norwegian steamer *Sartoroe*. They bring shipment two hundred thousand American dollars, gold, to defray initial campaigns. You will render them every service and arrange to meet them with proper guard at dock for safeguarding funds. Acknowledge receipt.

When he had read the message, Hargrove looked up in perplexity.

"You told me nothing of this, Elton," he said. "I'm sure the admiral knows nothing of any such plan."

"Of course he doesn't. It's the bait. We send it through Althorn's office, the Boche relays it to Holland, and then Helgoland puts the *Black Shark* on the watch for us."

"And sends us to the bottom before we get into the North Sea with our doddering little packet."

Elton smiled with evident enjoyment.

"I'm surprised at you, old salty," he said. "Send us to the bottom with two hundred thousand gold dollars aboard? You know better."

"But just where's the two hundred thousand gold coming from, please tell me?"

"You're particularly stubborn tonight, old salt. Must be too much contact with the British, eh? Are the trimmings on a trout fly real? What do we need of two hundred thousand dollars so long as the Germans believe we've got it and the whole crew is ravished with a mad desire to get their clutches on that much sheer prize money!"

Hargrove arose to pace the apartment with measured tread. He was not a man to be rushed off his feet, and though the force of Elton's plan had reached him suddenly, he studied it out carefully. Finally he sat down again, in front of Elton, and smiled.

"It sounds reasonable enough, old landlubber. At least I'm for checking up details and seeing how it works out."

"How about the boat for the job?"

"That's easy. We've got just the thing available, a refitted Norwegian packet, three hundred sixty tons. Made over for our purpose. Belongs to the royal navy, but we've got a good American crew aboard; and if this little plan works out after we've studied the details, I ought to be able to land it for your use. Especially if I can conscientiously recommend it to the admiral."

Daylight dawned upon the end of the conference. Hargrove's enthusiasm for the venture slowly rose as they checked over maps and routings, alternate possibilities of success or disaster.

"After all," Hargrove summed up, "we've got the boat and we've got the men, and that's what they're intended for. Yes, I'm with you, Elton. I'll recommend it to the admiral and I'll insist upon taking command myself. Even if the Germans don't get our bait, it'll only mean a junket to Norway and back."

"But they'll get our message and be on the lookout for us," said Elton with assurance. "I'll know before we sail. You see, I have a very definite way of checking up on those Boche operatives at the navy office. And before the day's ended we'll have them working for us, without suspecting it. When will you have things ready to shove off?"

"That'll not take long, Elton, if the admiral doesn't buck over the traces. But I'm sure I can handle him."

"Good!" exclaimed Elton gaily. "Then we can sail right on schedule, the hour set in my message, which is two o'clock of tomorrow morning."

SHORTLY after six-thirty that afternoon, Elton approached Commander Althorn's office. After satisfying himself that all had left for the day, he let himself inside with a duplicate pass key. He had received from Hargrove the report that his secret message had been sent in for encoding and transmission to Norway earlier in the day. And later, that the encoded message had been sent by Althorn to the wires and dispatched to the British naval attaché at Christiania.

He went direct to the typist's desk, opened a lower drawer and thumbed through the supply of fresh carbon paper until he came upon a buried sheet, near the bottom of the pile, upon which appeared the markings of type. He examined this only long enough to assure himself that it contained his secret message in original text as well as encoded form, then replaced it carefully and left the office. Two hours later he returned to the office to examine the carbon supply again. The vital carbon was missing.

On leaving the second time, he took a taxicab to his hotel. The last possibility

of a slip-up was past. German secret service efficiency would never have risked taking that message had there been the slightest suspicion of a counter-trap. He had no doubt that the message already was in Holland. Perhaps at this instant staff officers at Kiel were gloating over it, preparing instructions to their greedy sharks to intercept the golden cargo of the tiny Norwegian tramp *Sartoroe*.

It did not puzzle him that the English operatives had slipped up on the leak. It was far from being as simple as it appeared, now that the veil was lifted. Behind it were years of preparation, ten years since those obscure female operatives had been planted in London to fit themselves into the official British work machine against the day of war. And they had been left to work faithfully at their London jobs until called upon by the Germans at the crest of the submarine emergency. It was thus that the Germans protected their vital operatives, by working them in relays, a few weeks or months at a time when they were most needed.

The women themselves had run small risk in their work. Except for his determined conclusion that the leak must in all reason come from Commander Althorn's sub-section, Elton told himself that he might have been thrown entirely off the trail to look for the spies higher up in officialdom. The typist needed only to insert two carbon sheets in writing a duplicate letter. In delivering one used carbon sheet to the warrant officer, along with the two copies of secret orders, it was simple enough to drop the second carbon into her desk. If detected in such a ruse, she could readily explain that one of the sticky sheets had adhered to the other by accident. The janitress required less than a minute to get the telltale carbon paper when she came to clean up. Thereafter she need only seal it in an envelop for mailing to a confederate or delivery in a score of effective ways without leaving the slightest trail.

On arriving at his hotel, Elton telephoned Hargrove immediately.

"All right, the bait is out," he announced cheerfully. "It worked beautifully. Is everything set?"

"All set," said Hargrove. "The train leaves in half an hour. Meet you at the station."

At 2:00 A.M., a small steam packet of three hundred and sixty tons cast loose from the pier at Harwich and churned out in the channel. It was a typical little Norwegian tramp ship, with nothing to distinguish it from scores of other craft of that kind unless a careful observer had examined the name at the bow to find that the name *Sartoroe* was freshly painted, and had looked astern to see that the ship showed no flag. At the bridge was Lieutenant Hargrove, his trim navy uniform replaced by a faded civilian suit, a battered skipper's cap aslant his head. Elton stood beside the deckhouse until the shore became a distant black shadow in the night, then mounted the bridge. He was dressed in an oil stained serge coat, denim trousers, and wore a leather vizored cap of the sort affected by officers of small merchant craft.

"A clean getaway, old salty," Elton said breezily. "Two hours should put us at the happy fishing grounds all set for business."

"Yes, or two hours may find us mingling with the fish under twenty fathoms of salt water," Hargrove rejoined crisply.

They steamed on with lights showing, notice to prying submarines that this was a noncombatant vessel. But they expected no encounter with submarines before daybreak. The packet was too inconsequential to draw attack from a transient submarine. The Germans would save their tubes for targets of more importance. As for the expected visitor, it would lay in wait along the lane of travel used by neutral craft, intent on picking up the rich prize as soon as there was sufficient visibility in the early morning.

Elton and Hargrove lapsed into silence. Their plans were laid to the smallest detail. There was but one chance of failure, that the Germans sink them without warning. Of this danger, neither felt the

slightest uneasiness. It was too likely that the Germans would order the *Sartoroe* to heave to while they sent a boarding party over to retrieve the rich treasure and take alive the American spies whose presence had been disclosed from London. For that contingency, the dumpy little *Sartoroe* was fully prepared, its crew on their tiptoes for the clash.

Daylight broke slowly, a thinning of black into gray, a gradual lifting of a filmy haze. The sea was running smooth; there was no wind. Visibility spread to half a mile, a mile, two miles. The sun would rise presently upon an almost flawless day. Hargrove was scanning the horizon through binoculars when a voice cried out from aloft.

"Asparagus off the port bow!"

Lieutenant Hargrove brought his glasses to bear upon the area. Shortly he centered them upon a small ribbon of white and studied the suspicious object intently. Then he signaled the crew to their posts.

"They're right on schedule, Elton," he said laconically, without lowering the binoculars. "It's the periscope of a submarine and it's moving in this way."

ELTON strained through the distance, but was unable to see anything with his naked eye for some minutes. Then a long, white streamer came indistinctly into view on the heaving bosom of the water. The submarine did not rise to the surface as it came gradually to a point some two hundred yards off the port bow, passed at a wide angle down the port side of the little steamer, circled astern and moved ahead again.

"They're giving us the onceover," said Hargrove. "Looks to me like they're trying to read the name to make doubly sure this is the prize they're looking for. Watch them circle us once more at close range and then come to the surface to order us to heave to."

The *Sartoroe* was making ten knots an hour at the time. Hargrove signaled her down to six while the submarine leaped ahead at a speed which he reckoned at fifteen knots. As she moved ahead again, the submarine moved in closer, not more than fifty yards as she started across the *Sartoroe's* bow. The whole length of her lithe gray hull was now visible under the water. Hargrove lowered his glasses and looked with narrowing eyes at the maneuver.

"That skipper must be near sighted," he snapped. "She's coming close to identify us, damn close—too damn close!"

He turned swiftly, as if on sudden impulse, and bellowed into the speaking tube.

"Full speed ahead! With everything you've got!"

At the same instant he changed direction slightly and as the *Sartoroe* responded to the surge of her engines, Elton caught Hargrove's desperate purpose.

The submarine, sensing the sudden menacing maneuver, was in the first stages of a sharp veer to the left. But her commander had sensed the danger too late to avoid the impact. The *Sartoroe* caught the U-boat almost amidship. There was a violent trembling aboard the steamer from the blow, then she gathered herself and forged ahead as the hulk of the wounded submarine dropped astern.

"Let go that aft depth bomb!" roared Hargrove.

Although this emergency was no part of the carefully laid plan for the encounter, half a dozen seamen of the American crew were at the stern in a flash, setting the depth bomb and hoisting it from under its tarpaulin mask into the sea.

Half a minute later a mighty geyser spurted out of the sea, attended by a low, menacing roar that shook the *Sartoroe* to its keel. Hargrove stood observing the churning water with folded arms, a grim smile on his face.

"Looks to me as if that submarine was on her way to the bottom," said Elton, with a strange lack of enthusiasm. "Split wide open, wasn't she?"

Hargrove's smile broadened slightly as he shook his head.

"I don't know yet," he said. "But if we only scotched the shark, we'll be headed for the bottom ourselves as quick as she can limp far enough out to launch a torpedo into our ribs."

The lieutenant set the *Sartoroe* into a broad arc across the scene of the attack while watching the area closely with his lenses. A dozen pairs of glasses swept the sea. Men stood frozen in their tracks, immobile, holding themselves firmly in hand through the minutes of suspense that followed. Any instant might find the *Sartoroe* torn by a terrific explosion. Even though badly hurt herself, the submarine would marshal her last strength to send across a torpedo. An excited shout of joy rang out suddenly from the deck as the alert eyes of a seaman caught a telltale token.

"Oil afloat."

Others of the crew repeated the cry as their eyes picked up the greasy splotch on the sea. Hargrove lowered his glasses abruptly and hurried below. When he returned some minutes later from an inspection of the *Sartoroe's* hold, his face was serenely happy.

"One submarine less in the world," he announced, "and we're not damaged enough but what this little tub can make port nicely in time for lunch at Harwich, which means dinner at London. What would you say to a hitch at the opera tonight after our day's work, Elton?"

"Was that the *Black Shark* we sent down?" Elton inquired somberly.

"From what I saw of her, I'd say not, old landlubber," Hargrove replied. "Too small. A special job the Boche sent out from the Belgian coast to pick us up, in my opinion. But why the bilious look? A submarine on the bottom is something to chirp up about, even if it was a bit of sheer luck."

"True enough, Lieutenant, but a submarine on the bottom doesn't happen to serve my purpose at all. My interest in this matter is something more than depriving his Majesty of one little U-boat."

"What now, Elton? I thought you were out on this thing for a lark. Working off a bit of *ennui* from a stale life behind the lines in the A. E. F.?"

"On the contrary," said Elton, "I'm after an exceedingly valuable piece of information affecting the security of our whole overseas troop movement, and I can get what I want only by tapping a live submarine. However, I'll agree that the show's over for today if the front end of this tub is stove in. How long will it take to mend her?"

"Three days, I'd estimate. Not more than a week at most."

"Well, I'm ahead of the game on that London job anyhow," Elton reflected. "I want to get back on the job in France as soon as possible, but this is important enough to wait over for a month, if necessary. Only I hope you won't ram the next shark that rises to the bait, Hargrove."

"I'll not," said Hargrove, "unless they give me another chance. No sub is going to poke her nose under my bows and get away with it!"

Elton thought for a moment and fixed Hargrove with a quizzical smile.

"I'll see to it that the Germans don't crowd you next time, Hargrove," he said.

THE DAY following their arrival back in London, Elton prepared a terse message for transmission through Commander Althorn to the British naval attaché at Christiania. It advised that the Norwegian skipper had rammed a German U-boat and been forced back for minor repairs. Therefore the American agents and their gold supply would be delayed a few days, exact date of their second sailing on the *Sartoroe* to be cabled later.

Since he had several days to wait in idleness, Elton was struck by the temptation to shadow the janitress when she carried away the carbon imprint of the secret message, and thus identify the German courier. That would place him in position immediately to spring a trap upon the entire German nest in London, once he was back from the North Sea.

But he dismissed this idea, after weighing it carefully. There was the chance of a slip-up, of arousing German suspicion and spoiling his more important plans. So he contented himself with verifying the fact that his message found its way that night into German hands.

Three heavy days passed before Lieutenant Hargrove finally reported the *Sartoroe* seaworthy. She would be ready to leave by the next day. They promptly agreed upon 2:00 A.M. as the hour of departure, so as to land the *Sartoroe* in favorable submarine waters by daybreak. Elton prepared another memorandum for communication to Norway. It read:

> Norwegian str. *Sartoroe* sailing 2 A.M. tomorrow. Due Friday unless another submarine gets in way. Meet American agents promptly on arrival Christiania. Preserve utmost secrecy.

He had barely returned to his hotel from placing this information on its clandestine way into German naval hands, than Hargrove appeared unexpectedly. Although the lieutenant entered with a jaunty step and greeted him cheerfully, Elton sensed instantly that Hargrove was the harbinger of ill tidings.

"What's gone wrong, Lieutenant?" he demanded. "The admiral has balked?"

"On the other hand," said Hargrove quietly, "the admiral is all hepped up since we landed that Boche boat the other day. We're free to sail any time as far as he is concerned. But there is something very much wrong, something I couldn't very well trust over the telephone."

Hargrove took from his wallet a sheet of flimsy and handed it to Elton. It was a decoded report from a British secret service operative in Holland:

> Learn German press and popular opinion inflamed against Norwegian Master of Steamer *Sartoroe* said to have rammed and sunk German submarine. Charges of murder on high seas reported. Every effort will be made to arrest Master as soon as possible either through German agents by secret seizure in England or on high seas. He will be tried by German court for murder on high seas since as neutral he had no naval status. Alleged American agents on boat will be tried by German court as accessories. If such persons are in England they should be warned against appearing on high seas.

When he had read the message through, once hastily, a second time in order to weigh each word, Elton handed it back to Hargrove.

"Bloodthirsty rascals, aren't they?" he commented laconically, and motioned Hargrove to a seat. "Is everything all set for our getaway in the morning, old salty?"

"Look here, Elton," Hargrove spoke up. "Don't smile that thing off too lightly. It's worth giving some mighty serious thought."

"Of course it is," said Elton. "That's the reason I read it over a second time so carefully. But that doesn't change the situation a bit. In fact, I'd rather say it strengthens our hand."

Hargrove fixed him with a puzzled look.

"Do you realize that it means we'll be tried and stood against a wall on German charges, Elton?" he demanded.

"Of course. But that doesn't change things. By appearing out of uniform on an official mission aboard a neutral vessel, you realize we ran that risk before. Personally, if I ever fall into the clutches of a German court-martial, I don't care a rap whether the charges happen to read murder or espionage. It'll all end the same —against a stone wall. That is, unless they should chance to use a brick wall."

"Don't get facetious over this thing," warned Hargrove. "With German public opinion on a rampage, the Boche is not going to take any chances with us this time. They'll stand off and watch their step until they're sure they got what they came out after."

Elton leveled his eyes upon Hargrove and smiled mischievously.

"I believe I warned you that you weren't going to get another opportunity to ram the next U-boat we get a chance at," he reminded Hargrove.

The lieutenant looked back, suddenly aghast.

"You don't mean this is some of your doings?"

"Naturally not, but I suppose it's a logical development of information I salted for the German secret service. And I'm free to say that it is very much to my liking."

"Just suppose they send a destroyer flotilla, or two submarines. Where do we get off then with our little tub-arsenal?"

"Again, Hargrove," said Elton serenely, "you surprise me by your line of reasoning. You know the Germans better than that. In the first place, it's typically a job for a submarine, and they're holding their surface craft inside. Isn't that correct?"

"I'll admit that, of course. But what's to prevent them from sending a convoy of submarines to make a sure job of it?"

"The German ego doesn't work that way. They naturally figure it was more hard luck than bad headwork that cost them a submarine the other day. They're using their submarines overtime, and they'll not dignify our poor tub with a whole fleet of them. And aside from all that, they'll pass the detail out as a soft reward to the crew of some successful U-boat. My guess is that they'll parcel the job to the *Black Shark* this time, if she's still lurking in British waters."

"But supposing your logic should fail, Elton? Suppose they should decide to let several crews have a split on the prize money they think the *Sartoroe* carries. You'll admit it's quite a sum?"

"Yes, there's such a possibility, although I do not think it probable. But I'd already thought of a way of eliminating that risk, if it meets your approval. We can sail until soon after sunrise, and then turn back if we have no luck. You'll agree that the German fleet will not be dispatching their craft in fleets right up against the British coastline?"

"A capital idea, Elton," Hargrove assented at once. "But don't get the notion that I'm not willing to run right on into Helgoland if there's anything to be gained by it. My only thought is to plan sensibly and eliminate any foolish risks."

"I understood that fully, Hargrove. As a poor landlubber, I'm merely a bit of ballast aboard your glorified canoe, and what you decide about the salt water part of the job goes with me. Is everything set to go?"

"Everything. We leave on the boat train in three hours if you're still of the same mind."

"Very much of the same mind," Elton responded with emphasis. "Possession of one of those submarines for ten minutes, or less, is worth more to us right now than sending a dozen of them to the bottom. And even if we should fail—well, the information I'm after is worth any risk."

DAYLIGHT of the next morning broke calm and fine, giving the eyes a clear sweep of the sea to where it met the skyline. Elton and Hargrove stood at the bridge of the *Sartoroe*, their eyes riveted to strong binoculars, searching every swirl and foam fleck that appeared on the surface. Below, a dozen sets of eyes searched from the rails. Aloft in an improvised crow's nest, two sharp eyed lookouts scanned the sea through powerful lenses, one fore, one aft. Elton lurched and staggered from time to time under the motion of the ship. His face was set and ghastly pale, but for the moment he had forgotten an unseating nausea that had set upon him soon after they left port. His pulse was pounding, every nerve straining. The critical moment was at hand. The success of his mission might depend upon the next few minutes. An empty sea for another hour meant that they would put back to port in failure.

"Asparagus off the port bow!"

The warning came down from the crow's nest. The two officers swung their glasses to the point. A white fleck. It melted quickly to unbroken blue.

"False alarm, sir," droned the lookout a few moments later.

They settled down to silent search again. The *Sartoroe* was ambling ahead at a twelve-knot clip, all the speed that was in her special engines, a black pennant of smoke trailing behind from her single stack.

"Asparagus, sharp astern, range one mile," shouted the second lookout from aloft.

Another white patch. It vanished quickly, leaving no telltale trail of a periscope. If the Germans had taken a look above the surface of the sea, it was of brief duration. Hargrove put it down to taut nerves. Seeing things in mere vagrant patches of white water was a prevalent delusion among lookouts in submarine infested waters.

But they learned ten minutes later that neither eyes nor nerves had been at fault. The alarm next came from half a dozen throats at once. Not a periscope cutting a ribbon in the water, but the gray hulk of a huge conning tower rising out of the sea. The long, trim hull of a super-submarine followed the conning tower above the surface.

"The *Black Shark* herself," said Hargrove coolly. "That's her cut and I just picked up her number." He chuckled aloud in a peculiar key. "It'll not take long now, Elton."

They stood immobile behind their leveled glasses. The German U-boat came into full view out of the depths slowly, silently, a monstrous phantom sprung up as by magic. Small black figures began tumbling out of the conning tower, hurrying down the four-runged iron ladder to the dripping deck to unleash the craft's forward gun.

"The skipper's got his glasses on us, giving us a final onceover," said Hargrove.

Hargrove kept the *Sartoroe* on her course. But as he saw in the distance the bristling black figure that must have been the submarine commander, he shouted a crisp order to his men below. They went scurrying out of sight, according to prearranged instructions. The decks were promptly cleared of men.

The submarine, out of the sea at a range of half a mile, began moving in on the *Sartoroe.* A vindictive spurt of bright yellow flame leaped from her gun, a shell screamed ahead of the *Sartoroe* across her bows. Hargrove promptly shut down the engines and hove to, rolling in the trough while the big submarine nosed in, her approach covered by the forward gun at which the gun crew stood ready for emergency.

"They're not taking any chance with us this time," said Hargrove with a caustic touch in his voice. "It's like having a highwayman walk up on you with leveled pistol."

The German began signaling. Hargrove picked up the message letter by letter and announced the result aloud.

"We're to keep our engines down while we launch a boat and send over. They're waiting to send a boarding party to look us over."

"So far, right according to schedule, eh?" responded Elton.

A boat was lowered from the *Sartoroe,* six American seamen in dungarees at the oars. The submarine had eased down her engines at three hundred yards off the *Sartoroe's* port bow. An officer stood beside the conning tower in an easy posture, hands thrust loosely in his coat pocket. But behind him were two men with scopes glued to their eyes, while the gun crew at the deck gun stood in alert positions at their weapon, ready to pull the lanyard at a single word from the commander. As the *Sartoroe's* boat approached the undersea craft, four German sailors emerged from the conning tower and took their place behind the officer.

"Five of them coming over," said Hargrove. "With the skipper himself in the lead if I'm not mistaken. Elton, you're a mind reader."

"Did you expect the captain to send the bosun's mate, whatever that is, after two hundred thousand gold, Hargrove? Just put yourself in that skipper's place. Would you want to deliver that prize money yourself, or would you send some one after it?"

As they spoke, the *Sartoroe's* boat cast a line to the submarine and maneuvered alongside. The German officer stepped in, immediately followed by four sailors, all armed with magazine carbines and side arms. The boat put about and returned to the *Sartoroe.* Hargrove went to the

deck to receive his visitors. Elton joined a group of the crew who were loitering about outside the deckhouse.

THE GERMAN officer came over the ship's side first, followed closely by his four armed men. A chunky little man, far short of thirty, whose blond hair and clear eyes gave him a friendly, boyish aspect in spite of the official scowl into which he had screwed his face. He cast an alert eye about the decks and finally centered a glowering gaze upon Hargrove.

"You are in command," he said in German, more in affirmation than query.

"I have that honor, Herr Captain," Hargrove replied in clumsy German.

"You have aboard six Americans," said the German. "You will deliver them to me with all of their possessions."

"Very good, Herr Captain," replied Hargrove. "But first will you please show me your authority to board a neutral ship?"

The German bared his teeth in a sinister grimace.

"Neutral ships are no longer neutral when they sink German submarines!" he snapped. "I have no time to waste in talk. You will be able to tell your story to my superiors at Kiel, who will grant you any justice you shall merit!"

"You'll be sorry for this action, Herr Captain," said Hargrove politely. "I deliver the Americans under protest. As for their belongings, they have only their trunks."

"And much of their money in gold," put in the submarine commander. "You will deliver their money to me immediately."

Hargrove blinked at the deck, acting to the best of his ability, and with splendid presence of mind, the rôle of a disgruntled Norwegian skipper. He turned and barked at Elton.

"The commander demands your surrender, with the funds you have aboard," he cried. "I am helpless to prevent this outrage. It's out of my hands."

"If any harm is to come to us, we're ready to dump our money into the North Sea," Elton said stiffly. "Two of us are holding it ready to go into the water through a secret hatch, Herr Captain, unless you can guarantee us some immunity."

The German's eyes narrowed into a crafty glint. Elton could follow the workings of his mind. Until the treasure was safely in his possession the German decided to temporize.

"Any assistance you render to me will be considered in your favor," he replied. "I will be pleased to recommend it that you are released as soon as it is possible." He added in a tone of sharp impatience, "But come, my time passes. You must be prompt if my sympathy you expect."

Elton made a show of indecision before he acceded.

"If the Captain will give us time, my countrymen will help me with the money," he suggested. "It is below, concealed in the forward hatch."

"I shall save you that trouble," said the captain crisply. "With my men I shall take possession. I warn you against concealment."

Elton led the way up the ship to the forward hatch and down the metal rungs. His pulse, which had pounded at intervals from time to time this morning, was as calm as the sea, his mind clearly measuring every movement. So far, had it been a dress rehearsal of the plan he and Hargrove had devised, it could not have moved more perfectly. Five American seamen in civilian clothes stood over a pile of casks at the bottom of the broad, specially constructed hatch.

The German commander followed Elton eagerly, but not without precaution against treachery. Two of his men preceded him, the butts of their carbines resting on their hips, barrels sloped forward ready for use. A third sailor brought up the rear. The fourth of his men he left on guard over Hargrove and the crew. As they came to the hatchway the German held back his men until he surveyed the hole. For a brief moment he hesitated at sight of large, stained tar-

paulins that covered what might have been a part of the cargo. Then his eyes fell upon a pile of oak chests and he ordered his men down, following them closely.

As the last German sailor reached the floor, the hatch suddenly burst into swift and furious eruption. From under canvas and behind timbers flashed a dozen determined, grim visaged men, their eyes and cheeks aflame, their movements coordinated. Before the German seamen had even an instant in which to gather their scattered wits against the shock of surprise, their carbines were wrested from their hands. Their commander, alone impervious to shock, avoided the impact and dodged into a corner, his hand whipping to his coat pocket. But Elton leaped across the hatch and pinned him to the wall before he could get his automatic into action. Finding himself circumvented, the German abandoned the struggle, yielded the pistol and drew himself up with all the dignity he could muster.

"You Americans shall pay dearly for this outrage," he threatened. "Do you forget that you are under the very guns of my ship?"

"We realize that, Captain," said Elton quietly. "But I doubt if you realize that your ship is also under our guns. I will enlighten you."

He turned to Hargrove's men with a request that they uncover the gun in the hatch. A few deft pulls at the tarpaulin and a 75 mm. anti-submarine gun, fully set up and ready for use, was exposed to the staring German.

"Naturally, we have an adjustable screen in the hull through which to fire," Elton expounded. "Also we have a second gun concealed in a collapsible boat between the funnel and the mast, a third gun behind the bridge screen and a fourth one in the deckhouse. That's four guns to two, Captain, and I needn't describe to you the excellence of our gunners. That's recognized the world over!"

"So, you no longer fight like men," sneered the captain. "*Ei, Gott!* You use a rat trap instead of a man's ship!"

"A rat trap," Elton rejoined softly, "is the most effective way of catching rats, Captain."

At Elton's request, an American seaman who spoke German was sent to inform the remaining German sentry that he was wanted at once in the forward hatch. The fellow hesitated for a moment, then walked into the trap.

Elton launched his final maneuver as soon as the fourth German was prisoner First an interchange of clothes with the Germans, care being taken to select men of approximately identical stature. This accomplished, the lookout and gun crew on the submarine shortly witnessed a sight that must have set their hearts throbbing with joy. Six men staggering down the deck of the little Norwegian merchantmen under the weight of American treasure chests, four German sailors behind them with carbines, their captain marching serenely ahead, master of the situation.

The chest bearers deposited their load near the rail at the ladder while a pulley was rigged to lower two of the chests into a boat. A dozen men of the *Sartoroe's* crew followed down the ladder under escort of two Germans.

IF THEY reasoned at all, the men on the submarine must have concluded that their skipper was sending treasure and prisoners over piecemeal and remaining on the Norwegian himself to direct the transfer. In the stem of the boat stood two German sailors, with leveled carbines, their backs to the submarine. A natural position. Six prisoners plied the oars, the other six huddled under the carbines in the bow.

Elton sat in the bow, watching intently. He had charted his every move in advance, organized the movement of every one of his eleven men. All depended upon boarding the underseas craft without suspicion, and moving swiftly, decisively, thereafter. Since they would be outnumbered, they must depend upon the shock of complete surprise, the

total unreadiness of the Germans to receive such an attack.

As they came alongside, Elton's pulse was as steady, his nerves tense, his mind clear and alert. He saw and read, as coolly as if the deck before him had been the stage of a theater, the faces of the Germans at the deck gun and at the conning tower. They were off their guard, with happy, victorious faces, flushed with thoughts of their golden bounty, without the slightest sense of the omen that bore down hard upon them.

A German sailor sprang eagerly forward to seize a rope which Elton cast him. The sailor eased the boat alongside and secured it while the prisoners unloaded on to the deck of the submarine. Elton was first aboard, followed closely by the others. The German sailors watched them laconically, several stepping forward to search the newcomers for weapons at a bark of command from the conning tower where the engineer and watch officers were stationed.

Then, with devastating swiftness, the whole peaceful situation burst into furious action. With a sharp outcry of command, Elton set his men into the assault. For his own part he leaped to the conning tower, followed closely by a petty officer in dungarees, and covered the German officers at the bridge with automatic pistol. The two men with carbines suddenly leveled them upon the gun crew under the conning tower and commanded surrender. From under their dungarees, eight American sailors flashed forth heavy caliber service pistols to back up the command. Ten pairs of German hands went into the air instantly. The man at the lanyard alone hesitated, but thought better of any impulse to set off the deck gun as he found himself looking into the muzzle of a carbine.

Eight men of the gun crew in custody, the three officers, four sailors of the captain's party. Elton estimated the situation quickly. Another score of men in the hold of the craft, unarmed doubtless, and unaware of the tragedy on deck. He proceeded cautiously through the top of the conning tower toward the bowels of the ship. The commander's station was not occupied. For several moments he paused there to listen. There were no sounds of commotion below.

Another boat was now on its way from the *Sartoroe*, jammed with twenty sailors. Elton held up until the boarding party reinforced his dozen men. Then, forcing the two German officers below with him, he made his descent into the craft, closely followed by a score of his men armed with muskets, pistols and hand grenades.

"Will you call your men from their stations and quarters, or must we make a mess of your ship?" Elton demanded of the engineer officer.

The German did not hesitate in accepting the inevitable. Lying on the surface where her tubes were useless and with her deck guns stripped, the *Black Shark* was now as helpless as a whale on the end of a harpoon. A few minutes later, when the last of the prisoners were being escorted through the hatch, Elton made his way to the commander's quarters.

As he pried a locked drawer and took therefrom a small, leather bound book, Elton's hand was seized with a momentary unsteadiness. The words and symbols inside that little book danced before his eyes. The submarine vanished from his mind; the adventure of the *Black Shark* was forgotten. He sat down at the captain's desk and skimmed through the book feverishly. A familiar phrase caught his eye, removing any doubt of its validity. The prize for which he had ventured. The secret naval code of the Imperial German navy, with which he would be able to reduce to plain English those mysterious messages from Nauen to Mexico, to Spain, to Switzerland, across the seven seas.

He returned to the *Sartoroe* on the first boat, his mission completed, and stood by while Hargrove completed the transfer of prisoners, took the captured monster in tow and got under way for Harwich.

Hours later, the coast of England was looming slowly out of the sea ahead of them when Hargrove found release from

his duties for a moment and came forward to where Elton was standing on the forward deck of the *Sartoroe*, eyes fixed expectantly straight ahead.

"It worked so nicely, old landlubber, you'll not have to coax very hard to get me out again," Hargrove exulted. "The admiral will be beside himself with joy."

"I'll not be advising another gamble like this, Hargrove," Elton replied thoughtfully. "Not in this tub. It'll be unnecessary, anyhow, for the next few weeks."

"Why, I thought you'd be rearing to start right back shark fishing as soon as we dock our catch!" exclaimed Hargrove. "Since when did you become so cautious about taking risks?"

"Except for a little mopping up job in London, my work's done over here, Hargrove. I've got what I came after, and more. I've got to get back to France and put it into use before the Boche changes his naval code again. With the Imperial German code book in our hands, we can pass out more misery to the Kaiser in a few days than by killing off a whole army corps or sinking a submarine flotilla."

"The Imperial German naval code, eh? So that was what you wanted with a submarine?"

"Yes, and I'm sorry I can't stay a few days for the real fishing you ought to have now, Hargrove," Elton responded. "With the call numbers and the whole German naval code available, you ought to be able to order the Boche submarines out from Kiel to meet you in the North Sea and then entertain them at dawn with your destroyer flotilla. You've got some real shark bait now."

SPANISH GUNS

A Tale of the Caribbees

By CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

"WRECKED in a full gale, burned on a reef before she slid off into a ten fathom hole in the coral—that's enough to happen to one ship, isn't it?" Bill Jerome, sole surviving officer of the lost *Auralia*, smiled guardedly at Curtin, the marine insurance man from London. "But, now, to make it a job, this Yank flyer says she was machine gunned."

"Did I?" retorted Gentry, the American. "Mister, I don't know anything about your ship. I flew down over the spot, just curious, and comin' back I landed on the inside reef. Picked up this piece of varnished wood with six bullet holes in it—"

Curtin lifted a hand patiently.

"And Jerome swears it's from the wall panel of the *Auralia's* radio room."

"Exactly," said the sailor. "There are Sparks' initials cut in it. The poor kid never had a chance. They had to stop any SOS goin' out, you see?"

"They—?" demanded the London investigator. "Who?"

The Australian second officer glanced worriedly at the American. Gentry had met the two here at Timego, the obscure dependency of an obscure West Indian colony, when he landed three days ago. Rio bound down the Windwards, he said, trying to pay his way from port to port, which he now saw had been a crazy ambition.

The insurance man had come three thousand miles to ask questions, and brought Jerome from Barbados; and now Jerome wasn't sure that he should talk too much to the insurance people until he saw the owners' agents or the Admiralty authorities.

Jerome chuckled when Curtin repeated his query.

"They? How do I know? I wasn't on the ship when she finished here. Took a tumble down the fore hold and went to hospital at Panama."

"Lucky—that bum leg of yours," murmured Gentry. "Otherwise you'd been sharks' meat with the rest of the officers. I saw the gray wolves still nosin' about the wreck this mornin'. And I washed sand off that piece of wood, but I didn't gun it."

The gaunt sailor laughed.

"Prove you didn't, m' boy! How do you happen to hop down to this thieves' nest? Pals with our host, Bull Stanage who keeps the hotel, eh what?"

The American grunted. The fourth man on the porch, Annester, the Curaçao Dutchman who was collecting West Indian antiques about the Caribbees, got up and left the veranda of Mr. Bull Stanage's mildewed hotel. Gentry didn't answer till the vast shadow of the man was lost in the bare hall. Then he watched the close, hot jungle back of the mule lot. His lean brown jaw locked on some retort—he had not heard the Dutch trader's heavy steps go onward from the gray doorway.

Seaward glinted the empty Caribbean. Landward arose the foggy mountain which hogbacked the island east to west. The tiny, tree choked port sprawled along the curve of beach. Beyond Mr. Stanage's warehouse, Mr. Stanage's three dirty schooners rode at their hooks—Mr. Stanage's lighters, which conveyed Stanage produce out to the monthly mail steamer. If a man wished to leave Timego, he awaited Mr. Stanage's own sailings.

The long legged American swung his feet down from the porch rail. The hurricane wracked old building echoed every sound.

"No gas, no grub," he announced. "So I turned pirate, fella."

"Hot sketch—you and Bull Stanage," chuckled Jerome again.

Curtin frowned. He was old enough to be the father of these two adventurers who had never laid eyes on each other till this week, and their day long chaffing was a bit beyond the London man. He had taken his business to the local commissioner, who represented the colony on Timego, but this pensioner was on Mr. Stanage's books for four hundred pounds, and happy on Mr. Stanage's rum year in and year out, so Curtin didn't go to the government bungalow again . . . There were some nasty little corners to the empire, he observed.

Now he glanced at his notes.

"Gentlemen, I'm reducing this affair to an outline of known facts. Few, but startling. Mr. Jerome, will you correct me where I may stray to mere theorizing?

"The *Auralia*, freighter, Singapore owners, Captain Bannon commanding, loaded with tin, cleared at Port Dickson in the Malay Straits, for Liverpool, via Panama. Called at Hongkong to fill a short crew—"

Jerome lifted the piece of bullet riven wood from his lame knee.

"Ah, I recall we signed twelve hands—firemen and deck. Yat Wong, the quartermaster, had to do with that. Thirty

Chinese—and five white officers. Fact is, they were all strangers to me."

"Nothing unusual happened before you left the ship at Panama?"

The second officer shrugged.

"Hardly. But the Old Man didn't call farther up the China coast. Seems that some of the beggars didn't know they were on the Pacific haul around the world. Perhaps Yat Wong deceived 'em. You see the skipper trusted Yat—and wasn't overly confidential with his white officers. I noticed that."

"Then," said Curtin, "the ship called at Curaçao from Panama. And that's the last known of her. Now—bullets in this woodwork—"

The *Auralia's* officer snapped nervously:

"First, what the devil was the ship doin' here, hundreds of miles off her course, to finish in this nest of reefs? Liverpool bound, I'd say she should have made Mona Passage. Not," Jerome added, "that I know much about it. I never was in West Indian water before."

HE GOT up and limped the length of the silent veranda. The American flyer turned hard blue eyes from the white handed insurance man to the Australian sailor. Curtin sighed patiently again.

"Something's on the chap's mind," he observed softly.

"And on yours, mister," retorted the flyer. "Why the bullets?"

Curtin stared—and shrugged.

"Oh, mutiny—without any doubt."

"Your ship was ganged," announced Gentry. "Taken to the loneliest spot in the Caribbean and bumped off Chicago style. What for?"

Curtin's eyes shifted. Jerome must have overheard, for he hurried back and plumped down in his chair. He talked like a man eager to explain himself and no more

"You know I was captured once up one of those Chinese rivers. Held for ransom by some beggarly bandits. Oh, nothin' much. Hadn't a cent so they let me go, finally. But I learned a bit of their dialect. On the ship I heard it again. Hai Ling men they were that the quartermaster found for our black gang. Nothin' to that particularly, but I told the Old Man. He was a bit sharp with me. He said it was nerves—you understand I saw some bad doin's when I was a prisoner up in those hills. Torture, you know, on some of the others.

"Well, I can't stand barefooted men behind me to this day. Captain Bannon knew it. I didn't fancy Chinese crews, but there I was. The skipper laid my warnin' down to a pure case of jeebies, and maybe it was. I don't like slinkin' barefoot men behind me."

"No, you don't," said Gentry. "And how about you, Mr. Curtin? Not that it's any of my business. But—" he stopped.

The creak of a rocking chair sounded down the veranda. The other guest had come out.

Annester turned a bearded, oily face to them, eyes beaming behind thick spectacles. He fingered a heavy watch chain across his soiled linen waistcoat. No one greeted him, but his manner was that of a man who was sure others must be vastly interested in his affairs.

"Gentlemens, I haf found my guns. Beautiful bronze cannon! Of date, 1578, with the Spanish king's crest on them. Cast in Seville, my friends. I haf bought them of the Scotch lady at Deal Hall plantation, and Mr. Stanage will ship them for me. You shall see, gentlemens. Beautiful guns, once captured by the pirates!"

Jerome muttered:

"Damn his guns. He explodes that voice in your face like a trench mortar itself. This island is full of old guns."

"Every banana patch is marked out with rusty cannon," said Curtin. "The buccaneers used this hole as a spot to shed metal when they captured more than they could carry. But I say—"

The antique buyer exploded again:

"Liddle bronze cannons, ah! I shall sell to the museum. From a Spanish galleon, gentlemens."

Jerome got up testily.

"I say, the bar's open now." He limped off, turning to the London man. "About the ship, Mr. Curtin; that's all I know. All hands lost when she hit the reef."

Annester rocked triumphantly.

"All lost. White and yellow. I haf talked with many peoples here. The black boys know of the wreck, but of crew—noddings."

Curtin had taken the bullet smashed panel to his room. Jerome grumbled in the tiny barroom.

"Yank, dead ships write no logs. Curtin'll have to deal with Stanage about that cargo of tin, and that's probably all that was worth salvagin'. Stanage's black schoonermen swarmed the wreck. But nobody noticed gunfire marks, apparently. Well, that's business for the admiralty and not the insurance people, first hand. I'm fed up answerin' questions."

"Curtin wonders what's on your mind. And you wonder what's on his," murmured Gentry. "All this hellin' about a cargo of tin?"

"Yank—" Jerome's voice lowered. "There was something queer about that ship. The skipper shut me up when I mentioned it. And he carried a regular arsenal in her chartroom. Well, bullets in her bridgedeck woodwork. Mutiny—certainly."

"Yes, but was she gunned after she struck on this Timego reef, or before? This is one bad spot, fella."

The sailor stared at him—as if he had been groping for this question. Then Jerome smiled oddly.

"Meanin'—what?"

"Gosh, how this small time racketeer, Stanage, hates to have me flyin' over his island. He's put a jinx on my business. Not a native comes near the lot. That's how strong he is with 'em."

Then Gentry saw Curtin's dissatisfied eyes at the door, and grinned cheerfully.

"All set, mister. Jerry's advanced cocktail hour to midday. I said he was a nut, but a drink, eh?"

"One," smiled Curtin, "then a turn on the beach with me."

"Two, crazy. Do sane white men stroll in this sun? Well, I get you, mister. No privacy in these West Indian hotels."

TIMEGO drowsed in high white noon. The port, a vacant glitter; the sinister mountain robing its daily storm cloud to the crest. Of the dozen mongrel white men and four hundred blacks living by Stanage's bounty not one showed in the crooked lanes or about the waterside rum shops. The three strangers stopped where the giant *ceibas* hung from the rutty road over the narrow sand strip.

"Privacy, eh? Well, Mr. Curtin, I've had my say. The skipper is dead, and when I come before a board of inquiry I'll add that he was a bit queer actin'. Should have listened to me."

"Privacy," grunted the American suddenly. "There's the big shiny Dutchman out on the porch again. Sees us down here in a huddle. Bet anything I could cut his buttons in three shots—"

Curtin relighted a damp cigar. He wanted these two serious, and now Gentry was tugging at the big revolver on his hip. The black constables didn't fancy that at all, but no one had complained. Gentry had said he was from Texas; and London folks as well as colonials knew about Texans. They rode and whooped and shot Indians—but somehow, this big gun comforted Mr. Curtin.

"Don't shoot him," put in Jerome. "I want to drown him. Take him up in that ancient plane of yours and shove him off, eh what?"

"Gentlemen," said Curtin, as if addressing a directors' meeting. "I shall confide in you. I am compelled to. I fancy you are both in danger, and I can not place my finger on it. Jerome, because he might identify people from that ship; and Gentry, because he discovered the clue to murder on her. Danger, I say!"

"My goodness," breathed the American softly. "Bad as that?"

"Twice as bad." The Australian grinned. "Absolutely so."

The Britisher frowned again.

"My dear chaps, that tin was salvaged by Stanage's people—and will be dealt for. But I didn't come here to investigate cargo—not first hand. Mr. Jerome, did you ever hear of the Meelong pearls out in the Dutch East Indies?"

Jerome looked at him in quiet surprise.

"Meelong pearls? Why, yes. Finest collection in the native states, they say. Famous lot—been in that Timboru family hundreds of years."

"Sulu pearls, yes. Ever see them, my boy?"

"See them? Bless you, how'd I see them? Just what—"

"Perhaps a million in value," added Curtin calmly. "Well, then, you know nothing about them—except hearsay, I imagine."

Jerome seemed groping from a dream. At Curtin's next clipped words his jaw hung open.

"My people carried fifty thousand pounds insurance on the rajah's pearls. The old gentleman wanted to get them to England secretly. A wife or two making trouble, perhaps. None of my affair—but the Meelong pearls were on the *Auralia* when she left Singapore."

He ended abruptly and watched the sailor's worried eyes.

"The devil!" gasped Jerome. "So that was on the Old Man's mind? A million or more in his cabin safe!" Then he touched Curtin's arm sternly. "See here, not an officer on the old hooker knew of it, I'll swear. That's what you been botherin' me to find out, is it?"

"Are the pearls on that sunken hulk out there, or are they here ashore in this West Indian bush?" demanded Curtin. "Gentlemen, I confide in you. You understand we are three men cut off, alone, and no radio, not a ship out for a month except by Stanage's orders—if he wishes to accommodate you with passage. And we're watched. Mr. Gentry's arrival here in his plane, where the natives never saw one, was conclusive to some people that we're hunting the rajah's pearls. This salvage question of the tin doesn't go any longer."

"Meanin'," said Gentry bluntly, "Bull Stanage—"

"How would Stanage, cooped in this rotten hole his life long, know about the Meelong pearls?" retorted Curtin. "No; people on that ship did, though. White men, too—not coolie hands."

Jerome grimaced.

"They're dead, I tell you. All of them. But, say—what did the old rotter in London send them that way for?"

"Captain Bannon was his friend, and was trusted by the rajah. We don't know all that was going on in the Timboru family intrigues."

"Pearls—in the skipper's little green safe," repeated Jerome.

Gentry suddenly said:

"That reminds me. About a mile from that big plantation house over the ridge, I saw an iron box. Rusty but green. A little safe in a cleared spot of the jungle."

Curtin's pink face broke to fresher sweat. He mopped it before he spoke, but his voice came low and cool.

"Opened?"

"Sure, opened. Some peterman blew it right."

"Man, you didn't mention this before!"

"What did I know about a safe on that ship? I thought it was a piece of junk discarded from that plantation. Funny, though—"

"Absolutely comical—" Jerome's lean brown jaw twitched. "Well, they got it ashore then, with the portions of cargo they saved."

"Near Deal Hall plantation," pursued Curtin. "Jerome and I called there. Miss Grace Deal said she knew nothing of the wreck affair. Her place is the last white planting on that shore—and about bankrupt. Stanage holds the family notes, I've heard."

"Miss Gracie is a plucky lot," put in Jerome shortly. "Don't try to hook her up with any dirt. We questioned some of her field hands when she called them

in. Not a word from them of importance."

"Sure!" Gentry grinned. "Not with Bull's black *machete* men roamin' the bush. That's my guess. But from the air that whole shore looked deserted. I just saw one man and he ducked to the jungle. Had a rifle—looked like a Chinaman."

Again the two gasped. Curtin spoke slowly.

"Stanage says there are no Chinese residents on this island. He says not a member of the *Auralia's* crew got ashore alive. His men buried a dozen who floated in after the gale. No white body was found."

The London man put on his spectacles and looked at the jungle line back of Stanage's hotel yard. *Ceiba, guango,* wild black mango trees bound in flower streaked creepers and snaky *liana* coils.

Jerome spoke out of a nervous relief.

"Well, I hope this puts the idea out of your mind, Mr. Curtin, that any officer of that ship had to do with the looting of the Meelong pearls. It hurt—"

"Why, my boy," said Curtin heartily, "that was hardly the case. But I had to consider every angle. But if Chinese junk raiders were on the *Auralia,* and destroyed her, where are they now? Mr. Stanage would know of them, surely."

"And lie—if it profited him," put in Gentry.

Jerome stared at the stark gray hotel against the jungle wall. He had had a university year, and was a bit more sensitive than mates who work back from the forecastle. He was still hurt; if the jewels were never found the imputation would rest on dead comrades of the vanished *Auralia.* Gentry understood him keenly.

THE BLAZING blue sea rim out beyond the roadstead hurt their eyes, and Jerome was the first to get to his feet. Then his stare fixed on the Stanage mule pen to the left of the hotel. Not a sign of life anywhere except Annester rocking on the veranda. The creak of his chair, as he nested in it like a fat brown spider, came to them. Then Jerome shouted and dashed for the road.

The Yank was past him when they crossed it. When Curtin reached the mule lot, the only level acres near the port, Gentry stood with folded arms watching an angle of blackened grass widening as a flame line ate toward the jungle wall. In it was a skeleton frame dripping fire.

"Nothin' much on her to explode," the flyer called back quietly.

"Fired his plane!" gasped Jerome, "Curtin, this is rotten. I'm goin' to get my automatic and wear it like the Yank does!"

He limped to the hotel. Gentry came back to the London man.

"Well, mister, there goes the whole circus. I'm an imperfect stranger to you, but I hope this clears me of any suspicion because I happened to drop down out of the sky into this pearl mess."

Curtin made a gesture of despair.

"Please, my dear chap! Why, your plane was burned because others believe you were barging in. Without doubt. No radio here, no mailboat for a month—no means of getting word to the outside except by your plane. Who, now?"

Gentry pointed at the lifeless waterfront, the empty village lanes, the black shadowed bush slopes above it.

"Not a soul came out to see the show. Queer, eh?"

"Some one crawled on his belly from the jungle to fire that dead grass," snapped Curtin. "And the blacks will know nothing about it. Didn't see it, understand? No use to question them."

"Sure. They got their orders. That's Stanage. Well, let's drift to Bull's bar and have a drink. Where's the lame fella, Jerome? That boy's on edge—hot and bothered."

When they reached the veranda a hearty voice boomed from the shade. The Dutch trader beamed upon them sympathetically.

"Too bad. Boys—liddle boys—set a fire to burn a liddle snake. I saw them run frightened when the fire went across

the lot. The commissioner must be told. He will send a constable."

"Don't get excited—" the cold fire of Gentry's eyes checked him. "I'll donate another relic to your collection, mister. The old bus was all that. Well, a little drink— Where's Jerome?"

The yellow barman had vanished. The trade wind had not yet picked up. The palm fronds along the veranda hung like golden pendants in the sun glare. Not a sound, a movement in the gaunt building. Gentry listened, then stole to the empty hall. When the London man followed he heard the American's low voice—Curtin's room, and the Englishman looked in the doorway amazedly.

The cot was overturned, his luggage scattered; and Gentry was dragging Jerome up from the dim disorder. The wooden shutters of the door to the veranda were unopened, Curtin noted.

"Snap up, sailor," said Gentry. "Who slugged you?"

Jerome was gasping, clawing at blue marks on his throat. He was dazed, and a lump showed above his temple. Gentry pulled him to the hall.

"Slinkin' barefoot devils—I can't stand 'em behind me! They knew it—"

"You saw them?" The insurance man asked curtly.

"No—just heard. Something moved in your room, and I stepped in. Heard soft feet slippin', then they crashed me."

Curtin was looking about.

"The only thing missing is that panel of bullet scarred wood," he announced. "The one tangible clue to violence on the *Auralia*. Let's understand that."

"They wanted to bump Jerry off," Gentry put in. "Tried to brain him, he put up a battle, and they choked him. Now, it happened when we were at the fire. Not a sound after I came in. Not a houseboy is around. The barkeep's out of sight. But old Annester was rocking out on the front veranda—and I'll bet he heard nothin'."

Curtin was mopping his pink brow.

"Annester doesn't run affairs on Timego. But who burned your plane? Who stole that bit of wood? Who wanted to murder Jerome? Not a doctor in hundreds of miles, I fancy."

"Doctor, hell!" Gentry exploded. "Jerry wants something hard to chew on. Action—sudden and noisy. Let's wreck Bull's bar!"

Jerome smiled unsteadily but stiffened like a soldier when Annester's vast shadow filled the bar door. The yellow man was there now, shoving across a bottle of Three Dagger, and the limes.

"Fella—" Gentry grinned—"don't trip on any more chairs."

"Quite," retorted Jerome. "How about port with dinner, chaps?"

The three were chaffing again, and the yellow barman's eyes scarcely hid his bewilderment. Annester chuckled at the doorway.

"Mr. Stanage is late from his warehouse. Arranging for the transport of my cannon from Deal Hall plantation tomorrow. I have chartered one of his schooners to send them to St. Kitt's. If you gentlemens are going out, it is goot—as my guests, gentlemens."

"I say—" Jerome glowered "we don't want you by when we're drinkin'. We don't like you—understand? Get out!"

The Curaçao trader gave him a heavy stare and departed. The sailor grinned.

"Just thought I'd let him know—sorry about the rotten nerves, though. Well, let's dine before the bats go to boomin' too fast through Mr. Stanage's dining room. They'd tangle in the salad—if we had any salad."

"Good boy," said Gentry, and led the way.

"No, it's you buckin' me up. Yank, you're rotten good—losin' your plane and all. It's real cricket."

"It's bases full and we need a hit. I'm goin' to shoot out the lights tonight. I want somebody to take notice of us. You'd think we had smallpox the way folks keep away from us. Except the Dutchman. Now Jerry's hurt his feelin's."

Annester did not come to dinner while the three were there. The big gray room was lighted only by the single oil lamp

above their table. The black boy came and went softly with the dishes. The first lift of the night land breeze stirred the palms outside.

"Goat mutton stew," announced Gentry, "roast breadfruit, yams and stewed *chocho*— Thanks for the port, Mr. Curtin. There comes the first bat, and if he lands in my soup I'll gun him."

They heard a decrepit carriage rattle on the drive. Mr. Stanage had arrived. They saw his barrel body and close cropped head under the barroom light as he questioned the yellow man. Then the island born white man and sole factor of Timego came to his guests' table. Mr. Stanage had made no show of being pleased to have strangers in port, but he had a burly civility.

"About your airplane, Mr. Gentry; that is bad. How could it happen? Boys starting a brush fire in the dry months— I've had trouble before. Now, the magistrate will look into this business."

"Thanks. A look will do us good. Boys will be boys."

Stanage stared puzzledly at him.

"I'll send a schooner out this week, with Mr. Annester's guns. That man is a nuisance, roaming the back country around those abandoned plantations with his palaver about pirates. I'd have sold him a dozen here in port—old Spanish guns, or English, left here by Morgan or Teach. Just so much junk, I say."

His gray, hard eyes fixed fully on Gentry—then on Curtin. Jerome drew his breath slightly, listening nervously to the slither of palm fronds in the dark. Bull stared at the sailor, then his broad, dark face smiled. But his eyes took no part in it.

"My lad, you must not go about so much, riding a pack mule over the mountain, with that lame leg. You know all about the ship, now. The commissioner has written a report of all we know here. Well, I will send a liqueur in to you, gentlemen." He clapped his big hands. "Boy! Take the gentlemen's orders."

Then he was gone into the shadowy hall. Gentry smiled.

"He thinks I'm just another crazy American. But he's puzzled."

"Or a grand actor," muttered Jerome. "He never brings up the matter of salvage. Waitin' for Curtin to start the discussion. But he must find it strange—if we came to ask about tin."

Curtin was weary; it had been a bad day since Gentry flew back from the reef with that evidence of the *Auralia's* end. With Jerome, Curtin had plodded on Stanage's mules all along the wild north shore and seen nothing. The Londoner looked at the guns which these two long limbed adventurers wore, and felt comforted. He announced that he was going to bed.

"Jerome, if you're nervous, pull your cot in my room. And of course, no word about—"

"Tin—" The sailor laughed. "Thanks, I'm quite all right, now."

But Gentry yawned ten minutes after Curtin had gone. Jerome wanted to talk, and the American didn't appear interested.

"It's this way," explained the Australian. "We ought to do something. Curtin's helpless. Not an outdoors man like you and I."

"Bed for me, fella. You too. We had a day of doin's."

THEIR rooms all opened to the dark veranda. Jerome couldn't sleep. He dragged his mattress to the door and watched the glitter of stars over sea and land. The coco palms flicked in the breeze. Then he heard the creak of a board. A figure was arising by the veranda rail down past Gentry's room. Jerome crept that way, automatic in hand. The skulker sank below the floor level, and Jerome peered out.

Then he chuckled.

"Beatin' your board bill, Yank? I thought it was some caller comin' in, not you crawlin' out."

Gentry whispered disgustedly.

"Can't a guy have any privacy in this burg? Go away and nurse your sore head."

The sailor dropped to the ground by his side.

"Not for worlds. What's the idea? I don't see a light in the village."

"Come out to the hedge, then. The hotel's all dark, too, but I want to see if Stanage and Annester get together. Then I figured if any jungle jumper bothered you or Curtin I'd spot him."

"Nice of you. But count me in on your night prowlin'."

"Jerome, I'm a suspicious ranny, and I may be wrong. The yeggs who cracked that safe may be sittin' in a Broadway speakeasy this minute. The ship's been missin' for weeks. Plenty of time for a getaway, but it couldn't be done from this island without other folks knowin' it. Stanage would—but he just saw nothin' queer about the wreck, he says. Annester's only been here a week. The two don't like each other. Stanage is anxious to ship the Dutchman and his guns away, but Annester tries to hook in on our parties like an old friend. He grins like a satisfied cat, and Stanage is nervous at our being here. Now, figure it, fella."

Jerome shook his head.

"Murder on that ship—and some one wants to stop the evidence goin' out. Why should either of them be interested in that? Unless he knew of the Meelong pearls—"

"It's a long trail you're tryin' to follow in two oceans."

"Got to do it, Yank," muttered Jerome obstinately. "I'll be under some suspicion of knowin' too much. Then you, flyin' down from Porto Rico to land where no plane ever came before, well—"

Gentry turned at a sound in the dark. A lane skirted the mule pen along a swampy little creek to enter the cove, and the champing of animals came that way. Then snorting—muffled hoofs.

Jerome followed and found Gentry standing in the dim starlight, whispering warnings back.

"Right at my feet is a dead man. I'll turn my flash down and you see if you can identify him. Just a second, for we don't want to stop a *machete* whirlin' in the dark. He got his—"

The beam showed a young field negro with a gash above his temple. Back of the trampled grass saddle mules were milling from the blood scent. Gentry flashed the light off.

"Come on away from this jungle edge. Know him, Jerome?"

"How'd I know him?" Jerome halted in quiet wonder.

"Just an idea he might have been from your lost *Auralia*—"

"Turn your light on, Yank. The beggar was a plantation hand and he had a note. For some one—a nice, muddy, bloody letter . . ."

In the open space of the starlit lane they bent over the stained, torn paper. Jerome whispered coldly:

"A bad smear, but I make out Curtin's name. And it's signed by Miss Grace Deal, over at that north shore plantation. All I can make out is, 'Come tonight with your friends. They're here. They're in my house—' " Jerome crumpled the wet paper. "Yank, that's enough. Draggin' that plucky woman in! Come on; she sent saddle mules, and somebody stopped her messenger here."

"Watchin' this house, then. Say, Jerry, let Curtin sleep. If we try to arouse him there'll be a light and talk in the hotel. Maybe nobody knows you and I are out tryin' to double-check 'em."

The Australian was fumbling at the diminutive mountain mules.

"I've ridden over the ridge twice with Curtin, but never at night. Huntin' tin—tryin' to line up that wreck story. And Bull Stanage's wild hill blacks kept out of our sight. No savvy."

They led the mules past mud walled huts and rickety fences under the black mass of overhanging banana and mango clumps. Not till the stars showed above the hogback range did they speak.

"Just one trail over," muttered Jerome, "so we can't miss it. Frightful country. Cockpit rocks grown with mangrove. You can't walk on that rotten old coral

crust. It'll break and let you into holes twenty feet deep. Give the mule his head—he knows his job."

"What you mean, tellin' me your nerves were all shot? Girl, hey? Is she a looker, Jerry?"

"Miss Gracie Deal," retorted the sailor, "is quite all right. I never met her till this week—"

"Miss Deal—" Gentry grinned. "Well, here goes the works. I got an idea we're followed. The bird that stopped her messenger must know we're abroad. Action wanted."

A LATE moon was above the Carib sea when the two riders rounded a rocky summit out of the gorge they had traveled. Guns out, watching right and left into the shade of the cockpits. Ancient coral rock, carved and pillared by the tropic rains of ages since the ocean beds were thrust three thousand feet up. Crusty, rotten rock, overgrown with impenetrable hill mangroves through which the giant tree ferns fought to the air. Impassable off the trail which the feet of vanished Arawak and Carib tribes had worn before white and black men found the Windwards.

Then the road sank through a cliff darkened pass where seventy-foot bamboos arched the turns. They saw moonlight on lowlands, and a white crinkle of surf at the first widening of the gorge. Then Jerome reined in. He pointed to a vague figure ahead.

"Chap there, Yank—right in the open. Must be another of the Deal Hall plantation hands sent to meet us. What else?"

"Take no chances. Kick on, and I'll snap the light on him."

Jerome mauled his mule on faster. Twenty feet away Gentry flung the flash beam ahead. The sailor gasped. A wrinkle faced Chinese was staring, slant eyes wide. Then he howled shrilly and sprang to the tree fern jungle in apparent, utter funk at the sight of the *Auralia's* officer. Jerome swung from his mule, yelling.

"Hi—you! B'long ship! Stop, you beggar—!"

Then he heard Gentry's gun bark. Bare feet were pattering on rock and scurrying in leaves. A crunch of steel through flesh and bone, a stagger in the dark—then Gentry was by his side.

"Stick-up, Jerry. You hurt?"

"Swung a *machete* at me—and copped the mule. There they come again, Yank!"

They fired together at dim moving shapes in the slither of ferns and bamboo. One shot blazed back; then silence came. The two crouched on the trail, watching, listening. Then Gentry spoke.

"We put one down. Hear him crawlin'?"

"Get him. I want to chin-chin. A hand off the old freighter, you know—and Stanage swore none lived through the surf."

"Sit quiet, Jerome. These guys want to get you. You're the one livin' man in ten thousand miles, maybe, who could identify 'em. Chinks, eh? Now, you'd think that Stanage would want to make himself solid with the government by huntin' those killers down. And how did they know we were ridin' over the hills tonight?"

Jerome fidgeted whenever he had to be still.

"Mutiny on the ship—and Stanage knew it. Yank, this crowd knew we were comin'—but perhaps as prisoners. Or else that man who stood out in the trail was bait for us while the gunmen got into action. But he was paralyzed to see me ridin', with a gun out."

"This job," muttered Gentry, "was black man's labor, yella man's fight—and white man's brains. Somebody else is afraid the story of the rajah's pearls will come out. Or somebody else is huntin' them—and tryin' to strongarm us out of the game."

The *Auralia's* second officer was muttering:

"Let's see: twelve new hands at Hongkong. Hai Ling men, I think. Some of those people are Bias Bay pirates, m' boy. Cutthroats, you know, who board coastwise steamers as coolie passengers or deck hands. Get their arms smuggled on. Then

they seize the ship and take her into some river inlet to plunder at leisure—and hold the officers for ransom. No new thing out on the China stations. Piracy, you know!"

"Why didn't they pull it then?" asked Gentry.

"The skipper didn't make another port of call up the China coast as was expected. That fooled the beggars. Yank, I sensed some ugly feelin's in my watch. Nothin' I could grouse about with the Old Man so surly, determined that none of his officers should know he was secreting a tremendous fortune in his little safe."

"But those chink killers had found out—"

"Did they? I'm not so sure. They boarded the ship to seize her, but Bannon put for Panama. The outlaws couldn't navigate, nor avoid trouble if they killed the officers in mid-Pacific. So they had to go on, Liverpool-bound, posin' as honest seamen."

"Good guess," Gentry grumbled as he watched the dark unwaveringly. "But then what started 'em on a murder rampage here in the Caribbean? Ten thousand miles from home, I reckon—What chance did they have to escape?"

Jerome was silent for a moment. "Yank, white brains were in it. The pirates were shown some way out. Likely, if they destroyed the ship and took to the boats, they could be picked up and have a good wreck story to tell. That hurricane would help the yarn. Only the *Auralia* struck on Timego reef with that murder evidence on her."

Gentry shook his head.

"I'll bet she was steered here. Some one knew of the pearls from the start. Now Stanage must know some of your pirates got ashore. That racketeer knows everything about his black people. Got every man's mouth closed. Got us all here in a jam—the Dutchman as well. That's my idea."

"How would he know that old freighter carried the Meelong pearls? Quite impossible. Not a soul on her had ever been outside of China waters or the South Seas before, I'm sure."

"If one of your white officers cooked up the job, then he's keepin' out of sight. Somebody's got to stop us right soon." The American looked down the pass at the first rift of dawn behind a storm cloud. "Jerry, ride the mule and save your leg. You'll need the centipede's chance if today finishes like it's started."

GENTRY'S long legs were better on the down trail than the cautious mule which Jerome straddled. But it was an hour before Deal Hall plantation showed a thousand feet below. An ancient, white pillared mansion, gloomy in a sedgy yard of wet black trees, with the long abandoned fields stretching to the coast inlet.

"Not a smoke from the hands' quarters," said Jerome uneasily. "Her people have been scared away, Yank. Now, let's make for that old sugar mill first and find a way to the Hall unseen by any one. Looks deserted, but my guess is that we're spotted."

Then the sea squall rode over the lowlands and blotted the world. Half an hour later the two crashed through palmettos breast high to the brick arch of a shed beyond which was the boiler room of the decayed sugar house. Rusted cane rollers and cobwebbed machinery showed dimly in the tropic rain sheets through the broken roof. Jerome dragged his streaming mule to concealment there. Then he heard Gentry call from the arch facing the road. The rain was lessening toward the bush black hills.

"Three men, Jerry, on the trail we came. Two got rifles—"

Jerome gasped at his glimpse of them.

"There's that damned quartermaster, Yat Wong! So that was it? Poor old skipper!"

"Trailed us down—lost it in the rain. Take cover, Jerry!"

Three yellow men in faded wet cotton, barefooted, halted in the archway suspiciously. Jerome fixed eyes on the little weazened headman. Yat Wong would know English—they could twist the truth from him, perhaps, of the *Auralia's* mystery.

"Alive—get him alive," he whispered to Gentry as they crouched behind the rusted roller. "Come on, Yank!"

They had no chance. A shrill cry echoed. Bare feet pattered on the stone slabbed floor. The Hai Ling men had seen boot prints there. White tracks. They dashed for cover.

Jerome charged straight for the door where Yat Wong had vanished. Gentry rose up, shooting, for the others had fled to the shadows of the boiler room. A rifle muzzle thrust out, aimed at Jerome's back. The American jerked it down and the lead cut his legging thongs. He dropped the man with his revolver barrel, and another fear crazed face showed through the smoke film.

"Alive—get one alive!" yelled Jerome. "Got to make him talk!"

Gentry was trying to ride the bare wet shoulders of a fighting man who didn't care to talk. Around in the rusty grime behind the boilers, they circled, too close to use either gun or knife. But the mutineer twisted free, and leaped toward the lame sailor with his *machete* raised.

Jerome felt the downward stroke of steel clip hair behind his ear; then the bark of Gentry's gun from the shadows. The American shoved out across a heaving yellow body.

"Sorry, but this thing of takin' one alive don't go. You're too confident, askin' these fellas to surrender. And they want to stop your mouth, Jerry—see that? They got their orders."

Jerome staggered over blood wet stones to the door.

"Yat—"

"The boss man ducked. I bet we find him at the big house."

Gentry followed the panting sailor along a thorn grown ditch. The vacant windows of Deal Hall blinked in a red and stormy sun as they neared its gray, lichen mottled walls.

"Not a sign of life," said Jerome. "This shootin' should have been heard."

"Worryin' about the little Scotch lady?" Gentry grinned. "Well, quit. It's you they want to bump off. Here, drift under those rear steps till I loosen a jammed shell in my gun."

The lame sailor beat him under the arches of basement rooms long unused. Jerome's lips were tight when he stopped at the bottom of a flight of steps which led upward to a closed door.

"Come on, Yank," he muttered. "We break it in."

But Gentry was listening at a vine clad arch of the foundations which opened to the front veranda.

"Wait—something comin' down, Jerry. I heard a window crash."

A spatter of raindrops struck his face. There was a tugging of the vines above. Then a jerking fall as some weight hurled through the wet, green slither till it struck the grassy stones at their feet. Gentry pointed.

"A black boy, Jerry. They crashed his head with a cane knife like they did the other one. Your yella pirates—and they know they'll hang in a British court. Why has Bull Stanage allowed 'em the run of this north shore jungle?"

"Heave on this door," snapped Jerome from the stairs.

But to their surprise it opened at a touch. They stepped cautiously in to a bare rear hall. At the front the leaded colored glass of the great door diffused light upon a balustrade of ancient mahogany which curved to the upper floor. Gentry got to the grand staircase and then pointed to a vast room which must have glittered with its massive crystal candelabra two centuries ago, when the first white colonials were rich from the sugar lands long since reverted to West Indian jungle.

"Well," said Gentry, "I thought the Dutchman was a liar. This much is true, anyhow."

MOUNTED on wooden blocks, amid a litter of cleaning tools, were two little bronze cannon. Loot of the buccaneers from some Spanish captain out of Mexico with the king's bullion, their five feet of metal gleamed dully with ornate

decoration above the dim tiles of the floor.

"Yes," whispered Jerome. "Annester did buy them. When Curtin and I called here those guns stood in the vestibule. Miss Gracie said her family'd had 'em for generations. Ready for shippin'."

Gentry was at the colored glass of the door which opened to the pillared front of Deal Hall. Then he came softly back.

"Jerry, there's a dead man outside. And the live one who killed him is upstairs. And I see a schooner's sticks out at the inlet anchorage. Stanage has come around by sea—and there he is now on the road. Not huntin' Spanish guns, my boy!"

"Annester's with him!" gasped Jerome. "Now what? I never saw those two priceless birds pallin' together before."

"They're turnin' in here. Get cover. We'll hear something—they're in an argument. Bull's wet and snarlin'."

The ancient door shook as Stanage jarred it open. He gave the briefest look at the guns in the unfurnished drawing room. The two watchers were about the turn in the rear hall but neither Annester nor Stanage looked that way. Bull stopped at the stairs.

"You find 'em, Dutchy. You only told me this yarn of a fortune in pearls from that ship when you had to. The meddlin' flyer saw the safe and told the Britisher. The ship's officer arrives, and your chinks had to hide out in the brush. Pirate guns? I never did believe that yarn o' yours from the first."

Annester was rubbing his white fat hands as he looked up the grand staircase to the shadowy upper hall.

"My frient, not so loud. Do you wish the Scotch lady to know you are here? Mr. Stanage, the Timego factor, intruding? No brawling in this house, Mr. Stanage!"

Jerome gasped.

"Listen to him. Defendin' Deal Hall—why the bally nerve of him! Why—why—"

"Keep quiet," whispered Gentry. "I'm on to him. He's speakin' loud so the girl will overhear. That'll hang any rough stuff on Stanage. Smooth party, that Dutchman . . . Now let 'em battle."

Stanage cursed, but lowered his tone. This ancient mansion of the forgotten sugar aristocracy, the lands reverting to jungle, did daunt his bluster. He muttered on obstinately.

"Lies—tricks— I saw gun fire'd been done on that ship when I boarded her. Knew there'd been murder but I kept mum till I could see where profit lay—and I'd no fancy for havin' the magistrates worry my people. No gunboat callin' in, says I. Then you came to Timego to prowl over these back lands for Spanish guns. Not till the three strangers arrived did you hint fortune to me. And you'd come to meet this murderin' chink who plotted the job. Pearls—and now you say they're lost again. Tricks, as you played on the Chinese crew, once you'd made rotten use of 'em!"

The expert in modern murder and Old World antiques chuckled.

"Of the seven mutineers who got ashore alive, but three live. Suppose your black men hunt them down—pirates, rightfully disposed of. When the last is gone, who will know of strange doings, my frient?"

"The Britisher, the sailor and the American—"

"Ah, but liddle accidents happen to strangers in the Timego bush, do they not? Then who can talk of pearls save you and I, eh?"

"Mister, I don't trust you. You asked me to stay away from my hotel, and a killer attacks the ship's officer. The American's plane burned. Now find the pearls, Annester, if you want a whole skin."

"Of course we will find the pearls. But even you, Mr. Stanage, cannot go too far. Too much blood spilled—even black or yellow—and the magistrates inquire. What do you gain? Now, I offer you ten thousand pounds to aid me. With the salvage of the tin, you are a rich man, Mr. Stanage."

Bull's wits were no match for Annester. But, leaning down on the great staircase, he growled disbelief.

"You'll hang if I preach on you. I

know how deep you're in, Annester. The ship calls at Curaçao, and the crooked quartermaster tells you what she carried. You planned for his gang to kill every honest man, white or yellow, when she was three hundred miles off this port, and steer here for her destruction. Then you came by the mailboat. But the ship did not sink before I saw murder on her, and eight of Yat's men drowned in the surf. But he hid the rest and the ship's safe in the jungle till you came to his camp.

"I suspected you then, Annester; and you had to confess to me when the strangers came. As for the Chinese, you promised them escape, here; but you knew they'd swing for piracy. Even Yat Wong, whom you'd known in the East."

The Dutchman chuckled.

"Quite true, Mr. Stanage. And last night Yat's men were to settle with the three strangers at your hotel. A word from you to the constables, my frient, and they are seized. To England and hanged —and you and I alone know of the pearls, eh?"

Bull seethed, trying to lower his rage.

"Damn this palaver! I kept my mouth shut about the ship. I swore no man lived from her. Your knife men have done murder at your orders, so hand over half of your plunder or to the British courts you go. Half, I say!"

Gentry saw Annester beam on him with curious confidence. Luring Bull on to where he could stop at no crime to conceal his own complicity; confessing the exact truth about the *Auralia* was the first tangle of the net into which he had drawn the boss of Timego, and Stanage would have to aid him to the end. And if Stanage could be provoked to violence, here in the house of the one resident of the island whom he was forced to respect, Annester could make his own terms. Stanage feared Miss Grace Deal after all.

JEROME tapped Gentry's arm. Up the stairs they saw Yat Wong in the shadow of a doorway, watching Annester and Stanage who had gone along the upper wing corridor where Miss Gracie's living apartments were. The two were conferring again. But Gentry watched the yellow man; an idea was growing in his mind.

"Jerry, I see why the Dutchman is so chesty. He's sure that Yat's gang finished us last night. But Annester kept clear of it, and Yat hasn't been able to tell him the ambush failed. Yat's afraid to come openly into Stanage's sight, or else—"

The *Auralia's* quartermaster was stealing along the hall as if to overhear. Annester was protesting again.

"Will I cheat you, Mr. Stanage? I hid the pearls here in this house. When the insurance agent arrived suddenly to talk to the Scotch woman, I had to hide them. Here in this broken spot in the wall, my friend. And now, you see? Gone! The woman found them and hid them elsewhere."

Stanage retorted thickly:

"A likely yarn! I've broken no law yet about these pearls you tell of. But you— Well, find them!"

Annester was whispering at a closed door.

"I will go to her now. Yat tied her to a chair when he went to trap the American. I will twist her arms—I will make her tell. But you must not be seen, Mr. Stanage. Not you, Mr. Stanage—" And he went into the room.

Jerome nudged Gentry.

"That's far enough. Torture her, eh? Little Miss Deal— Not a bit, my boy! Are you comin'?"

"Sure; we'll stop it. But, Jerry, where's that chink? Slipped into some side room out of sight."

"I'll shoot Yat Wong on sight," whispered Jerome calmly. "Still an officer, you know, facin' mutiny, piracy—that sort of thing. As to Annester, a Dutch subject—matter for the courts . . ."

"Come on," muttered Gentry. He stepped to the hall.

But they heard a surly grumble. Stanage had been listening at the closed door where Annester had gone, but now he turned. Yat Wong was pressed close to the wall between him and Gentry. Bull

saw the indistinct figures of the three, in fact. He fell away, his big voice booming against all caution.

"So that's it? Filled the house with your yella rats, eh?"

The door opened. Annester's bulk filled it, and Jerome heard Grace Deal's voice cry out in command. But the big Dutchman saw moving men up the hall, men he could not account for, and wild suspicion gripped him. Stanage had played false. He had brought his hill blacks or the constables . . . His shout echoed with Stanage's own.

"Look out!" yelled Gentry. "Here comes lead, Jerry—and we're in line!"

The others did not notice them. Twenty feet apart Annester and Stanage were firing. The dim hall spun with splashes of light, grew filmy with smoke. Yat Wong crouched along the wainscot, and Gentry dragged Jerome flat against the wall.

Then Annester faltered. His big body sagged. Stanage lunged at him, howling:

"That plunder, you rat! Tell the truth before you go. Where is it?"

Annester was croaking words no one understood save Yat Wong.

Stanage never saw the little figure in wet, faded blue trousers, bare of foot and shoulders, stealing along the hall. Gentry shouted, and Jerome thrust his pistol across the American's arm.

Yat Wong was rushing now, as if at Annester's last orders. Bull's gun was coming up, but it was Jerome who fired. Along his line of vision a heavy knife had gleamed. The flash of it lengthened—deadly, accurate. The head mutineer had gone down under the *Auralia* officer's bullet, but Stanage had toppled without a word—cleft to the chin.

The silence in the smoke filled hall was broken by a woman's cry beyond. Jerome ran that way, calling to the American. They brushed past Annester who still stood on his feet, weaving about, a distorted smile on his bearded lips. Gentry watched him briefly:

"Got his—and lost his guns. All right, Jerry!"

Jerome was loosening the cords that bound Grace Deal to a chair in her living room. The sailor was muttering apologies.

"Yes—got a message but they stopped your man. They killed another black boy just awhile ago who came back to your house. Oh, murder, you see! The beggars had to—no hope for them otherwise."

Miss Grace Deal turned cool blue eyes to Gentry whom she had never seen. She rubbed her numb wrists and pushed back the disorder of her blond hair. Two centuries of battling the West Indian bush had given the Scotch colonials a calmness nothing could shake.

"Thank you—Mr. Jerome told me about you. Did you say that Mr. Stanage was out there also?"

"He was," said Gentry. "But he ain't—if you get me—"

"And Annester," put in Jerome swiftly. "He came to torture you, Miss Gracie. But Stanage killed him when each thought the other was playin' false."

"They were," retorted the girl steadily. "Annester came in just now and pretended to aid me. Said it was all Stanage's work—those Chinese scaring my house boys away, and then the boss man tying me here last night. Said I must keep still and he'd get rid of Mr. Stanage. I couldn't understand it."

"He was trying to make Stanage believe you had discovered the Meelong pearls and hidden them. Yat Wong got the little safe ashore when the mutineers first landed, and Annester cracked it. But the Dutchman had to have an alibi, and also destroy the Chinese, one by one, after he had used them. Didn't you suspect him?"

"Suspect him?" Her blue eyes widened. "I detested the man, but I was willing to sell him antiques—or anything else. But pearls— What in the world are you talking about?"

"You never heard of them?" demanded Jerome. "Really?"

"I'll bet they're a myth," growled Gentry. "Nobody's laid eyes on 'em. Not even Curtin, who's been runnin' us

ragged to help find 'em. Nor Stanage, badly as he itched to get hands on 'em."

"Sit down," said Grace Deal. "This is interesting. Pearls looted from that wreck—and concealed on my property?"

Jerome protested.

"They're real. I've heard of 'em in the East. Famous collection. Oh, you mean to say that every one who might know of them is dead, do you, Yank?"

Gentry had been listening. A sort of stealthy shuffling had been heard by him alone as he stood near the door. Suddenly he turned and closed the door behind him. Jerome stared at Miss Deal.

"Good old Yank! None of his business, but he's stood right by. Hopped over the mountain to save you!"

"From what?" asked the girl amazedly.

"Why, didn't you send word to Curtin to come here?"

"Yes, but I didn't know I was in any danger. I wanted Mr. Curtin to know that some of the Chinese crew of that ship were alive, and that Stanage had lied to him. I was sure Stanage would try to swindle him in the salvage settlement on the cargo. Tin—and now you say she carried South Sea pearls. Fancy that!"

The lame sailor sat at the window seat.

"Oh, I say! It's all muddled again. I was sure you had a clue; the most valuable collection of pearls in the Orient is lost again. The old rajah, sittin' in his London club this minute, waitin' for Curtin to report something. Poor old Curtin! Did his best, and all he's got is half a dozen dead men on his hands to explain to the colonial government. Of course you couldn't know that this oily, smooth talker, Annester, was a crook out in the Dutch East Indies, and knew all about the Meelong pearls years ago. And when this former thievin' tool of his, Yat Wong, showed him a chance at 'em, Annester took it. Now, he's dead—and no one else knows where he hid 'em."

Miss Deal went to the door.

"Mr. Jerome, you're a bit shaky. Let's go to the dining room. I'll never live here again after this frightful murdering. I'll sell to the sisal company. They'll plant all this shore now that Stanage's influence is removed from the blacks. I never could get field labor because of him."

"There's Bull Stanage, quite removed—" Jerome stepped around the body, and Miss Deal followed, shivering slightly. "And there's Yat, the last livin' mutineer of the *Auralia*. I removed *him*. But where's Annester—and the blessed old Yank?"

THEY saw Gentry at the foot of the curving staircase. Face up, on the tiled floor of the ancient drawing room, Annester stared at the dim colored lights from the leaded glass of the front door—stared with unseeing eyes and his vast, bearded smile.

"He crawled down here and then passed out," said Gentry.

"He fooled me completely," Grace Deal said softly. "Never a word about pearls, or tin, or Chinese hiding out in the brush."

"Kept clear of complicity and let Yat do the rough work," Jerome murmured. "Didn't he say a word before he died, Gentry?"

"How about that drink, Miss Gracie?" asked the American. "I'll bet anything you've got stuff your father made before you were born."

"Before *he* was born!" retorted Miss Deal.

Gentry sat at the head of the long table and watched the girl light the mellow candles in the heavy silver.

"Jerry, old boy, what's on your mind? Worryin' about the rajah's pearls again?"

"It's rotten—" Jerome tinkled the decanter. "Rum, sixty years aged, eh? . . . Oh, well, the pearls! We'll have to take this whole affair to the local magistrate, and he'll muddle it worse—or start tearin' Deal Hall up to find them ourselves." He sipped of his drink gloomily. "You see, we're all of us here goin' to be under

some suspicion of knowin' something about the things."

Miss Deal glanced at the Yank, who had laughed suddenly. It sounded loud in the silent house, and curiously comforting.

Gentry drew a slender canvas packet from his coat. The lacing at one end had been cut, and from it he slipped an inner case of soft leather. The pockets of this had also been opened. From them the American dropped twists of white paper.

Jerome reached for the nearest one.

"M' boy," he exclaimed, "no chaffin'. What do you mean?"

"I tore the thing open. Wanted to be sure, and maybe I'm wrong, anyhow. Are they real?"

The sailor was shaking globes of iridescent sheen from the twisted papers.

"Oh, beautiful!" Grace Deal cried out.

"The Meelong collection," said Jerome absently. "Perfect pearls, perfectly matched. I'd heard of 'em in the native states years ago. Never strung, never worn, some hundreds of years old, and some just from the Sulu lagoons. Hoarded for generations by that Timboru family. They've cost blood before . . ."

The jewels were heaped in a softly glowing nest under Grace Deal's hands. The candle light struck her eager face and the lean bronze ones of the two men.

"Hundreds of 'em," whispered Jerome. "Yank, where—how?"

"Just got 'em when I came downstairs ahead of you. I heard Annester crawlin'. I stayed out of sight and followed. He just had strength to get to that front room. Then he stopped and began talkin' to himself. Boastin' to the last—he'd fooled Curtin, fooled Stanage, Yat Wong—everybody. Then he died."

"Didn't see you?"

"No. But I wondered why he loved those two old Spanish cannon. So I got down and fished up the muzzles. They both had wooden weather plugs. Took my knife and picked 'em out."

The sailor arose joyfully and hammered Gentry on the back.

"Annester hid them there? Oh, see his game? Stanage would never allow the Dutchman to leave Timego without searchin' him to the skin. But Stanage was goin' to ship those guns this week, after he'd crated them at his warehouse. Bill 'em safely through to St. Kitt's himself! Oh, man—while Annester stayed here, pretendin' to join Bull on the grand hunt for the pearls. They'd never find 'em on Timego. And Annester played the ace when he accused Miss Gracie of havin' found 'em. It was the one spot on the island where Stanage wouldn't dare search without gettin' in trouble."

"I should say not," announced the girl. "Stanage always rather feared I'd complain to the colonial office about his rule here. But Annester, he was awfully keen about cleaning his guns yesterday when he rode over. And drinking my port and talking intaglios and Sixteenth Century art things which the pirates must have stolen and chucked about. And this morning, when he came, he was terribly shocked at what the Chinese had done!"

"Blamed it on Stanage, eh? Jerry, he took a big chance shippin' that plunder out ahead of him. But he had to take it. Bull had him in a hole; but he got Bull to send the stuff away safe for him." Gentry turned to the Australian. "Take charge of the pearls, sailor. You started the voyage with 'em; finish it."

Grace Deal sighed when she pushed the lustrous beauties across her gleaming mahogany. Jerome took them reluctantly.

"Think of that old rotter in London waitin' while a couple of priceless fools, like you and I, Yank, battle for his wealth. But if the gems had never turned up we'd been dogged for years by his secret agents. A lot of things happen in those native states that never get into print. The rajah'd never believe that we'd be on the level, once we got hands on the Meelong pearls."

"Stick 'em out of my sight," retorted Gentry. "Then we better take some of Miss Deal's mules and pack over the mountain. Three—no, four dead men—and a couple more up the road, maybe.

Mr. Curtin's got a lot to explain to the magistrates for us all."

Jerome was repacking the last of the rajah's pearls. He saw Grace Deal's eyes linger on his hands.

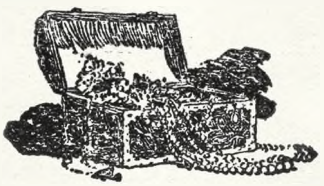
"You know," he said absently, "Curtin told me that his insurance people would pay ten thousand pounds for the recovery of these gems—and no questions asked. Rather neat, eh? I say, the three of us here split it."

"Three of us?" gasped the girl. "Why, I didn't do a thing to earn it. Never heard of them till this morning!"

"Why, ma'am"—Gentry grinned—"it was you that brought Jerry and I over the mountain. Fifty thousand dollars it figures, split three ways. The way Jerry kept thinkin' of you makes me feel you and him ought to bank your shares together. When I get clear of this mess I'm goin' to buy a new plane and get goin' again—still got a yen to look 'em over in Rio. What say?"

"Don't be silly," murmured the girl, and colored under the sailor's long gaze at her. "He is silly, isn't he—Jerry?"

"Quite!" Jerome smiled. "The silly old Yank keeps puttin' ideas in one's mind, though, doesn't he?"



THE BALLAD OF FELIX XAVIER AUBREY

By S. OMAR BARKER

Straddle the saddle and touch and go . . .
Many the tales that the old men know.
This is a tale that the old men tell,
Grizzled old riders who know it well:

Felix Xavier Aubrey, sir,
Talk of the trail and knight of the spur,
Up on a horse at the dawn of day,
Dusting the trail out of Santa Fé;
Wolfing the miles from mountain to plain,
Twelve days once and eight again,
So he has ridden this trail before,
Now he must make it in six, no more.
All for a bet of a thousand, gold,
Aubrey rides out of the Plaza old.
Independence is far away—
Eight hundred miles, so the trail men say.

At Pigeon's Ranch and Pecos Town
Freighters cheer as he gallops down,
Changes of mounts all day still find him
Leaving the long miles strewn behind him.

Out of the hills he hits the plains,
Drizzled and muddy with autumn rains.
Coffee gulped at the Point of Rocks . . .
Dolly, his mare with the slender hocks . . .
Willow Bar on the Rabbit Ear,
Relay horses will wait him here.

What, not a horse, nor meat, nor bread?
Indian tracks, and a dead man's head!
Lung-spent, Dolly labors on,
Far to the banks of the Cimarron.

Saddle to saddle—his legs feel strange,
Numb and dead as he makes the change.
One he rides and two he drives,
Finally only one survives.
Soon it too has fallen, sick,
For mud is heavy and deathly slick.

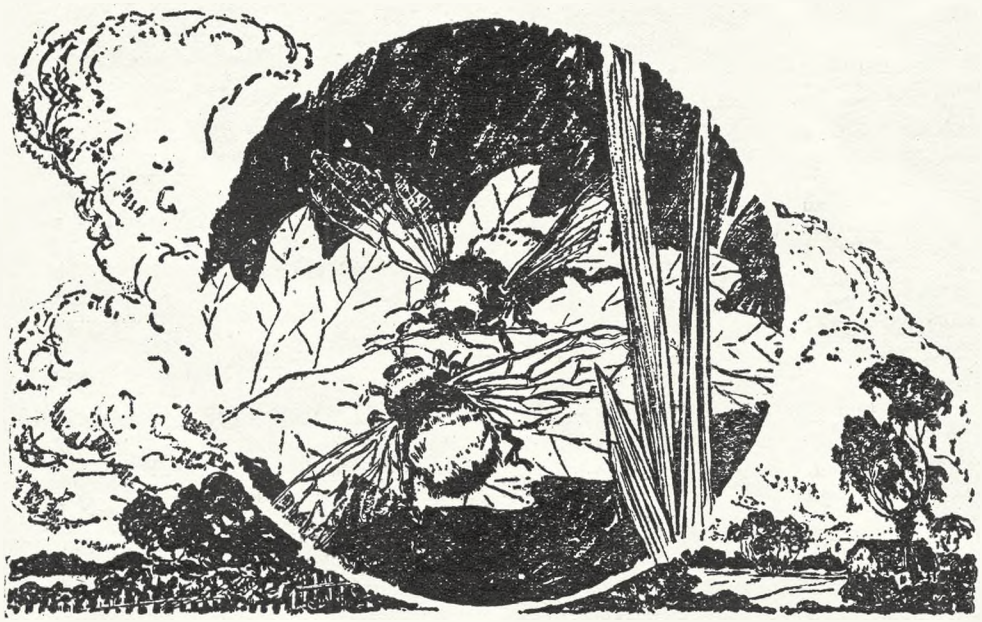
Coyote-like he trots the trail,
(Even afoot he will not fail!)
Twenty miles to the Arkansas . . .
Old men tell the tale in awe.
Thew-sore, hungry, weak of blood
Aubrey swims its swollen flood,
Straddles a saddle where horses wait.
Galloping hoofs sing: "Late . . . too . . . late!"

Dizzy with sleep till the reins drop loose,
He rubs his eyes with tobacco juice.
His last horse down at Big John Springs,
He swaps for a mount, and up he swings.

Gallop and gallop and gallop to win . . .
Late in the night at Nolland's Inn,
Aubrey draws and fires his gun,
Signaling out that his bet is won!

Down from the saddle they see him sway,
Six days' ride out of Santa Fé.

Straddle the saddle . . . the horseback clan
Tell this tale of a riding man:
Felix Xavier Aubrey, sir,
Wolfing the trail in the days that were!



The CLOUD

By F. ST. MARS

LIKE many people, Psithy met her husband at a dance. Like many, too, at the same amusement, she lost him. Psithy was modern and mercenary, you understand, and quickly divorced—within about half an hour, I fancy—and Nature and Psithy said that he could go hang, which he did and died. But Nature took great care of Psithy—until her destiny was fulfilled. That Psithy's destiny was to be that of a rogue made no difference. That is Nature's way.

Psithy sat at another dance—the Dance of the May Blossom, they call it—when we first catch sight of her, combing, literally combing, her hair, golden and brown.

"Oh! but—" you cry. "She is a bumblebee!" and you would have been wrong, also right. I, who am supposed to be in the know, a detective of the wild, spot the difference between her and an officially sanctioned bumblebee—but watch!

Many bumblebees came to that dance, not to flirt, for they are honest housekeepers, but to gather honey while the sun shone.

Psithy also gathered honey; at least, she rose on wing lazily, and with a dilettante air went and sipped a little nectar—enough for the moment.

But this was very different from the other bumblebees. Theirs was a business method—jolly, fat, clumsy, furry, I admit, but strictly business. They filled themselves with honey. They packed their pollen baskets (pollen is the bees' bread) the bunch of hairs on their specially broadened hind legs with pollen, pressing it in carefully.

Psithy gathered no pollen. She could

not. She had no pollen baskets, nor were her hind legs broadened for the purpose. Psithy played with the sunbeams; flirted with idle gentlemen Psithys; toyed with the passing hour, the summer breeze, the sensuous soft scents of the flying petals tossed by every movement of wind, of bird, of insect, like pink foam. So frittered the time away. Thus languished the hot day.

Then Psithy began to watch the other bumblebees; and when she did that 'twas time to watch *her*.

One bumblebee passed, a foxy red person, not like Psithy. Psithy let her, or him, pass. Another, brown and stone color, came quite close. Psithy ignored it. Then one blackish with a red tail almost exactly resembling Psithy herself, and Psithy's head turned to follow it, wherever it, or she rather, went, watching it like a cat; as, like a cat, too, she had sat cleaning her face.

Then the bumblebee, having got a full load, boomed away over the gooseberry bushes with that happy song which can only come of hard work. And Psithy followed her.

But it is with bumblebees as it is with men: Lucky are they who reach their goal without anything getting in the way. In this case it was a silver and sulphur great titmouse that got in the way. But the bird could not help his shadow underrunning him; and with Psithy even a shadow was enough. She fell headlong—fell, and lay as if stricken with paralysis among the red currant bushes, whose ropes of blood hearted rubies hung in the sunshine.

The great titmouse did not relish finding her in there; a cat might find him. He went, therefore. But a busybody ant found her instead, and wished it had not, for Psithy promptly came to life again. Followed a "*Buzz-z-z!*" and—no more ant; at least, no more living ant.

Psithy, however, had lost her bumblebee, and with that same, her own goal, which was the bumblebee's most carefully guarded secret—the position of the bumblebee's nest. Psithy had been, in fact, shadowing her from the start.

Nature, however, had given Psithy another aid to her villainy as well as quick eyes. She had a wonderful insects' equivalent for a nose. She could scent like a hound. She could "run a trail"; and she trailed—but not the past and gone bumblebee. She trailed that fat lady's nest. She worked upwind, of course, low to earth, swinging in zig-zags of a yard or two across, sometimes less, sometimes more, in and out among:

> "Daisies pied, and violets blue,
> And cuckoo buds of yellow hue,
> And lady smocks all silver white . . ."

backwards and forwards she swung.

A very large bumblebee she looked, one of the biggest that you ever saw—searching, searching, searching, with a care and a perseverance that would have been admirable, if it had not been the only bit of energy she had expended upon real work in her whole life, or—hoped to again.

It was a long, slow process, this nest trailing; and it had to be gone back on to the starting post, so to say, and begun all over again. And in case it should not be found hard enough, there were enemies to add a ripple of excitement to the entertainment. Queen wasps there were, short tempered and wicked; dragonflies with dragon appetites; hornet robber flies, deserving their titles; sparrows ready to bully; swallows feeling hungry; tom-tits anxious to risk a sting; but through, and over, and under it all, Psithy managed at last, guided by Fate, guarded by her booming hum that was a reminder to all of her power to make a stinging retort. She flew at length to what looked like a fieldmouse burrow, shaded at noonday by nodding bluebells, almost hidden under lilies-of-the-valley. It had been one, too, but was now the main gate of a city of the bumblebee people—the precise form of bumblebee that Psithy most nearly resembled; she would not have interfered with any other species for any money.

Psithy loafed around a bit, as if to get the hang of the place. There were plenty of busy, honest, fat, rollicking

bumblebees going in and out of the hole, and Psithy finally slipped in close behind one bee that had just arrived with a full load—as close behind her as she dared. She walked quite boldly down into the black dark of the yard long passage—'twould have spelt death to enter any way else—and hoped to pass in unnoticed.

At the end of the tunnel Psithy came to a hollowed out chamber, nearly filled by a ball of moss and chopped and shredded grass, which was the bumblebees' nest. She slipped through the one entrance as quickly and unobtrusively as she could, just escaping a guard, who happened to have turned the other way for a moment, and found herself among the jumbled, piled heap of wax cells that was the nest.

HERE was none of the beautiful mathematical precision of the honeybees' creamy waxen comb. Here were only big brown waxen cells piled higgledy-piggledy anyhow; new cells containing hungry bumblebee grubs; old cells that had contained them, but were now used as honey vats; old cells broken down to supply the material for new ones; whole cells, half cells, and bits of cells; empty cells, inhabited cells built into, on to, and over one another in a heap of confusion.

But, in spite of this, the colony was virile, was growing. There were plenty of young bees hatching out to carry the work on.

All this Psithy found out as she poked around, watched from dark corners, dodged the busy owners of the place. But you will say that she could not see, the nest being as dark as the black plague. That may, or may not be; but ants are sensitive to, and apparently regard as light, the ultra violet rays, which to us appear pitch dark; and something of the same kind may have applied here. Anyway, it did not much matter, for Psithy had her antennæ, her feelers, that is, which carried within them a wonderful sense, the meaning and working of which we do not know even yet, or are likely to. It seemed to be as good as eyes, and nose, and ears, and touch rolled into one, and capable of a speech, or sign language, beyond our understanding.

Now, the nest population of the bumblebees consisted of three distinct classes, all of one species, of course. First, we have the big queen mother, the giantess egg layer and founder of the colony, a perfect female, and with her, too, some quite young perfect females, princesses, destined next year, if they lived—a big *if*—to found new colonies of their own.

Second, the smaller, fat drones, or males, who did no work, but played all day or basked on the flowers idly when the sun shone, or loafed and gossiped in the nest, and fed from the honey pots filled against rainy and cold weather.

Third, the small workers, females who had never become perfect, tenders and feeders of the broods, builders, wax makers, guards, honey gatherers, pollen packers, and all the rest of it. Nobody could do without the workers, just as nobody could without the queen mother, for she produced the eggs that the workers—that they all—came from.

Psithy was not afraid of meeting any of them single clawed, and they were not sufficiently far advanced up the social scale to combine *ordinarily* against her. What she had to fear was the chance of meeting a large number simultaneously, and of that mysterious sudden mass rage, mob hypnotism, or whatever it is, breaking out among them at her expense.

But Psithy had another weapon beside sting and shearjaws. Recent history has divulged to us the workings of it; strangers within the gates have proved its deadliness. Watch now and you shall see.

Psithy walked about and helped herself to honey from the honey vats. She took wax of an empty cell and fashioned it into a larger one. She laid an egg in that same, and passed on to fashion another, and still others. In each she laid an egg. It was the bees' wax she used—and it takes about fifteen pounds of honey to make a pound of wax, too. It would be the bee workers—blind with the mother instinct of those that could never bear—

who would feed her ugly fat grubs that would come from those eggs, and would rear that cuckoo brood to be thorns in their sides.

Days and nights passed. You could not tell night from day down there, except that all the bees were in at night—as they were indeed when it was wet—and that the temperature of the nest rose unbearably at that time, and there were scarcely enough workers in that busy bustling place to act as "fanners" to keep the nest cool with their wings, as the honeybees do. Also dawn was announced by a specially loud voiced worker—a sort of bugler.

I estimate the population of that nest at one hundred and seventy perfect females, one hundred and fifty drones, and two hundred workers odd. A strong lot, strong enough to make mincemeat of Psithy, had they caught her. And indeed it was at such times, dusk and dawn, when they were all at home, and on wet days, that she ran the greatest risk, and had to walk very circumspectly, and do her prowling in the quietest corners. Ordinarily, however, they were an industrious happy people, away to work at dawn, and not ceasing till dark.

As a matter of fact, a guard did once "suspicion" Psithy's disguise on the second morning, when Psithy thought she would like a breath of fresh air, and made to pass the "main gate." 'Twas a ticklish moment, and Psithy had to act like a flash, before the worker guard could sound the "general alarm." She slew swiftly, and retired at speed, and nothing happened further.

Still Psithy was ill at ease; she had not accomplished her destiny. The nest was thriving, virile, hatching fresh bumblebees every day. She had not come for *that*.

Then, on the afternoon of the third day, when the nest was at its quietest and most of the workers away gathering pollen and honey, and most of the drones at play, Psithy's chance came.

Emboldened by the quiet, she had climbed to the top story, so to speak. She had never before explored there. It seemed to be the busiest part of the place generally. Now it was quiet, however, she passed slowly along these top cells, fashioning an empty one here and there for her own viper brood. She did not see the queen mother, lying so silent and still in a long groove in the brown wax, the cells built up all round her, as it were in her bed; where she had actually with the warmth of her own body, incubated her first brood of all, before she had hatched out any workers, in the spring days when the colony was founded. But the queen mother saw *her*.

Indeed, Psithy had passed the royal chamber, and crawled a little way along the top tier, when something very like a half stifled scream of rage made her spin upon herself quick as an injured snake.

Then she saw. The queen mother, literally vibrating with fury, was tearing at the last cell Psithy had built up, and was smashing to pulp Psithy's last egg. She was not deceived by the disguise. Unlike her foolish people, the queen could see through Psithy's make up instantly; and unlike them, too, knew the character of the stranger within the gates.

PSITHY took three steps forward, and halted. Queen faced queen—ruler of the Good People faced ruler of the Bad. Neither had any delusions. Both knew it must be a fight to the death. Upon both hung the fate of an empire.

Facing each other there, one could see no difference between the queens—queen of the Good People, queen of the cuckoos—except in Psithy's slightly larger size, and, as I said, in her hind legs. Then one did. She sailed under the cloud, as they say in the insect world. Her wings were clouded. By that you could know her. There are many different sorts of cuckoo bees, but most sail under the cloud, so to speak. The honest bees have clear wings.

Then suddenly, so suddenly that it was like watching sparks off a live wire in a thunderstorm, the rival queens had shot

together — apart — together — apart— together. You must take my word for this. No eye could see it. Also they had charged like bulls, head to head. This, because it was about the only part that could not be hurt; they did not carry their brains there. Then something happened. There was a terrible lot of buzzing, anyway, and a hazy suggestion of bees out of focus. Then it stopped, and showed Psithy on her back, but still rotating on her axis so to speak, with the queen mother on top. Then it started again, stopped, and revealed the combatants reversed.

Both bees were now nearly screaming with demoniacal fury, and one realized how verily, if Psithy could or would not work, Nature had seen to it that she could fight. Twice both had a chance to deliver the death sting—'twas no good unless delivered under the joints of a corselet plate—and twice drew back for fear of breaking the delicate sting and bringing about her own ultimate death. Followed at last one wild whirl; one coruscating, halo-like convolution of buzzing bodies; one frenzied whirligig of warfare; one sparking, spinning, whirl of death, and—Psithy was cleaning her face, cat fashion, as I have told you, beside the body of the queen of the bumblebees, who, on her back and crushed, was slowly doubling up and straightening out in death!

And after that, Psithy discreetly withdrew. She had accomplished her destiny, struck her blow, exploded her bomb. After that she had nothing to do but lay eggs, and watch the downfall of the state.

Since the queen mother was dead, there could be no more eggs to hatch into workers—nothing to hatch into anything, but ravenous and ever increasing Psithys, eating more and more as grubs, requiring more and more attention, consuming more and more honey from the honey vats as bees, till at last the bumblebee workers were worked to death, the drones were killed, the city fell into ruin, and nothing was left but a lawless, lazy, loafing colony of Psithy's foul cuckoo brood to launch upon an unsuspecting world, and repeat the crime.

"THE HEATHEN CHINEE IS PECULIAR"

By CHARLES A. FREEMAN

BRET HARTE was certainly well informed as to the blandly smiling Chinese. He is today the principal opium dealer in the Far East, as well as being the principal informer of officers of the law representing countries where the importation of narcotics except for medicinal purposes is strictly prohibited. That the Chinese will not squeal is a long exploded fallacy, for he will—if well paid. On the other hand he will often doublecross the very officials who, as do those in the Philippines, give him a percentage of the sale value of drugs seized by reason of his tips.

Let a stranger—or a person not connected with the mysterious opium ring which supplies the Philippine market—make in China a large purchase of prohibited drugs, and a tip is immediately sent to the customs officials. Naturally many seizures result. Chinese informers

residing in Manila at times also have tips to sell as to the expected arrival of shipments.

One of the most peculiar cases of Chinese doublecrossing occurred a few years ago when an American customs agent was sent to Sandakan in British Borneo to investigate the opium trade between that port and Jolo. Opium is readily procured in Sandakan, and the Moros of the Sulu Archipelago and Mindanao manage to keep well supplied from this source.

The American, taking with him a Manila Chinese who may be called Ah Fong and who was a trusted informer, rented a Moro *prau* at Zamboanga and, with a crew of Filipinos of the Visayan tribe, sailed for Borneo. Ah Fong, who was a skilful cook, posed as body servant to the American, who in turn gave it out that he was an ornithologist, going to Borneo to study bird life and to secure specimens.

To give genuine color to the trip the white man was armed only with a Winchester pump gun, and carried numerous boxes of shells loaded with the finest birdshot.

These shells he placed in Ah Fong's food locker and gave the key into his man's keeping. He did, however, hide a dozen buckshot shells in a rubber boot, unknown to Ah Fong—it being well to be prepared for the unexpected while navigating in Moro haunted waters.

While in Sandakan, Ah Fong proved to be most useful, and in a few days the *prau's* square sails were hoisted for the voyage to Jolo, where provisions would be taken aboard.

It was still quite early in the morning when the swift craft entered Jolo harbor on the wings of the monsoon, and dropped anchor within a hundred yards of the famous Chino Wharf, headquarters for pearlers, pearl buyers and smugglers of many nations.

As the American finished his breakfast of rice and bacon, the *prau* was surrounded by dugouts containing young Moros.

"Throw money, señor," they shouted. "We will dive!"

The special agent grinned, but tossed no coin; but Ah Fong foolishly tossed something else. Through the air whirled a scrap of bacon rind to fall into the bottom of the nearest canoe.

"Unclean!" shrilled the Moro paddler, overturning his craft, and madly attempting to scour off the taint of swine's flesh.

The Chino could have offered no greater insult to a Mohammedan, and the canoes closed in. Spears flashed—long three tined fishing spears—and one entered Ah Fong's cheek. Writhing in agony the Chino endeavored to extricate the barbs.

Whir! Another spear thudded into the *prau's* after deck.

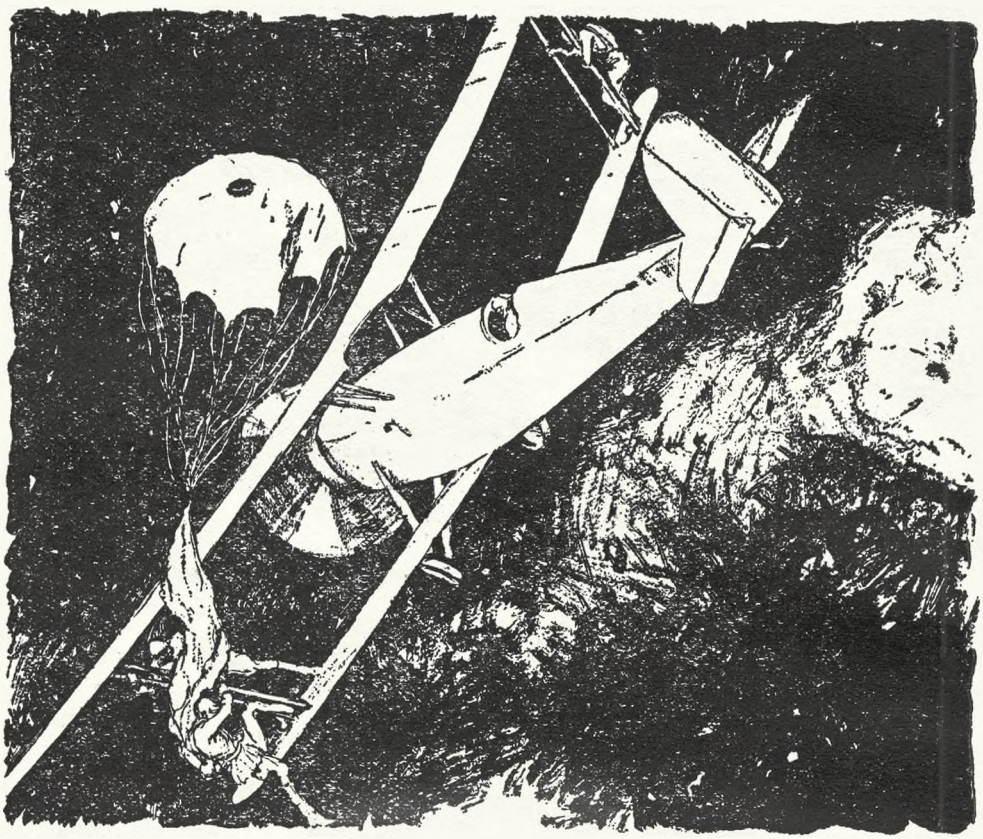
To frighten off the Moros or to attract the attention of the constabulary on duty at the wharf, the American seized his shotgun, which was loaded with birdshot shells, and pumped madly, holding a finger on the trigger and pointing the muzzle in the air. No reports came. What could ail that ammunition? Another spear removed the special agent's hat just as he slipped buckshot shells into the magazine. *Bloom!* This time there was an explosion—and five more.

Constabulary armed with Krag rifles dropped into handily moored boats and came to the rescue, while the Moro force paddled hastily away. Then alongside the dock, while a *medico* cut the barbs loose from the face of the moaning Ah Fong, the special agent conducted an examination of all fine shot shells. *Wopea!* From each, the powder had been extracted and opium had taken its place. The shot had been replaced to give the right weight, but Ah Fong had neglected to wear rubber gloves, and his finger prints betrayed him.

He had almost been successful in his plot to import opium in the baggage of an American special agent, but his idea of a joke had betrayed him.

Sí, señores, the heathen Chinee is peculiar.

A Story of the Stunt Flyers



The WHITE PILOT

By ANDREW A. CAFFREY

ALONG toward nine o'clock of a bright Southern California morning Loop Murry somnambulated through the deserted streets of fair Hollywood. It was early for Loop to be up and about; but he was on business. Also, he was on his way to the boarding house where Bugs Tedder hung his hat. Bugs was, is and always will be Loop's stuntman. That is, he will be till the Fool Killer cuts him down.

Mr. Bugs Tedder, being a true artist and high class gent, was still abed when Loop broke down the door, without knocking, and crashed the quiet of that swell Californian morning with:

"Come on, spider! Crawl outa that nice warm web."

"Eh?" Bugs grunted from deep in the hay. "Wha's 'at?"

"I said unravel!" Loop barked. "Hit the deck! Stand on two feet—and make

it snappy. We're up for the day, we are."

"And why?" Bugs wanted to know. "My room rent's paid—for once."

"Leo Murillo's got another job of work for us," Loop told him. "Flit-A-Bit Pictures can use us, feller. Roll out, and now, you heller."

"What's the job?" Bugs asked; and he came as far as an elbow-lean, but was still pretty deep in the hay. "What we going to try?"

"Don't know," Loop admitted. "Leo gave me a ring half an hour ago. I didn't stop to ask what the work was when Leo said there'd be four hundred smackers in the thing, if we pull it. That's jack, Bugs."

Bugs Tedder—wow! just like that—was out of bed and into his clothes. Four hundred bucks! Men have died for less than four hundred bucks. It was not for Loop and Bugs to ask foolish questions when such a sum was mentioned. No, not theirs to ask the reason why, just theirs to do and fly, and maybe die.

On the way to the street Bugs said:

"I'll have to drop by at Aerial's for a minute, Loop. I want to tell her—"

"Nix on that!" Loop snapped, then began to yell. "When will you get wise and forget that girl during working hours? When will you learn that skirts and hard graft don't mix? We're going out to Clover Field, and we're going now! D'y'hear that—now? Not this afternoon."

"I'll buy some at the corner," Bugs agreed, even promised.

"Buy what at what corner?" Loop growled, and hurried more.

"Smokes," Bugs answered. "Didn't you ask me if I had any?"

Well, that shows where Bugs had his mind—on Aerial Blue, best stuntwoman on the Coast. And if ever you were to lay your cold, blue eye on this same Aerial you wouldn't find it in you to blame Bugs. Very pretty bit, Aerial Blue. Game kid, too, through and through. Too bad that she takes such chances in the air game. Guess it's just one of those things that can't be helped, though. But it's hard to figure, isn't it? You'd wonder how such slick little tricks start the thing. You might crack wise and say that it's born in the bone; but this Aerial Blue isn't all bone. Nor is Bugs, for that matter.

"Bugs, I'll bust you loose from your funny ideas one of these days," Loop promised. "I said that we were headed, *pronto*, for Clover Field. Get that straight. No detours; no stopovers on the way, and—"

"It won't take a minute," the dazed Bugs carried on. "We were going to shoot some pony golf today. Guess Aerial will be willing to wash that out and run out to the field with us. Maybe Leo can work her in on this job. Not stunting, though. Anyway, we can—"

"Hey, listen, feller," Loop argued. "Four hundred bucks, cut two ways, is a pretty good take. But the same check, split three ways from the center, is ruined. Love's one thing. But jack is everything."

Anyway, Aerial was with them when they arrived at Clover Field.

Leo Murillo, efficient and wild thinking director of Flit-A-Bit Motion Picture's thrilliest thrillers, was on hand waiting for them. He was pacing the deadline, openly agitated and impatient.

"Thought you'd never get here, Loop," Leo said.

"Me and you both," Loop shot back; and also shot a nasty side glance at Bugs and Aerial. "The crowd isn't my idea."

"Cut it! Cut it!" Leo warned. "I don't want any part of your family brawl. You three are beginning to crab and battle like a well developed triangle. First thing I know you'll bust three ways from here, and I'll be tied up without a group of flying nuts for this picture. With all your faults, you three are 'the best in the West', which is saying something. Let's get down to business."

"That's what I'm here for, Leo," Loop said. "Let's have the lay. I want to get my high powered thinker off the hired help."

Bugs Tedder and Aerial Blue went mooning off to one side while Loop and

Leo paced the deadline and got down to cases.

"Now look here, Loop," Leo went on to explain, "I've got the toughest piece of air work cut out for you that has ever been tried. For a fact, Loop, I don't know if you can pull it."

"You said that there was four hundred iron men in it, didn't you?" Loop reminded Leo.

"That's the figure. And I made it plenty because maybe it's the last bit of jack you and Bugs will ever pull down. I'm not kiddin' you, Loop, this here stunt is dynamite."

"Nevertheless," Loop told the director, "if the four hundred still stands there's a chance of the thing being put across. Now, with that offer repeated, just what are we up against, big boy?"

"Jack first—" Leo laughed a grim laugh—"then anything, eh? Well, Loop, here's how she stands. And you've never heard a Poverty Row hophead sound off with a more goofy idea than this."

"You say you thought this up?" Loop asked. "You and some more of the Poverty Row high-wide-and-handsome talkers, eh? Is that what you just said?"

"Let's have a little quiet from the hired help," Leo urged, tossing one of Loop's own hot shots back at him. "I didn't say that I had anything to do with the origin of this stunt. It comes right out of the big office, Loop. My job is getting it into the black boxes. Your job is getting it out into the open where my boys can shoot it."

"Its pelt is as good as stretched," Loop Murry promised. "Whatever the queer animal might be, it was as good as dead the minute you said there was five hundred bucks in the thing, Leo."

"Four hundred," Leo Murillo corrected. "Don't forget your name is Murry, not James. Four hundred iron men was what I said."

"Don't be a tight hinge, Leo," Loop said, being quick to hit Mexican Leo Murillo where it hurt most. It hurt big hearted Leo most and worst when you insinuated that he'd strangle a single dollar for Flit-A-Bit Pictures, Inc. "You don't expect Aerial to work for exercise, do you? You forgot to mention her when you gave me a ring."

"But she isn't in on the bit," Leo argued; and it was the first time that he had ever said that many words in defense of the almighty, nasty dollar. It had Loop stopped, but not for long.

"Sure she's in on it," Loop argued. "It's this way: Bugs and Aerial were going to shoot some of this vacant lot golf today. Then you give us a call and take Bugs away, see? What's the girl going to do all day—grab a double deck bus and ride east and west on Wilshire Boulevard, talking to strange bus drivers? Hush your mouth, Leo! She isn't that kind of a kid, and you know it— How much jack did you say the Loop Murry Flying Circus was going to drive down in this dive?"

AT THIS point, without a bit of warning, one of the studio's most efficient efficiency men came out to the deadline and joined Leo and Loop. But before the efficiency man could say a word, Leo Murillo said:

"Take it or leave it, Murry. Five hundred bucks is the whole works! That's all I'll give you or anybody else for this bit of flying. Five hundred's the limit. Now what do you say?"

Max Pachmann, that efficient efficiency man, froze in his tracks at Leo's elbow. Shades of Flatbush! Here was a dicker in full bloom. Max actually held his breath and bet himself two to one that the Irishman would back down and take the five hundred. Max won.

"All right, Murillo," Loop Murry growled. "But it's worth five hundred and a quarter if it's worth a cent."

"The hell you tell, Murry," Max Pachmann now put in. "For five hundred, Murry, I could get plenty guys, over on Western Avenue, that'd fly this stunt. Five hundred! For five hundred, Murry, them Western Avenue pilots

would kill a wingwalker, no extra charge, either."

"Is that so!" Loop barked, and looked hard. "Well, guy, for five hundred dollars and one cent, I'd kill a studio bird, see?"

Max Pachmann looked at Loop. Then he looked at Leo. Then again at Loop. He decided:

"Murillo, I'll be out by the beach should anybody want me by the studio or here. Five hundred's money, Murry."

"The guy is right," Loop agreed. "Five hundred is money. I'll be out by the beach myself when I get this check, Leo. Now what do we have to do to win it? And what is the picture we're doing?"

"As I said, before you interrupted to talk money," Leo went on to explain, "this thing is plenty crazy. Fact is, the only reason I backed down and agreed to the five hundred is because I really don't expect to see you on hand when the check is due, Loop. The picture we're doing is a futuristic, spiritualistic, fantastic war thing. Its leading character, Phantasmas, is the impregnable pilot of this future war. They can, and do, shoot planes from under Phantasmas; but they can't cop him. Each time, when Phantasmas gets in dutch, the eery and wraith-like ship of the White Lady comes along. Phantasmas merely takes to ghosting, and passes from his own burning or falling ship, out and across to this spirit ship. Tell you what, Loop—this is going to be the way to fight future wars. It took two Russians and a serious Bohemian two weeks to write this script, so it should be good. The only strange thing about it is that it didn't take three weeks, for good old Flit-A-Bit had these three long haired boys housed on the lot, in one of those bungalows. The studio was feeding 'em too. It was the first time in a long time that the three got the wrinkles out, Loop.

"But to get back to the phantom pilot and this picture that we're doing. It's called 'They Do Not Die'."

"The devil they don't!" Loop Murry mused, thinking back to the late War, wherein out-of-luck pilots did not ghost from ship to ship.

"Anyway," Leo Murillo continued, "it's up to you and Bugs to find some way to ghost Bugs from your burning ship to the bus of the White Lady."

"And who's the White Lady?" Loop wanted to know.

"Nig Nunnally!" Leo laughed. "Nig's the only guy in the south with an all white plane, so I gave him a ring last night and told him to be on hand. He's coming up from San Diego." Leo looked at his timepiece. He figured. "Nig should be here now."

Loop was gazing southeast from Clover Field, toward the coast. He pointed and said:

"Here he comes now. Funny, you can see a white ship on a blue white sky for four or five miles. So we've got to make Bugs do some ghosting, eh? From ship to ship?"

"That's what three long haired gents in a free bungalow decided," Leo told Loop. "Can it be done?"

"Anything," Loop Murry answered, "can be done for six—"

"Five hundred!" Leo barked. "Learn to remember, guy. Five!"

"My mistake," Loop apologized. "Just about anything can be done for five hundred dollars. However, Leo, this thing isn't new."

"No?" Leo said, with some surprise. "You mean other long haired boys have beaten our three bungalow sitters? Who and when?"

"Why," Loop said to refresh Murillo's memory, "this was the same crack brained piece of business that Gassy Gauss, Tommy Wiley and Flea Fenny were rehearsing when they went down off Venice three years ago. Of course, just for the good of the game, we told the inquiring board that it was a rope ladder did the tangling. You'll recall that they never found either ship, or any of the three men.

"But, Leo, it was fifty feet of flying wire cable that tied Gassy and Tommy together. I was just south of them, off Del Ray, and saw the whole mess. Flea Fenny did his swing, and it was pretty.

But he made a poor landing on Gassy's right lower wing. Flea grabbed for a strut, but slipped. He fell off the wing, backwards, and the cable was around the base of the strut. Flea hung there, for about five minutes. He couldn't climb that three-eighths inch slick cable. And the two ships couldn't carry Flea. They came together, spun, hit, splashed. Then the Pacific was quiet again. Balboa was right."

"Yep," Leo agreed. "And I guess I was right when I said that you wouldn't be on hand to collect the check. Let's see, where do your people live, Loop? I'd best make a note of it. If there's anything Flit-A-Bit hates it's to have stiffs cluttering up the lot. Looks to me as though three long haired boys in a free bungalow can be bad luck for the flying game, eh?"

"I'll haunt them there Roosians and that Bohemian for a long time if anything goes haywire," Loop Murry threatened. "But if everything goes jake, then I'll say that five hundred bucks makes anybody broad minded. Five hundred bucks! Leo, you're stealing our services."

"Here's another little thing, Loop," Leo Murillo now recalled and mentioned. "The pilot, Phantasmas, is a lone worker. He's the foremost pursuit pilot of his day. So, this being the case, we can't have you and Bugs come barging along in a two-place ship. The same thing goes for Nig and his bus. What I'm getting at is this—can't you and Nig cover your front pit with a temporary cowling and fly from a blind?"

"Thataboy, Leo!" Loop cheered. "Make it hard! Make it hard! Damn your great big Mex heart! Villa was a gentleman compared to you. But, Simon Legree, just to prove that I'm brave I'll fly from a blind. I'll dig up that cowling that we used in 'Ghost Control' last fall. By the way, you'll remember that it was my last fall, eh?

"But about Nig, Leo—why put him in a blind? He'll be doing a solo anyway, won't he?"

"He will not," Leo emphasized. "By no stretch of the wildest imagination does Nig Nunnally look like a lady, Loop. Not even a high brown, to say nothing of the White Lady. I'm going to have a swell looking white gal sitting at the controls in Nig's open back pit. One of the extra girls will do."

"How about Aerial?" Loop suggested. "If it's all the same to you, I'd just as soon have Bugs and Aerial in two different ships. Fact is, Leo, it will be a good idea to have Aerial with Nig. Then Bugs will be in a hurry to get over to where she is. Doesn't that sound jake and full of logic? Why, the idea is worth six—"

"Not a bad idea," Leo agreed. "Aerial rides with Nig. That's settled without costing Flit-A-Bit a single cent. Well, here's Nig turning in for a setdown. You and him get together. Lay this thing out to suit yourselves; and let me know when you're hot. I'm going to do a few ground shots first, then I'll be all set for the air work."

IN THE hard looking Clover Field hangar that housed the two harder looking ships of the Loop Murry Flying Circus, the three very active members of that flying circus got busy. Presently Nig Nunnally joined them.

"Me and you going to clutter up the same sky today, Loop?" Nig asked, by way of opening the present business relations. "Oh, hello, Aerial, old sweet thing. Shake— You here too, Bugs? Are you still buzzin' round my gal? How about it, Aerial, is he? Better lay off, Bugs. Me and Aerial can't be bothered with young guys."

All of which line didn't make much of a hit with Bugs Tedder. But, to make things worse, Aerial laughed and kidded with Nig. And she didn't try to get from under when that loud sport from the South put his brave right arm across her shoulders.

"I'd kiss you, kid," Nig said, "but I don't want to show Bugs how the thing's done. Never let a wingwalker kiss you, Aerial. They're here today and hell and

gone tomorrow. How about Bugs, is he insured? Well if he is, me and you, Aerial, we might—"

"Hey, guy," Loop Murry cut in, "lay off my help. We have a job of work to pull, and it can't be done if Bugs is talking to himself like a guy with money in the bank. Did Leo tell you about covering your pit and flying from the blind, Nig?"

"Yeh," Nig answered. "Isn't that Mex inventive, eh? Where will I find some old plyboard or aluminum sheeting, Loop?"

"There's a pile of junk down behind Bob Lloyd's hangar," Loop made known. "That's where I get all my ship parts. Guess you can find enough cowling there to do the trick. But, Nig, don't forget to leave a peephole on your right side. I'm going to put Bugs on your off wing, and we don't want any mistakes. Hop to it. Last hangar to the east is Lloyd's.

"And you, Aerial—get into your whites. You're going to ride with Nig. You're the White Lady. You're a ghost."

"How come she rides with Nig?" Bugs wanted to know.

"Leo's idea," Loop lied—just a half lie, perhaps. "Anyway, it's in the script. And you, Bugs, you be sure that your hideaway 'chute is O.K."

"A 'chute on a wide swing?" Bugs questioned. "Naw, I don't wear a 'chute on this stunt, Loop."

"You sure do," Loop snapped back. "And what's more, you stow a pair of wire snips where you can get to them quick. This is the same stunt that sent Gassy Gauss and that gang down off Venice. We're not going to repeat that high dive, feller. Get that 'chute, and get it now. Make it fast. We've got to lash this extra ten feet of spar to our lower left wing. I'm going to give Leo a good wide swing for his jack."

"That's right," Bugs wailed. "Make it hard. Make it hard. Ya big Irish what-I-can't-call-ya-with-Aerial-here, make it hard!"

"Let's see," Loop figured. "We have a forty-foot spread on these lower wings, eh? Then we'll have this lashed-on spar reach out from the left lower for about ten feet more. That will give you about fifty feet of swing. Guy, she'll be pretty doings! You can hook the cable to your 'chute's harness. That will give you both hands free for the grab, when you make Nig's wing tip. And, guy, see that you make it. By the way, Bugs, where did you say your folks live?"

"Eh?" Bugs pricked up his ears, listening. "What's that got to do with it?"

"Oh, nothing much," Loop told him. "But Leo just asked."

It was along toward noon before the ships were all set to go into action. Loop and Nig taxied out to the far northwest corner of the field. At that spot Leo and his cameramen had been doing those ground shots of which Leo had made mention. There was a futuristic looking town set up there; and the people on the set looked like a cross between what is supposed to live on Mars and what shouldn't be found running loose on this hard old earth.

Silk Shane, that old man of air, and his cabin plane were also on hand. Two of the three cameras were already mounted in that aft cabin of Silk's. Leo and Silk were busy with final preparations.

Along the deadline, not far from Leo's futuristic town, were parked five "enemy" pursuit planes. These were the ships that would finally shoot Loop's craft from under Phantasmas. Loop knew every man piloting in that group, and he took a few seconds off now to tell them what he'd do to the whole mob if they crowded his old hack too closely.

"If you must have fun," Loop told them, "try to cut Bugs off the cable when he's midway between ships. Now, back in New York State, in '20, just after the War, I saw a boy cut off a swinging ladder. What fun, what fun! He didn't have a 'chute, either."

"Aw, what t'hell, Loop," Bugs Tedder grumbled. "Why can't you birds lay off me? First it's that Border jumper, Nig. And now it's you. Give a guy a break now and then. It's bad enough to be

pulling a swing like this for four hundred bucks, without taking a lot of bum kidding on the side."

"Four hundred, me eye!" Loop said. "We're pulling down five."

"Well, five," Bugs chirped. "What's five for a job like this?"

"What's five hundred bucks?" Loop repeated. "That you should be sticking your proud nose up at five hundred! Ye gods, proud man, there are stars in Hollywood who have to work a whole half day for that much jack. And we're going to get it in a few hours—if we do get it. Get an eyeful of Nig and Aerial, Bugs. Wise up."

Bugs looked. Nig was on the job with the girl. Rushing her.

Yep, it was a tough day for Bugs. They were all riding the kid; and, being such a kid, he didn't know that they were working on him. It was Loop's way to get young Tedder all hopped up before a stunt like this.

"Get him sore," Loop would laugh, "and Bugs'll go out of his way looking for wildcats in dark alleys. Bugs has to have his stimulant. And worrying over Aerial will do it every time. Ain't love hell?"

Leo Murillo turned to Bugs next.

"Hey, Bugs," he said, "see Old Rags Hallet, down at the costume car, and have him fit you out. A white uniform, Bugs. Make it snappy; we're almost set to shove off."

"A white uniform!" Bugs repeated as he went away. "Hell!"

"Get a good one, too, Bugs," Nig Nunnally yelled. "It might be your last."

Bugs turned to answer that last crack. He stopped and choked, for there was a big smile on Aerial's face. That hurt. Bugs just kept going, boiling, stewing, getting madder and madder, every second, in a big and man sized way. The rest of the outfit winked at one another. Aerial said—

"It isn't fair."

And, by gosh, it wasn't. But this big stunt had to be done; and all's fair in love, war and the higher art—wing-walking.

With Bugs on his way, Leo Murillo turned to Loop.

"Now how about things, Loop, and what are you going to use for fire effect?"

"I've got my own old smoke pots," Loop answered. "Bugs'll have them clouding the whole sky when the time comes. Don't worry."

"O.K," Leo agreed. "And how are you working out the ship-to-ship thing? Let's see what you've got here."

Leo and his gang, cameramen and all, walked around Loop's ship and took a closer look at the layout. Loop swelled a bit and went into a very thorough explanation of the masterpiece.

"Bugs does his swing on this cable," Loop told them.

So saying, Loop reached under the leading edge of his lower left wing and pulled a thin control wire cable into view. All hands looked at that very thin cable with outright bewilderment. It was no thicker than a fairly heavy shoestring. It was knotted here and there, also rusty.

"You mean to say," Leo Murillo questioned, "that Bugs is going to do a free, ship-to-ship swing on that cable, Loop?"

"Sure, and why not?" Loop answered. "That cable has a tested safety factor of five to one, or better, as used on Spads. That's where I got it, off that Spad that Para-Art washed out while they were doing 'Wings of War'. What's more, Leo, this cable has a breaking strength of better than five hundred pounds. 'Course we'll use it. Why, man, if we use a nine-inch hawser you'll get it in the cameras."

"Far better," Leo remarked, "that we get a bit of rope in the cameras than that Bugs gets it in the neck."

"He won't," Loop told them. "But ain't you studio babies getting careful of the hired help! Since when have you people started worrying about a few necks per picture, eh?"

"It isn't so much the necks," Leo admitted, "as it is the fact that I want to

finish this shooting on time. I'm behind now."

"Well, why don't you quit arguing with me and go to work?" Loop backfired. "Oh, ye gods, take a look at the white general coming down the line. Don't kid him—much—or Bugs will blow up."

When he came into the group they didn't kid the white clad Bugs—much. And, for a fact, he was on the point of exploding. But to aid and abet that condition, Nig Nunnally asked:

"Whitewing, where's your pushcart? Don't tell me! Don't tell me! Let me guess. You quit it for a wingwalking job out here at Clover Field. Hey, Leo, have we got a job for this White Roosian?"

Whew! They sure had Bugs worked over by that time; and they shouldn't have laughed. But they did. Even Aerial, which was the very nastiest dig of all. Loop Murry, however, got young Tedder's mind off his troubles by picking up that hideaway parachute, holding it out like a coat and saying:

"Here, Bugs old kid, back into this. I see you've got the wire snips, eh? Good. Put 'em in this pocket."

Bugs backed into it, as one might take to a barrel, were one caught out in the public square at high noon without clothes. Slowly, deliberately, Bugs snapped up his harness; and tried to avoid the eyes of that kidding mob. Then Loop carried on with his explaining.

"This spar extension, Leo," he continued, "is something extra that isn't costing Flit-A-Bit a single sou. See how it works? The cable is tied solid to this outside end of the extension. Then the fifty feet of free cable I've pulled across under the full spread of both lower wings. When Bugs gets set, I'll lay the ship over in a heavy right bank. You'll be above me with your cameras. So, when my ship is in that bank, with right wings down, your black hand winding boxes won't grab Bugs quitting the cockpit and going out on the wing. With my fuselage between you and Bugs, Bugs can go down. Then he'll hook on to the free end of the cable. Nig will be alongside and a few feet lower than me. With Bugs all ready to shove off, I'll flatten out of that bank, fly her flat, then drop my left wing as Bugs swings under, and toss the brave boy across that fifty feet of sky. It'll be so fast that your cameras will just show Phantasmas on his way, without showing exactly where he left my ship. How does it look?"

"Don't know how it looks," Leo Murillo decided; "but it sure listens like a million dollars."

"Like six hundred dollars, Leo," Loop said, through the off corner of his mouth. "Anyway, keep above us. Get it on a long shot, and I'll buy you a new hat with a peacock feather in the band if she doesn't shape up jake. Anyway, with all the smoke; even if I didn't fly a bank, you'd never see where Bugs came from."

"Hell!" Nig Nunnally put in. "It isn't so much where Bugs came from as it is where he's going to that counts. Oh, for the life of a wild bird on the wing! But hop to it. Aerial and I will be safe and sound in my ship."

Bugs Tedder, green eyed, went red. Clear up to the ears. The wild kid was certainly suffering. There should be a law against love.

Director Leo Murillo guessed that this was a good time to avert open warfare. He got his five "enemy" pursuit men under way, telling them to get up there above ten thousand, wait, and be set to shag Loop Murry ragged.

"Make it look real, too," Leo ordered. "Get right down on Loop's tail. But don't forget that Loop's flying from the blind, so you babies watch your step and fly 'to him', all the time."

After the five got under way, Leo hammered home final instructions to Nig, Loop and Bugs. To Aerial he said:

"All you have to do, Aerial, is sit high in that rear pit and look ghostly and pretty. Can you do that?"

Nig Nunnally answered for Aerial. He said:

"'Course she can look pretty. She's sitting pretty too—riding with good looking Sport Nunnally. I think I'll move up

North here and go into pictures with Aerial. Leo, I'll bet you dollars to *frijoles* that Aerial and myself would wow the movie world. Yes, sir, I'm going to think it over."

By then Bugs was fit to be tied. He was acting mighty busy around the motor end of Loop's bus, doing things that didn't have to be done at all. And, half a minute later, when Aerial climbed aboard Nig's white ship, Bugs hit the low spot in his fast and reckless young life. Loop came hurrying over to the ship.

"Let's get started, Bugs," he urged. "Best that we get this stunt under way. Best that you get across to Nig's ship and head that hot sport off. He's working too fast for your good, Bugs. I think Aerial kind of likes the loud ape."

JUST then, with a roar of power and a zoom of glory, Nig's all white ship took off. While the ship was still in its zoom, Aerial and Nig waved back over the tail; and a few hundred onlookers waved at them. Needless to say, Bugs Tedder wasn't one of the wavers.

Loop got under way before Nig's dust had settled. Then, with his usual care, Silk Shane taxied the camera plane down field, turned into the wind, and the last ship of the group was off the ground.

The five pursuit jobs had won their ten thousand feet of altitude by then. They were playing around up there. Looping. Rolling, split S-ing. *Veraging.* Putting on a show for the ground members of Flit-A-Bit's troupe. It was a swell airy day out at Clover Field.

Nig reached for his ceiling mighty fast. Loop, right on the Southern sport's tail, reached just as fast. Fact is, those two ships were standing on their rudders and pawing thin air, almost straight up. Nig Nunnally was no mean man on the controls of a ship. Nig and Loop had teamed up on movie stuff before; and Leo liked the way they worked. Any director would, for this pair of nuts gave and gave and gave. Also, while on the wing, Loop and Nig competed and competed and competed. But that is air for you. One must never admit that, perhaps, the other stunt pilot is at all better than one is oneself. That wouldn't do.

When Loop and Nig reached an altitude just below the pursuit group, at about eight thousand feet, the two nuts, each flying from his covered cockpit, put on a combat that was uncanny. Fact is, the darned performance was very close to suicide. Aerial and Bugs sat there out in the open, looking across at each other, and wondering what was coming next. Well, Silk and Leo came next. And Leo, hanging from the side window of the cabin, waved those two wild men apart.

Clover Field's usual west wind was on the job. That wind which is never a nasty wind blows in from the Pacific, some two miles away. So, in doing a job of flying work such as the boys had on hand, it was the custom to drop downwind to the east, off toward Hollywood, then swing their noses into the constant breeze, and go to it. The birds of Flit-A-Bit's air service were soon hightailing eastward, all eight ships. That's quite a skyful of noise and flashing props, too.

Half a dozen miles east of Clover, with the edge of good old Hollywood under them, all pilots banked and swung west again. Then, with Loop's ship out front, where the cameras might grab the white clad Bugs Phantasmas Tedder, Leo Murillo put his hand winding men to work on a few preliminary shots. With those in the boxes, Silk Shane fell behind and won a little altitude. Then the cameramen did some grinding on the "enemy" five in wild goose formation. After that, those cameras caught a few hundred feet of the White Lady. Aerial tried to look her best, and Aerial's best is good enough for any old camera.

By then the whole flight had reached, and swept out over, the Pacific. So, just to avoid international confusion, Leo Murillo gave his air force the wave; and they all flew turns and hightailed downwind again. All eight, with Loop, Nig and the camera ship lowest, were still cruising

at between eight and nine thousand feet. But the pursuit group, on the way east, began to regain some of the altitude they had dropped in diving down and past Silk's ship. When the next, back-into-the-west turn was made, the "enemy" five were back at ten thousand.

Well, with all motors cutting 'em off sweet, and with all noses into the wind, the time for action was close at hand. Bugs was making his way out along the leading edge of Loop's lower right wing. Nig and his White Lady were hanging back. The five pursuit planes were all set to dive on Loop. And the camera plane was awaiting that split second which would find all eight pilots just where Leo wanted them.

Two or three times, for reasons only known to himself, Leo waved all hands to break. Then they'd fly eastward turns again, and go back to the western edge of Hollywood to give the thing another whirl from start to finish. That wasn't bad at all for the pursuit men, for what's time to a gang of air hogs? But it was pretty hard on the two men flying from the blind. Also, it wasn't any too easy on Bugs, who continued to ride out there at the wing's tip. And, on each westward push, Bugs would swing down under, hang from the wing skid, and hook on to his cable. All set, there, to feel Loop drop that right side, and yell—"Unload, guy!" And each time, when that yell failed to come, Bugs said certain things to Bugs that nobody but Bugs would appreciate.

It was on the fourth try into the west that Leo Murillo saw those ships just as he wanted them. From Clover Field, to the watchers, they seemed well bunched. And, for a fact, they were.

Leo gave his high up men the flag. Down came the five roaring pursuit jobs with a shower of sky marking tracers smoking before them. Tell you what, they sure looked war-like. They had the point of their hard dive right on Loop too. It wouldn't be long now.

Silk was holding his ship two hundred feet above Loop. Up through the glass top of Silk's cabin one of the cameras was getting those downcoming ships. And—believe it or not—the "enemy" was getting too close for comfort. Too close for old man Silk; and he prodded full gun to his ship, and began to pull out of that mess. The five wailing, tracer shooters shot below Silk's tail. Then Silk worked fast and whipped his ship over into a heavy bank directly above Loop.

Two cameras in the cabin now had Loop's ship in focus; and Loop was in his heavy right bank. Tracers were filling the air all around him; and the ship of the White Lady was fifty feet to his left.

Loop's banked ship was working in such a heavy cloud of eddying smoke that the men above could see no part of it to the rear of the motor end. Loop was right—the cameras would never guess where Bugs swung from.

Having shot Phantasmas full of assorted holes, and put his ship "in the red", the enemy five were still in the cameras; but they were far below Loop's burning craft. As Leo and his camera crankers saw the thing this layout was just what they wanted.

Loop Murry, in the next flashing few seconds, had picked up those right wings and brought his ship back to an even keel. And in that same group of crowded seconds something white was sure enough ghosting across the empty sky between that smoke ship and Nig's bus.

"Cut!" Leo Murillo barked at his cameramen, and they cut, quit cranking.

The N.G. sign went up in front of two of the cameras. Bugs, at the end of his swing, had missed Nig's right wing tip by two or three feet. And, as Leo yelled for the cut, white clad Phantasmas had started on his return swing. Maybe that wasn't one nice spot to be in, too—way out there swinging at the end of a thread some eight thousand empty feet above mother earth. Few air nuts would care to fill that spot.

Knowing that the cameras would be cut, Bugs took time out to give Aerial the wave. She was hanging half out of her rear pit, anxiously watching Bugs. In

that split second, maybe, the kid was happy. It's good to know that the girl friend is very, very anxious.

But it was a tough spot and, strange to say, even Loop and Bugs hadn't looked ahead to anything like this. You'd wonder why they hadn't, though. It's a fact that on all ladder changes the boys count on two or three misses; and they act accordingly. Well, in this case, Loop acted accordingly, and quickly, smoothly.

As Bugs swung back, and was blown far to the rear, that fine handling Loop Murry dropped those right wings into another steep bank. At the same time, all in one motion, he fishtailed his rudder to the left and forward in line of flight. The right wings, low now, swept back; and Bugs Tedder reached out—at the very end of his swing—and put both hands on the wingskid from which he had departed.

"Got 'er, Loop!" Bugs barked, above the spluttering wail of their idled motor.

Loop slapped full gun back to his motor and redressed the plane's staggering line of flight. A bit mad now, Loop kicked over into a turn. Again, they had reached the Pacific. Again, highballing, all ships went back toward Hollywood.

But that's movies. Try, try and try again. Take, take and retake. Work till all hands are tired, then work some more. Yes, sir, she's a hard enough game on the birds who get out in the open and do the real work—while the stars are on the sands up Malibou Beach way, collecting coats of rich brown tan. Great life!

Nearly an hour's air work had been put down when the Flit-A-Bit air service once more reached the western edge of Hollywood and again nosed into the off Pacific breeze. As far as Leo could tell, all motors were going in good style; and all ships seemed to be O.K. The "enemy" five were up there at ten thousand feet, all set to do their damnedest and shoot Phantasmas out of the sky *pronto*, if not sooner.

On their upwind try this time, all pilots came into the desired positions in record time. Well, they should, for it's a poor guy who can't find his way after he's been over the ground half a dozen times. This gang could have done the thing in the dark, on this try.

The entire outfit was directly above Clover Field when the pursuit five took the flag, opened fire in their dive, and went after Loop. Bugs had remained in his pit till the last second. Now he turned loose the smoke cloud again, went overside, and got out on that right lower wing with the speed of a tree going monkey. Ye gods, what a wingwalking nut can't do on a wing! Should be a law against that, too. And no kidding. It's harder on the watchers than on the nut.

Once more, as before, the single upshooting camera caught the hootin' shootin', downcoming five. That cameraman yelled that this was a better run than the former shooting.

Again, also as before, the going got too hot for old Silk Shane, and he pulled out from under. Out from under, then over in his right bank, and the two side window cameras were bearing down on Loop's fire ship. That ship, half hidden by its swirling smoke, was standing on its right wing tip. Pretty flying! Wonderful handling, on Loop's part, to have that ship of his so darned close to a standstill just when Silk came overhead.

And again at Loop's left rode the ship of the White Lady. Nig Nunnally was doing great work from his blind. For a fact, this was the first time in the history of movie flying that two men had piloted from the blind, side by side, and so close together. And for another outlawed fact, the aviation regulating agencies would have put up an awful wail had they known that this piece of business was "in the work".

The pursuit five, still pouring lead into Phantasmas, shot past the level of Silk's tail service. Now they were diving past the ship that they had riddled. And again, Loop was pulling out of that bank. Nig was in a bit closer. It's mighty hard to guess fifty feet of empty space, especially when you have to guess it within a foot.

Out from the eddying cloud of smoke

floated the ghostly, air walking Phantasmas. Two cameras were cranking. Leo Murillo was tense, motionless, on the spot. On the spot, for you might just as well cut out his romancing Mex heart as have this thing fail now. It couldn't fail!

Bugs Phantasmas Tedder reached the end of his swing and, as before, two good pilots—flying from the blind—had misguessed.

THERE, at the top of his outward journey, Bugs seemed to hang, motionless. Another fraction of a second and the return swing must set in. And the wing tip hadn't been reached. But on this try Nig Nunnally's ship was somewhat lower than Loop's craft; and as Bugs hesitated there, and reached for the wing that couldn't be made, Nig made a quick guess. He guessed that he could put that wing tip into those waiting hands. Nig made that try. Such a try, that thing of moving a plane to the right just a few feet, called for the very top in close figuring handling. And Nig did it. He overdid it. Then Bugs, coming down, made his two fisted grab. His hands reached the wing.

The cameras were on the job all the way. To the cameramen the thing looked mighty good. For a fact, the impression was something the same as if Phantasmas had gone out into space and actually waited for the ship of the White Lady to come along, then stepped aboard.

Leo Murillo yelled—

"Cut!"

What he had been after, he now had. As far as Flit-A-Bit was concerned the day's work had ended. The cross over had been made. It had taken some time. The gas in the ships would be getting low. Good that they could quit now and land.

Very good, were that possible, but it wasn't. Far from it! The swing had been completed; but that wasn't all. Moreover, things were not so good atop that wing, where Bugs was.

When Leo Murillo's "Cut!" had ended camera work, Silk Shane had allowed his bus to fall off to the south of the two planes wherein those pilots were flying in the blind. And Silk had intended to drop his bow end and slide back on to Clover Field. But, taking another look at the two ships, old Silk's stout heart missed a flock of beats. His flying eyes bulged, and his hair might have stood on end were it not for his helmet and the fact that Silk Shane hasn't had hair for lo these many years. In that one glance, Silk knew that hell was a-poppin'.

Nig Nunnally, unable to see anything overhead, sat there in his blind, watched that tight cable that stretched away from his right wing, and wondered why Bugs hadn't turned that cable loose.

Aerial, in that open rear pit, was now standing. She was trying to win a better view of the doings atop that wing. Trying to size up the situation as it stood for Bugs.

Loop Murry, though, could view the whole works from his left side visibility port. And now, with a bang, Loop stood upright in his pit. As he did so, the temporary cowling above his head went up with him. He tore the cowling free of the ship and tossed it aft. Loop sat down again, back on his controls once more, out in the open and free to act. Loop Murry knew that the next few minutes must see action, too.

Seeing Loop come out of the blind, Nig Nunnally guessed that things had gone wrong. He too stood and butted his cowling away; and, to help him, Aerial Blue cast off her safety belt, stood on the rear seat and worked like a Trojan in her efforts to uncover Nig.

Loop Murry crowded in toward Nig, and put plenty of slack on that thin cable. However, too much slack wouldn't do, for there was the ever present danger of trailing the cable back into the tail service controls of either or both ships. A thing that had happened in movie flying more than a few times, in one way or another.

Aerial Blue stood, leaned far forward and yelled to Nig.

"Bugs," she said, "isn't moving. Something's wrong. He's on the wing all right,

flat on his back, out past the cabane struts."

By then, before she had stopped yelling, Aerial was climbing from her pit. Already her right foot was down on Nig's lower wing, when he stopped her.

"Can't be done, Aerial," Nig yelled. "I can't carry both of you on that wing. Better get back. Guess you'll have to go over on the left wing till we guess a way out of this. Get up on that top panel, and right now, gal! We need balance here, and how!"

Aerial went out along the leading edge of the left lower wing, shinned the outer front strut, and arrived on the upper surface of the wing. Nig's flying balance was restored.

Loop and Aerial, with only a few yards standing between them, were each in a position to get an eyeful of what was wrong with Bugs. Close in and behind Loop, also getting the eyeful, was Silk's ship and its cargo of movie workers. But it was the three air nuts who really saw and understood. And for those three there was plenty to see and almost too much for quick and rational understanding. Bugs was—as Aerial had told Nig—flat on his back, and not moving. Bugs, for a fact, was in one hell of a snug mess, and he knew it. So he wasn't moving. Truth was, Bugs had no moves left. It was this way:

Bugs had come down on Nig's upper wing tip too hard and too suddenly. And when Bugs hit that wing tip, he hit it astride the cabane assembly. Then, reaching and asprawl, Bugs' parachute harness had hung up on the front strut of that assembly. At the same time, the frail spreader bar of that strut assembly had collapsed; and when old kid Phantasmas had finally stopped reaching and grabbing, he was flat on his back with each good hand holding tight to a cabane strut brace wire. But—and this was bad!—there was a few feet of white silk fanning the upturned face of Phantasmas Bugs Tedder.

And this was the picture upon which Aerial, Loop and Silk gazed—and tried not to believe—the while their brave blood ran cold.

In that misjudged wing landing Bugs' parachute release ring had been pulled. The harness, as Bugs knew, was tangled in the cabane assembly. One move on Bugs' part, and that spread of silk would snap into full bloom. Then what? Hell—that 's what!

Let that parachute swell now, and it will yank the end off Nig's wing. Or, if the harness and shroud lines are plenty strong, it will stick with the ship. If that happened, Nig and the ship and the girl and Bugs would all go down in the same spin. Anything could happen; but not while Bugs remained flat on his back and kept that wild silk from going places and doing its deadly stuff. So Bugs froze.

Loop Murry was yelling. Nobody could hear the wild man; but Bugs, looking up, knew that Loop was yelling—

"Cut me loose!"

Slowly, working with his right hand, Bugs fished around till he had that pair of wire snips where he could use them. Reaching back over his head, he took a bite out of that thin cable; and Loop's ship was free. Loop ruddered right into the teeth of Silk Shane's whirling prop. He gave Silk the office, and the camera ship came right along. Silk knew what Loop had in mind, to a certain extent. Loop wanted Silk to put his left wing tip where Loop could get his hands on it. So Silk got right down to business, took that big cabin bus in his lap, shoved the left wing tip between Loop's tail service and right wings, and Loop reached up and took. He abandoned ship. As he came out of his pit, hanging to Silk's wing, Loop kicked his own switch to "off", and that meal ticket of his dropped its nose and headed for the Pacific; for that large ocean was directly under them now. Goodby, meal ticket!

That was tough too, for Loop's agreement with Flit-A-Bit said nothing about ships lost in action. And ships, even the kind used in the Loop Murry Flying Circus, are not to be had for the asking. What's more, the days when a barn-

stormer could steal a ship are gone. Anyhow, it took more bravery to abandon that ship than it did to grab Silk's wing. But the thing had been done; and Loop, hanging by one hand, was signaling Nig to fly a turn and get back to land. Nig began to fly his flat turn; and a few minutes later both ships were back over the beach.

Silk's wide winged bus went closer to Nig's right wings. And closer. Loop's feet dipped the toes. They touched the surface near Bugs. Silk held everything. Loop tangled his feet in the tangle of the badly wrecked cabane assembly. Then he turned loose of Silk's ship and went to work. Nig couldn't hold an even keel. That right side began to fall. There was going to be a spin. Aerial fell flat to her wing and grabbed everything she could reach. That ship did go out of control, and Nig "let 'er run". There was nothing else to do.

Somehow, Loop Murry pulled that parachute harness free of that broken strut and spreader bar. And when the parachute bloomed, Bugs Tedder was with it; and Phantasmas was ghosting groundward on the good west wind that was riding him back toward Clover Field.

Loop and Aerial exchanged waves, then began to walk back to Nig's fuselage. For the next five or ten minutes two planes accompanied Bugs and his swell hideaway 'chute on their slow way down; and the two ships blew Bugs right on to the center of Clover Field. After that there wasn't a whole lot to be done, for, after all, a flight is just a flight if all hands are fully alive at the end.

El Lagarto

By BERT SMITH

YES SIREE, after this long dry spell we've hed and right now when the rainy season's beginnin' is the time to ketch 'gators. Soon's the rains begin, they come out. They don't often leave their caves in dry weather. You didn't know they live in caves, stranger? Well, they sure do. They dig down two, three feet like a gopher; then maybe their cave goes back all o' thirty feet right along underground.

The last 'gator I got wuz a tough ol' critter. I found his cave out back of the field. I put a pole down the hole and I couldn't feel 'im. I knowed he was there, though, 'cause he hadn't made no track on the green scum at the water's edge. Nex' day I wuz settin' here talkin' to my cousin Jim when up comes my boy an' Jim's boy, both a-runnin'. My boy wuz out of breath, but Jim's tad, he says:

"Dad, dad, we stuck th' pole down th' hole an' th' 'gator done shook it! C'm on, let's go git 'im!"

So I got me the big hook and we all went down to the cave. We put the hook on the pole an' stuck it down the cave, but I couldn't feel 'im. Then I pulled the pole out and stuck it in on t'other side of thet tussock. I could feel 'im but he wuz movin' to th' other side of th' tussock. Tussock? Sho', thet's a clump o' grass. The mouth of a 'gator's cave mos' always behind one o' them 'air tussocks.

Well, sir, purty soon he grabbed it an' then he begun to turn over an' over. Then's when you have to be keerful, for if they git th' drop on you they'll mos' pull you in.

They're shore hard to pull out, too, all a-turnin' and a-twistin' like they do. One of my cousins onct, let th' pole slip an' it got wropped around in his shirt sleeve, and with th' 'gator a-twistin' an' a-whoppin', he got so he hed to have th' sleeve of his shirt cut off or thet thar 'gator would a twisted hit so tight th' blood would have stopped circulatin'. Bran' new hickory shirt, too, 'twas.

Huh? Yeh, you shoot as soon's his eyes git out 'th' hole. If you resk th' chance 'a' usin' an ax on 'em, you mos' likely'll lose 'em.

Did I ever git inter a close shave with a 'gator? No; don't know as I ever did, stranger. Oh, one time I thought I was goin' to be dumped inter th' river an' maybe hold close communion with one. We fooled 'im, though.

It wuz up in north Floridy, whar I was brung up. Y'know, we got more rivers up in thet part of th' State, than down here around th' Keys.

'Bout thet time? Oh, yes. Well, ol' Buck Taylor was with me. As we started out in the river jest after dark, I sees a 'gator down aways. He was lyin' quiet-like with his eyes above th' surface of the water and they was shinin' like two stars. I guess he heer'd th' noise of our gittin' started, fur he moved away. We follered but he kep' on. I whispered to Buck to foller along till he stopped. Buck was a-rowin' and I hed th' gun. When he did stop an' we got to whar I was shore I could hit 'im, I shot, knockin' the top of his head clean off.

Huh? Oh, about two an' a half feet,

the gun orter be from the 'gator. Yeh, thet is purty close quarters, but if you keep yore bead on 'em an' be keerful, t'ain't sech a pertikaler job, onct you gits ust t'it; then, too, th' lights on our hats fools 'em.

No; hit don't muss up th' hide none when you spoil th' head. The checks on a 'gator's back are tough an' tolable hard to git off. They ain't wuth but 'bout a quarter. They're used on trunks an' sech things. Oh, no, if you skin 'em by cuttin' the hide down th' middle of th' belly, you've done ruint th' hide. You want thet part hull, for that's whut brings th' jack.

Well, sir, we hooked 'im and put 'im in th' boat. Then, 'twarn't long before we got another. Them two wuz from six to seven feet long apiece. The nex' one we killed was a twelve-footer. Man, we shore wuz proud of that 'un.

They hed all been put in my end of th' boat, an' thet made Buck's end up in the air so's he couldn't paddle. So he says, "Ben," sezze, "I cain't hit th' water. We cain't git nowhar thisaway."

So I tells 'im to stick the hook in the big 'un an' pull 'im to his end. It wuz a-floppin' round like they allus does an' bein' so big, I wuz glad fer th' thing to be in Buck's end.

Well, th' blame thing kept a-twistin' round an' round an' th' fust thing we knowed, it hed thrown itself out o' th' boat. We shore didn't want to lose 'im; his ol' hide was wuth darn good money. With his threshin' round outside, we was afeered he'd turn us over. I says to Buck—

"Quick! Grab 'im an' I'll hook 'im agin."

So Buck grabs the 'gator with both hands on each side o' his jaws an' hangs on. But I saw he was a-whippin' round so terrible that we could never git 'im back in th' boat without his upsettin' us. Instead of jabbin' the hook inter him, I retched the pole over an' got a holt to a root on th' bank an' pulled the boat to shore with Buck hangin' on to thet 'gator. I perferred my job to Buck's, I kin tell you.

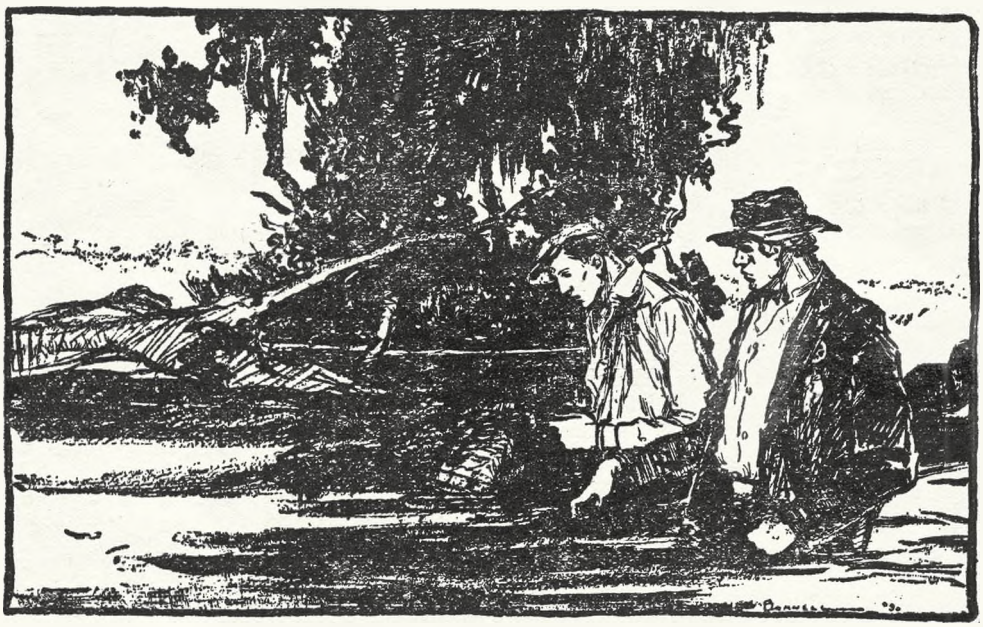
Yes, sir, if they gits a holt on you onct, they don't let go. I was with a man one time when an ol' 'gator clamped down on his hand. We hed to take an ax to break thet 'gator's head an' then split 'is jaws open er he'd lost his hand, or more'n likely Mister Gator would've pulled 'im in an' taken him to th' bottom to eat like they allus does.

To go on with thet night's job. We dumped our 'gators there on th' bank. Piled 'em up, yes, sir, an' we went on. We got thirteen in all thet night. When we'd git three or four we'd onload 'em on shore and shove off in th' boat agin. When we roused 'em nex' mornin'—yeh, skinned 'em—we hed thirteen as purty alligator hides as you ever seen.

No, I don't set no store by onlucky numbers, stranger. Never hev sence then. We got the fanciest figgers we ever got, did Buck' n' me, fur them thirteen hides. I've salted down hides afore and sence then to wait fur fancy prices, but I never got better'n what them thirteen brung.

Mosquito Bound

By CALVIN BALL



The test of a good man-hunter lies in keeping, not catching, his man.

THE SHINY steel chain clinked as the big man adjusted and locked the handcuffs.

"I don't want to set it too tight on you, Archie. Is that going to be comfortable?"

The prisoner disregarded the question. His lips were drawn back over his teeth, and his weak, pale eyes were sneering.

"You bulls are all the same," he answered. "All of you yellow, playing safe back of a gun. And you're dumb! That goes particular for you, O'Rourke. Awful dumb."

Without at once replying, the big man finished his inspection of the manacles. One end was fastened above his own left hand; the other fitted snugly around the dirty thin wrist of the youth.

"Maybe so, Archie," he said at length. "Maybe I'm dumb like the rest of us flat-foots you talk about. But I'm bright enough to catch my man now and then; and when I catch him I know enough to keep him."

The two moved away from the abandoned shack from which they had emerged, turned through the weeds along the shore of the lake and thence across to the road where an open motor car awaited them. The driver stood beside

the car and as they approached he opened the tonneau doors. But the big man stopped for a final word of warning.

"We're going to get into the car," he said to the prisoner, "and we ought to kind of understand one another before we start. The roads ain't so good as they might be. And we won't be meeting other cars until we get up near the main highways. In the meantime, Archie, I'm hoping you don't make a foolish effort to break away. I'm not saying you've got such a thing in mind, but you've slipped loose on others, and you've got a name for being tricky that way; so I wanted to remind you I've got a gun ready just as you said a minute ago. Don't make it necessary for me to use it."

Contemptuously the thin face wrinkled.

"If it ain't dumb to hear you handing out such a line of talk, what is it? I'm hooked, ain't I? Can I jump the car without dragging you along? What I always claimed—dumb like that."

"It's only being careful, young fellow." O'Rourke drew out the key with which he had locked the handcuffs. "Anything might happen riding in a car; and if by accident you should get your hands on the automatic, it wouldn't be no job at all to make me hand over the key—and that's what I'm going to prevent before starting. Watch this, Archie."

With the key held in his free right hand, O'Rourke turned half around toward the lake; a forceful fling sent the key out into the water.

"Now we'll be getting in the car," he said, "and we'll try to be comfortable riding back. By throwing it in the water that way, you won't have to be bothering your head planning how to get it away from me. You and me are linked up until we get to the calaboose, and there ain't any way you can change it."

With his right hand stretched backward toward O'Rourke, the youth climbed ahead into the rear seat of the car.

At a signal from O'Rourke the machine moved forward, wound through a swampy patch of high grass and presently settled to a steady speed, headed south over open country. The sun was high and hot. Archie's shifty eyes looked on curiously as O'Rourke removed his hat and arranged himself for the ride. Later the big man took out a handkerchief and tucked it around the inside of his collar.

"It's a scorching hot section you picked out for a hideaway," he said to Archie. "A mean trip I had to make all the way through."

"You had to make, eh? I guess you didn't have to make it."

"Well, maybe not. The captain picked me out for the job. He couldn't very well send a green man after you—not with your record, Archie. And you couldn't blame him for that."

"My record ain't got nothing to do with it. I ain't got any record, anyhow. You dicks spill talk to the newspapers, and the way they spread it out for the public, I've suddenly got a record—Archie, the killer. It's good, ain't it? A pain in the head!"

O'Rourke drew out a package of small cigars, extracted one for himself and extended the package to the other.

"Want to smoke up a little?" he invited. "It's going to be a long ride; seems like we might as well be agreeable and try to talk about something else."

The cigar was accepted silently and lighted. The short chain at the young man's wrist jingled as he extinguished the match. And when he leaned out to drop ashes over the side of the car the chain tightened; he moved back closer to the detective. His gaze had dropped again to the smooth steel band.

"Threw the key into the lake, eh! Taking no chances with the killer guy."

"I didn't call you that," O'Rourke protested gently.

"It's what you're thinking."

"The fact is, I don't think so at all. You never looked like a killer to me. And you ain't charged with it. I understand they've got you down for burglary though, and when anybody goes kicking in doors with a loaded gun, it is only a question of time till he goes the limit."

Conversation lagged, and Detective

O'Rourke turned his interest to the district through which they were passing—a rough ridge, flanked on either side by swamp.

With a smoother roadbed the bumping of the car had changed gradually to an even swaying. Conversation had ceased.

It was yet early in the afternoon; ample time to reach town before dark, and O'Rourke was as well pleased that this was so. In his right coat pocket he ran his fingers over the automatic. The newspapers had not been far wrong in their opinion of the boy; he was a hard customer. Not a killer, perhaps, but certainly a hardened criminal.

Later, out of the corner of an eye, O'Rourke observed that the other man had moved up closer and, with the greater slack in the chain, had lifted the manacled hand to his lap. A sidewise glance disclosed the youth's gaze directed curiously to the little lock.

O'Rourke turned his head toward him.

"How is it now—comfortable enough, Archie?" he asked.

The yellow wrist slipped from the lap to the seat and the gaze shifted quickly to O'Rourke.

"Listen, O'Rourke, are we going to go on being dumb about a game like this?"

"How do you mean, dumb?" O'Rourke inquired.

Archie's eyes had fixed themselves in cold speculation upon the detective.

"What is it going to get you, O'Rourke? They could pickle me for the rest of my life and it wouldn't be anything in your pocket. You don't get nothing; ain't that right?"

"I get my salary regular," O'Rourke reminded him.

"And a healthy pile it is, ain't it? I'm going to come clean with you, O'Rourke. I've got cash. There's a shade over twenty grand packed away in a certain savings box. Fifties and centuries. All cash, clean and neat. You haven't turned me in yet; there's still time for—say—an accident, and you won't be the first one I've made a getaway from. What do you say, pal?"

"You mean you want to pay me to let you go?" the officer asked softly.

"You don't have to put it that way. All I'm saying is if something should happen so I get away before we hit town, you're going to be ten grand to the good. And I ain't the kind that plays a doublecross."

"That's a handsome offer you're making me," O'Rourke agreed. "Where you got this money?"

"Don't talk like that now. Am I going to tell you where? I come straight when I say I will; and once I'm free you'll get yours."

"I'm afraid I would," the detective sighed. "I'm afraid I'd get it where I wouldn't expect it. It's awful bright of you to make a plan like that. But you're forgetting that I don't doublecross either; when I say I'm bringing a man back I mean it. That's another way of coming straight."

"You won't deal, eh?"

"I couldn't if I wanted to," O'Rourke finished. "The key is in the bottom of the lake. You'll have to get used to the idea, boy; you're going to jail."

THE ROADS at the beginning of the trip had accustomed O'Rourke to an occasional lurching of the car, and for this reason he was not disturbed when some twenty minutes later, in passing over a rough spot a sidewise swerve sent him sliding across the seat toward the prisoner.

O'Rourke caught at the side of the car, Before he had recovered himself a second jolt threw him, and the other man as well, against the forward seat. The sudden setting of the brakes alarmed O'Rourke, and instinctively he reached for his automatic; when the car came to a stop he held the gun half pointed toward the prisoner. The driver turned to the back seat to inquire if O'Rourke was all right, and the detective reassured him.

"Go easy where the road is bad," O'Rourke called when the car again had started. "There's plenty of time, and we don't want any accidents."

At the wrist of his left hand O'Rourke felt the weight of the handcuffs and of Archie's arm suspended limply from his own. And turning now, he inquired—

"Did it shake you up some, Archie?"

"Sit down, mister," Archie responded, "and put up the gun. You figuring I'd run away?"

O'Rourke turned his eyes to the handcuffs; and before seating himself he lifted the other's hand, and in a perfunctory way looked at the manacle. Into the eyes of the young man there had come faintly a new glint; points of light which might have been discernible had the detective taken notice.

"Maybe you thought I'd picked the lock with my teeth?" Archie commented. "Cautious guy."

O'Rourke slipped the automatic back into his pocket, and when the car got under way he sat down.

"How about another one of them little fags," Archie asked. "Got any more?"

A vaguely ominous note tinged the tone of the query, and O'Rourke in his stolid shrewdness detected it. He reached willingly for the cigars though; and after putting away the package, he held a match while the prisoner obtained a light.

"I always claim smoking helps you think," Archie observed.

O'Rourke looked at him curiously.

"And in my line you've got to think, or you'll be doing overtime duty in stir," Archie went on. "I've been thinking, for example, about your pal in the front seat; he looks to me like another pair of squareshoes. Am I right?"

"He belongs to the force," O'Rourke admitted. "What makes you ask?"

"I knew it without asking. And I got a little news for you, mister."

The detective's gaze became puzzled.

"Let's have it, son," he said.

Archie's eyes shifted to the forward seat. The car had gained speed, and the uncertainty of the road held all of the driver's attention. With the engine rumble, the rattle of fenders and the wind, it would have been difficult for the driver to hear even a loud voice from the passengers behind him. And the prisoner did not speak loudly.

"Being an old-time flatfoot," he continued to O'Rourke, "you maybe won't believe it at first. But the fact is, I ain't so sure you're going to cage me today after all."

"How do you mean?"

"You notice the cap, O'Rourke?" Archie's left hand lay beneath his cap which he held in his lap. He raised the cap slightly as O'Rourke's eyes turned in that direction. "It's a funny thing that happened just now to the lid; you're going to laugh. When the bump hit us, the lid slipped off and went into the front seat. And this is the funny part, mister: the gat belonging to squareshoes was out of his pocket laying back of him in the seat, and— Keep your hands dead still, O'Rourke. Not a wiggle now or I'll give you the works!"

Though the prisoner's voice was scarcely audible, the tenseness of the face, the narrowing of the eyes and the set of the snarling mouth held a menace more effective in its warning than the command itself. And from beneath the cap projected the muzzle of an automatic.

The detective sat bewildered at the sudden advantage of the other man. The mishap caused by the skidding of the car had been brief; but there had been an interval, he realized, during which the prisoner had been above him, grasping for a hold on the forward seat. A moment of confusion during which the unforeseen apparently had happened.

Not lacking in courage was O'Rourke, yet he was old in experience and, along with other veterans of police work, he knew the recklessness of the criminal when he is armed and in a corner. Helplessly O'Rourke watched while the youth slid in closer, the cap partially covering the gun, concealing it thus against a a possible backward glance of the driver.

"Set back in the seat like natural, O'Rourke. Keep your hands in front of you. Not a squeal out of you to the sap ahead."

Switching the gun to the manacled right hand, he pressed the muzzle against O'Rourke; a swift glance forward assured him that the driver's eyes were on the road before him. With the free left hand he reached around to the detective's coat pocket and secured the weapon that was there. A quick search brought out a jackknife, a flashlight from an inner pocket, wallet, change, cartridges, and an extra pair of handcuffs; all of which he placed on the opposite side of the seat.

"Where is the key to the extra bracelets, O'Rourke?" The fingers fumbled through the small pockets of the vest. "Come through with it—the key for the extra bracelets."

"The key—" O'Rourke pitched his reply so that it might carry to the ears of the driver. A warning pressure of the gun stopped him, and he went on in lowered tone, "The key won't fit the ones you have on," he said.

"I ain't asking does it fit. I said, where is it?"

"It's in the wallet," O'Rourke answered.

The prisoner took out the wallet, held it between his knees and found the key. Rapidly he passed the key to O'Rourke and instructed him to try it.

"I can't set you loose with this, Archie. It fits the other pair." By holding the key close to the lock, it proved too wide even to be inserted.

"All right, then. Tell the flunkey in the front seat to stop the car. Speak up—and no explanations."

Through orders from O'Rourke the car came to a stop and, wonderingly, the driver looked around. Yet it was not until the other two men were getting out that a glimpse of the gun in the prisoner's hand made the situation clear to the driver. He reached then to his back pocket and found that he had been disarmed.

On the ground, the youth had covered both men.

"You gents are in a squeeze, and it's me that's telling you. Keep your right hand lofted up, O'Rourke. And you in the car, get out!"

Still befuddled as to how it had come about, the driver moved to leave the car. He had not yet shut off the engine, however, and a further order from the prisoner directed him to do so.

O'Rourke saw the driver stoop as though to reach the mechanism which would stop the engine.

A roar from the exhaust had followed, accompanied by the grind of a closing clutch; and although the prisoner fired with the automatic, shots directed low apparently at the tires, the careening car gathered speed.

TO BE left stranded in swamp land, on a remote and unused road, with evening coming on, and with an armed thug securely handcuffed to him, was not in any way to the liking of Detective O'Rourke. Nor was it more pleasing to the youth. And to both of them then it had come about so suddenly as to leave them in bewilderment, their eyes fixed in common concern on the back of a receding automobile.

Later O'Rourke found some comfort in knowing that the driver had headed for town and, that upon arriving, there would be no delay in obtaining help from the local police. The distance, however, was ten miles or more. And with the return trip, and the time in town, an hour would be consumed.

O'Rourke had no hope that the prisoner, desperate in his desire to avoid jail, would remain inactive during that hour. The youth knew the swamp country. Once free of the handcuffs, he might safely expect to escape.

O'Rourke was a plodding sort, slow of mind and of action, a patient worker whose greatest merit had always been a quality of hanging on. Not always did he catch his man, but when he did, as he said, he brought him in—the latter point being one on which he rather prided himself. There were those on the force who would find amusement in his returning empty handed after having had the prisoner in custody, and for this reason

the thought of an escape disturbed the detective, even in the face of the threatening automatic.

"It looks like you've kind of messed things up," O'Rourke spoke. "The machine is gone, and here we are. What are you counting on doing now?"

Archie's eyes were yet directed down the road.

"He's a fool for luck," he said of the driver. "And if the cannon had been in my right mitt he'd have got it." He turned back to O'Rourke. "Keep your hand up there, and don't try anything as nutty as what your partner got away with or I'll pot you quick."

O'Rourke shrugged his shoulders. And his manner was that of one who offers advice.

"I'm sorry to see you cutting up in such a fashion," he said. "And it ain't once in a hundred times that a break like this works out the way you expect it."

"This one's going to work out," Archie responded. "And what I want now is these open. I'm talking with a live gat in my hand, O'Rourke. If you've got a key in your clothes, or an idea in your dome, I'm telling you to produce it."

"You know where the key was thrown to," O'Rourke reminded him. "There's no way I know of to open it, unless it's a file; and with the car gone and the tool kit with it, there wouldn't be a file in miles."

"Sift your pockets out, mister."

"There's nothing in them," O'Rourke assured him.

He complied, however, and turned the pockets inside out; but as the contents had already been removed, and had been taken away with the car, nothing remained to be found. Archie carried the search further, feeling carefully through the lining of the clothes and tearing at the seams of the smaller pockets. When at length he had given up O'Rourke offered a suggestion.

"Why don't you wait here quiet," he advised, "until the car gets back from town. They'll be here before dark. If you go along peaceable from now on, I'm willing to overlook this break and square it up for you when we get to headquarters. That's the sensible way of doing, and you'll be getting yourself out of a pack of trouble."

"I ain't walking into jail," the prisoner answered. "And if there's trouble coming, its coming to somebody else. You're a smart guy, O'Rourke. Ditched the key and giving me a laugh. All right. I'm headed to make a getaway; and until the irons are off, you'll have a sample of what the swamps is like. No hanging back and no whines. What I ought to do is bump you; and if you start lugging back on me I'll do it."

"You've got the gun," O'Rourke replied quietly. "But you ain't so foolish as to do anything of that kind."

The youth met unblinking the detective's gaze.

"Can you tell me any reason why I shouldn't bump you, copper?"

"Well, Archie, I just don't think you'd do it. The worst they've got against you is burglary—you wouldn't do something now you'd burn for."

"You've got it figured out, have you? We'll drop it then. And start moving. But what I'm telling you, mister, don't hang back."

As they turned through the higher grass toward the marsh, O'Rourke became conscious of mosquitoes circling overhead, the faint buzzing sound awakening a new train of thought, and one that was not a little disturbing. Irritating little bumps, several of them, inflamed and white centered, had been the result of the short walk through the grass at the time of making the arrest. O'Rourke lifted his hand now and looked again at the swellings. The small singing above them became louder.

"We're heading ourselves direct into the mosquitoes," he said presently to Archie. "If it come night-time on us, have you thought ahead what the swamp is going to be like?"

"I don't have to think what it's like," came the response. "I know. And what I mean, it ain't a picnic. Maybe by morning you'll be changing your mind

about how bright you was in getting rid of the key."

"It's done now," O'Rourke replied.

"Then don't holler about mosquitoes. It ain't a pleasure to be dragging you with me, get it straight, mister. And if it wasn't for you being dumb, we wouldn't be hooked together. And listen, bo. When we get a mile or two of slough between us and the road, we're going to work serious on the wrist jewelry. The quicker it's off, the quicker you're free to get out. . . . And a little more lively, copper! Keep a half step ahead, and no lugging."

BY THE time O'Rourke and the prisoner had vanished into the swamp the driver of the automobile had got well started on the way to town. The miles were covered rapidly and, on arriving, he went at once to the local police with an account of what had happened.

The town, some seven or eight thousand in population, chanced to be the county seat, and the sheriff being thus at hand, the matter was turned over to him and a small posse was hurriedly organized.

With three cars, each bearing a half-dozen men, all of them armed and equipped with mosquito netting, and most of them familiar with the swamp region, the party set out. Under guidance of O'Rourke's driver they reached before nightfall the point at which the escape had been made.

But the swamp area extended five or more miles in length. And in width it varied from one to three miles. Moreover, they could find no clue as to the point at which O'Rourke and the prisoner had entered the swamp; and no proof, for that matter, that they had entered it.

The task of making an effective search over a territory so large was obviously a hopeless one; and, since it was already growing dark, the plan that suggested itself to the sheriff was to station the men temporarily around the edge of the marsh.

The deputy shrugged and looked toward the group of excited young men who were clambering out of the cars.

"So far as watching the swamp tonight," the deputy commented, "there's not enough of us to make it hardly worth while. We'll be near to a half-mile apart."

"It's the best we can do," the sheriff returned. "And before morning I'll be back with more men."

The deputy's eyes met those of the sheriff.

"We're acting then," he said, "on the theory that the pair are somewhere in the swamp. And if they are, and spend the night there with the mosquitoes, I hate to think of the condition we're going to find them in."

"There's nothing we can do," the sheriff responded. "To set the men hunting in the dark wouldn't give us a chance in a million; and before morning they'd be shooting at one another. If the prisoner is still in there, he's working on the handcuffs. Either that or he's already free from O'Rourke; and if he is, he could tie the loose end of the handcuff out of sight in his sleeve, and be safe enough to head cross-country for a railroad."

"You figure there's a chance he would do up the detective?" the deputy inquired.

"I'm hoping not. But if he can't get the irons off O'Rourke any other way, we don't know what he might do. It was an unlucky move for O'Rourke to throw away the key. A bad mistake."

The deputy shrugged.

"A key now would mean a lot to him," he agreed. "Maybe be the means of even saving his life."

By midnight additional cars were leaving at intervals for the swamp. On the sheriff's return to town the news went round; a stir of excitement caught the citizens. During the evening, in barber shops and poolrooms, hasty discussions took place, and quick plans went forward to assist the sheriff.

Nearby villages were notified and warned to be on the watch. Several cars departed for the purpose of bringing word

to the farmers. And by sunrise the searching party at the marsh had increased until the men were enough in number to encircle the swamp. Still, the men were by no means close together. Hardly within hailing distance at the nearest, and at the extreme ends of the swamp the intervals between them were even greater.

Shortly after daybreak the signal sounded to move forward. But noon arrived before word came that the detective and Archie had been sighted.

In a stagnant wallow of slough water, their fatigue hollowed faces plastered with mud against the swarming mosquitoes, and with their shoulders resting against a marsh rat mound while their lower limbs were sunk in mire, Detective O'Rourke and the prisoner were as yet unaware that the searchers were near at hand.

The gun remained in Archie's possession. In a futile as well as dangerous attempt to shoot the connecting chain free from the cuffs, the prisoner had used what ammunition the gun held, with the exception of the final bullet reserved to hold advantage over O'Rourke.

A flat stone picked up at the swamp edge served crudely in the prisoner's hand now as an anvil, and with the butt of the automatic, the process of severing the handcuff chain stubbornly went forward. Through slits of mosquito puffed eyelids, O'Rourke looked on. Occasionally, as he watched, he tugged at his right arm buckled securely to his side in a loop of the trousers' belt.

One conclusion O'Rourke had reached: the prisoner, despite his desperation, had decided to stop short of manslaughter. The sound of motorcars had drifted to them during the day, and O'Rourke sensed that Archie had become less sure of himself. The chance of escaping he still had, but there faced him now the possibility of being recaptured.

The clump of reeds in which they were hidden, O'Rourke knew, lay scarcely more than a quarter mile from one of the inner edges of the swamp. Twenty minutes would have brought them into the open and to the higher land away from the mosquitoes. But with the passing of the hours, and with their resistance against the insects growing weaker, O'Rourke at last had come to wonder whether they would have the strength to go that distance, even if they were free to.

A sudden crashing of reeds preceded the command—

"Let go that gun!"

Archie's fingers released the gun, letting it slip with the stone down into the water. And when the fingers of a deputy clenched his arm, he obediently pushed himself to his feet.

"You got me, fella," he responded. "I'm with you. Let's get out from these mosquitoes."

The deputy turned to O'Rourke, unfastened the belt and then looked at the handcuffs.

"We'll get these off in a minute," he said. "As soon as the sheriff comes up with some keys." The deputy's eyes lifted curiously to O'Rourke and he added, "The driver was telling us about you throwing away the key."

O'Rourke nodded.

"Yes, I threw it," he admitted. "But I've got an extra key. I always keep one extra."

The fishy eyes of the prisoner fastened unbelievingly upon O'Rourke.

"It's in the lining of my shoe," O'Rourke continued. "If I can just get at it—"

Incredulous, Archie looked on as O'Rourke produced a tiny rusted key.

The handcuffs snapped open. In O'Rourke's mud crusted face there shone the satisfaction of one who has done his duty—a satisfaction quite beyond the prisoner's pinched understanding.

Archie moved his hand in a futile gesture.

"Going through all this! A night like that!" he repeated. "And a key all the time in his shoe."

The manacle jaws closed on Archie's right wrist.

"Move along, son; you're going to jail."

Continuing

KING *of the* WORLD

By TALBOT MUNDY

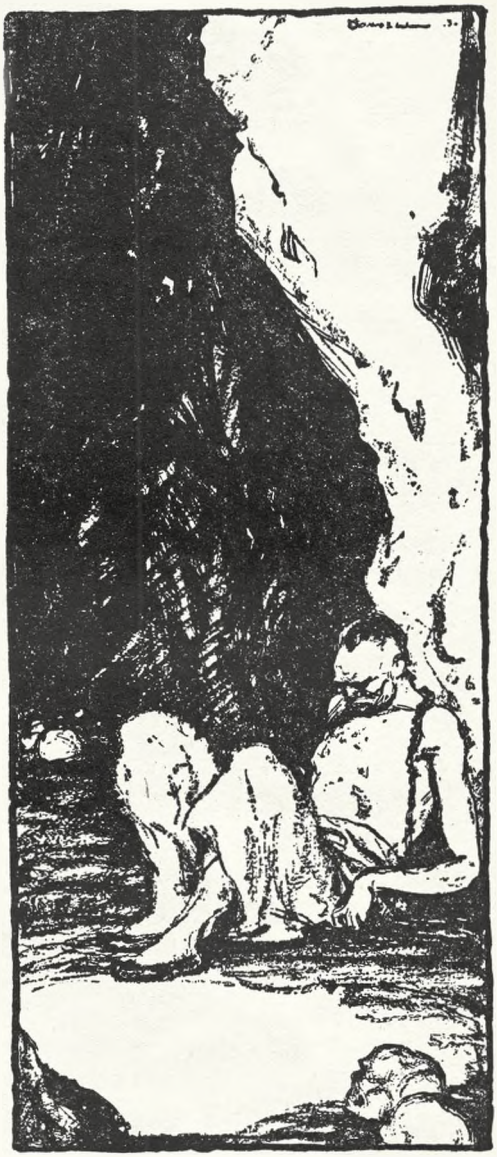
WE FIRST heard of Dorje one sunny Marseilles morning when, by some mysterious agency, the man who believed himself to be a reincarnation of Solomon and who planned to make himself King of the World by means of his diabolical inventions, blew into scrap iron a French cruiser lying in the harbor.

There were three of us in our party: James Schuyler Grim, American soldier of fortune known on most of earth's frontiers as Jimgrim; Jeff Ramsden, his gigantic companion of a thousand adventures; and I, Major Robert Crosby.

Persuaded by Meldrum Strange, a billionaire with world-wide interests at stake, to track down this man who seemed bent on the ruin of civilization, Grim took the case. And because he and Ramsden are famous adventurers, it was but a few hours later that the first of a long succession of Dorje's agents threw herself athwart our path: the woman who called herself the Princess Baltis, and who claimed to have been associated with both Dorje and Grim in past incarnations. Nevertheless Grim knew her for one of the cleverest of international spies . . .

Playing on her vanity, Grim won her partial confidence and she divulged information that led us to Cairo, where co-sharers of past adventures rallied: Chullunder Ghose, the *babu* behind whose most

A Novel of Ramsden and Jimgrim



fantastic clowning was the purposeful thought of genius; and Colonel McGowan of the British army.

A bold stroke on Grim's part then led us one night to the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, near which he believed was a cache of Dorje's mysterious "thunderbolts." The pyramid was alive with Dorje's agents, led by one Bertolini, and it was only after a terrific fight that we—Jeff mostly—were able to subdue them sufficiently to learn two important facts: that Dorje was believed to be in Chak-sam, on the Tsang-po River; and the secret of his tremendous power depended upon thought transference—a perfected system of mental telepathy, of which Bertolini was a key man. This, and the discovery of an instrument that later proved to be Dorje's thought-wave detector, dwarfed in importance the cache of "thunderbolts"—energy converters of some sort which we were able to destroy, along with their guardians, by the use of searchlight rays.

Back in Cairo, Grim proceeded immediately to Bertolini's house, where we were met by a bellicose Chinese whom we promptly trussed up. From his pockets Grim removed a master key and several flasks of a colorless liquid. In the hallway Grim's eye fell upon an unusual picture. Slipping it to one side we saw below us

in a chamber hewn from solid rock, a dozen armed men—and one poor devil, bound, being subjected to torture. With a yell Jeff let fly with one of the flasks—and like magic the chamber and its occupants were blotted out by a heavy, cottony vapor . . .

"Come on," Grim ordered soberly, applying the key to the door across from the picture. We each slipped one of those flasks into a pocket, hoping the glass was not so fragile as it looked—and as I followed Grim and Jeff into the musty passage that opened before us, I fastened the door so that it would not lock behind us . . .

WOODEN stairs led downward—plain, unpainted, soft, imported lumber, held together by clumsily driven nails, the steps resting on strips of discarded wood nailed none too regularly to the framework. It was plainly an amateur job. A lantern, twenty feet below us, burned rather dimly, resting on a ledge of limestone rock.

The stairs came to an end on a naked rock floor, at about the level of the floor of the chamber we had bombed with the flasks; but there was no door leading into that chamber. Two sides of the space where we stood were of rough rock; the two others were of broken stone and rubbish roughly mortared up to keep the sub-soil from falling in. It looked like a place that had been excavated by shovel and bucket long after the house was built, and in one corner there was some of the undug sandy earth remaining.

In the darkest corner, underneath the stairs, there was an opening in the rough rock wall. It had been cut and squared by skilful masons, but the outside had been very crudely hewn, perhaps afterward, to represent two pillars entwined by serpents. The cut blocks of stone that had originally sealed the opening appeared to have been used in building one of the rough supporting walls that kept the earth from falling in; and in their place there was a well made oak door, reenforced with iron straps and nails and set into a very heavy oak frame. The only opening in the door was the keyhole of a Yale lock.

Grim inserted the master-key, and again I made sure of retreat by fastening the bolt back. He led the way into a narrow passage about seven feet high. Its roof was rounded and both that and the walls were as smooth as ancient polishers knew how to make them, but the floor was rough enough to walk on without slipping at a downward angle of about twenty degrees. I counted thirty steps between the oak door and an obviously modern iron hook, from which a lighted kerosene lantern hung.

The passage turned at that point, sharp to the left, and again to the left, with a well proportioned bulge in the right hand wall to allow, I suppose, for stretcher bearers and the maneuvering of large objects around the corner. Then there was another lighted lantern, on a hook exactly above the center of a circular, descending stairway. Shaft and steps were cut from solid rock, and they seemed to me much more ancient than the amateurish pillars at the entrance, or than the passage itself, although it was difficult to understand how that could be, because there was no break in the rock wall and it seemed impossible to have cut the stairway without first having driven the passage.

Grim took the lantern and led the way down. But there was no need of the light; there was another lantern burning at the bottom, more than eighty feet below us, so he passed his lantern back to me and I re-hung it on the hook. There was no balustrade; on our left hand was an unprotected central shaft, around which the stairway coiled itself without a measurable error. Instruments might detect inaccuracy, but to the eye that stairway seemed geometrically perfect. The stone seemed not particularly hard, but the tread of the steps was scarcely worn at all, and they were quite unbroken; there was not a perceptible flaw anywhere.

From the bottom the effect was even more astonishing. Evidently the stair-

way had been started from below and tunneled upward, which accounted for the passage seeming newer than the stairs. Another generation, centuries later, may have found those stairs and cut the passage from their summit through to daylight. Blown sand covered up the entrance. Some khedival favorite chose that spot to build his house, which Bertolini bought; and Bertolini, blind or not yet blinded, reasoning from evidence or merely following a hunch, dug down under the floor until he found the marvel. Being Bertolini, he had held his tongue about it and had railed with biting scorn at any one who dared to hint there might be tombs worth finding in the city limits.

At the foot of the stairs was a circular vault, and in its walls were seven openings, closed by new oak doors all similar to the one at the passage entrance, except that in each one of these was a spy-hole at the level of a man's eyes. But the spy-holes were closed by sliding iron covers, on the inside, and they refused to move although we worked at them hard with our fingers and thumbs. Not even Jeff could shift them; and even if we had cared to risk making the noise the holes were hardly large enough for him to crash them with his fist. Grim produced the key again.

"Which door?"

"The middle way," said Jeff. "When in doubt, take the ridge of the hill or the crown of the road. Seven doors—try the fourth from either end."

Grim inserted the key, and a third time I set back the lock.

CHAPTER XXIII

"Now! Go the limit!"

THE SMELL of coffee greeted us. There is no need to tell an old campaigner what that means to men who lack food and sleep. We were like tired horses sniffing crushed oats. There was a well tanned horsehide curtain at the far end of a twenty foot passage, and beyond that was warm light which turned out to be from many lanterns and from the glow of a charcoal fire in a big copper pan on a tripod.

Grim parted the curtain and strode in, motioning to us to keep behind him, so I had to look over Jeff's shoulder, because Jeff's breadth almost filled the passage. I was backed against the curtain and I dare say its movement suggested there might be a number of people behind me. That may possibly account for our immediate reception. No one started to his feet and no one fired at us, though there were several revolvers in the room.

The place looked like a mortuary chapel, but it was much less evenly proportioned than, for instance, the passage by which we had entered. A natural cavern had been hewn out and adapted for the purpose, leaving the roof and some parts of the walls in their original condition. The entire floor had been hewn to such depth as to leave what may have been an altar, or a bier, in the center; and at the opposite end from the door there was a platform contrived in the same way, occupying the entire width of the chamber—twenty-five feet more or less.

At the right hand end of that platform, which had a depth of eight or nine feet, there was a natural projection of the rock wall which had been carved into a throne as grand as anything that Rodin ever chiseled. Its proportions perfectly suggested all the majesty and ponderous insolence of olden priesthood. On that sat Bertolini. He was no longer wearing spectacles; his eyes were closed; he looked like a scholarly anchorite in meditation. Even when he moved there was the same effect of spiritual calm suggested by the drooping eyelids. Outdoors they were protected from the sun by goggles so that they were whiter than the rest of his face.

But when he turned his face toward us the effect was different; he became a hater, nervously alert. Above his head, exactly in the corner of the wall, there was a natural crack in the rock, that led upward, growing gradually wider, until it spread into a hole up near the roof, as a river flows into the sea.

There was nobody else on the platform. In a semi-circle on the floor around the brazier, with their backs to the wall, sat seven men on prayer mats. There were coffee cups beside them. Facing them, not far from Bertolini, but below him, there were five more, also on mats with their backs to the wall. They were of different nationalities, well dressed. One man, in a suit of raw silk, was undoubtedly German; another looked English; three wore Arab costume, and of those one seemed to be *mullim*—Moslem teacher.

On the bier, or whatever it was, in midroom was Li-pu's—the Chinese I had chanced upon in Gizeh—instrument. Li-pu, oblivious of all else, was up there huddled on the stone beside it, watching it as if it were alive and he expected it to move. But he, too, had had coffee; the cup and saucer lay smashed on the floor where he had knocked them off the bier.

Chullunder Ghose sat back toward us, also on a prayer mat, hands on thighs, his big head sunk a little forward as if thought weighed more than muscle could support. He looked fatter than ever—enormous. He was squatting well to one side of the stone bier, in a position where he could watch Bertolini and every one else.

HE HAD the coffee pot, a bowl of sugar and a tin of evaporated milk beside him; it was not Turkish coffee—good United States dripped nectar; and instead of turning his head when we entered he poured some, so that the aroma reached our nostrils.

"And as I told you that he would be, here he is!" he announced.

It did not occur to me at the moment that he had seen us reflected in the polished copper of the pot from which he poured.

"Who?" Bertolini sat bolt upright. "Is Titai with him?"

"No," said Grim, "but Titai, if that's your butler, sends his compliments and says he'll see you later."

Evidently Grim had made his mind up instantly to force a showdown and I felt for the flask in my pocket. Bertolini recoiled as if some one had slapped his face. But to Grim's astonishment as much as mine he took the tale for granted.

"Damn that Chinaman! His insolence grows unbearable. But how the devil did you get in here?"

"I passed myself in."

"Through a locked door—three locked doors?"

"Certainly. What do you take me for?"

"Who are you?"

"Major James Grim!"

If a bomb had gone off it could hardly have caused more alarm. I heard two revolvers click, but the only hand that I actually saw move was Bertolini's; he let it fall between the throne and the end wall, and since he produced no weapon I concluded he had touched an electric bell push. The other men held strained, alert, breathless silence.

"Jimgrim? Of the Intelligence?" said Bertolini.

"Does it surprise you?" Grim asked; and I saw his game now. He had given Chullunder Ghose a cue and was simply marking time until the *babu* acted on it, or returned another.

"What do you imagine?" the *babu* asked. "That Dorje has no agents in the secret services of all the countries in the world? You must be crazy. I don't wonder—no, indeed I don't—that Dorje ordered you to be investigated! I am thinking he was crazy also, when he chose you!"

So that was it. Chullunder Ghose was not yet ready for the showdown; he was inviting Grim to carry on a while, so Grim returned his lead.

"You have balled things badly. If I can save you, Bertolini— But how can I?"

Bertolini's lean right hand dropped out of sight again. I saw his shoulder move; he was pressing on something, almost certainly a bell push.

"Your credentials are lacking," he retorted. "I hear three of you. I have a hole here that has taken more than three

at a time into the Nile—many more than three who could not *name the name right!*" He almost screamed the last four words. Then he leaned over the right arm of the throne and there was no longer any doubt whatever that it was a bell push he was furiously pressing with one finger after another. "Name the name!" he shouted.

"I don't need to," Grim answered. "Feel this."

He walked toward him, and to do that he had to pass between the group of seven and the group of five. There was plenty of light. He let them see the small gold token that he held between finger and thumb. I heard the hammer of one revolver click.

"Feel it!"

Bertolini took the token in his fingers.

"You could have stolen that," he answered. "Get off the platform!" With a trick of sleight-of-hand he made the token vanish. There was no knowing where it had gone. "Do you hear me?"

Jeff and I felt for our glass flasks, but I failed to see how we could use them without putting Grim out of business. We would have had to throw the things and beat it down the passage; even Chullunder Ghose would have been lucky to escape. And all twelve men pulled out revolvers.

"Jim's out!" said Jeff in my ear. It was the only time I ever heard him admit that there was no hope. "Beat it while you can. I'll stay and—"

I BELIEVE Jeff still thinks that I started to run but recovered in time to save my self-respect. What I actually did was to draw back the curtain a little and shout down the passage:

"Stand by for a rush, you fellows! If a shot's fired, come in on the run—no waiting!"

And I contrived to drop my memorandum book behind the curtain and to kick that skidding along the stone floor of the passage. To me it did not sound in the least like lurking men, but then I knew what it was and the others did not. It served. It raised at any rate a doubt in thirteen minds, including Bertolini's.

"So that's why my men haven't answered my summons!" said Bertolini. "Bring your men in here!"

Grim did not hesitate. He switched ideas in a fraction of a second.

"If I do," he said, "you're done for. They are *your* men! They're the gang you rang that bell for! They're the pretty boys who were to fix me! Imbecile! Do you suppose you can set yourself up as an independent without Dorje knowing it? And do you suppose he'll know it without sending somebody to pull your plug? What do you take Dorje for? A sort of small-town politician who swaps pork for votes? Put up those revolvers. I'll give you thirty seconds!"

They obeyed him, although the German hesitated and one Arab only stuffed his weapon under his *abayi*. Evidently they had had a taste or two of Dorje's discipline.

"Self," remarked Chullunder Ghose, "am under influence of Dorje so much that am Dorje-minded, absolutely. Don't give a damn who dies, who lives, fat self included. Notwithstanding which, I intimate—with purely abstract interest in any situation whatsoever—that our Jimmy Jimgrim, being of the secret service, is of much more use to Dorje than yourselves. And Dorje oils good tools. You'd better listen."

Grim was signaling to Jeff, and it meant "go the limit!" And Jeff's limit is nothing that any one else can predict; it includes everything except cats and elevators. Calmly, almost casually, in a low voice he remarked to me:

"You'd better show 'em one flask. One's enough."

So I drew the flask out of my pocket and held it high where every one could see it. Jeff, business-like and unexcited, with a hand in his hip pocket, strode forward until he reached the nearest of the group of seven. It was the German.

"You first. Lay your gun on that stone altar!"

Bertolini jumped up.

"What is happening?"

"We're being sensible," said Grim. "If you are fit to live, this is your chance to prove it."

"Obey him!" said Bertolini, and sat down again.

The German eyed my flask and Jeff's fist bulging in the right hip pocket. Then he got up and laid his automatic on the stone beside Li-pu, who took no notice, pondering, almost praying to that instrument that would not work.

"Both guns!" Jeff commanded, and the German drew a smaller automatic from an inside pocket. He laid it alongside the first one.

"Now your knife!"

"*Wahrhavtig, ich habe keine!*"

"All right. Get back there. You next."

Psychologically speaking they were knocked out, and even the Arab who had stuffed his revolver under his *abayi* obeyed orders, although he called the others cowards and "worms in the bellies of dogs" in spluttering Arabic that told the whole tale of the state of his nerves. Unloading one by one, Jeff let the shells fall on the floor and tossed the empty weapons into the corner beyond Chullunder Ghose. Perhaps he meant that as an inspiration to the *babu* to get busy. If it was a hint, he took it.

"As was saying antecedently to disarmament conference, at which am happy to observe that minority sentiment received magnanimous consideration, am expertly dubious about your understanding of the secret code. Am otherwise at loss to explain how such mistakes have happened. Will resume interrogation."

"Have I gone mad?" asked Bertolini.

"That is what this committee of investigation wishes to discover," said the *babu*.

Bertolini almost staggered to his feet. He stood swaying, pressing both hands to his blind eyes. He was a madman if ever I saw one—incurable, with egomania embittered by a consciousness of creeping weakness of the will. Undoubtedly one reason why we had disarmed that crowd so easily was that they had already lost faith in the blind despot; mystification and threats had lost their value when they saw the sick will waning even faster than the outworn body and nerves. But even yet they half expected him to spring a surprise.

"Repeat to me the cipher, then explain it," said the *babu*. "I bet you I will spot the mistake in half a jiffy. Who knows it? *Potz-blitz-Donnerwetter*, you first!"

"None of us knows it," said the German. "Only he does. We must come to him for—"

Two sounds interrupted him. The first was Li-pu, madder than a coot, gesticulating:

"Ha-ha-hee-hee! He work! He do! He work good! Come, look! Come see!"

The second sound was footsteps in the passage.

CHAPTER XXIV

"Gad, what a team she'd have made with her twin!"

GRIM signaled me. It was my job. Fully expecting that the men we gassed had come to life and at last were answering Bertolini's electric bell, I parted the horsehide curtain and stepped through swiftly; it was no use hesitating. There was no one in the passage, but I saw the door at the end shut silently. So it was all to do over again, and I was in doubt whether to creep up and spring the latch so that no one could enter, or whether to take all chances. Sense of smell encouraged, so I took them.

There was perfume in the air—faint, but it stirred memory, and in some strange way it stopped the skin from crawling up my spine. I did not realize how scared I had been until I suddenly felt less scared. Then I jerked the door open.

Baltis—with her throat in a Chinese's fingers! He had her down on her knees. Her hands were wrenching at his wrists.

He tried to turn on me but he could not free himself. He went down like a steer under the pole-ax when I hit him. Then, before I even thought of stopping her—I was watching to see whether the Chinese was actually out or not—she did something to the bracelet on her left wrist, knelt, and struck him with the bracelet on the neck. While I helped her to her feet she readjusted the bracelet.

"It is for myself I wear this. Where is Jeemgreem?"

"Poison?"

She nodded.

"Where is Jeemgreem?"

"Give that to me. You might use it on him."

"No. It is for myself I keep it. Where is Jeemgreem?"

She was rubbing her throat with her right hand; the man had almost torn her muscles out, and her voice was hoarse, choked. But she had the vitality and pluck of an animal, in addition to which she had taken some sort of stimulant. Her eyes betrayed that. She could stand unaided, so I turned to push open the door into the passage. It was locked. When I opened it I had accidentally released the pin that held the bolt back.

It was hard to know what to do then. If I should hammer on the door, Jeff or the *babu* would come and open it, but that would leave only two to handle thirteen men. On the other hand, if I waited that might worry them. I might be badly needed in there.

However, I decided to wait.

"How did you get here?" I demanded, leading her toward the hanging lantern, to examine her throat. The skin was lacerated and it was likely the bruises would swell, so that she wouldn't be able to talk much presently. It seemed a good idea to get her to talk now. Mercurochrome was all I could do for her; I had a phial of that in my silver pocket case.

"You laugh at me?"

In that uncertain lantern-light the red stuff made her neck look comically ghastly.

"Yes," I said, "I see you really were Anne Boleyn. You've the headman's trademark. How did you get here? Weren't you at the hotel?"

SHE GLANCED down at the Chinese and I stooped to examine him. He was stone dead; whatever poison she had in that bracelet was as quick as cyanide.

"Yes," she said. "That fat Indian left me at the hotel. I went to Suite A. I was filthy. A hotel servant, staring very much, unlocked for me the door. I bathed. I drank champagne with cognac." (She had also taken something stronger, but that was her affair.) "I went to bed. And I could not sleep. Almost always, when there is danger very near, I know it and can not sleep, no matter how tired I may be. So I got up again and dressed myself, wondering what I should do. And in my mirror I saw that Chinese. Through the window he entered, very silently. There was a glass flask in his hand."

"This Chinese?"

"Yes, that one. And I guessed that flask held some of Dorje's stuff. So I knew they think I am my sister and some one—Bertolini very likely—has said kill her. I myself have used that stuff. It turns into fluffy vapor, no smell, no noise. It kills. It leaves no mark, no trace. It vanishes. And then the doctors say heart failure."

"You say you have used it?"

She nodded.

"But not often. There is very little of it. Even Dorje can only make it in small quantities and it is dreadfully expensive. But I knew what that Chinese had in the flask. And he knew that I had seen him in the mirror. So he stepped back, and his foot slipped on something outside, so that there was a moment before he could recover. Then he threw the flask and smashed it on the bedroom floor. But by that time I had reached the bedroom door, and was outside in the sitting room, where I had time to snatch this dress out of a closet; and I put it on out in the cor-

ridor. I hoped the Chinese would think I was dead."

"Did you summon any one?"

"Of course not. If a lot of fools had made a fuss, I could not have found Jeemgreem to warn him; they would have kept me there answering questions. I decided that if I am on Dorje's death list there is no longer the least doubt in my mind as to whose side I am on. So I left the hotel to look for Jeemgreem. It was already daylight. I saw Colonel McGowan's car. The chauffeur recognized me. I ordered him to drive me to wherever it was that he had taken Bertolini and that fat Indian; and he obeyed without a moment's hesitation, driving very swiftly."

"How did you get in?" I asked her.

"The gate was shut and no one opened it, although I rang the bell. The chauffeur wished to drive me away again, saying he must return at once to wait for Colonel McGowan; but he also told me that Jeemgreem and you and Jeff Ramsden were somewhere in this place. So I sent him away. I did not wish him to see me climb the wall. And then I could not climb it, so I did not know what to do. And that Chinese came and found me vainly trying to lift that great gate off its hinges.

"I think he thought I did not recognize him. He unlocked the gate. I went in with him. He was very civil. He unlocked the house door. And he told me to wait in the hall while he went for some one. He looked first in one room, then another, then another. Then he went upstairs. So I, too, began opening doors. I found my way down here. I had opened that door. I was listening in the passage from behind a leather curtain, when that Chinese came on me from behind and seized my throat. Then you came."

"How much did you hear in the passage?"

"I heard that fat Indian trying to trick them to explain the cipher. Listen," she said, "I wish Jeemgreem for my friend, that he shall trust me. I will not explain the cipher. But I will read for him what—"

Jeff came, opening the door abruptly.

"What's up?" He stared at the stain on Baltis' throat. "Better carry her in here. Seen McGowan?"

"If you can carry your own stupidity you are doing well!" she answered. "Where is Jeemgreem?"

She went ahead of us into the passage. Jeff looked worried.

"Bertolini," he said, "has cracked—brain going before Grim can get him to explain the cipher. Chullunder Ghose is almost at the bottom of his bag of tricks. It's a blank wall."

BALTIS heard him. She waited for us and demanded to be helped, but refused to be carried. She put a hand on Jeff's shoulder. From behind I put my hands under her arms, but she shook me off. The passion, that had made her stab the Chinese in the neck like a she-cobra, was still raging in her and she struck at whatever irritated; it was probably lucky for me that she had covered up the deadly fang of her bracelet.

"Jeemgreem learns the cipher, does he? Bertolini tells him? And they put *me* on the death list!"

Physically she was weakening. Emotionally she had flared up, and there was no guessing how far that indignant heat would carry her. When we had passed through the horsehide curtain she tried to stand alone but had to cling again to Jeff's arm, and in the stronger light her face looked ghastly.

"Jeemgreem!" she said—and then stared at Bertolini, clinging to Jeff's arm with both hands as if to economize her strength. She reminded me of a beaten boxer saving himself for the clang of the bell and hoping to land meanwhile with one venomous punch. Instinct governed her. "Jeemgreem, if you wish to understand that cipher, let me speak with Bertolini."

Grim nodded. Jeff passed her to me, his instinct, habit, training keeping him at his post as guardian of the exit. She could hardly stagger unaided, so she took

my arm and as I led her toward the platform I paid very little attention to anything except to make sure that she did not touch her bracelet. Bertolini was muttering like a drunken man, with his chin on his chest, and Grim was listening but evidently making nothing of it.

I had to lift her to the platform; there was no step. As I did that I tried to get her bracelet, but there was no pulling it off over her hand and Grim shook his head.

"Poison," I explained.

"Yes," he said, "most snakes have that."

The words enraged her, as I don't doubt he intended. He wanted an indiscretion, but he got more than he bargained for.

"Look out! She signals!" Chullunder Ghose shouted. He scrambled to his feet and backed away toward where Jeff stood near the entrance.

My attention was divided; I had noticed what Grim must have seen when he first approached the platform—a square hole in the wall no higher than the seat of Bertolini's throne; one could only see it by looking around the throne.

Out went a light with a crash as the German smashed it. He charged straight for the horsehide curtain, kicking over another lantern on his way and lowering his head to butt Jeff in the solar-plexus. Jeff took care of him, but knocked him sidewise into the *babu*, who was caught off balance, and the two went down in a flailing heap together, punching at each other.

It was as quick as a barroom roughhouse. Light after light went out. The man who rushed me trod on a revolver cartridge and did a split like a comedian so that my fist missed him by several inches. As he fell he grabbed my leg and another man knocked me backward. I fell in Bertolini's lap and experienced all the sensations of instant death; imagination made me absolutely sure that the glass flask in my right hip pocket had struck the stone arm of the throne and smashed to smithereens. That it did not break was one of those things that make a man want to believe in miracles.

I saw Li-pu pick up his instrument and run with it like a football player scoring a touchdown; he, too, set his foot on a rolling cartridge and collapsed. He started keening like an old hound left at home when the hunting is on. Then some one got me by the throat, and there were two men hanging to my left arm. Underneath me Bertolini struggled like a fish in a net. All the lanterns were out except one.

GRIM had it. It was his fist that felled the man whose fingers clutched my throat. I saw Baltis, too, on hands and knees, quite near me. I believe it was she who helped to pull me clear of Bertolini; and then, for a few seconds, Grim and I had to fight with our backs to the wall at the back of the platform, and the brunt of that business fell to me because Grim had the only lantern and to save that seemed almost as important as not to break the glass flasks in our pockets.

It was too dark to see what Jeff was doing, but the place sounded like a shambles when a wounded steer has broken loose. Jeff had his hands full. But he probably could have held that exit almost indefinitely if Baltis had not been there, and if Chullunder Ghose had held his tongue and I mine. The *babu* had kicked a man in the stomach and then busied himself throwing the empty revolvers down the passage to prevent the enemy from getting them. But he kept one; and two or three cartridges came kicked along the floor toward him, of which one fitted.

"Jimmy Jimgrim sahib, shall I shoot?" he called out.

"No!" Grim answered. I suppose he did not want dead witnesses but live ones, who could be made to tell their story afterward.

"Come and get these flasks out of our pockets!" I shouted. "Then protect those with your pistol."

Baltis had not known until then that

we had those flasks. I felt her snatch mine from my pocket at the moment when a punch drunk Levantine rushed me for one last effort to crack my head against the wall. I sidestepped him and grabbed her. Grim's fist downed the Levantine and in the same second Baltis tried to hurl the flask against the wall. She dropped it. Grim caught it, tripped on the legs of the man he had knocked down, fumbled it—he had the lantern in one hand—and sent it spinning into the square hole in the wall beside the throne. I heard it smash. Then Grim fell and the lantern went out.

"So now we all die!" Baltis said calmly. "And when we return to the world Dorje will have made it fit to live in!"

"Out of here!" Grim shouted. "Hurry up, Jeff—grab the *babu!*"

He seized Baltis and ordered me quietly to bring Bertolini; so I dragged him off the throne and hoisted him like a sack. It was pitch dark. I had to scramble from the platform to the floor and then head for the noise where they were fighting to be first into the passage. I tripped on a man's legs and staggered on a cartridge, fell and lost all sense of direction. I had thought Grim was ahead of me. He was not. It was his hand that helped me up again. Jeff's voice gave direction:

"This way! This way!"

Then the *babu* fired his pistol to give us a flash to see by and we entered the passage all together with the battered survivors of Dorje's gang fleeing ahead of us. Jeff had picked up three who could hardly stagger and had shoved them toward safety. The last one slammed the door in our faces, but as there was no way of holding it on the far side and the lock was toward us they gained nothing by that. They were met by McGowan descending the stair with a flashlight in one hand and his automatic in the other; and behind McGowan was a view of the putteed legs of armed men. I was holding the door for Grim. He was a long time coming; I almost turned back to look for him, fearing he had been caught and overcome by the fumes from the flask. However, he came at last with Baltis in his arms, and in the mixed light from the hanging lantern and McGowan's electric torch both of them seemed to be laughing.

"Hello, Mac." He set Baltis down, letting her slide slowly to the floor, where she sat with her back to the wall. Then he glanced at Bertolini, whom I had laid not far away. "What's wrong with him?"

"Dead," I answered. On his neck, above the jugular, there was a puncture that might have been made by a snake with one fang; by the lantern light it was hardly visible but it was plain enough when McGowan turned the torch toward it. "Baltis' bracelet," I whispered, and Grim nodded.

"Gad, what a team she'd have made with her twin!" McGowan did not hear that. He interrupted:

"What killed twelve men in the other cavern? We got in by a tunnel from the garden and broke down a door. They're as dead as mummies, and not a sign of how it happened."

"Gas," Grim answered. "You can have some for analysis." He passed his flask to McGowan. Baltis spoke up hoarsely; her throat was swelling:

"I hope you open it! I hope your friends are with you when you do!"

McGowan took no notice of her.

"There's a tunnel," he said, "that seems to lead from that cavern to this one, and there's an electric bell at the entrance. Have you seen an opening at this end?"

"Yes, in there," Grim answered. "Gad, you're lucky!"

"How d'you mean?"

"I dropped a gas flask in there—broke it."

"And the fun is," Baltis interrupted, rubbing her throat, "that nobody—can ever prove—that there was anything—in the bottle! It becomes gas—it kills—it vanishes—it leaves no trace!"

She loved the humor of it. She appeared to wish that Grim were such another as Dorje with similar weapons.

Grim ignored her as McGowan had done.

"Why did Bertolini keep such watch over the tunnel?"

"We'll give the gas time. Then we'll go look-see," McGowan answered.

CHAPTER XXV

"People want answers. And they want the answers wrong, I tell you!"

"WHO KILLED Bertolini?" asked McGowan.

"I did," Grim answered.

McGowan stared, but not so hard as Baltis did. McGowan's men had rounded up the prisoners and marched them elsewhere. We were waiting down there for the gas to vanish out of the tunnel, as it already had done from the cavern where a dozen dead men lay. McGowan had sent one of his men to try to cook some breakfast for us up in Bertolini's kitchen; and the Chinese whom we had trussed up in the lavatory had been brought down and placed facing us, back to the wall, with the gag removed but his hands and feet still fastened. He glared balefully at Baltis and I think he thought she was her sister. But not a word would he say.

Chullunder Ghose pulled his turban down over his eyes.

"Am liar too, on suitable occasion," he remarked. "But suitability parades incognito. I don't recognize it."

Grim said, looking at McGowan—

"I killed Bertolini to save Baltis."

"Was she worth it?" asked the *babu*. "Bertolini understood the cipher. If you had left him alone in a room with me and something—say a copying press in which to crush his fingertips, I would have solved it!"

"Save her from what?" asked McGowan.

Grim's index finger traced a noose around his throat and then repeated it to make sure Baltis understood.

"They won't hang *me* for killing him," he suggested.

"No. Of course they wouldn't."

"But, they would hang her."

"And if this *babu* is asked for evidence, she will be shamefully and undramatically dead to all intents and purposes from moment when he takes the witness stand! Am expert witness! Furthermore, am deaf. For purposes of lawful evidence, I did not hear James Schuyler Jimgrim say he slew *corpus delicti*."

"Yes," said McGowan, "they'd hang her all right. If I were you I'd let 'em do it. She is no more use. If she won't tell what she knows I don't see why you should shield her."

"She will tell," Grim answered.

Baltis looked indifferent. She rubbed her throat with both hands and took her time before she answered:

"I killed Bertolini. He had idiotically bungled Dorje's business; and he had presumed to put me on the death list, which was not his business at all. He was also going to tell the secret of the cipher. Now, if they should hang me, nobody will tell it."

"Same no longer being secret," said Chullunder Ghose. "It reads this way: forty-five minus forty-five equals forty-five. And that is easy. Nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one—are forty-five. Reverse that order, forty-five again. Subtract one from the other and we have the self-same figures in a different order, namely: eight, six, four, one, nine, seven, five, three, two. That then evidently is the order in which the numerals should read for decoding purposes. How goes the rest of it?"

McGowan spoke up:

"Bible, 'McLaughlin's Dictionary', 'Encyc. Br. Eleven'."

"Undoubtedly those are the books," said Chullunder Ghose, "to whose lines and pages we must refer for the explanation of given numerals. That is also easy. What next?"

McGowan spoke again from memory.

"One to twenty-eight equals circle. Nine, ten, eleven are one, two, two-two."

"Thirty-one numbers," said Grim. "Those might refer to the days of the month, the circle meaning the full moon.

How many volumes has the eleventh edition of the 'Encyclopedia Britannica'?"

"Twenty-eight," I said, "omitting the index."

"So perhaps from the first to the twenty-eighth we should consult the 'Encyclopedia'—volume one on the first, volume two on the second, and so on."

"I suspect it is not so easy as all that," said Chullunder Ghose. "A skunk emits a smell to stupefy his adversary. Would not Dorje do that also? How many volumes has the Bible?"

"King James version, usually one," I answered.

"*Atcha, sahib.* On the twenty-ninth we consult the Bible, which is oftener than many Christians do it. Self, am substitutionist with pantheistic prejudices; one religion failing to excuse my tendencies, I substitute another, always. Am familiar with Bible, having frequently consulted same for proof of theory that nobody knows more than he can find out. What about 'McLaughlin's Dictionary'?"

"French-English," I answered. "Two volumes."

"So we know that," said the *babu*. "On the thirtieth we consult volume one, and on the thirty-first volume two of 'McLaughlin's Dictionary'. Not too troublesome. I hate French; it is such an accurate language. But we all hate something. Rammy sahib hates cats. Jimmy Jimgrim sahib has no word for how he feels regarding people who think they are better than others. Now what?"

"Look through Bertolini's pockets," Grim suggested.

THERE was nothing much. A handkerchief, watch, keys, a little money, a new, cheap memorandum book. The latter contained nothing except a folded half-page from a Cairene daily paper, from which the date was missing. Grim examined it.

"We win!" he said abruptly after half a minute. He handed the sheet to McGowan.

McGowan nodded.

"Obvious. Of course, we have clerks who watch the daily papers. The agony column is always clipped and pasted in a scrap-book. We have known for, I should say, nine years that Bertolini paid for those occasional strings of numbers. But then he was known to be a crank on numerology among other things. Have you read his treatise on the Pyramid? It was just like him to publish a string of numbers without explaining them. We all thought he was warning us in his own opinionated and obscure way about the date of the end of the world."

The piece of newspaper was passed from hand to hand and reached me finally. At the top of the column headed Public Notices there were several lines of figures that resembled, for instance, a list of the numbers of bonds drawn for redemption; only there was no occupying text. Numbers, separated into groups by means of hyphens. No signature, no initials, not one word of explanation.

"He was blind. He himself couldn't read it," I objected.

"Precisely," said Grim. He glanced at Baltis, sidewise. She understood him.

"Do you still—think—you can—manage—without me?" she answered.

Li-pu seemed excited and McGowan turned his torchlight on the man's face that was less than a foot from that part of his instrument on which the numbers and letters appeared in small squares.

"Numbers are a universal language," Grim said quietly.

More than one of the figures was trembling on its pivoted leaf. Li-pu was almost like a cat that crouches at a mouse hole. Baltis leaned sidewise and suddenly shoved him, so that his head struck the instrument and all the leaves vibrated. He turned and chattered at her like a monkey. Grim laughed.

"Yes," he said, "I can manage now nicely without you. Until you did that I believed I couldn't. Goodby!" He glanced at McGowan. "Could one of your men take her upstairs?"

McGowan summoned a man.

"Escort the Princess Baltis into Berto-

lini's house and let her lie down if she wants to. But watch her, and call another man to watch with you. I will hold you answerable."

Baltis changed expression. I saw her hand go to her bracelet, and quicker than I could cry out she had struck at Grim's neck. Jeff sprang at her. But Grim had guessed what to expect and caught her wrist. Jeff held her while Grim took off the bracelet and passed it to McGowan.

"Interesting piece for your museum," he remarked. "I've finished with her. She can go now."

She was led away in something like a stupor and the soldier had to call another man to help him carry her up the winding stairway.

"Jail, I suppose?" said McGowan when she was out of earshot.

"No," Grim answered. "I need her badly."

"For the cipher?"

"Lord, no. That's as clear as daylight. I'll explain it in a minute. She can endure anything except contempt, so I pretended to despise her. Now that she's tried to kill me I believe she'll be consistent and keep on trying. Let her go, Mac. Let her go. She can't return to France. There's only one thing she can do—one man she can go to—Dorje! She will go to him to urge him to destroy me, and to help him do it. And if she can reach Dorje, so can we."

"But how the devil can we let her go?" McGowan asked. "If we do, she will know why we do it. She will lead you on a false trail."

"I'm as easy to lead as a loose pig," Grim retorted, "and she knows that. She knows, too, that we have the Chak-sam clue. She probably won't try to reach Chak-sam; she'll head for some place in India where she knows she can get in touch with Dorje. He may come to meet her, although it's hardly likely. Much more likely he'll order her to come to him; and if he doesn't have her killed in ambush on the way, and if she stands the climate and hardships, we can follow."

BREAKFAST came, strong tea and what the soldier said was an omelette. Maybe it was; at any rate, we ate it. Then, Chullunder Ghose inventing ingenious details, Grim and McGowan between them worked out a scheme. A friend of theirs named Jean Roche at the French consulate-general was to be asked to approach Baltis and to offer her a forged passport and credentials if she would agree to escape from Egypt with his assistance and to do a little dirty work in India for the French.

"He can say he wants the lowdown on the probability or otherwise of native armies joining in a revolution," Grim suggested.

"And she can go by plane," said McGowan. "We had an application six or seven days ago from the French for permission to use our air ports for a flight to Delhi. It isn't granted yet, but I believe it will be. If so, I can very likely persuade Jean Roche to smuggle her on board and make the pilot take a confidential letter to the Indian Intelligence. You'll follow?"

"Hard on her heels. We're ready the minute we've got this cipher ironed out . . . Shall we all take a chance on that gas being gone? Or would you rather I'd try it alone?"

"Give it ten more minutes," said McGowan. "What's the secret of the cipher?"

Grim smiled at the *babu*.

"You tell. I might argue for a month. But he'll believe you. What's the secret of the famous Indian trick of sending news?"

McGowan snorted.

"If you know that, you know what our smartest men haven't been able to discover. It's done all right, but I don't believe the Indians themselves could tell you how it's done."

"Those who could tell, won't; and those who would tell, can't, because the new words to explain it haven't been invented," said Chullunder Ghose. "Am personal antithesis of secrets. Not only

can't keep one but hate to try to do it. Nevertheless, am neither Webster nor a psychiatrical contortionist who can elucidate the said-to-be subconscious subterfuges of the mechanical instrument known as the brain.

"Same swims in thought the same as a frog in a bottle of alcohol. You stir the alcohol, the frog moves. You stir the sea of thought, and brains think—or they think they think, which shows what piffle words are.

"How do you suppose that Jimmy Jimgrim sahib guesses accurately six times out of seven what to do next? How do you suppose I understand him and can do what he wants me to do without his saying anything? How do you suppose a world goes mad and butchers ten or eleven million men without knowing what it is fighting about? It is because the brain is a machine that does exactly what it is told to do; and if you don't tell it, some one else will.

"In India we teach ourselves to use our brains as listening machines, since that is easier than hard work. Our trouble is, too many people send us such perplexing contradictory absurdities to think about; and too few understand the trick of tuning in to what is worth getting. And besides, jazz stirs them to excitement, whereas symphony suggests that there are problems.

"People don't like problems. They like answers. And they like the answers wrong, I tell you. Now I bow and take a back seat. Jimmy Jimgrim is from Tibet, where they teach such matters. Let him tell it."

GRIM did tell. Ten minutes trailed into an hour while he explained, as far as can be done when scientific words have not yet been invented for the purpose. I did not believe him. Neither did McGowan. My mind, while I try to keep it tolerant of other men's opinions, refuses to take seriously explanations that are not demonstrable by scientific method.

For him to say, as he did say, that the Eastern trick consists in emptying the brain of thought in order that it may pick up other thought deliberately broadcast or else latent in the layers of the mass-mind, left too much still to be explained. His argument that orators, with nothing in the world to say, can stir men's minds by stilling thought with trickery of voice and gesture, and then fill them with emotion that induces them to go away and vote in opposition to their better judgment, seemed to me unconvincing.

But he knew what he wanted to say, and he did his best to say it, in a language that is singularly lacking in appropriate terms.

"The difficulty is," he said, "that though we all are being constantly bombarded by a perfect barrage of thoughts from all directions, so that lots of people go mad because they are over-sensitive to it, there are very few who are able to train themselves to select the thoughts they wish to think and to reject the others. I believe that instrument is something Dorje has invented to enable people to detect—to use a stock phrase—thoughts sent on a certain wave length. It responds to a certain agitation of their own brain. Watch Li-pu. You'll notice, when he gets into a certain mood, the figures on the instrument begin to flutter.

"I believe his brain receives the impulse and transmits it to the mechanism in the box, which is probably sensitive to only one selected wave length. Li-pu isn't sane; he's over-developed psychically; he's the sort of one idea lunatic who can be instigated by other people's mental attitude to go and assassinate some one. I've tried several times to make the instrument respond to my thought, but it doesn't."

"Then you're all at sea," said McGowan.

"Maybe, but I think not. I keep thinking of a string of numbers."

"So do I," said Chullunder Ghose.

"So do I," said Jeff.

"That instrument," said Grim, "when-

ever Li-pu gets a certain set blank expression on his face, keeps repeating the numbers. Have any of you noticed?"

We had not.

"Without telling each other, let's all three write down what we get," said Grim.

He, Jeff and Chullunder Ghose wrote on leaves torn from McGowan's notebook. They passed to me what they had written. I read aloud:

"4—3—2—9—2—5—9—8—7—1."

There were the same figures, in the same order, on each sheet of paper.

"And Jeff and I are only partially trained," said Grim. "Chullunder Ghose comes by it naturally. Those are the same figures the machine gives."

"What the devil do they mean?" McGowan wondered.

Grim glanced at the black clad Chinese butler, turban tied, who had been glaring at Li-pu with concentrated malice.

"They are meant, I think," he said, "for Bertolini, who could very likely get them but who could not possibly have looked them up, for instance, in a code book, if there is one, as I think there must be. Some one loose that fellow's legs. He has heard our conversation, so we'd better take him with us, or he might talk to the wrong man while our backs are turned. Besides, we need a man who knows to go ahead of us and make sure that the gas has gone out of the tunnel." He looked straight into the man's eyes. "If he won't talk, he shall serve us somehow!"

CHAPTER XXVI

"Law of improbability is only mystery that always functions."

THERE was no smell or sign of gas in the rock hewn chamber where we had fought with Bertolini's gang, but there were five men lying on the floor who had died so instantaneously that their nerves had not had time to make their muscles move and register pain or even a spasmodic struggle. There was a careful autopsy performed on them, and on the dead men in the other cavern, late that evening and not a trace of anything was found that could explain why or how they had died. They were dead; the life was separated from their bodies; that was all that even chemical analysis could answer.

Nor was there the slightest trace of gas or of any detectible rare element within the tunnel leading downward from the cavern, although later in the day men came and chipped small pieces from the stone and those were crushed and chemically tested. Nobody believed our tale about the gas until a too incredulous laboratory expert opened one of the glass flasks taken from the drawer in the Chinese butler's room. That expert and his five assistants died so swiftly that the only good they did was to suggest how other unexplained deaths, in many countries, might have happened. There are nine of those flasks remaining for some genius to open, if he dares, and analyze if he can find a way to do it. And there may be others; nobody knows how many gallons of that deadly liquid Dorje sent to different quarters of the globe for the removal of objectionable people.

Grim drove that Chinese down the square hole near the throne which Bertolini had adopted as his seat of high authority. He was quite sure that the yellow man was Bertolini's intimate, if not his master. He was equally sure, although he had no proof, that Bertolini had a code book hidden somewhere and that the Chinese knew where it was. But I don't think that even Grim with his inductive imagination guessed to what fanatical extremes that Chinese would go to keep the information from us.

It was a square hole three feet high, but it formed the opening of a circular descending shaft, thirty or thirty-five feet deep, that had difficult steps cut spiralwise around it.

We had to descend with our bodies pressed close to the wall and both hands feeling at it to keep our balance, while a soldier lay in the square opening over-

head and showed the way with an electric torch. The Chinese seemed used to it. He went down as adroitly as a sailor and reached the bottom several seconds ahead of Grim, who came next and was racing to overtake him.

McGowan had brought extra torches and we each had one. At the bottom with our hands free we could use them; so the Chinese fled down a six-foot tunnel in a glare of white light and he very soon came to a standstill, realizing that he had no chance of hiding from us and that whatever he did we could see him. I believe, too, that he was stiff from being tied; his tendons hurt him. Anyhow, he slowed down; Grim overtook him; and by that time we ourselves were hard on Grim's heels.

There was a gap in the floor that we jumped, Grim following the Chinese and we pursuing Grim. Jeff jumped it like a catapulted hayrick, but Chullunder Ghose seemed as light on his feet as a full balloon, although he came down on the far side awkwardly, slid, and sat down so hard that his belly shook and he dropped his flashlight down the hole. It was switched on, and it fell on something that prevented it from breaking. I turned back to help the *babu*. He and I looked down into a cave illuminated by the torch, which lay undamaged on a pile of filthy looking sacks.

"Come on," I said, "we can examine that hole later."

"Said the dentist to the man with toothache. Now or never, sahib. You do what you jolly well damn choose about it!"

Down he went feet first on to the pile of sacking, ignoring rough steps hewn into the rock wall. I saw him roll off the sacking and vanish. Arguing that Grim was not likely to need me since he had Jeff and McGowan, I followed the *babu*, landing on the sacking heels first. Dry things cracked under my weight. The *babu* laughed from twenty feet away.

"What we need now is buckets of blood!"

THOSE sacks were filled with skulls. The floor was spread a foot deep with the broken bones of human skeletons, not mummies. Nailed to the walls of the cave with iron spikes were parts of other skeletons still held together by dry ligaments that broke and let the bones fall as the *babu* touched them. Of the hundreds in there, some looked old enough to have been dead for centuries; but I counted ten, on walls and floor, that at the first glance I could swear were so recent that there was marrow in the bones.

"Look out!" said the *babu* suddenly.

The Chinese came sprawling down the hole and landed on hands and knees on the loose mass of ribs and skulls and thigh bones that covered the floor. He was up in a second; he rushed me with his head down, clutched my jacket as I dodged him, tore it and then charged Chullunder Ghose. The *babu* fled.

"Come on, sahib! I say come on, dammit!"

He switched his light out. In another second he was clambering the rough steps.

"Come on, sahib, for the love of—"

So I switched my light out too, although I couldn't see why I should run from a middle aged Chinese who was already out of breath as well as stiff from being gagged and tied. I could hear Grim coming, and the others close behind him My hand touched the *babu's* foot. He switched his light on, jumped for the sacking again, taking me with him, and we rolled together off the sacks on to the floor. But he held his torch as if it were a gun and he were fighting. He kept it full on the Chinese. Grim, Jeff, McGowan crashed on to the sacks. Jeff and the *babu* spoke together.

"Doubled on us! Ducked around a Y-shaped passage!"

"Sahib, he has swallowed it! I guessed he did not come down here for nothing! I saw where it came from!"

I sprang at the Chinese. So did Grim, Jeff, McGowan. He was gagging. He

had swallowed something that stuck in his throat, but he fought like a bearcat. We held him, and by the light of the *babu's* electric torch I tried to force him to disgorge what was choking him. He bit my fingers to the bone. It needed all the strength of Jeff's two hands to force his jaws apart; and even then, though he was dying of strangulation, he resisted and kept on struggling to swallow something that would not go either way; his will was such that he could overcome the natural instinct to disgorge, even though I used every trick I knew to make him do it.

I had no instruments. To save the man's life, if for no other reason, I had to take desperate measures, and whether I killed him or not is something that the Book of Judgment, if there is one, must determine.

I got the thing out, and he bled to death. He would have strangled to death, I believe, if I had not done that; and if he had contrived to swallow what I pulled out from his throat he would undoubtedly had died, not quite so quickly, but in great pain.

It was a tube, of such diameter that it was a mystery how he had got it into his throat at all. It was three and a half inches long and made apparently of bronze—at any rate of some copper alloy, very ancient and extremely thin—so thin that at one place where it was broken it had turned up like paper and would certainly have pierced the lining of his stomach, had it ever got that far. It was screwed together in the middle and contained a roll of exceedingly thin, strong paper that had been thumbed and handled so often as to be entirely discolored on the outside. Grim unrolled it, and his fingers trembled.

IT WAS nearly a yard long, entirely covered on the inside with Tibetan characters, which neither McGowan nor I could read. We held the torches. Grim, Jeff and Chullunder Ghose pored over it, the *babu* breathing through his nose and almost squealing with excitement.

"We have him!" he shouted. "We have him!"

He danced, impiously posturing like Krishna with his flute, whereas he should have danced like Siva. The thighs of a skeleton crashed from the wall to the floor.

"Symbolic of the end of Dorje! Read it, Jimgrim sahib! Read it! Translate!"

"What were those numbers?" Grim asked.

"Four, three, two, nine, two, five, nine, eight, seven, one," I answered.

"This," said Grim, "is all divided into numbered words and sentences, and the numbers are not in sequence. For instance, there's a sentence at the bottom, numbered one, that seems to be the signature. It reads: 'I am Dorje the scepter of that which shall be. I am Maitreya. I destroy that I may rebuild. Dorje is my body and Maitreya is my spirit. I am dual and I bring forth the third, which is a new dispensation.' "

"Hot stuff!" said McGowan. "Even Lenin—"

"Lenin," said Grim, "was not a frocked Tibetan monk, as this man must be. Nobody else would write as this man does. The numbers seem to run from one to nine, and then from one to nine again, and so on. And the words and sentences, except that last one, don't make sense in the order in which they stand, not even if you read them in the order four, three, two, nine, two, etc."

"Omit that last one," Jeff suggested. "That s the signature. That leaves nine numbers."

"And transpose them!" The *babu* was dancing again—dancing on skulls and ribs and thigh bones. "Forty-five from forty-five leaves eight, six, four, one, nine, seven, five, three, two. So we start with the eighth figure. Which would that be?"

"Three," Grim answered. "Good—you're right. It makes sense. Give me a paper and pencil and for God's sake hold that torchlight steady." He scribbled. "Wait a minute. There are two twos in the figures *we* got, and two nines."

"All right," said McGowan, "aren't there lots of twos and nines on that sheet? Try the first two for the first; the second two down the line for the second; the first nine, and then the second nine—how does it read then?"

"Give me your notebook."

Using Chullunder Ghose's broad back for a table, swearing at him irritably when he moved, Grim covered half a dozen pages.

"Yes," he said at last, "we've got it. Listen:

" 'I find fault. Slay those who moved too soon. Those who escape, betray them to their governments. Continue to attribute blame for every outbreak and every destruction to whichever social rebels in each country are already most notorious. Continue to excite rebellion against all governments by setting party against party. Double and redouble all precautions concerning shipments of my lightning and my breath of anger (God, what a name for the stuff!) even to the extent if necessary of destroying those who have served their destiny by bringing these to the appointed places.

" 'Concentrate on spreading unrest and a feeling of impending cataclysm. Observe greater secrecy. Remember you are only one of many who obey me and that my conquest is not hastened by your consulting with one another, which can lead only to confusion, but by your drinking inspiration from its source, which I am. I am Dorje, the scepter of that which shall be. I am Maitreya. I destroy that I may rebuild. Dorje is my body and Maitreya is my spirit. I am dual and I bring forth the third, which is a new dispensation'."

"General orders!" said McGowan. "Hot and heavy! Got to hand it to him! How about those figures in the daily papers?"

"What's today—the twenty-ninth?" Grim asked. "We can't read those then till we get a Bible."

The *babu* yelped excitedly.

"Am three in one! Am most observant *babu* in the universe; am champion long distance heavy weight deductionist from Kanchenjunga to Peru; am humble servant. All three! Just a minute. I saw where celestial sword swallower of Dorje's predigested pilot book abducted same! I bet you! I bet everybody! Pounds Egyptian fifty! Who bets? Wait a minute?"

HE BEGAN to burrow among bones that almost filled the opening of a six-foot cavity in the middle of the end wall, tossing jaws and ribs and thigh bones to the floor like a terrier enlarging a rat hole.

"Torches! Torches! Why does no one bet me?"

He dragged forth an armful of bones and we flooded the hole in the wall with white light.

"There you are! I said so! Why should something so important that a Chinese swallows it be hidden here, and not lots of other improbable things? Law of improbability is only mystery that always functions! Is it likely? No. Then seek and ye shall find it! Look, I tell you!"

One would have thought he had found Dorje himself, so jubilant he was. However, what he found was all we needed at the moment—a big Bible, a complete set of the "Encyclopedia Britannica" and two volumes of "McLaughlin," along with a set of work sheets done in pencil giving sets of figures evidently meant for insertion in the agony columns of newspapers all over the world. There was even a list of newspapers, including more than fifty in the United States.

McGowan read off the figures from the Cairene daily paper. Chullunder Ghose transposed them, using the order 8—6—4—1—9—7—5—3—2; 8 becoming 1; 6 becoming 2 and so on. Grim decoded, turning from page to page of the Bible and jotting down the indicated words. The first numbers preceding a hyphen were page numbers, the next gave the line on the page, and the next gave the word. The message read:

> Men of Egypt, laugh if they say these calamities are caused by this or that. Know ye they are the deeds of him ye look for who

shall rule all peoples from his high place. Therefore let each of you according to his own ability strive to bring your rulers into despair and contempt. Pay no taxes. Lend not to your rulers. Obey no laws of their making. Cause the wheels to cease turning. Answer no man. And beware ye of rash speech with one another. I am that I am.

"That smells a bit of Bertolini—lacks the Nelson touch," said Grim. "However, now we're all set."

I suggested that such messages were hardly likely to accomplish much in civilized countries, but McGowan snorted.

"Have you forgotten our wartime propaganda? Was there ever anything less credible than that? And who didn't believe it? . Why, even our own propagandists did!"

"Sink a few more battleships," said Jeff.

"Blow up a few more arsenals," said Grim.

"Smash a bottle of that liquid in the House of Commons, in the House of Representatives in Washington, in the French Chamber of Deputies, in the Berlin Reichstag—all the politicians silenced, and no trace of how it happened! Dorje might turn out to be a godsend after all!" Chullunder Ghose suggested. "Am not yet a convert to the cause of Dorje, but I feel premonitory symptoms of enthusiasm! If he would only guarantee to kill my wife—but that is too much to imagine!"

"But we can stop him now," said McGowan. "We'll have his code copied at once, and that roll translated, and we'll distribute copies to every secret service in the world. It should be easy to track down the men who insert the advertisements. They'll squeal on the others. I'll take Li-pu and his instrument and set the best men I can find to study it. And you?"

"Chak-sam," Grim answered.

"Plane, of course?"

"If you can manage it. For God's sake, Mac, get word to them at Delhi not to tie us up with red tape. Tell 'em any one may have the credit. What we want is leave to cut loose and behave like crazy men."

"All right; I'll do my best. But just how crazy?"

"From the hour I land in India, I'm Dorje! It's as obvious as day, his technique is to be mysterious and let no one see him. I'll force his hand or bust. You fellows game?"

We nodded.

"Maybe I look meek, but I'm a tough guy," said the *babu*. "Was in jail in U. S. A. United States and know all about bloody murder. Nobody can scare me, except emancipated wife of bosom."

"And Mac, will you make sure Baltis gets to India?"

"You bet I will. Who wants her here!"

That evening McGowan brought us secret news of the Italian disaster—the first of three terrific ones in three days—the explosion of the arsenal near Genoa that killed a thousand men. The earthquake made it easy for the censors to exclude it from the news; and when it did leak out it was blamed on the anti-Fascisti, seventeen of whom were hanged and others sent to life imprisonment. He also told us that a big plane would be ready first thing in the morning, for India, via Bagdad.

CHAPTER XXVII

"Probably ninety per cent. of them don't even know they are Dorje's men!"

GRIM was jubilant. We had had four hours' sleep on cots and sofas in McGowan's apartment. McGowan had gone to the office to send cablegrams.

"Can you stay awake?" Grim asked us. "We can sleep in the plane, there'll be nothing else to do. There'll be another big one tuned up and waiting for us in Bagdad. It's a rotten trip. Nothing to do but bump the bumps and hear the engines sing until we get to Delhi. Listen to this—"

He began to read us excerpts from a pile of papers in a box marked secret that McGowan had left with him. They were

decoded cablegrams received during the past twenty-four hours and they provided the first real glimpse that any of us except Grim had into McGowan's actual importance in the secret service network. There are probably not ten men in the whole world, foreign editors of newspapers included, who are kept so accurately posted as McGowan as to the details of subversive events. There was hardly a sentence from any cablegram that could have been published without causing a panic somewhere.

Unemployment and increasing discontent in England, Germany, the United States, Belgium, Spain, Austria, Portugal, Scandinavia, Australia, South Africa—the list was endless. Nine warships, belonging to five nations, missing without trace, probably destroyed by explosion at sea. Ammunition depots destroyed, on the same day, in England, France, Italy, the United States and Mexico, the explosions attributed in each instance to communists—but, a rumored and partly confirmed account from Russia of the complete destruction of the arsenals in Moscow and Odessa. Strikes throughout the whole of northern France. A serious invasion of the northwest provinces of India by Afridis and Pathans supplied with quantities of modern weapons from an unknown source.

Ferocious civil war in China. An explosion in Japan attributed to earthquake. A disaster to the Turkish army near the Persian border, where the Kurds had suddenly appeared in overwhelming numbers and mysteriously armed, with officers trained in modern warfare. Three big liners overdue. Johannesburg in darkness, due to the explosion of stores of dynamite and the unexplained wreckage of the electric light works; South African native unrest, ascribed to communism but apparently kept alive by Gandhi sympathizers and by negro missionaries from the U. S. A.

The discovery of an enormous cache of Dorje's thunderbolts, described as "thought to be a new kind of electric bomb," at Portsmouth, England, where they had been dumped into the harbor. The almost simultaneous arrest, in seven countries, of alleged Soviet agents, to the number of eighty-one, not one of whom could be definitely linked up with Russia but every one of whom was suspected, without actual proof, of being involved in a conspiracy against the social order; eleven of them were described as "religionists," three as university professors, nine as "commissioned officers", one as an ex-member of parliament, seventeen as "politicals" and five as "commercial travelers".

One cablegram read:

"Lack of coordination between governments and widely differing methods of procedure makes quick comparison of information difficult. Report immediately in full detail any facts whatever which appear to indicate existence of world-wide secret organization whose members receive instructions from some common source perhaps unknown to them and probably without consulting one another. Control would appear to be vertical not horizontal. Individuals arrested in London appear to be totally ignorant of one another's identity but use almost exactly similar terms describing impending world revolution to be accompanied by or preceded by total destruction of armed forces leaving populations at mercy of new dictatorship."

"DORJE'S strength," said Jeff, "consists in being undiscoverable. You can discover his agents, but they all seem to be pretty futile people, and they don't know where he is. Perhaps Baltis has seen him; but have any of the others? Probably ninety per cent. of 'em don't even know they are Dorje's men."

"Exactly," said Grim. "If we don't catch him quickly, he has the world whipped. He is doing what every conqueror has always done: playing on the world's ignorance and jealousy, and using propaganda of all three kinds—secret, political and religious, backed up by drastic violence.

"Every conqueror has had something new to sell, and Dorje has gone them all one better, this being an age of science. Dorje has discovered something that they've known, for instance in Tibet, for centuries; that is to say, how to send out thought waves so that other people can get them. He has probably studied thought wave lengths. They're like radio wave lengths, only different in degree and impulse. He has discovered that this wave length reaches one kind of person—that, another; and very few of them guess what is happening to them. So he needs hardly any organization; he makes use of other people's.

"For instance, in Italy he can stir the anti-Fascist element. In France, the communist. In Russia, the anti-communist. In England, the unemployed. In India, any and every one of a dozen political and a hundred religious factions—each against the other, and the lot against the British. In China, communist against nationalist. There isn't a country in the world he can't reach."

I objected.

"There can't be force enough in one man's brain to send out waves to all the people in the world. It needs horsepower, for instance, to send out radio."

"But," Grim answered, "if the energy is there already and all Dorje has to do is use it, what then? He doesn't have to create it. Nobody creates energy. A machine, or a gun, or a brain, or a human body is only a rather clumsy means of using the same energy that turns the world around. A so-called dynamic man is merely one adjusted by temperament or training to a certain sort of thought wave, or energy wave, or whatever you like to call it. He responds to and distributes that particular type of energy. That is what Dorje—who I will swear is a Tibetan monk—understands."

"We'll have to take tall chances," I suggested.

"Same are like tall women," said Chullunder Ghose. "They are not so deadly as the short ones. You should see my wife: height four feet seven, but emancipated—very."

Then McGowan came, with news of Baltis.

"All O.K. She'll arrive in Delhi about two days after you chaps. Dammit, I feel sorry for her. She doesn't believe a word of it—understands perfectly she's being imshied off to India to serve as bait. She's probably as much afraid of Dorje as she is of life imprisonment. Between the devil and the deep sea, and on a hot plate in the bargain. She might commit suicide."

"Not she," Grim answered. "Everybody has faith in something. Hers is in reincarnation. She honestly believes she was the Queen of Sheba, and Anne Boleyn, and all the rest of 'em. That's the crazy side of her religion. The same side is that she'll endure anything rather than kill herself, because she knows that would cause her to reincarnate as a foredoomed failure. No. She'd kill Dorje or me. But herself? I think not."

CHAPTER XXVIII

"In indelible ink?"

EVERY tourist in the world knows what happened. While we were speeding toward Delhi in a plane provided for us by the Royal Air Force McGowan and his staff were sending cablegrams in code to London, giving a detailed explanation of Dorje's cipher, and London was distributing the information to all the governments of the civilized world through the embassies and legations, along with a careful description of Dorje's "thunderbolts" and the glass flasks containing his "death's breath".

Consequently, tourists were exasperated by the questions they were forced to answer at every frontier they crossed, and by the minute inspection of their baggage.

But those precautions did not prevent the Hull, the Essen and the Angora explosions that caused so much havoc, and the latter of which, by destroying all re-

serves of ammunition, prevented the Turkish army from annihilating the invading Kurds. There was also serious disaster caused by the examination of the captured thunderbolts.

Governments were unanimous in keeping silent about Dorje. For one thing, there was no evidence against him—that is to say, no legal evidence, because the thunderbolts destroyed themselves and left no trace. It might have been much wiser to tell the truth and so unite all factions in one indignant and alert defense against a common foe; but it seemed at the moment more convenient to all the governments to blame their pet domestic "reds", anarchists, Fascists, anti-Fascists, monarchists, republicans, Carlists, Semites, Anti-Semites, revolutionaries pure and simple, counter-revolutionaries, socialists or anti-socialists as the case might be. In more than one country the Pope was accused of conspiring to conquer the world by force of arms, and even nunneries were searched for hidden stores of arms and ammunition.

In India Gandhi's followers were blamed for the affair at Cawnpore, where the arsenal exploded on the day we landed and a quarter of the city, along with thousands of men, women and children, was obliterated. But the Gandhists accused the British-Indian Government of deliberately carrying the explosion to provide excuse for drastic military measures.

Delhi—or at least that part of it where the new great government buildings stand and the official nerves of India meet in one imposing but too vulnerable ganglion—was in a state of tension such as even India had not produced since the days of the Mutiny. The Intelligence department, normally the best informed and most efficient in the world, was as overloaded as a switchboard on the New York Stock Exchange when millions of shares are dumped on to a slumping market.

The office into which we were led by a uniformed guide was as quiet as a morgue—too quiet. There were too many sentries. Officers walked much too calmly through the waiting room and down the corridors, betraying tension by an overdone restraint. And when a voice fell on the silence it was as startling as a pistol shot in church.

We were kept waiting forty minutes before we were shown into the office of a general who knew Grim, but was not so cordial toward Chullunder Ghose.

"I have had dealings with you," he remarked. "You are on my black book."

"In indelible ink?" the *babu* asked him; and the general nodded.

"Then please tear out the entire page, general sahib. My *akasic* record is already bad enough without another one in this world also. Am professional scoundrel. Delete me, therefore, from your page of fame. Besides, I have credentials—new ones—uncontaminated yet."

GRIM gave the general a letter from McGowan in which the *babu* was emphatically praised. The general read it, scowling.

"How long has McGowan known him? I refuse to take him into confidence. He has a bad record and has been in prison three times to my knowledge."

"On the other hand," said Grim, "I understand him and he understands me."

"Do you think he has reformed?" asked the general.

Chullunder Ghose gulped.

"Never! Am not so contemptible! Reformers and reformed, are all dishonest scoundrels. Self am honest scoundrel. You put a reformed person in your job, and see how soon Dorje, for instance, will abolish the job altogether! Respectability? I don't give a damn for it! Am last-equationist. That is to say, appearances may go to the devil unless they serve my purpose; and the only problem that concerns me is, what do you or I intend to do about it? Life is a personal business. I am personally pleased to work for Jimmy Jimgrim sahib against Dorje; but for you I would not work on any terms whatever.

"If you feel about me as I do about

you, we will both of us go to the devil; but I think the devil would receive me pleasantly, whereas your brass hat and your shoddy morals would annoy him. That is my opinion, and if I were a lawyer I would charge you money for it."

"You may leave the room," said the general, and I saw a flicker in the wrinkles at the corner of Grim's eye.

Chullunder Ghose went, waddling out importantly, and when the door had closed behind him the general continued, smiling:

"That is the worst of that man. One of the best we ever had in some ways, but incorrigibly impudent. I can't have dealings with him. If you care to trust him, you must do so at your own risk and on your own responsibility."

"I think it's just a question of understanding him," Grim answered. "He would ten times over rather die than let a friend down."

"Well, you manage him. As a matter of fact, Grim, if the situation weren't so serious I should have to dispense with you and Ramsden. As an American no longer serving in the British army, we can't discipline you."

"I am not asking favors," Grim answered. "If you don't want my assistance, I can go home."

"I can't put you on the pay roll."

"I am paid by Meldrum Strange," Grim answered.

"A wealthy nuisance, who would like to dictate policies and morals to the whole world! I can't recognize him either."

"Do you mean you won't recognize me?"

"Officially, no. Personally you and I are good friends. I can't protect you or even promise to back you up."

"Suits me," said Grim. "Do you know where Dorje is?"

"Nobody knows."

"If he were in Delhi you would hear of it, of course?"

"Within the hour, most likely. Within the day, at any rate."

"If his presence in Delhi were reported to you, would you dare not to arrest him?"

"I can dare anything. But what's the idea?"

"I am Dorje."

THE GENERAL stared, leaned back and drummed his fingers on the desk.

"There is no other possible way to uncover him," said Grim.

"Do you know who he is?"

"I feel sure that he's a Tibetan lama, thoroughly trained in occult science."

"Do you suspect where he is?" asked the general.

"Probably in Chinese Turkestan. Perhaps in Tibet."

"Then how can he possibly know what has been happening during the past ten, twenty days? I can swear he has not used wireless; we'd have caught that in a minute. There's a single wire to Lhassa; I have a record of every message, both ways, since the wire was first installed. The same goes for the wire to Ladakh. Of course, the Chinese have a wire of their own from somewhere in Turkestan to Peking, but it takes about a week to get a message through and it has to be transmitted so many times that it arrives all garbled. Do you suppose the Russians have run a wire that we don't know of, over the Pamirs?"

"No," Grim answered. "Dorje is as much a problem to the Russians as to all the rest of us. Dorje is using thought waves, of a scientifically determined wave length, to send code numbers to individuals all over the world who have been trained to get them. We have the book they use to interpret the numbers."

"Yes," said the general, "McGowan rushed a photostatic copy to me, in the plane that brought you."

"There must be another book," said Grim, "containing other numbers and another set of words, phrases, sentences, that some one—very likely only one man, or a woman—uses to send messages to Dorje.

"He would not be likely to intrust that to more than one or two people, even if he could find more than one or two people in the world who could be trained and trusted. Otherwise, they might get to sending messages to one another. There is some one person, somewhere, who can get the world news—probably it's some one in a foreign office, or at any rate a government department—some one high up—who is sending code thought messages to Dorje. I believe that codebook and that person are in India."

"Why?"

"Several reasons. It would be easier to teach an Indian to work the trick. In a certain degree the Indians are used to it; it would only need developing and training. Again, Dorje has not been getting all the news."

"What makes you think so?"

"His message that we caught in Egypt, ordering his agents to discontinue action and wait for orders. A ruthless devil such as Dorje must be, in receipt of information that his agents had produced major disasters in a dozen countries, would be likely to order them all to cut loose and wreak general havoc. Why not? So it looks as if his information man is hampered by the censorship. Isn't the censhorship screwed tighter here than anywhere?"

"The thread might break if we took one more turn at it!"

"I'm guessing, but I think that information man is probably a rather high official here in Delhi—some one who had access not so long ago to all the bulletins, but who somehow or other no longer has it. If so, you can find him by a process of elimination. However, don't move too fast. Give him time to get word through to Dorje that there's some one here in Delhi masquerading as himself."

"Do you realize the risk you're undertaking?"

Grim smiled, nodded.

"It would be safer to pose as the Pope, or as the viceroy of India," said the general. "At least five hundred million people, to whom religion means more than food and drink, await the coming of the Lord Maitreya under one name or another. It's the strongest and most dangerous undercurrent in the world today, and it includes all Asia—even China and Japan. Dorje, whoever he is, has stirred that undercurrent so adroitly that the whole of Asia awaits the new dispensation—expects it.

"These political disturbances are symptoms. They're ready, on tiptoe, listening and looking for the new Messiah. Look what they did to Gandhi—almost deified him. I tell you, if Gandhi hadn't been a man of iron will and decent spirit they'd have done it! And they'd have killed him if he had lost his head for half a minute! Dorje—you play Dorje and they'll mob you. They'll demand a miracle. Fail, and they'll tear you to tatters!"

"I will take that chance if you permit," said Grim.

"I couldn't think of it. I forbid it absolutely." The general glanced at Jeff and me. "I want you all to understand me. I forbid that. I would like to talk to Grim privately, if you two will excuse us."

So Jeff and I returned to the waiting room, where Jeff sat down, looking confident.

"The old game," he said, grinning. "Now there are no witnesses, he'll give Grim *carte-blanche*. If Grim fails, Grim can get it where the chicken got the ax. If Grim succeeds, all honor to the secret service! But that's how bureaucracies work; their promises are so evasive that they're not worth breaking, but their hints mean 'help yourself and pass the bottle!' Wait and see."

WE WAITED, endlessly. If we had known that Grim and the general were going over Dorje's cipher and the codebook that we found in Bertolini's cavern, we might have gone for a walk and returned in a couple of hours. However, Jeff continued genially patient until Chullunder Ghose smiled his way in

through a door that opened into secretaries' offices. Then Jeff became suddenly ill tempered.

"You damned fool!" he exploded, sounding all the more violent because he kept his voice low. "Why the devil did you insult that brass hat?"

"Sahib, am expert in contumacy. I bet you pounds Egyptian fifty. Have not yet had time to see a money changer, otherwise would bet you rupees."

"What do you bet?"

"Rammy sahib, I bet you I got out of that room very neatly, and that you can't think of any other way I could have done same and appear to have a message from the general to some one else. Am fish in water hereabouts. Know all the holes and corners. Lend me a thousand rupees."

"What for?"

"I wish to bet you handsomely. I wish to bet you that I know how Dorje has been getting news of world events. He did until several days ago, but now he does not."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Now he knows only Indian events, unless he has another intermediary."

"Not so loud," said Jeff. "That man on duty at the door might overhear."

"Have personal old friend in this department—very friendly person—name of Hari Kobol Das; he did me out of good job once and got me sent to prison, but he never knew I knew who did it. Was at one time teacher of a class in Sanskrit, which was cover up job for an under cover study of the Sanskrit sciences. Had to get money somehow, and it takes a long time to make dummy replicas of ancient manuscripts and substitute same for the real ones stolen from the temple libraries. Hari Kobol Das and this *babu* experimented with thought transmission, which is intricately but not too lucidly explained in certain ancient books. I stole them, which is how he had me put in prison, but no matter."

"Where are the books now?" Jeff asked.

"Back in the temple library. He did not have me put in prison until he had translated the books and had begun to study the translation, and grew jealous and began to fear that I might learn something. He was like a man who has discovered gold; he wanted all of it, since a man who can do it could govern the world if he had enough brains.

"Just now I went through that door. As I passed through I was halted, but I said the general sent me; and before the man could ask to whom had the general sent me, I saw Hari Kobol Das sitting all alone at a desk in a little office at the end of the corridor. So I replied that I was sent to Hari Kobol Das, and he pretended he was very glad to see me, though he feared I came to ask a favor.

"So I told him I was prosperous and came from Europe; and I did not ask him why a man who knows as much as he should be satisfied with such an unimportant place in such an office. He had scissors and a paste pot. He was clipping items from the Indian daily papers and pasting them into a scrap book.

"When he learned I was from Europe he began to ask me for the latest news. I pretended to wonder at that. I said surely you have all the news in this place. He said yes; that until recently he had clipped the bulletins decoded from the secret cablegrams from Europe, but now no longer. They have put him to his present task, which isn't so interesting.

"And he began to question me. But I denied that I had any news; I said the ship on which I came was not equipped with radio except for purposes of SOS. But he knew that was a lie, because I told him I had traveled first class on a P. & O. liner. So he reminded me that he and I are old friends who can trust each other. And at that I let him understand that I had come straight to him from the general's office. So he supposed I am one of the general's secret agents.

"Presently he hinted news is valuable. There is money to be picked up, he said, buying and selling rupee paper, which goes up or down according to the world news. If there were disasters all over the

world, for instance, it would go down as soon as the news was known, and if I had advance information I could sell high and buy low. He asked me if I knew of any such disaster. Such, for instance, as that business at Cawnpore.

"So I told him he should learn that by thought transference, and left him. But as I turned away he begged me not to repeat our conversation. And of course I said I would not. But I bet you pounds Egyptian fifty that if any one possessed of faculties should search the dwelling place of Hari Kobol Das, he would discover there a code book showing how he thinks the news to Dorje over thought waves of a certain length."

Then Grim came through the general's private door. And by the look in Grim's eyes it was easy to see that what had been said in confidence to one man was as different as what had been told to three as chalk is from the cheese on tasters' tables.

CHAPTER XXIX

"But you must kill him!"

GRIM calls his own sudden feats of induction "following the middle way." Jeff calls it tight rope walking. And Chullunder Ghose describes it as "the insideoutishness of paradox pursued to ultimate improbability, which is the essence of the quest for truth." But then, Chullunder Ghose claims he can understand Einstein.

Anyhow, Grim thinks ten times swifter than Chullunder Ghose. The *babu* was too cock-a-hoop with his discovery of Hari Kobol Das, and a bit too pleased with his own astuteness, to draw clear conclusions or to estimate the probabilities beyond the too exciting facts.

As we drove in the general's car to an address that Grim whispered to the chauffeur, Jeff aired his view of it.

"No one of Dorje's caliber would be such a damned fool as to trust a man of that type. If Hari Kobol Das has brains enough to wring the juice out of a Sanskrit treatise on thought wave lengths, and not guts enough to make himself a power in the land on the strength of it, then Hari Kobol Das is a piker. Pikers can do nothing but a piker's job, and any one of Dorje's weight must know that. The nearer we get to Dorje, the more power you'll find his real captains have. They won't be pasting clippings in a scrap book."

"There are traitors," said Grim, "in every camp."

But it was not clear at the moment what he meant by that remark. He appeared excited. I imagine we all would have been if we had known what he was contemplating.

We went where I hoped we were going —to the Chandni Chowk—to Benjamin's, where any one may go without exciting comment. Nineteen expeditions out of twenty buy their second hand stores from Benjamin, and get their information from him, too, if they want it dependable. His great dim shop is like a mausoleum of caravans. The smells of Asia live there. Tibetan devil masks scowl from the walls between *tulwars*, spears, Persian knives and all sorts of obsolete weapons. There is a pervading smell of musk. There is a little of everything, from saddle soap to coral nose studs for *zenana* ladies. And whatever you buy from Benjamin is what he says it is—exactly that. They say he is as rich as Crœsus. But he is disconsolate because he has no sons, and even his son-in-law Mordecai died in a storm in the throat of the Zogi La on the way from Tibet.

Benjamin met us—old, bearded, in a little skullcap, red rimmed around the eyes, wearing spectacles nowadays, down on his nose; he looked at us over them. And he was so pleased to see Grim and Jeff as if they had been his own sons returned from the grave. He almost ran ahead of us into the windowless, lamplit office at the rear, where receipts and letters hung on long, old fashioned filing hooks and a portrait of the Tashi Lama, looking like Elihu Root in a bathrobe, stared from an ebony frame on the wall above a rolltop desk.

"Jimgrim!" he said. "Jimgrim! And you, Jeff! It is better than meat and drink to see you two again before I die!" Then he examined us. "And who is this one? He is younger. Well, you know best. You trust him? That is a recommendation. And you still trust that one?"

HE STARED at the *babu*, shook his head, showed him a box in a corner to sit on and then offered us the bent wood chairs.

"Food presently—my daughter shall spread her best for us. Hey-yeh, what memories! Well, Jimgrim, what now? What is it this time? For you never come to see me unless your nose is upwind like a lean dog's. Either you seek Sham-ba-la, or you hunt some devil. What now?"

"Dorje," Grim answered.

"Heh-yeh, I might have known it! Seven years ago I said that Dorje must be reckoned with sooner or later—just as I told them that Mustapha Kemal would get a grip they can't break. It was I who told them that the Dalai Lama would be driven out of Lhassa. And that was Dorje's doing—and I said so. I told them also about the Tashi Lama; and that, too, was Dorje's doing. But they laughed. Was I right, Jimgrim, or was I wrong? They only listen to me after it is too late. Dorje has stolen the wind in the sail of the myth of the Lord Maitreya. It is likely your last journey if you think of hunting Dorje."

"We are on our way," Grim answered. "May we camp here? May we use your subway?"

"Kek-kek-keh! Subway! What a name for it! You may use everything I own, Jimgrim. You will stay here? You will sleep in my house?"

Grim nodded.

"Who are the two cleverest prostitutes in Delhi?" he asked.

"There are three important ones. Sumroo, Damayanti and Vasantasena. But Vasantasena grows old."

"Who is Hari Kobol Das?"

"That rat? Never trust him, Jimgrim! I believe Vasantasena uses him to spy on *them*. And *they* use him to spy on *her*. She tells him things to say to them. They tell him things to say to her. *Tss-ss*—a cheap one, making here and there a little blackmail money, which he loses at the quail fights or at Ganji's gaming house. He thinks he has a system. It is based on sending thought into another's head. It was from him, they say, Vasantasena got the copies of the Sanskrit books that Babu Jamsetji translated for her—and then died, it was said, of a sting of a scorpion.

"But there are more ways than one, Jimgrim, of increasing a scorpion's venom. I have heard of gangrene being painted on the claws and on the sting. They say, too, that Vasantasena herself made secret copies before she surrendered those books to a temple because the priests were after her. But who knows? All I know is that she buys from me the musk that I get from Kulu, for the perfumes that her maid makes. So I took some to her, myself in person. And I am old, Jimgrim, but I am neither blind nor deaf."

Grim made no comment. He apparently knew Benjamin too well to interrupt him with unnecessary questions. And after a minute's stroking at his beard the old man went on.

"Nine. Is nine the residue of nine from nine?"

Grim nodded.

"Forty-five is four and five—that's nine. And forty-five from forty-five is—"

"Eight, six, four, one, nine, seven, five, three, two," said Benjamin.

"Which are forty-five—four and five—nine again."

"You have it, Jimgrim. Nowadays Vasantasena loses customers to Sumroo and Damayanti. But there are others who come in their place. I noticed that if one should say nine to the man at the outer door in any language, he asks how many are left if nine are taken; and whoever answers nine may pass into the courtyard, where the inner guard stands

—he who slew the younger son of Poonch-Terai in '17 and hid the body in a sweeper's cart, so that none knew who had done it, except those who have ears to the ground.

"And if he should ask such a question as how many miles has your honor come, the answer should be forty-five miles, whereat he will probably ask how many hours that journey took? And if the answer should be forty-five hours, then that person is admitted to the stairhead, where a maid asks other questions in a voice so low I could not overhear. There come strange people to Vasantasena."

"Hari Kobol Das among them?"

"Often."

"Does he come here?"

"Sometimes. He comes to spy on me. I humor him by paying him a little money now and then to tell me lies about the European news. And I tell him other lies because I know he will repeat them to a certain general, to whom I do not choose to seem too well informed. They have a way, those generals, of dealing harshly with a man like me, if I should know too much."

"Could you get word to Hari Kobol Das?" Grim asked him. "Could you bring him here without arousing his suspicion?"

"Why not? I can pretend I have secret news."

"I want him to learn that Dorje is in Delhi."

"You are mad! Jimgrim, of all the madness—"

"Call me any name you care to, Benjamin, but—"

"Jimgrim, if I say that Dorje is in Delhi—"

STRONG old fingers like a sculptor's began combing at the long beard. Red rimmed, scandalized, and it seemed to me terrified eyes scanned each face swiftly until the *babu's* turn came.

"Jimgrim, send that one away!"

"No," Grim answered. "Chullunder Ghose is as much my friend as you are. A general told me this afternoon that you paid the lien on the *dhow* of Haroun ben Yahudi, months ago, so that he could clear from Karachi, for Marseilles, with a mixed cargo, including scrap brass."

"What of it? Eh? What of it? Is my money not mine?"

"And that you sold that fleet of *dhows* that you used to send each year to Zanzibar."

"True. True enough. As you said, Jimgrim, I am old. It was time I should get rid of that liability. *Dhows* were profitable once, but not so nowadays. It is no secret that I sold them."

"But it is a secret that Dorje's thunderbolts were shipped in *dhows* from Karachi to the coast of the Red Sea, and to Egypt, and to Marseilles, and to other places."

"What do I know of Dorje's thunderbolts?"

"Or of Dorje, eh, Benjamin? Or of the fact that Dorje used your 'underground,' as Mordecai called it, for the transportation of his thunderbolts from Chak-sam to Karachi?"

"It is a lie, Jimgrim!"

"So the general supposes. But the thunderbolts did reach Karachi. And I have traveled by your underground, so I know it exists and how carefully Mordecai planned and perfected it. If Mordecai had lived, that secret chain of hand-to-hand communication would have reached Siberia."

"True, Jimgrim. True enough."

"And the Gobi Desert."

"Eh? Eh?"

"So that whatever was found in the Gobi could be smuggled either north or south? Why did you and Mordecai devise that underground?"

"Before I helped you into Tibet I explained that, Jimgrim. Has the government not a secret service network, like a spiderweb that reaches in all directions? And what a government can do well, an intelligent man can do better. Their system is expensive. Mine has been a source of revenue to me."

"Yes—has been. When did Dorje steal it?"

"How do you know he stole it, Jimgrim?"

"Because I know you, Benjamin. The general told me that you are no longer a problem—no longer suspected, no longer watched—except as a matter of routine."

"Tschuh—tschuh! Hari Kobol Das—that imbecile!"

"He remarked that since Mordecai died you have lost ambition and that you finally abandoned your underground, at just about the time when he had clapped a hundred men on to the job of tracing it."

"Well? What if I washed my hands of it? What of it? There was nothing illegal, except a little matter of some customs duty now and then. But at my age should I make myself trouble?"

"Benjamin, men like Mordecai, and you and I, and Jeff, and Crosby, and Chullunder Ghose don't quit because old age creeps on us. We die with our boots on. And if some one steals the boots, we try to steal 'em back. We don't squeal. And we don't have change of heart. And if we know of buried cities in the Gobi Desert, we don't give up scheming. But if we grow old, we possibly look for a partner. And we sometimes trust the wrong man. Why did you trust Dorje?"

"Jimgrim—"

"And when Dorje stole your system, as I have no doubt he did, why did you yourself, in person, as you told me just now, put yourself to the humiliation of delivering musk to Vasantasena? Benjamin, the richest man in Delhi . . ."

"Not the richest, Jimgrim. I have had losses."

"And the proudest; too proud to go to a general and reveal the system that has baffled the Indian secret service all these years, delivering an ounce or two of perfume to a prostitute! And memorizing numbers! Trying to trap Dorje, Benjamin? Well, so am I. And I don't betray old friends—not on any terms, or for any reason. So if you wish, you may hold your tongue. I won't humiliate you."

"Jimgrim, if you knew what I know of the Gobi!"

"I can guess."

"Cities—cities—buried cities by the dozen! Libraries perhaps a million years old! Sciences, forgotten when the Gobi sank under the sea! And let that secret out? Tschuh! The Chinese would pour in and burrow like rats. They would dig for the gold. They would destroy everything. No water—no food—no transportation. But that would not prevent the Chinese if they saw one golden chest that came out of the Gobi. They would overrun like rats, and die like rats; and like the rats they would win in the end!"

"And you told Dorje!"

"Do you think that I would tell such secrets to a monk who was a renegade already? Nay, nay! Dorje knew it. And he has wrested secrets from the buried cities. But he learned that I knew. And he learned of what you call my underground. So he came and made a bargain with me, and he has the vastest intellect and breadth of understanding I have ever met. Within one twelve-month, Jimgrim, he had thrust me to the background; he had turned against me all the men who— Jimgrim, may the maggots of Gehenna crawl into his soul, and may he know that in the outer loneliness!"

"Never mind his soul. I'm here to get his body! Are you going to help, or have you lost your spirit? Is cursing all you're good for nowadays?"

"Jimgrim, I swore I would never trust another man born of a woman! But I am old. I have no sons. I think you will not succeed in finding Dorje. I think Dorje can defeat the whole world with his knowledge of things unknown to other people. But I will make this bargain with you. Kill him, and I will reveal to you the secret of Gobi Desert! I will bequeath that to you. It shall be yours and Jeff's. But you must kill him!"

"Are you going to help me?"

Benjamin nodded.

"All right. Send for Hari Kobol Das;

and when he comes here, tell him Dorje is in Delhi. Then one other thing. A lady who calls herself the Princess Baltis will arrive by plane, perhaps tomorrow and perhaps the next day. She has French credentials and a British secret service visa. She will go to the Kaiser-i-Hind Hotel, because she will be told to go there by the officer who examines her passports. Do you know a woman whom you could trust to go and meet her?"

"My daughter—"

"Splendid. I want Baltis told that the lock of the gate of the trail that leads to Dorje's nest—is—?"

"In Vasantasena's house," said Benjamin.

"And I thought this *babu* knew how many beans make five!" remarked Chullunder Ghose. "I sigh myself into a back seat. I absquatulate myself. I am gentleman named Anon—"

"That's a good one," Grim said quietly. "Ahnon Mirza, Persian merchant—you can play that. Benjamin can tog you. Be sure to be at Vasantasena's place this evening."

TO BE CONTINUED

NEW GUINEA GOLD

By

M. M. TAYLOR

NOT long ago gold in large quantities was again found in New Guinea, largest island in the world barring the continent of Australia and, next to Teneriffe, the most mountainous.

According to dispatches from Sydney, the find was located in the high, jungle clad ranges of the Morobe district where the savagery of the cannibals long has kept the white man away. In the rushes of the late Seventies and early Eighties scores perished miserably beside the trail or were done to death by natives.

New Guinea offers incredible hardships to all save the hardiest of men. Its precipitous mountains seem piled end on end. Its tropical jungle is almost impenetrable and swallows up a trail within a few days after it is cut. Malaria pervades the mosquito infested swamps which must be crossed to reach the mountains from the coast. The natives are hostile. Food upon which a white man can subsist must be packed in on the back, for there is no game, and the savages live upon sugarcane and sweet potatoes laboriously raised among the rocks—and upon each other. In the rushes of almost half a century ago conditions were worse, as no white nation had established a foothold there yet. Later Australia annexed the main portion of the island, Holland and Germany dividing the rest.

In the early Nineteen Hundreds other discoveries were made, but for the most part they were on adjacent islands rather

than the mainland and the casualties were fewer. Recently, however, the mountain ranges again claimed attention.

The new discovery was attributed to one of the survivors of former rushes, men who found the lure of prospecting too strong to break and remained to continue the elusive search for gold. They number a dozen or so, all told, these old-time diggers. They are familiar figures in the tiny ports of Moresby and Samarai during the hurricane season when torrential rains drive them out of the mountains. Grim, determined, weather beaten old chaps they are—hard livers, hard workers, hard drinkers and, if occasion arises, hard fighters.

With the passing of the hurricanes they disappear for months inland with their crews of natives, recruited from friendly villages at ten shillings a month and found to pack in supplies and aid their white *taubada*—master—in panning the deposits of rivers and creeks for semi-alluvial gold. Huts spring up in the jungle and the crew stays on the job from dawn until dark so long as the yellow stuff in paying quantities is found. If the stay is but temporary, white men and black men alike shelter themselves under flimsy tents and build roaring fires against the chilling cold of night. For the natives there is rice and once a week "bullamacow," or corned beef. For the white man there is canned stuff such as plum pudding, marmalade, oatmeal and the inevitable tea of the Britisher.

With the coming of the big rains, the streams become raging torrents. The digger knocks off for that time and returns to the coast. The crew is paid off and proceeds to spend the accumulated wages for knives, calico, beads, trade tobacco and knickknacks dear to the primitive heart.

If gold has been found, the digger turns it in at the tiny branch bank of Moresby or Samarai. Weeks later he gets the proceeds of its sale. Accounts are squared at the stores and the hotel, a fund is set aside to finance the next trip and the rest is gambled away, as a rule. If a trip has been unproductive the stores grubstake the digger for whatever he needs or some other digger takes him into partnership until he is on his feet again. For the most part, though, each man prefers to go it alone. He deeply prizes the friendship of his fellows and he does not like to risk the quarreling and enmity which months together without seeing another white man, perhaps, may engender.

Among themselves the diggers are friendly rivals and have deep respect for each other's prior rights in likely sandbars, natives known as good workers and so on. Nevertheless, it is strictly ethical to try to find out where the other fellow has gone and what he is doing, and to adopt any subterfuge to keep him from finding out the same things about you. If suspicion arises that one of them "knows something," such as the location of an unworked deposit of gold, he may be shadowed without arousing resentment. One digger may seek information from another's discharged crew and nothing thought of it because the native probably won't know where he has been or how to get there. To the outsider, however, the digger grants little except extreme indifference.

The BEAR SLAYER

By VICTOR SHAW

A Tale of the Far North

CROUCHED, spear in hand, far out on the shore ice beside the breathing hole of a seal, the Nugumiut youth, Sunah, froze suddenly motionless. His heart pounded madly. His brown eyes almost popped from his shaggy head as he stared toward the barren Baffin Land coast, from a cove of which there had just shambled out upon the ice a gigantic white bear.

"Nannuksoah!" he grunted beneath his breath, trying to shrink smaller within his furs.

The bear, a giant of its kind, was headed straight toward him and save for the inadequate spear and a short skinning knife, Sunah was unarmed. Had Nannuksoah seen him? Not yet, he decided, judging from its actions; and, moving nothing but his eyes, the youth threw a swift glance around seeking the nearest pathway to safety.

He had no need to look behind. Rearward he was cut off by open sea, where white caps raced and gulls flashed screaming in wind and sun. But, just ahead and on both sides, several huge, stranded bergs were frozen in, rich green and blue in crack and crevice, tipped with white fire where touched by the pale rays of the October sun that swung low in the south.

Sunah squatted, hopefully measuring the distance to the berg ahead. He was a muscular, stubby little chap, round of

face and olive skinned, clad in summer furs of hair seal hides and with a straight black mane straggling from the hood of his *kulita*. His only chance, he decided, was to try to crawl behind the ice hill unobserved.

It was not so much that Sunah feared he might be seen, for he well knew the white bear's sight was poor; but Nannuksoah's furry ears were sharp, his long nose very keen—and there the danger lay.

Lying flat in the light snow of early fall, Sunah rolled over and over till his furs were plastered white, then wriggled and hunched along, crawling as swiftly as he dared until the berg reared its ponderous bulk between him and the bear. When hidden from view, he leaped to his feet and ran.

Arriving at the iceberg's mighty base and using it as a screen, Sunah skirted the tidal cracks and openings to its farther side, where he once more saw the shore, a full half mile away. The wind, he saw, was right. It puffed in his heated face, blowing briskly down along the coast and toward him from the bear; and presently, from the shelter of a niche in the towering frozen mass, he peered out cautiously to relocate the white peril.

Apparently the big beast had been wholly unaware of his presence. Sunah held his breath, as he saw it shuffling along with pointed snout lifted to test the wind; a mighty, fearsome thing, more than four paces long, with a long haired coat of yellowish white and paws that looked as big as Sunah's body. But, as he saw that the bear was angling off upwind, Sunah breathed more freely, since, if it kept on in that direction it would not cross his track. Nevertheless, it was the part of wisdom to retreat; and careful to keep the great berg always as a screen he sped shoreward like the wind.

When the low cliffs and barren, snow mantled hills drew close, Sunah slackened pace and threw a glance over one shoulder. Nannuksoah was nowhere to be seen. Hiding, he guessed, behind one of the ice mountains to lie in wait for a seal.

Safe, now, Sunah's heart leaped with exultation. This was his own discovery. No one but himself knew that a bear was near. Alone, unaided, when he had obtained the proper weapons, he would return and slay the fierce white beast—his first bear. Here, at last, was his great chance to become a man.

WHIRLING, Sunah headed on the run for the skin tents of the little colony of Nugumiut Innuits, which was located at the head of an adjacent bay and from which not long before he had set out to get a seal. Brain afire with hopes and plans, he stumbled blindly on among the snow covered beach boulders in frantic haste lest his unsuspecting quarry get away.

Surely, he argued, Nannuksoah would remain out there until he should return with gun and dogs. Then he would prove himself a mighty, fearless hunter. Then, with that vast hide, he would win and don the coveted bearskin breeches of full manhood.

For Sunah, though past his eighteenth year and very strong, was by ancient Innuit custom not yet recognized as fully grown. He had still his first bear to trail and slay, unaided. An exasperating and senseless thing, he told himself heatedly, when one is already a daring and expert hunter.

But luck had been against him. Several times he had shared a kill with others. Many bears also he had stalked with a heavy hunting bow, good enough for caribou or wolf, but not for bear—at least no bear like Nannuksoah. But this time, with the fine gun just given him by Euapi, his father, the luck must change. This time he meant to win.

Failure had irked him sorely, for several vital reasons.

There was Uliyu, strong daughter of old Itusarsuit; a fat cheeked, laughing, healthy *kuna*, industrious and very stout of back, with fine white teeth to chew the tough hides soft, and skilful with her bone needle. Uliyu was a prize for any Innuit in the land, the best young *kuna* of his people to carry meat back to the tents, to

make stout *kamicks* with soles that kept out water and wet snow, and to keep an *igloo* warm and light with the blubber lamp of stone when swarms of demons ride the winter gales.

But not till he had slain his bear could Sunah claim her.

Perhaps not even then, for there was also Kowio, his boyhood friend; Kowio the lazy and inept, a trifle older and with his own first bear to get, who likewise rolled a longing eye at Uliyu. Not that Sunah feared his rival very much, for Kowio was a coward. Still—it was always hard to tell what would please any woman.

And, recalling the good times he used to have with Kowio, Sunah was sorry that they no longer called each other friend. Since they had learned to walk, they had been like children of the same mother. Together they had fished the black water lanes among the floes for salmon, with ivory lure and spear; had set the snares among the rocks for lemming, hare and fox, killed ducks and gulls with dart or slingshot, and built small sledges for the pups to drag around. Why, they had even planned to hunt together when they were grown and wore the bearskin *cotali*—unknowing then of Uliyu.

Now, all was changed. It was a race between them alone, for they had distanced all the other youths, but neither knew which one Uliyu favored. Perhaps she did not even know herself. At least, the trail was open yet—the goal still lay ahead.

And as he hastened onward, Sunah called to the dread spirits that control the chase, that he might be the first to fling a fresh hide at her little *kamicked* feet. Uliyu, he hoped, would straightway pick it up and begin to cut the pattern of his bearskin *cotali*. If not, if she should let it lie and turn away—?

But Sunah thrust the disturbing thought aside, as the *tupics* of the village hove in sight. What man could read a woman's mind? Besides, he had yet to kill his bear . . .

HIS FOUR fine dogs lay curled asleep where he had left them, tied to the rocks with walrus thong, lest they follow when he went to hunt the seal. Eagerly Sunah strode on to where he saw Uliyu, sitting with the crowd of chattering women. He well knew what they were saying, there among the piled up caribou skins. Whispering among themselves, giggling, squealing shrilly over nothing and laying down their sewing to poke jesting fingers at Uliyu.

A witless bunch, noisy as a flock of sea pigeons. Sunah gave them no heed, his eyes upon the girl. She sat quietly beside her mother, a gray and ancient crone, who peered up at him as he passed with age dimmed eyes and screeched—

"You travel fast, boy; do you fear a bear?"

"I have seen," he told her proudly, "the father of all bears. I go to get my gun, to kill and bring him in."

He ignored the cackle of derision and headed for his *tupic;* but, as he passed her, Sunah noted the sly glance that Uliyu threw him from the corner of a roguish eye. Hence, he failed to note that Kowio sat with a group of older men nearby, listening intently, while stuffing himself as usual with fat chunks of seal meat. Nor did he know that, when he dropped the skin flap of his tent and stood inside, Kowio arose and vanished speedily.

Swiftly Sunah got out a sealskin sack of powder, caps and hammered slugs of lead, to load his gun—an ancient smooth-bore musket, for which in trade with a white man who came to hunt whales many suns ago Euapi had given the long tusk of a narwhal. That even at that time the gun was almost worthless Sunah did not know. To him it was a marvelous weapon, the one thing he had lacked.

And as he poured into its barrel a handful of trade powder and rammed home a slug of lead well patched with rawhide, he gloated upon the battered firearm. It was a goodly weapon, and his own. Each broken, splintered place he had mended

with utmost care, driving in ivory pins split from a walrus tusk where needed.

Carrying the gun, the bag of ammunition, his long lashed dogwhip and a knife with a great steel blade, Sunah hurried out to get his sledge and dogs. Better, he thought, to face ten bears than walk past that ribald group of women—but Uliyu was there.

Being young, he strutted somewhat, trying to appear cold and fierce, as befits a man who goes to hunt the great white bear. As for the silly women, he did not even glance that way; but he saw Uliyu's rosy cheeks, red lips and fine plump shoulders, as she sat chewing a tough hide soft and white. In fact, he even caught again her guarded glance and thought it meant encouragement—although she also looked at Kowio that way, he knew full well.

He pretended not to hear the clamor of jests: to beware of the gaunt white wolves —to be sure and not mistake a rabbit for a bear—and that it was best to take real hunters with him lest he die of fright. Indeed, both ears were red as guillemot legs as he stalked in huge disdain to where his sledge rested high upon its platform, secure from gnawing dogs.

Swiftly he dragged it down, tucked the weapons beneath the proper rawhide loops and laid out the harness. He worked fast, confident of success. Everything pointed to it. The weather was good, there was snow enough to let the sledge slip easily, and all unaware of approaching doom the great bear was waiting. And then, when he went to get his team, the dogs were gone! The leash of every animal had been slashed through with a knife.

In feverish haste Sunah set out to track them down, but by the time that he had found and harnessed them and started out again, the sun had gone to sleep below the sea. But *Tukya*, the moon, was big and round and its reflection from the snow made all as light as day. Laying on the whip, Sunah drove fast. Much time had now been lost. He feared that by this mischance Nannuksoah might have secured a seal and gone away.

And then, when he arrived at the cove where the bear had first appeared upon the ice, he found beside the trail two furrows in the snow made by another sledge.

Another hunter had found them—had gone on ahead!

And suddenly Sunah knew the truth. From the number of dogs, from the size and shape of the sledge runners, he knew the driver's name. Also, he knew now who had cut the leashes of his team—and why.

Angered and very sick at heart, Sunah would have turned at once had not the dogs picked up Nannuksoah's scent. Crazed instantly by excitement, they swerved so sharply as to almost upset the sledge and plunged, yipping eagerly, along the trail. Sunah could neither check nor turn them—had to let them go.

Bellies flattened to the snow, they raced out across the ice, pelting his face with snow dust flung by their flying feet. Carried along, baffled and hopeless, Sunah could only cling tightly to the lurching seat; and then, out where the ice hills gleamed like giant *igloos* in the moonlight, he heard the faint far clamor of fighting dogs. His team heard also and surged madly against the traces.

Soon, above the bobbing backs and plumy tails, his staring eyes picked out a cluster of dark shapes weaving about on the snow ahead. It grew swiftly larger, more distinct, till he could see and recognize the leaping, snarling team of six: five battling savagely and one lying still, its shaggy coat dyed scarlet.

But the thing that stopped his breath and sent his heart to hammering in his throat was the white monster upreared in the center of the swirling mass; a roaring, devilish thing with massive, flailing paws that swung and battered at the dogs that slashed its flanks, then dropped upon all fours and lunged in pursuit of a skin clad shape that fled screeching with waving, empty hands—Kowio, as Sunah had guessed.

Before his racing team could drag him closer, Sunah snatched his knife and with several slashing strokes cut the dogs

loose. One shaking hand groped for the musket, but it was not there. The rawhide loops hung torn and empty. The gun had slipped out somewhere back along the trail. Blankly, Sunah shot a glance of terror at the bear.

Once more the huge beast stood and raged among the dogs, red froth flying from its gaping jaws where long fangs glinted like icicles that fringe a cliff crevasse. Nannuksoah struck twice. A dog whirled upward in the moonlight, a limp sack of crushed bones. Another, empty and kicking, splashed the snow with red. Nannuksoah turned and bounded in pursuit again.

And at that instant, with a shriek of crazy terror, Kowio slipped and fell. The dogs closed in. The bear heaved itself high above its helpless prey and faced the dogs again to fight them off.

Sunah saw it through a crimson haze. He forgot he had been tricked, that Uliyu waited, that his gun was lost—forgot all but that Kowio had once been like a brother and in another breath would die most horribly. Insensate fury gripped him. Knife in hand, yelling wildly, he rushed headlong at the beast. And Nannuksoah, his attention attracted to the new foe, cuffed the dogs aside and charged him with a savage roar.

Sunah knew no fear; he had no time. A devil borne whirlwind swept him into a blind dance with death; of tangled hair and stinking breath, of slashing claws and fangs. Vaguely he was aware that the dogs closed in, snarling insanely from the rear and that the great white head snapped back at them. Sunah was in the middle of a fantastic evil dream. Clinging in blind fury to the lurching shaggy back, with long knife driving for the heart, he stabbed, and stabbed — and stabbed again . . .

SUNAH awakened, to flame streaked agony, lying on his sledge. Save for the drone of voices somewhere close, the moonlit night was still. Weakly he turned his head and gazed around.

Uliyu bent above him, pressing cool snow upon torn places in his flesh that burned like fire. Nearby his team lay curled upon the snow, full fed, asleep. Farther on lay the vast, stripped carcass of Nannuksoah. Beside it stood old Putuk, Uliyu's father, with several other graybeards talking earnestly. Sunah's gaze came back to Uliyu and she smiled down at him. It was all very strange.

She said:

"Do not move. Much flesh was clawed from side, and arm and leg. One eye is gone. But I think you will get well."

Suddenly it all came back to Sunah, but the girl was talking on, telling him what had happened. Wondering, he heard how Kowio had driven his sledge madly to the *tupics* and, splashed with blood, had flung the great hide at her feet; how Kowio had boasted that he had killed the bear to save his friend, but that it was too late; and how she herself, in fear and unbelief, had left the hide lying and run out along the trail, to find Sunah lying helpless and almost frozen. Then Uliyu hid her face and said—

"Sunah, when you can walk again, and hunt, you may put on the fine new white *cotali* of bearskin, which I intend to make."

Sunah grunted faintly. It was very good to hear, though much as he had expected.

Then a chance word drifted from the group of old men farther on. Putuk was talking and Sunah strained his ears to hear the marvelous thing.

"Now, Innuits," Putuk said, "we know the truth. The tale that Kowio told us was a lie and had not Uliyu doubted we would not have known. What happened here is plain. There is no mark of any leaden slug, just the deep cuts from Sunah's knife. Look; he holds it yet, reddened with frozen blood. Sunah slew Nannuksoah with nothing but his knife. Few among our hunters could do as much. To Sunah goes the hide and all the meat. By this mighty deed, he has left youth far behind and by our custom, Innuits, Sunah is a man."

The ART *of* KNIFE THROWING

By CHARLES H. COE

NEARLY every one has seen references to knife throwers—usually "swarthy Mexicans" who threw the deadly weapon with lightning speed and more or less damaging effect. The average reader wonders how it is done; many of them would like to learn the trick, but do not know how to go about it. This article gives the desired information, as well as the principles governing the art.

Knife throwers belong to two distinct classes: Those who throw as a means of assault or defense, and those who entertain an audience in a hall or a crowd out of doors. The former are by far the more numerous. Thousands of Mexicans, especially, are experts in this line. Some of our native Indians were experts in throwing a knife as well as a tomahawk. Many of the early trappers, too, understood its use and effectiveness at short range.

In our own country knife throwing, at the present time, is confined almost wholly to a few experts who entertain at agricultural fairs and circuses, and less frequently on the stage. However, one occasionally sees a Mexican or half-breed in the Far West, especially in New Mexico, who pulls a knife for assault.

The knives used are as different as the men who handle them. The Mexican knife, usually made to order, is a medium sized bowie or sometimes a spear pointed implement. It is heavy and well balanced, nine to twelve inches in length, and is without a guard. Most of them have one cutting edge only; in others both edges are sharp. The point especially is kept very keen, as in that condition it will readily penetrate clothing, for instance, where a dull point would not.

The knives used for entertainment are wholly unlike the murderous weapons of the Mexicans, being broad and diamond pointed for several inches. As they are only used to stick in soft wood to a depth of about three-fourths of an inch, the points only are sharpened.

Frank Dean of San José, Cal., an expert entertainer with a knife, makes a fine article for his own use. I use one of these knives for practise and prefer it to any other. Its dimensions are as follows:

Total length, nine and one-eighth inches; length of blade, five and one-half inches; width of blade, one and one-eighth inches; thickness of blade, three thirty-seconds of an inch, tapering or beveled to dull edges, the spear point only being sharp; handle, five-eighths of an inch wide, one-half inch thick; weight, seven ounces. (Another ounce in weight would add to its value.) It balances five and three-eighths inches back of the point. It is without a hilt or guard, which device only adds to wind resistance.

A good blacksmith could make one of these knives out of a large, flat file. The

blade and handle should be in one piece if possible; or metal strips could be riveted on securely for the latter. If the blacksmith simply rough forges and tempers the knife the amateur can finish it himself, with file and emery cloth. If handles are to be riveted on, the smith should punch three holes for this purpose. Holes would have to be drilled in pieces of brass or other metal.

It is truly astonishing with what accuracy, force, and penetration a good knife can be thrown in the hand of an expert, varying, however, with the method adopted. The greatest perfection in knife throwing is attained by those who grasp the end of the blade between the thumb and the fore and middle fingers. In this manner it can be thrown with accuracy and force to the greatest distance, which is about twenty feet. This is the common method.

FIGURE 1—THE GRIP

In the other method, which has comparatively few champions, the knife is held in the palm of the hand, point to the front, and does not revolve when thrown. It is good for short distances only, and lacks the force and penetration obtained in the popular throw. This article will deal with the latter system.

While a palmed knife is comparatively worthless for long throws, the writer has succeeded in throwing a heavy bayonet, such as was used in the late war, and sticking a target forty to fifty feet distant. The implement is grasped by the handle and released with a rotary motion, which latter has a tendency to straighten the flight and keep the point to the front, without turning over end to end.

The secret of successful knife throwing consists of the following points: A good, well balanced, rather heavy knife; an accurate judgment of distance; and in throwing and releasing the knife in the same manner, with the same force, every time.

The third point, I sometimes think, is the most important of all. It is possible to do fairly well with a poor knife, other things being favorable; also, if one fails to estimate correctly the distance the first time, he will easily hit it sooner or later. But unless he releases the knife in the same manner every time he throws, he can not expect to stick it repeatedly in succession.

A knife will make a half turn or one or more complete revolutions, depending on the knife one uses and the force with which and the distance to which it is thrown. For illustration, when the thrower stands five feet four inches from a target, a small to medium sized knife will have revolved one half turn at the moment it sticks in the target, provided it is thrown with the proper force or speed.

What the "proper force" is, must be decided by each individual by experimentation for a few throws. It should be noted that the knife actually makes a half turn, when properly stuck, within three feet; but the length of one's arm and hand, stretched out in front to the limit, must be added—say about twenty-eight inches—or five feet four inches in all. The measurement in this first trial distance must be taken from the instep as one stands in front of the target.

This is called the "least distance," and it governs the other throws mentioned herein.

Add just three feet to this, making eight feet four inches, and your knife will make one complete revolution *under the same conditions.* Every six feet added thereafter will cause the knife to make another complete revolution. Thus at twenty feet four inches—about the limit

for accurate throwing—the knife will revolve three times.

I want to impress on the would-be knife thrower the great importance of learning to maintain a *uniform* force, or speed, in releasing the knife. Nothing will contribute as much to his success. Every time you materially change, your success in sticking will vary accordingly.

Watch an expert thrower and you will notice that all of his movements and motions are like clockwork; they do not vary in the least degree. Such an operator can stick the ace of hearts, for instance, three times out of five, at twenty feet, and the card itself every time.

Practise uniformity by throwing out the arm and hand to their full length in front, without a knife, but imagining you are holding one. You can learn faster in this way, because you can practise at odd times and places.

Another important matter is to *stick to one knife* as long as possible, if it is a good one. A knife is like a gun: You can do better work when long use has made you familiar with it. Changing knives is like varying your speed—you undo what you have been learning.

When you have secured a good knife—one that has proved its value—it is an admirable plan to have several duplicates made. An ordinary knife will not last, as vibration destroys the steel by crystallizing it, causing breakage. The blades also are too thin and the points break off. A heavy hunting knife is fairly good while it lasts. And remember: Each knife, varying in size and weight, must be experimented with before you know what can be done with it.

One of the writer's knives weighs only two ounces. Its total length is seven and one-fourth inches; blade, three and five-eighths inches. It is an all-metal U. S. Army kit knife. It throws well at the two least distances. Another is an ordinary Marble hunting knife, shortened one inch from the original length and spear pointed. Weight, four and three-fourths ounces; total length, eight and one-fourth inches; blade, four and one-fourth inches. The handle is built-up leather, with a heavy steel cap at its outer end. The balance is three inches from the end of the handle. It throws to perfection.

A good target for practise is a pasteboard carton, such as canned goods are packed in. This should be filled with sawdust, if possible, and set up about two or three feet above the ground. A white pine board, a foot or more in width, makes a good target, one that will last longer than the other. A tree with a thick bark is good, but repeated throwing injures it.

Now, to commence practise, measure off the least distance—from your instep to the target, as you stand squarely in front. Grasp one and one half inches of the point of the knife with the thumb and the fore and middle fingers. Take it backward until the hand and arm are opposite your right shoulder, with the handle of the knife pointing almost directly backward.

FIGURE 2—THE POISE

Next, bring it forward with a steady, continuous movement, and release it with a jerk. At this instant the end of the handle should point almost directly at the target. If your throw is successful, the knife should be sticking very nearly at a right angle to the target.

You will have to experiment more or less until you have learned the right speed for the least distance. When once you have it, use the same rate for the other distances. Practise until you can stick the knife every time. Some men subconsciously follow the knife in its flight and

know whether or not it will stick. When this knack is acquired—if it ever can be—sticking will be easy. This faculty is sometimes possessed by an expert rifle shot; it may be "born in" favored individuals.

When you have become proficient at the least distance—and not until then—add three feet to this and practise as before. Thereafter add six feet for complete revolutions. Continue practise at each new distance until you rarely miss. If you do not follow this plan your progress will be slow and erratic.

Use a yardstick for taking measurements while practising, until you are expert in sticking. Thereafter you will be able to judge distance with more or less accuracy. A throw or two will correct any under or overestimate.

Knife throwing is almost an exact science, founded on the size and weight of the knife, and the force with which and the distance to which it is thrown. Once these principles are realized and practised, success is certain with any persevering student of the art.

I will add that I will gladly reply to any and all inquiries relating to the subject, on one condition—that a stamped and addressed envelop be enclosed in your letter.

FIGURE 3—THE THROW

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

Author of "Four Years Beneath the Crescent"

THE CASINO of Macuto, Venezuela's most fashionable summer resort, was gaily illuminated. Some of the prettiest débutantes of our Caracas smart set, dressed in the latest Paris creations, and elegant *caballeros*, both civilian and military, were gliding gracefully over the polished marble floor of its main patio; while silhouetted on the moonlit sky or slumbering in the weird shadows cast by flickering lamps, stately palm trees and myriads of pale Castilian roses were listening intently to the rhythmical sighing of the guitars and the thunder of the breakers on the distant seashore.

I had just celebrated my twentieth birthday. It was the first time that I had been in my home country, Venezuela, after an absence of thirteen years—since my parents had taken me to Europe to be educated. I had returned to Caracas, our capital city, only three months before, and spoke Spanish with a strong German accent—a reason why President Cipriano Castro, then dictator of Venezuela, sneered at me during an official reception given at the palace of Miraflores; whereupon I had given him a piece of my mind about the way in which he was bullying and torturing the unhappy and defenseless people of Venezuela.

My rebuke and fair warning that I would fight him at the first opportunity angered Castro so much that he immediately ordered my arrest. Fortunately the officer who was to take me into custody was a friend of mine, and gave me a hint of what was up.

At first I thought he was only joking; but when a cousin of mine rushed up to me, while I was engaged in a little *tête-à-tête* with a charming young lady in the

garden, and shouted that the Casino was surrounded by the police and that those worthies were after my scalp, I thought it convenient to make myself scarce—for awhile, at least.

Ducking beneath some laurel thickets, I gained the beach and summoned a lone fisherman, whose tiny *cayuco*, or dugout canoe, was rocking to and fro on the long swells near the moonbathed shore. When I asked him to row me to a French tramp steamer whose lights shone in the distance off La Guayra harbor, he most emphatically objected. However, when I told him to choose between a drawn six-shooter and a ten dollar bill, he changed his mind, and took me in his crazy little *cayuco* to the vessel, on which I immediately secured a berth and made myself as inconspicuous as possible until we were well out at sea.

A week later our tramp made fast at the wharf at Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, and, after saying goodby to the captain and the ship's officers, who had been very kind to me, I walked ashore bareheaded, still in my tuxedo and dancing pumps, with the intention of buying myself a decent outfit.

But a gentleman stepped out of the crowd of rubbernecks who had been watching our arrival, and saluted me in a most cordial way. He was a young Dominican whom I had met in London a year before. After I had explained to him briefly what had taken place, he introduced me to a tall, handsome chap who seemed to be anxious to meet me. He turned out to be no one less than General Mon Caceres, the Governor of the Province of El Cibao, and future President of Santo Domingo. It was he who two years earlier had shot President Ulysses Heuraux, thus liberating Santo Domingo from the man who had terrorized that country for many, many years.

Mon Caceres invited me to come along with him as his guest, an invitation which I accepted readily because he was a courteous and very tactful man.

This happened in the spring of 1901. With the exception of one year and a half —from January 1910 until July 1911, which I spent as a citizen in Venezuela— I have been a voluntary exile from my country ever since, fighting constantly.

The resolution which I took that day when I landed in evening clothes in Puerta Plata—to spend the rest of my life an exile rather than to agree with or submit to Castro's and Gomez's* régime—represents the real reason why I became a soldier of fortune, fighting under many flags.

I owe this explanation to those who may have mistaken me for a professional revolutionist, or an inveterate and incurable international military hobo.

THE FIRST American whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Santo Domingo was Fatty Johns, the superintendent of the Puerto Plata railroad. He used to come to Santiago every now and then to attend to business and to pay me a visit. He was extremely good natured, as corpulent people usually are. He drank like a fish. Habanero, or native Jamaican rum, was his favorite beverage. During a three or four weeks' vacation, which he granted himself, he took a room next to mine in the hotel where I was staying and taught me how to behave, how to swear and how to drink like a "real man". Those were three things which I had yet to learn. The first lesson, how to behave, I absorbed quickly, by shedding most of my European prejudices and discarding my monocle. The second—how to swear —I learned perhaps a little too fast, because in less than a week I was profaning like a trooper, both in English and in Spanish. How to drink like a "real man" was the most difficult lesson of all, though not for lack of good will on my part; more, I think, because I presumed to a capacity which had taken Fatty Johns over thirty years to acquire.

Nevertheless, in two weeks I had mastered that lesson also. Every day at dawn, before getting up we used to enjoy our first two or three "four finger" pegs of Habanero. Fatty claimed that that was

* Succeeded Castro in 1909.

the secret of his never suffering from malarial fever during the many years he had been in Santo Domingo. After breakfast we invariably gulped down some three or four more pegs. Before lunch, two or three additional pegs and half a dozen cocktails were our regular quota. By the time we retired to our virtuous couches we usually were afraid to light our cigarets while holding them in our mouths, lest we explode. In other words, in less than two months I had become a "regular guy" in the eyes of Fatty Johns, and in my own eyes also.

I had been busy during this time corresponding with Dr. Rangel Garviras, the leader of our nationalist party of the Andean States in Venezuela, who planned to rise against Castro. He needed some additional guns and ammunition, so he begged me to go to Central America and see what I could do there. He advised me to visit first President Zelaya of Nicaragua, who had been educated in Belgium. Owing to the fact that I had been a sort of *protégé* of the late King Leopold II, Dr. Rangel Garviras thought that there might be a chance of Zelaya lending us a helping hand. At any rate, the experiment was worth trying. When I went to say goodby to Fatty Johns I found him shivering in his blankets, suffering from malarial fever. His talisman, Habanero, seemed to have failed him after all.

When I got to Santo Domingo City, where I intended to take passage on a schooner en route to Nicaragua, President Jiminez summoned me. He warned me to be careful because President Castro had asked him to keep a watchful eye on me. He seemed to feel considerably relieved when I told him that I was going to leave his blessed island in a couple of days, and promised me not to interfere with thirty other Venezuelan rebels who had likewise taken refuge in Santo Domingo.

These were itching for a chance to take a whack at Castro's mercenary army. Ten of them had enlisted in the Dominican navy, while the rest were employed on a sugar cane estate right across the river. They were in possession of twenty-odd rifles and a considerable amount of ammunition, which they kept secreted in a cave near the ruins of an abandoned lighthouse. They promised me to wait there until my return. The only one of them whom I took along was Pancho Gonzalez, a witty sort of chap from Puerto Cabello, who knew Central America like a book. We spent the last night together in a coconut grove near the beach, duscussing future projects, while the rolling and growling of the native drums pierced the silence of the tropical night like the voice of a barbaric past—like the voice of the Congo itself.

A week or ten days after our departure we sighted the little island of San Andres, on the Spanish Main, which belongs to Colombia. And when we were already approaching the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua the tail end of a hurricane got hold of us and blew us north at a tremendous rate. Our trim little schooner *La Concepcion* was cutting the foam covered waves of the Caribbean, which occasionally swept her deck with a roar, like an arrow while the wind came belching out of the night with a crash, and howled and whined its sobbing song in the rigging above us.

Three days and three nights we battled with the strength born of desperation against the infuriated elements until, finally, the ghastly radiance of a paling moon revealed to our eager eyes the somber outlines of rolling hills and patches of tropical jungle slumbering peacefully in the distance: the Honduran coast. And an hour later, glittering near the skyline like a maze of jewels, we caught sight of the lights of the historic little town of Trujillo, where that jack of all trades and ex-buccaneer, William Walker, had faced the firing squad many years before.

In Puerto Cortez, where we landed a few days later, I met another celebrity *à la* William Walker: Lee Christmas. At that time he was driving a locomotive for the local railroad and told me, while we were having a drink at a local bar, that he intended to "break into society"

sooner or later, meaning by that that he would never stop until he had secured a job with a Honduran government, no matter which, for the purpose of making some ready cash, of which he seemed to be badly in need.

AS THERE was no possible way for us to return the way we had come, Pancho and I decided to reach Nicaragua by way of Guatemala and El Salvador, which means across country. Unfortunately, as soon as we reached the Guatemalan frontier, Estrada's secret police got hold of us and dragged us to Guatemala City where President Estrada threatened to put me in irons the minute I told him that I was headed for Nicaragua, to get in touch with his rival, José Santos Zelaya. President Estrada, like most tyrants, was in constant fear of being assassinated. He mistook me at once for one of Zelaya's spies.

Thanks to the efforts of a former German schoolmate of mine, who owned a coffee plantation in Guatemala, I was finally allowed to live in a hotel, but I had to report every day to the police department. As Estrada was abhorred by the Guatemalans, the revolutionary *junta* was a powerful secret organization—a sort of Mafia—which counted among its many members several cadets of the military academy. These were getting ready to blow up President Estrada and, as I felt very sore at the president myself on account of the way in which he had treated me without any reason whatsoever, I enthusiastically espoused the cause of the revolution and busied myself giving the cadets a helping hand.

Pancho was a clever rooster, and he possessed, among other virtues, the rare gift of foresight. He had immediately started making love to one of the hotel chambermaids for the purpose of securing some of her clothing. He used to disappear almost every evening, after dark, through the kitchen door, masquerading as a woman, in order to keep me in touch with the revolutionary *junta;* while I, in the meantime, was hobnobbing with some of Estrada's cronies and army officers, attending dances and having an all around good time with them in the various clubs and casinos of the city. The slightest slip on my part would have meant instant death, both for Pancho and myself. I had to be careful therefore, for I was up to my old game once more—playing my life on a single card.

Finally the great day arrived. The mine beneath the Sexta Avenida had been completed; the charge of dynamite or nitroglycerin, I don't remember which, had been duly placed, and rubbernecks of both sexes were crowding by the thousands the narrow sidewalks of that thoroughfare when, followed by a troop of mounted gendarmes, the president came driving down the Avenida in his state coach. Proud as a peacock, he passed over the mine—without the explosion taking place. Our plan had miscarried; something had gone wrong and awfully wrong at that because, immediately after President Estrada had passed on, I noticed a squad of the secret police drag four of our fellow conspirators out of a house across the street from where the mine should have been exploded. In other words, our game was up. In less than an hour those poor wretches would probably reveal, under torture, our names to the police also.

Foreseeing all that, Brother Pancho had thoughtfully been keeping a couple of fine saddle horses in readiness near the outskirts of the town. Therefore, immediately after our mine failure, he and I were racing at top speed through a maze of narrow side streets in the direction of our mounts. And half an hour later, while the shadows of the night were settling slowly over the gloomy gullies and ravines of the Santa Maria volcano, Pancho and I, preceded by an able scout—another brother *revolucionario* out of luck—were galloping madly toward the Pacific Coast, which we finally reached after following for two days the swampy jungle trails of the lowland forest belt.

No sooner had we gulped down a cup of coffee and devoured a roasted banana

than we jumped into a fishing boat which we had traded for our horses. And a week later a friendly gale blew us ashore near the harbor of La Union, in the Republic of El Salvador.

Remembering, however, that our trip to Central America had not been for the purpose of blowing up President Estrada but to get some additional guns and ammunition for our projected revolution in Venezuela, Pancho and I shaved, put on some decent clothes and took passage on a steamer for Corinto. Thence we proceeded to Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, where I was very well received by President Zelaya. So far so good. Our narrow escape in Guatemala and the fact that I was a partisan of the Central American Union, made President Zelaya open his heart to me right away. He treated me royally and promised to furnish us all the necessary war materials to fight Cipriano Castro.

My mission, in other words, had been crowned with success. All I had then to do was to return to Santo Domingo, rent a couple of schooners, and go back to Nicaragua to "get the goods."

After shaking hands with Zelaya, whom I was never to see again, Pancho and I started for Greytown, near the mouth of the San Juan River, where we boarded a steamer for Limon, Costa Rica. And after an uneventful week we landed safely in Santo Domingo where our companions had been anxiously awaiting our return. I found there also a cable from Dr. Rangel Garviras, in which he ordered me to return to Venezuela immediately to take part in the big drive which our nationalist party had started already against Cipriano Castro's army near the Colombian frontier, on the peninsula of La Goajira.

WHILE I was sitting on the second evening after our return to Santo Domingo City in the Club Union, doing some tall thinking—because Dr. Rangel Garviras' cable, ordering me to return to Venezuela, would not permit me to go to Nicaragua first to fetch the guns and ammunition which President Zelaya had promised me —Pancho strolled up and whispered in my ear:

"The boys have found just the thing we need. You better go down to the cave and have a talk with them."

Intrigued by that mysterious message, I hurried down to the wharf, crossed the Ozama River in a boat, and ten minutes later I entered our rendezvous from where my faithful Venezuelan fellow rebels pointed out to me, riding at anchor near a dilapidated warehouse, a fine little schooner, called *La Libertad*, which was supposed to leave next morning on ballast for San Pedro de Macoris. She lay only two hundred yards away from our cave and could easily be reached by a narrow jungle trail which led to the beach. The schooner belonged to a full blooded negro from Port-au-Prince by the name of Captain Bibelot, who was a friend of ours.

His favorite drink was *tafia*, a sort of Haitian native rum. He would walk a mile to have a smell at it, and two to get a drink of it. My partners were pretty wise. They had found that out long ago. They had secured two or three gallons of the nasty stuff plus a pound or two of raw salt codfish for the purpose of serving it as free lunch during a cocktail, or rather *tafia*, party, which they intended to stage that afternoon in honor of Captain Bibelot. Two of them had signed on with the captain as sailors for the forthcoming trip; the third sailor was a Dominican lad who could easily be taken care of, for where there is a will there is a way.

That afternoon I had Pancho smuggle my luggage across the river and stow it away in the ship's hold. And after sunset, while several of our boys were seeing that Captain Bibelot was being properly entertained with *tafia* and tidbits of raw salt codfish, which the ebony faced captain seemed to relish immensely, to judge by the way he rolled his beady eyes, the rest of our gang carried our rifles, ammunition, hammocks, provisions for several weeks, on board the *Libertad*. And, when at dawn the sun rose majestically

over the eastern skyline and Captain Bibelot woke up in his cabin with a head as big as a cathedral, the schooner, with the Venezuelan tricolor proudly waving from her main mast, was headed south, toward the Goajira Peninsula, which we expected to reach in a week or so.

After lunch we offered Captain Bibelot the sum of eight hundred dollars as the first monthly rental of his ship. He refused at first to take the money because, as he claimed, he also was a patriot—a Haitian patriot—and realized that in time of war, etc. . . . But as we insisted he finally accepted five hundred dollars and the pompous title of commander of the Venezuelan rebel cruiser *La Libertad;* in other words, Captain Bibelot became one of ours, a Venezuelan rebel, and stuck faithfully to our course to the bitter end.

According to an old Spanish proverb, man proposes, God disposes, and the devil usually decomposes the show after it has been staged! Such was the case with us that time. In this particular case the part of the devil was being played by a Holland-Dutch by the name of Van Dusen, who lived in Santo Domingo and whose chief occupation seemed to consist of keeping a watchful eye on us. He was highly elated when he heard about the mysterious disappearance of the *Libertad* and our gang. He knew that Castro would pay him well for that information. So he immediately cabled full particulars to Caracas. Whereupon Castro dispatched two gunboats on the double to ambush us at the entrance of Lake Maracaibo, where we were supposed to be headed.

We were put wise to all that on the high seas by the captain of a Venezuelan schooner en route to Panama. He also told us that the Castillo, or fortress of San Carlos at the entrance of the Saco de Maracaibo, had been recently reenforced. In other words we were up a tree because, after leaving Santo Domingo, we had decided to attack that fortress by surprise in the expectation that its garrison might rebel and join us. In those days everything depended on whether a man was willing to take a chance or not.

After a few days of careful maneuvering, for the Venezuelan gunboats were ever at our heels, we manged to make port near a little smugglers' nest on the eastern shore of the Goajira Peninsula. But, no sooner had we laid to and dropped our anchor when the appearance of a thin grayish smoke spiral near the horizon made us scramble for safety. And not a minute too soon. Through the mangrove thickets of an *ensenada,* or shallow lagoon in which we had taken refuge, we managed to get an occasional glimpse at the azure expanse of the Caribbean Sea, which deepened toward the horizon. Finally, after an hour of anxious suspense, we noticed the thin, trailing smoke of the Venezuelan gunboat—for it turned out to be a gunboat all right—growing thinner and thinner until it finally vanished below the horizon.

After sunset we hoisted our main sail and started skirting leisurely the moon bathed littoral, until at dawn we dropped anchor once more, this time in a sheltered spot: behind a rocky promontory which rose somber and forbidding near a barren and seemingly deserted valley. The numerous sandbanks and gray coral reefs which lined the entrance to the little *ensenada* rendered detection almost impossible, at least from the sea. They also offered an unsurmountable obstacle in case the Venezuelan gunboats should have tried to attack us or to shell us while we were lying at anchor.

There I left our schooner in charge of Captain, or rather Commander Bibelot and five of our men while I, with my remaining twenty-five *bravos,* started out across country in the direction of Carazua where, according to an Indian runner whom we captured that morning, a big fight was expected to take place any moment between the government and nationalist rebel forces who had already started gathering in that neighborhood in considerable numbers.

I may as well mention here that Carazua was not the name of a town or a hamlet but of the only waterhole within a

radius of fifty miles and, therefore, the vital point and key of the situation in that part of our western front.

NO SOONER had we left the mangrove belt which skirted the marshy shores of the *ensenada* than the thick cactus and mimosa underbrush, which represents the only vegetation in that godforsaken desert land, commenced tearing our clothes to shreds and making us suffer considerably. The captured Indian told us also that the majority of the Goajiro Indian tribes along the littoral and in the interior of the peninsula were siding with Castro, whose government had equipped them with modern repeating rifles and supplied them with considerable cash. Those Goajiros were splendid horsemen. I have seldom seen such bony yet fleet and beautiful mounts as some of their native cayuses. I tried them successfully many times, both in the dry coastal regions and the swampy jungle districts of our Apure and Arauca cattle lands. Some of those horses—not all of them of course—represent in my estimation the nearest thing to an Arab steed that we have left in America from the original blooded Ibero-Arab stock which the Conquistadores brought over from Spain in the early part of the Sixteenth Century.

Before our departure I had cross-examined the Indian who had fallen into our hands. He was a lad of seventeen. One of the officers who accompanied Davila had offered him five fuertes, or Venezuelan silver dollars, if he took a letter for him to Maracaibo. The boy knew nothing about the contents of that letter, nor cared to. All he wanted was those five fuertes. Naturally, when I offered him five dollars a day and one of our rifles if he took us to Carazua, he gladly accepted and joined us on the spot. He was a good kid and a splendid scout.

About mid-afternoon of that same day he stopped suddenly in his tracks and pointed with his outstretched arm in a westerly direction, where a sand devil was drifting lazily along the dusty horizon. Instantly we flattened out behind some cactus thickets, and kept our eyes riveted on the spot which Gabriel, our scout, had pointed out to us. At first we did not notice anything in particular; but, after the sand devil, which we were watching with mixed feelings, had started growing darker and thicker, we finally discerned several crimson dots which were moving slowly over the dusty plain in a southerly direction. They were one of the many Goajiro Indian detachments in the pay of Castro which Gabriel had mentioned already.

Fortunately the wind was blowing in our direction so that our scent could not reach their cayuses, which would undoubtedly have betrayed our presence through a peculiar way of neighing which the Indians teach them to emit whenever they scent a *Cristiano*, or civilized human being. Thanks to Gabriel's eagle eye which had detected the Goajiros not one minute too soon, and thanks also to the circumstance that we were not mounted and could therefore conceal ourselves easily, we managed to escape detection.

After a purple sunset had finally vanished beneath the western horizon and the ragged outlines of bare, hilly ranges stood out stark and silent against the starlit sky, I called Gabriel and pumped all the information I could get out of him. According to what he told me the government forces were being led by a General Davila; that is to say, by José Antonio Davila, who had run down and captured a couple of years before the famous Mocho-Hernandez, and who was considered to be one of Castro's bravest and ablest generals. I hated the idea of having to fight against Davila because he and I were personal friends. But that couldn't be helped, for *la guerre c'est la guerre!*

Next morning, after we had been tramping for a couple of hours over a maze of barren hills and dusty desolate plains covered with dry, scrubby vegetation, inhabited only by snakes, we suddenly struck a dusty trail which uncurled before us and disappeared in the distance

like an endless orange colored ribbon. We were approaching our goal sooner than we expected because, according to what Gabriel told us, that was a branch of the main Rio-Hacha trail which led directly to Carazua. Unfortunately about noon, while we were enjoying a rest in the bottom of a deep depression and a drink of lukewarm water out of our goat skin canteens, our sentry whistled softly and pointed toward the west whence a group of thirty Goajiro horsemen, with crimson woolen blankets wrapped around their waists and glittering Mauser carbines resting across their saddles, came advancing slowly in our direction.

Of a sudden one of their horses neighed, whereupon the Indians looked meaningly at one another, split up into several groups and kept advancing toward us, their arms in readiness. They soon crossed our trail, which disclosed to them that our party was about as strong as their own. But unfortunately for them we turned out to be *Cristianos*, otherwise they would probably have attacked us right away. Under those circumstances, however, they considered it advisable, perhaps, to talk the matter over first, or at least to find out to which of the two contending parties we belonged.

After the Goajiros had advanced another hundred paces and stopped, the leader of the band rode on, alone, for quite a distance. Then he suddenly reined in his pony and shouted that he wanted to speak to the general. A courtesy to which I could not refuse to comply, naturally. So I climbed out of our depression. But the instant he noticed my garb, and realized that I was a *revolucionario*, he pulled his cayuse around with a ferocious snarl and disappeared amid a cloud of dust.

No sooner had he rejoined his companions than they all let out a vicious, long drawn howl and started circling around us from right to left at a mad gallop. They were dangling with their left foot and left hand from their saddles, with their bodies flattened for protection, to the "starboard side" of their madly racing horses. With their right hands they kept up a continuous fire from their carbines. Those Indians certainly knew how to ride and fight. I still can see them, yelling and racing around us like a band of howling dervishes gone *amok*. Our men answered shot for shot, and on the scorching, dusty plain, saffron hued sand devils kept humming and spinning around and around, as if waltzing to the rhythmical chatter of our furiously barking rifles. I did not witness a performance like that but once again—during the World War, when a band of wild Shammar Arab tribesmen kept me and my escort of Turkish soldiers pent up in a similar depression near Auvenat, in the northern deserts of Mesopotamia. Contrary to my expectations Gabriel, our Indian scout, instead of trying to escape kept peppering his countrymen merrily.

AFTER the Goajiros had tired of galloping around us, wasting their ammunition, they stampeded back the way they had come, leaving behind eight dead and two wounded warriors as well as three dead, two wounded and five unharmed horses which had remained standing, like faithful dogs, by their fallen masters.

Taking advantage of the darkness and the sudden retreat of the Goajiros, we tramped on all night and entrenched ourselves at dawn in another depression, ready to give the Indians another hot reception if they tried to attack us again. As they did not show up, probably because they had gone to report our approach to Davila's chief of staff, we resumed our march about noon, greatly refreshed by a few hours' rest of which we had been badly in need.

When we finally reached our destination, shortly before dawn, things were happening in Carazua, sure enough. I immediately reported to General Ortega and presented to him my credentials as a representative of Dr. Rangel Garviras, a courtesy which he appreciated very much because he too was a regular army officer, and a mighty good one at that.

Unfortunately he was struck by a stray bullet that day and died a week later of his wound. Through him I heard about the latest happenings along our Andean front, as well as all about the *Revolución Libertador*, of Bermudez Asphalt Company fame, which was being hatched.

While Ortega was telling me all that and many other interesting things the fight was growing in intensity all around us. General Davila, the commander of the government forces, was proving that he was a brave and able soldier for, though the odds were against him in a certain sense, he continued fighting like a wounded lion. His forces had been advancing steadily past the notorious Caño de Sinamaica to cut Ortega's army from its base, which was the province of Santa Marta, in the northeastermost extremity of Colombia.

But, as soon as Davila noticed that Ortega had taken up strong positions around the lagoon of Carazua for the purpose of flanking his right wing if he ventured too far ahead, he immediately retraced his steps and got ready to drive Ortega's rebel army away from that lagoon at no matter what price. After deploying his forces and forming a temporary battle line, Davila ordered his artillery to open fire on the jungle thickets around the lagoon in which a part of our forces had entrenched themselves. It was the roar of these guns which we had heard the night before, and which was kept up until dawn, when the battle really began.

After my first meeting with Ortega we got busy shifting our troops into more advantageous positions; that is to say into positions from which we could neutralize as much as possible the murderous fire of Davila's artillery, which was causing us already considerable damage. Part of the surrounding jungle had been set on fire by bursting shells, as were the bush thickets around the lagoon. A gray curtain of smoke was drifting lazily into the dry bush forest. Hordes of tiny monkeys, aroused by the unusual turmoil and the barking of our rifles, kept peering and gibbering and jeering at us from a safe distance above until some stray shrapnel burst in their direction, causing them to sprout wings and scatter in all directions like flying bats. Occasionally gorgeous butterflies flickered and fluttered in their uncertain flight over the gruesome lagoon, in which corpses were floating, or settled down slowly, like flaming jewels, on its muddy banks.

I was riding one of the magnificent Goajiro stallions which we had captured during our scrap with the *Indios bravos*. It was a tall, cream colored brute with the peculiar St. Andrew's Cross brand on its haunches, characteristic of all Goajiro Indian horses. When Pancho had tried to ride it the stallion had thrown him clear over its head and would have stamped him to death, Indian horse fashion, if I had not arrived just in time and driven it back with my heavy quirt. The fact is that Pancho did not know the trick: he had jumped on its back from the left, the wrong side, for wild Indian horses are trained there to be mounted from the right side only. After the cayuse had quieted down a bit and I had mounted it the right way, it grew docile and even rubbed its nose on my knee.

During the early morning hours the fight had been conducted on strictly strategic lines. But the minute the sun started glowing down on us like a furnace from a leaden sky, and thirst, a terrible maddening thirst, clasped our throats with its iron grip, the combat degenerated into a mad scramble for the lagoon, for the possession of that priceless asset that meant life. I had taken over the command of a part of our right wing, which was the most exposed one because of the proximity of the Caño de Sinamaica whence considerable government reenforcements were expected to arrive that day. A government spy, whom we captured that morning, finally confessed that those reenforcements were already under way. Our situation was critical. Something had to be done, and quickly, unless we wanted to be caught in a vise between

the enemy's center and its left wing. Besides my twenty-five original companions I commanded, among other regulars, also a considerable number of *Andinos*, or Andean *macheteros*—wild and fearless mountaineers who preferred to fight with cold steel, at close quarters, and invariably, as soon as a charge had been ordered, hung their rifles across their backs and dashed like a band of wild boars into the enemy lines, hacking and chopping down everybody with their long, razor edged *peinillas*, or Andean machetes; a terrible weapon, capable of flattening with a single blow the barrel of a rifle.

AS SOON as we sighted the first enemy trenches we opened fire on them, whereupon several of Davila's cannon, which had been sweeping the banks of the lagoon, were immediately trained on us. Our position grew worse every hour, not only on account of those field pieces, whose shells kept bursting all around us, causing us many casualties, but also by reason of the enemy reenforcements which we expected to pounce on our right flank any moment. That fact notwithstanding, our men held their ground wonderfully well. Finally, when I noticed that we were getting the worst of it, I ordered a machete charge. My order was greeted with shouts of joy, especially by our *Andinos*.

I, being an *Andino* myself, naturally had to lead the charge. So I got off my horse, threw away my cigaret and, shouting "*Viva la Revolución!*" dashed ahead of my men toward the enemy trenches whence the *gobiernistas* started pouring lead into us as fast as they could reload their guns.

Then we clashed. I will never forget that terrible struggle, the horrible panorama that unfolded itself before my eyes like a nightmare. The machete charges followed one another in quick succession, ripping bodies, tearing limbs apart, maiming hundreds, for our *Andinos* were just as brave as Davila's *macheteros*.

The air was rent constantly by the roar of cannon. The rifle fire grew intenser every hour, as did the cursing and yelling of thousands of men who kept clashing and separating—only to clash again at the point of their bayonets, with their six-shooters belching yellow streaks of fire, with their flashing blades crimson with blood. While the wounded, those hundreds of pitifully moaning wretches, sometimes shrieking or hoarsely cursing in their agonies of death, kept on struggling, crawling on hands and knees among heaps of corpses in a vain effort to reach the lagoon, to quench their terrible, maddening thirst . . .

Only those who have witnessed a fight to the death in the heart of the jungle, under the scorching rays of the tropical sun, without food, without water, without medical attendance of any kind, will be able to realize the terrible scenes, the ghastly sights which met our eyes that day at Carazua.

After sunset the fight was called off on both sides "for humanity's sake". As soon as the command "stop firing" was sounded, friend and foe alike made a dash for the pestilent, nauseating, blood dyed waters of the lagoon. The Venezuelan tricolor, caressed by the evening breeze, shivered and trembled over the battlefield and the majestic silence of the night was filled with the soft moaning of the wounded.

Our losses had been heavy, but so had been those of the government. And when dawn spread pale wings once more over the slumbering jungle, both the government and the rebel forces turned their backs on the dreadful lagoon and silently withdrew to their former positions. While I, laid out on a stretcher, with a bayonet thrust through my leg and surrounded by my few surviving companions, fought my way back through the marauding Goajiro Indian tribes and, reaching the coast, set sail for Santo Domingo in quest of medical treatment and mental rest.

SWORD FISHING

By F. H. SIDNEY

FEW PEOPLE realize that the ram of the sword of a five hundred pound swordfish has been known to sink a good sized fishing schooner and that angry swordfish have rammed their swords into small fishing boats, wounding the fishermen and causing them to bleed to death. The swordfish, scientists claim, belongs to the mackerel family. The end of its snout is a swordlike bone projection about three feet long—a terrible weapon, which the swordfish uses in preying on other fish. I have seen swordfish at sea attack a huge sperm whale, stab it to death, and then eat out the whale's tongue.

The method of fishing is to harpoon the fish from a fishing stand built on the bowsprit of the boat. When the swordfish is harpooned, a buoy attached to the end of the harpoon line is thrown overboard. Then the fisherman rows out from the schooner in a dory, picks up the buoy, and hauls in the swordfish to the side of the boat, where he proceeds to kill it with a lance. It is then that the real battle begins, and many a fisherman has lost his life as the result of a wicked sword jab from the big fish.

I remember distinctly my first experience catching a swordfish. I threw my iron into him from the bowsprit stand, threw the buoy overboard; launched my dory, and went after him. He was a big fellow and I had to row pretty fast to catch up with the buoy, which was towing behind the fish in a wake of bloody foam.

Picking up the buoy, I began hauling in line. After a while the line tightened, and the swordfish began towing me. Fortunately there was a fairly good breeze and the schooner could follow me. Otherwise I would have been obliged to cut loose for fear of being towed miles out to sea, and then if the big fish attacked the boat, my chances would have been mighty slim. After a while the big fish sounded; and when he rose from the bottom he came straight for the boat. I jabbed him one with the lance as he lunged at the boat with his wicked looking sword. The big devil then dived under the boat and came up on the other side.

The schooner circled around me.

"Want any help?" yelled the skipper.

"No, damn him," I answered. "I'll get him or he'll get me."

"Go to it, kid," encouraged the skipper. "You'll make a fisherman some day, just like your father." The skipper and my dad had fished together in their younger days.

In warding off a terrific lunge I broke my lance in the hard, horny head of the swordfish. Picking up an oar, I fought off several terrific rushes, any of which would have penetrated the side of the boat and sunk it.

All of a sudden the big fish sounded.

"Done for," I thought.

Just then I felt a terrific thump on the bottom of the boat, and the sword came up through the planking directly under me, ripping my trousers' leg and grazing my skin. I threw myself over backward to get out of the way. But the danger from the fish was over. His sword was fast in the planking and, tug as he might, he couldn't pull it out. The boat began filling with water, and I signaled to the schooner, which came alongside and picked me up. We pulled my dory with the swordfish to the side of the schooner. The big fighter was dead, and he tipped the scales at five hundred and forty-five pounds.

The LOST

A Complete Novel of the African Jungle by

GORDON MacCREAGH

THE BEARDED man spoke fluently, appealingly, with only the faintest trace of a foreign accent. He was even convincing.

But the other man, King, sat back, hugging a cord breeched knee in his two brown hands and observing the speaker through thin slits of eyes from behind a smoke screen made by his pipe. He heard the man out; led him on to talk about distances, directions, costs of *safari* and so on. Then leisurely he changed knees and said pointedly—

"Why don't you go in yourself and get him out?"

The bearded man shrugged deprecatingly.

"I, Mr. King, am a man of science."

King let go his knee and grinned at the man quizzically.

"Yeah, I know. Herr Professor Reinsch, director of anthropology of the University of Heidelberg. I've known that ever since you came here to Dar es Salaam a month ago. And you've written three books on your subject, and you've lectured over most of Europe."

The professor raised his eyebrows.

"Your information is very accurate. You will see, then, that for a man such as I a *safari* into Central Africa is no—"

King, with head on one side, continued

END *of* NOWHERE

to grin with such sardonic amusement that the professor stopped in confusion. King took up the unfinished sentence.

"You were going to say that for you a *safari* is no novelty—at least, I hope you weren't going to try to tell me anything else."

The professor stared at him with round eyes for a moment and then he threw up his hands with a rueful expression and laughed.

"I perceive," he said, "that what they told me about Kingi Bwana is true. Very well, I admit. I have *safaried* before. But tell me, please, from where you get your so accurate information."

"Shucks," said King. "What do you think I gabbled such a lot of hot air about *safari* for? Just to see how much you knew about it. The other is no gumshoe work of mine. They checked up on you as soon as you came here."

"They? Who is this they?" asked the professor quickly. King chuckled as he

spoke. He had found his own moments of irritation from the same source.

"His Britannic Majesty's very careful government of the mandate territory of what used to be German East Africa."

"Aa-ah! So?" A long breath of understanding came from the professor. "But how do you know this? You are not one of them."

"Well," drawled King, "things are different from what they were in your time. Now there's a whole lot of East Indian clerks and Eurasians in the offices and in the telegraph and so on. Things leak, and if you're not too high up to listen you can hear them hit the ground."

The professor nodded absently. He was connecting up in the light of this new knowledge the long circumstantial chain of hindrances and delays that had reduced him to despair and brought him to King. The latter added an item—

"And just about that time Biggs, inspector of police, took a holiday and went by train to Ujiji to make *safari* up to Emin Pasha Gulf on Lake Victoria."

"Ss-so," hissed the professor. "They know something, then."

King's mood of banter changed. He pushed back his chair and prowled with long and singularly noiseless strides up and down the room, his thumbs hooked in his belt, his lean, angular face impatient, and his wide mouth a thin line. He stood and shot a long finger out at the professor with the suddenness of a gun.

"Now, listen, Professor. I don't like this deal on its looks. To begin with, you're offering me too much money. Why? To go on with, the British authorities are too much interested in you. It's none of my business, but I want to know why. Now if you'll cut out all the clever stuff and play cards on the table I'll listen to you, though that don't mean that I'll take up your proposition."

The professor lifted his hands in quick apology and defense at the outburst. He had already decided that he must tell all the truth to this man.

"Sit, please, down again, Mr. King, and I will tell you everything. Everything, at least, that I know. It is all true as I have said. We of the university received a letter from our colleague, Doctor Hugo Meyer. In this letter it said that he had discoveries of such a great importance to science that we should please send an expedition to bring him out with his proofs. Unfortunately the letter was so worn out and tattered that we can not guess at the date. It may have been a month; it may have lain in some hut for years—you know how a letter is that is entrusted to an African runner. We receive what is not worn out. The date line is gone; and of the address we have only Deutsch Ost Africa.

"Our colleague, it seems, is one of those not reconcilables who will never admit that we have lost our colonies. You see it was before the war that he went up there into the interior, and we had since then heard no word from him until now."

"Umph," grunted King, still suspicious. "How come you haven't his war record for at least the next four years, since your people hung out till the end and surrendered only after the armistice when Von Lettow was guaranteed military honors and repatriation for every German in his command? How come you have no repatriation record? How come the university didn't see him before he came out again? Come clean now, Doctor, or I can't waste time talking to you."

The professor held up his hands again.

"Please, my dear sir, please. Listen and I will tell you true. The very extraordinary circumstance about our colleague is that he had no military record. You understand that. No military service in a time when every German in Africa was a soldier. We of the university received a letter at that time—that was fifteen years ago—in which our Hugo Meyer said that he was not interested in this stupid war; he was interested only in a study of botany and zoology—especially of anthropoid apes, and he would go into the deep jungles and would not waste time with marching up and down.

"We there in Heidelberg, we laughed

and said to each other how fine he would look in a kitchen uniform; for every man of us within the age was immediately in the army. But the very strange circumstance was that when Von Lettow came back after it was all over and we who were left made inquiries; it was true; our Hugo had disappeared and had escaped service; and from that time on we have no news until this letter."

"Good Lord," murmured King. "Fifteen years in those jungles! Alone! How do you know he isn't dead long ago? How d'you know that letter hasn't been lying in some native hut for years before some one had a whim to take it out?"

"This, we do not know," agreed the professor simply. "Except that Meyer was a young man and of a very unusually strong physique to withstand the sickness of the jungle. But there is one more thing that we do not know; and this I will tell you true. We of the university were debating what we should do. For *safari* expeditions cost much money; and we have not so much money nowadays. We were almost thinking to wait for another letter, when suddenly from somewhere the university president told our department of zoology that all the money we should need would be available and we should make this expedition immediately to bring out these discoveries of so great importance to science with all the proofs. Particularly must we bring all the proofs."

"Hmph!"

King's steel gray eyes narrowed to gaze into distant nothing as a thought came to him in connection with the sudden mysterious source of money for an expedition, and the equally mysterious interest of the British government in the colony.

"You say this man was a zoologist and a botanist? He wasn't by any chance a mining man, was he? Or an oil expert, huh? Could he locate oil, maybe?"

"No, no, my dear sir. Positively not. He was what you call a crank on the anthropoid apes; and he was interested in botany from the point of food—the food of nature as the monkeys eat it and keep their health; you understand? Dietetic botany, you say, is it not? Nothing else. Nothing else at all. The man was of a very single purpose mind."

"Then that upsets that little theory," grunted King. "Well, what else?"

"That," said the professor, "is all that I know. I was quickly sent out with sufficient money to make this *safari* to look for our colleague in those not so well determined jungles. I arrive. I find only obstructions. Everywhere I meet with the greatest politeness from all officials. I am invited to the race meet, to the club, to the sacred ceremony of tea. But I get nothing more than politeness. I receive no permits to make *safari*. I am unable to hire porters except through the government agency; and the agent does no more than invite me to accept many whisky pegs and to play billards and tennis at his club. I am not a fool. I see that there is an obstruction. I do not know why."

KING'S hard face cracked in a wide grin of appreciation. He had his experience of that masterly method.

"Yeh, that's their way," he chuckled. "Always polite and good fellows; no rough stuff. But, golly, how gracefully they can stall when they're tipped off from higher up."

Then a certain exasperation came over him and his face set hard again and his chuckle changed to a grumble.

"They give me an awful pain. Not only they—I mean all governments, all officials. Stuffed out like bullfrogs with the importance of their jobs. If they've got some private deal on why can't they come to a fellow and say, 'Hey, lay off, this is private?' Anybody'd say, 'All right, brother, it's your business, not mine.' But when they go stalling around, giving each other the secret high sign on some huge diplomatic maneuvering that is already common bazaar gossip it sure stirs the wishbone in me to buy in on the game."

"And so, Mister Kingi Bwana," said the professor, stepping adroitly into the

exasperated mood, "I come to you. You are American; you owe no loyalty to these diplomatic maneuvers in a colony which is only mandate. You will carry through this business in which I am so from the underhand prevented."

King's quick grin broke through his irritation.

"Wait a minute, brother. Not so fast. You haven't bought me yet. Let's talk some more. Tell me exactly what it is you want me to do."

The professor was quite candid.

"It is simply that you go in, that you find our colleague, if he is alive, and that you bring him out. I do not know why he can not come out alone. It is perhaps that he needs money or that he needs *safari* to bring out his collections, his proofs, whatever they may be. There is only one proviso—these scientific discoveries, if they are of such importance, they must be delivered to us of the university. In Germany these days much of our activities are restricted by treaty. We wish very jealously to retain our credit for scientific discovery."

"Hm-mm, that's fair enough."

King frowned into the distance, musing. He could see no objection. He believed that the professor had been open with him and had told all he knew. The only possible fly in the ointment was this mysteriously obstructive interest on the part of the mandate government. And that, if anything, was an attraction.

Nobody had come and confided anything to King; he was an outsider, not of the great official family; and not, therefore, bound by any loyalty to a confidence. If officialdom chose to make a ponderous mystery of some trivial thing, that was—he grinned—well, that was just their hard luck. He had suffered so often from restrictions set up by an autocratic officialdom, too proud to explain why, that his natural sympathy was with the underdog who, without official backing, suffered under similar restraint.

His mind was made up. He pointed his terms as though taking aim with his forefinger.

"All right. I'll play with you. I'll go in and find this scientific nut of yours. If he's dead, I'll find his cache or whatever reports there are about him. And I'll deliver to you in Heidelberg. You'll turn over to me now about a thousand dollars expense money for *safari*—better make it fifteen hundred in case there's a lot to bring out. I'll collect the balance when I deliver the goods. That's how I prefer to work. No tickee no washee. And—" the long forefinger aimed a final shot—"don't let any methodical skinflint at your end ask me for any piffling account of expenditures, 'cause I won't keep 'em."

It was the professor's turn, now that the thing was settled, to find misgivings.

"Do you think, my dear sir, that you can accomplish this? They will try to stop you, as they have hindered me."

The deep lines and abrupt angles of King's face stiffened to the semblance of crudely carved hardwood. He grunted rather grimly.

"I've done nothing they can lock me up in jail for; and I don't see anything else in sight that'll stop me. Don't you worry about that; that's my *shauri*. You go and holler your head off to the high muckamucks and keep them busy stalling you off with tennis and tea. I'll see you in Heidelberg. Always wanted to come to your country anyway to buy one of those three barrel shot and rifle combinations."

"Also, *auf Wiedersehen*," said the professor. "I shall have one waiting for you when you come—a handmade 'Drilling' by Sauer."

"It's a bet," said King.

KING was enjoying scenery. He sat on a high, rocky bluff, smoking a pipe and watching a red sun smolder through misty layers of thin vapor that floated upon long, torn streamers of violet, from beneath which radiant shafts of hot orange flared over the edge of a dead flat, ash-gray cloud.

Behind his back gray parrots squawked discontentedly in huge, blue-black eu-

phorbia trees and an occasional shriek of a terrified *colobus* monkey indicated that the creatures of the night were beginning to prowl forth on the hunt.

The flaming sky mirrored itself in the waters of a deeply indented lagoon that stretched away beyond vision into the dusky gloom.

This was the gulf that Stanley had named after Emin Pasha of Egypt. It reached in a crooked, lava broken creek out of the southwestern corner of the vast square of Lake Victoria Nyanza. King knew that there were two thousand miles of that jagged waterfront of which less than two hundred miles—and those mostly at the northern end—could be said to be inhabited.

Somewhere in this unmapped maze Dr. Hugo Meyer had last been seen—fifteen years ago. Fifteen awful years in the silence. And now a great university wanted him and a government was interested and King was looking for him. It was almost as much of a needle hunting in a haystack as had been Stanley's search for Livingstone.

King was alone. That is to say, it is the custom of explorers in Africa to speak of themselves as being alone if there is no other white man with them—no matter how many dozens of porters, trackers and camp boys they may have.

It was King's peculiarity that he did not consider himself to be alone. With him was Barounggo, his Masai henchman, an unusually powerful great fellow, a member of one of the most warlike peoples of Africa. Also his cook, whose whole grandiose name was Kaff'enq'uam-undhlovu, a Hottentot as shriveled and dried up as the Masai was huge, possessor of uncanny bush lore and cunning as an ape.

They were just niggers to most of the lordly white men who ruled the land. But King had a queer quiet way all his own of making a distinction between Africans and just niggers. He had niggers with him too; forty of them; many more than he needed; more than he had ever had on a *safari* before. Most *safaris* had at least that many. But King had learned his camping, not in the luxury of tropical cheap manpower, but back home in the Western hills where a pair of tough old prospectors would go out with a single pack burro, and contrive to stay six months.

The forty were *shenzis*, dull oxen who carried thirty-five pounds of camp duffle apiece on their thick heads in country where the *tsetse* flies would kill horses or cattle in a week.

Forty of them at thirty-five pounds apiece, with all the attendant trouble of looking after and controlling them, were as great a surfeit of worry as of carrying capacity. So much so that King seemed to have gone quite crazy, and most of his *shenzis* carried upon their wooly heads, instead of the assortment of canned foods that burdens the greater part of most *safaris*, nothing more valuable than grass with a few large stones to bring up the regulation weight.

King had collected them at Ujiji and, since there were no orders in his case to the contrary, had set out for the tip of Emin Pasha Gulf before a rather bewildered local official had interfered. But he knew that heliographs had winked across the hilltops behind him and that the scattered native constables in the villages ahead of him had not been surprised at his coming.

Nor was it any surprise to him, therefore, when his Hottentot took form out of the shadows and announced:

"*Bwana*, that man whom we sent out has come. He says a white *bwana* comes. In one hour he will be here."

"Good," said King evenly. "Prepare food and hot water for the bath against his coming and send Barounggo to me."

The Masai was already there, blending with perfect match of color into the deeping shades behind him. Only the flutter of the plaited monkey hair garters above his great elbows and knees and the breeze ripple along the furry edge of his leopard skin girdle denoted that something moved that was not entirely natural to the wild. That, and two perpendicular scintilla-

tions of light; one thin sharp one at the ground and the other, a broad stab of flame, in a direct line seven feet above it. These were the glint of the last sun on the iron spike at the butt and the broad two-foot blade of the Masai spear.

The man leaned motionless upon his great weapon. King asked him what he knew to be a superfluous question.

"Barounggo, is all ready as I have ordered?"

"All is ready, *Bwana*."

"And the twelve men, they are the strongest of the lot, and you can surely hold them that they do not run away?"

The Masai laughed a deep rumble in his great chest.

"Surely I can hold them, *Bwana*. I have picked only Banyoro men and Baseses. Their fathers were the slaves of my fathers."

King laughed silently at the man's shrewd selection of men of these two tribes. Since all time—as far back as their grandfathers could remember—before the white man came these fierce Masai had enslaved their people and had slain them relentlessly for the least of misdeeds. They might run away from a white man, as *shenzis* had often done as soon as there had been a hint of the least little procedure unusual to their dim minds.

A white man would never chase them with murderous ferocity through the woods; the most he would do would be to try to catch them and perhaps beat them before putting them back to work. To run from that great spear flashing at their heels would be worse and infinitely more certain death than taking their chances of doing the most usual thing that the wildest white man might order.

King laughed.

"Good," he said. "Take the twelve and travel swiftly, and hold them till we come; it may be one day; it may be two. And do not, on your life, forget to make the trail of the secret sticks that the Hottentot has taught you."

WHEN the white man came hotfoot into King's camp he found all the litter of an African *safari* getting ready for supper. This was not the open plain country of farther East, favorable for lions; so there was no need of a thorn *boma*. It was heavy stunted mimosa bush; and King had selected the tiniest possible natural opening that just gave room for his diminutive tent and his simple needs.

"Ha, hello, Big Chief Biggs," King greeted the police inspector. "I got word you were coming, so I've got a hot bath ready for you and then we can eat."

"Hello, Kingi Bwana." Biggs shook hands. "You heard I was coming? The deuce you say. I wish I could get the service out of my niggers that you seem to get out of yours. How do you manage the thing?"

"One way," said King lazily, "is not to think of them as just niggers. But go ahead and clean up and let's eat."

During the meal both men tacitly agreed not to discuss the business that both knew brought them together. When it was over and Kaffa had removed the enamel plates King lighted his pipe, stretched himself comfortably on the ground and said—

"Now then, shoot."

The police inspector hesitated. His mission was, to his inherited principles of courtesy, an awkward matter to bring up to a man with whom he had always been on friendly terms.

King laughed at his confusion and helped him out.

"Hell, Chief, you know I've come up here to find this Meyer man, and I know you came up a month ago to look for him yourself. Now let's start from there on."

The inspector was relieved. King's open minded attitude made things easier.

"Well," he said, "he isn't anywhere around here; and unless you have some information which we have not, I believe the man must be dead. I've come to find out what you know and what you propose to do."

King was relieved, too. Immensely relieved. He wanted just that information; it saved him many weeks of fruitless search. If the policeman, with his connections and his channels of inquiry through native constables and headmen and so on, had established the fact that the lost scientist was not there, that eliminated an enormous district. In fact, had it not been for the need of this information which he could have got in no other way, it is probable that King would not have been there when the policeman came. King was willing to trade news for news.

"You want to know what I know? It's darn little. Except—d'you know about the letter the Heidelberg crowd received?"

The inspector did not. King told him frankly. He explained the content of its quite ambitious claims about the value of the discoveries, and the condition in which it had been received; also the unexpected and unknown source of funds.

"I thought it might be gold or oil; but it seems that this bird knew nothing about such things. Now there's my cards on the table. That's all I know and that's why I'm looking for him. It's up to you to tell me why your people are officially interested."

"That might be a few months old; or it might be a few years," said the inspector, referring to the letter. "It establishes nothing. What is your opinion of the professor from the university?"

"I believe he's on the level," said King. "His crowd is interested in the scientific findings, if any. He doesn't know where the money comes from; though his higher-up probably does."

The inspector ruminated. He was inclined to believe with King. As to why officialdom was interested, it seemed to him that since King already knew so much and was there on the spot, there could be no harm in telling the secret.

"I'll tell you, Kingi Bwana, since you've been so candid. The professor thought it was queer that their man wasn't just picked up and shoved into a uniform. Well, after the trouble was all over and our people got to straightening up and looking over whatever records there were, we came across a notation to the effect that this Hugo Meyer was to be let alone because he was doing something or other of immense possible value to the German arms.

"That was all. It didn't say what; only that he was not to be bothered. Now that it is all over, the thing is possibly useless. But we made a note of it, of course; and when this professor suddenly cropped up after all these years to look for him we thought we'd better find out what it was all about. But now that the man is dead, I suppose that closes the chapter."

"I have a hunch," said King slowly, "that he isn't dead. I think you've looked in the wrong place. He dropped out of sight here; but—he was interested in anthropoid apes—the fighting around here drove away every live thing that the Heinie troops didn't have to shoot and eat—and from what I hear those birds ate about everything. Why wouldn't it be reasonable that this scientist nut moved west, up toward the Ruwenzori foothills? There's supposed to be more of his apes there, anyway. That's where I'm to go look-see."

"Good Lord!" gasped the inspector. "My dear fellow, you can't do that. That's Urundi and Ruanda districts. Positively ghastly country. Nothing but solid jungle for hundreds of miles. It would take an army ten years to find a man there if he wanted to hide. You could go in there and in the first day you'd be lost to the human world. It took our whole African army, helped by the Belgians, four years to round up the Fritzies in the comparative open country around here; and still they were holding out after they had given up in Europe. Nobody lives in that frightful country."

"Pygmy tribes do," said King stubbornly.

"Oh, pygmies, yes; but they are half monkeys, anyhow. And for that matter a missionary once told me a fairy story about giants. But good Lord, my dear chap, that is the last, lost end of nowhere.

You don't mean to tell me that you hope to find a white man in there after fifteen years?"

King's face wore his hard look of determination.

"I've hired out to go and look, anyway," he insisted. "And if he's dead I'm hired to look for anything he may have left."

THE INSPECTOR relapsed into silence. He knew King. He knew it was useless to argue. He thought the matter over from his official angle and finally he said—

"Well, I don't suppose there can be any objection to your going idiot if you want to—er, provided, of course, that, if you should find anything and come out alive, you'll let our fellows look it over—just in case, you know; if this fellow might after all have found something of military importance."

King was positive.

"Hell, no! I deliver my findings, if any, to the crowd that's hired me. Just the same as if I was a mining man or a plain business scout, I'd be bound to turn in my reports to my employers."

The inspector was officially thoughtful; out of which grew a great embarrassment. He looked at King's dogged expression and found it difficult to give words to his decision. At length he forced himself to mumble—

"Well, my dear fellow—er, I know it's no use trying to dissuade you; but—I'm awf'ly sorry, I'll have to detain you—er, at least until I can communicate with headquarters and find out whether they want to go any further into the matter themselves."

King took the announcement with surprising coolness.

"Yeah, I figured you'd think that way," he said. "Although Urundi and Ruanda are Belgian mandate and you've got nothing to do with it at all."

The inspector was more determined and more embarrassed than ever.

"Sorry, old man, but—by Jove, that complicates things. We'll have to get in touch with the Belgians—because, you know, there might be something in all this. It might be a matter of the gravest international importance. Dash it all, I wish you could see this thing my way."

"Oh, I do," said King. "I can see your point exactly. I figured just that anyhow. And I suppose the negotiations will take weeks and months."

"I'm afraid they will, my dear chap. But—I'm really frightfully sorry—but it's my duty to stop you until the thing is settled. I'm beginning to think it may be much more important than we had thought—that mysterious money, you know; and the insistence upon bringing out all his proofs, whatever they might be. Somebody besides the university is interested. Sorry, old man, but I've just got to stop you."

"And just how do you propose to stop me?" asked King pointedly.

The inspector was excruciatingly embarrassed. Not because he had any doubt of his ability to stop King. This was not any wild and woolly West of America where men settled such personal issues at the swift point of a gun; this was British territory and the British policeman had the ingrained conviction of his kind that all and sundry persons would be amenable to the majesty of the law. He was embarrassed at the need of displaying his authority.

"Oh, come now, my dear fellow." He laughed constrainedly. "We don't have to fight about a thing like this. But, if I must, of course, the simplest thing is to order your *safari* men not to go any farther with you and to send word through the villages that you don't get any others. And you'll have to stay with me, of course. So—" He finished his exposition of authority with another constrained laugh.

"Yeah," King said resignedly. "We don't have to fight. I figured you'd do just that."

"Sorry, old man," apologized the inspector. "But there's just a chance that the thing might be frightfully important,"

King grinned at him without a trace of rancor.

"Oh, that's all right, Chief. You're acting just like I figured you'd have to according to your best lights. But we're deadly enemies, and I won't ask you to share my tent—haven't got room for two, anyway."

"Awf'ly glad you take it that way," said the inspector with huge relief. "I'll pitch my tent in the next little hole in the bush. My sergeant will take care of your *safari* men."

The next nearest available hole in the bush where a tent could be set up—King had carefully seen to that—was a hundred yards away.

So that night, when everybody was asleep and contented and secure, King and Kaffa quietly rolled up the tiny tent with the few cooking pots in its center and melted away from that place, leaving twenty-eight *safari* men with their loads of grass and stones in care of a trusty sergeant of police.

"Now then," whispered King to the Hottentot, "see to it, little monkey man, that you don't fail to find the secret stick trail that you taught to Barounggo."

"Keh-heh-heh-heh," giggled the Hottentot. "If that great man of more war than wit has not forgotten it I will surely find it. Have no fear, *Bwana*. Surely will I follow it."

THE little *safari* had arrived. The queer Hottentot code of broken sticks had been surely laid—the man of war had not forgotten—and as surely followed. The twelve *shenzis* had remained intact, wondering and fearful under the shadow of that great spear.

That was a week ago. No angry minion of the law had followed. As the inspector had said, one could go in there and in the first day one would be lost to the human world. King was lost in the lost end of nowhere. He did not know where he was. Nobody knew. He had traveled westward from Lake Victoria Nyanza, crisscross, zigzag and around, as the lesser densities of the jungle had best permitted. He had covered many tedious miles; he did not know how many.

Perhaps he was twenty miles away from the lake, perhaps a hundred. Maps were indications of nothing. In mere unsurveyed country maps are a help in that when one comes to a river one may figure that this may be such and such a river and that it may be perhaps within fifty miles or so of where a random cartographer drew it.

This map showed but one river, the Kagera, which rose theoretically somewhere near Lake Kivu, the "gorilla lake", and flowed generally northwestward and emptied into the Victoria Nyanza by the swamps of Bukoba—at least the map thought it was the same river. King had already crossed three rivers, three quite sizable *lu-anzas*—or maybe it was the same river three times. He had skirted round the shores of five large *ni-anzas*, two of them salty and one whose edges were heavily encrusted with potash. The map knew nothing about these.

King knew something about the elements of ascertaining position by sextant observations; and he was wondering rather grimly just now how some explorers could come back with such confident traverse notes out of dense forest country where one could scramble along for days without ever catching a glimpse of the sky, to say nothing about horizon, or stars, or sun.

Positions, however, are relative; their scope and usefulness is in connection with other known and established points. Had King been able to establish his accurate position to a pin prick on the map, what good would it have done him? It would not, since the rest of the map was vague, have told him how far he would have to hack his way through the jungle to come to the next water or to a pygmy village.

He was looking for a village. He thought he was in pygmy country. If he could find a settlement of these queer, shy little people he hoped to inquire whether anything was known of a white man alive somewhere in the district. If

anywhere within fifty miles—which was about the life and trade association radius of these forest dwellers—so unusual a phenomenon existed, it would surely be known.

For all that King knew he might be surrounded by the little people at that very minute. Furtive and aloof as animals, they might skulk in their own fastnesses and peer cautiously at strangers for a week before they would permit themselves to be seen—or rather, might grow careless enough to be surprised. It has happened that the first intimation strangers have had of their presence has been a poisoned arrow from a diminutive bow or a blowgun dart out of the night.

But if one stopped to think of the possibility of treacherous natives one would never get anywhere. That is a chance that the stranger must take, and he must be careful in his slow progress to mind his jungle p's and q's; to do nothing, not even any unknown anything, that may offend the unsuspected conventions of the suspicious denizens of the forest.

King was being very careful. His course was an erratic zigzag. He picked openings where he found them; he pushed through where he could; he detoured rather than let his men chop a path; for all forest dwellers are of necessity tree worshippers. How could one tell when a blade might chop some sapling whose evil spirit required to be propitiated, or might scar some tree whose tutelary deity called for reverence? Until the people had been met, how should these things be known?

Fortunately for his progress this was rain forest, not *liana* jungle. The elevation was nearly four thousand feet and was gradually ascending to the lower flanks of the Ruwenzori range. The trees were tropical giants of silk cottons, tamarisks, yews; the underbrush was sapling and bush growth rather than the awful interlaced thorny vines of the lower levels. Now and then occurred spaces where the overhead growth was so dense, the light that filtered through so dim, that undergrowth struggled but feebly for life. Here one could progress almost as fast as a slow walk.

Suddenly King, in the lead, stopped and held up his hand. Kaffa at his heels immediately did the same. The first porter behind Kaffa followed suit. And so the signal passed along the winding line to the Masai who brought up the rear with an ever watchful eye upon stragglers. The shuffling line came to a halt and stood to listen.

For awhile there was nothing. Then from far ahead came the sound again; a swishing of branches and a crackle of dead leaves. King looked at Kaffa. The Hottentot listened awhile and then nodded.

"Yes, man," he whispered.

"Ba-m'bute or Ba-nande? Dwarf man or forest man?" inquired King.

Kaffa weighed the question.

"I think forest man," he pronounced. "The moving of branches is too high up for dwarf."

"Guess you're right," agreed King. "Now if you know any forest talk like you've always bragged, call to him."

Kaffa grinned his readiness to show off his accomplishment and gave forth a throaty barking hail. Instantly the growing noise stopped. The jungle was as still as if a deer had crouched in hiding. King was wise. He made no advance toward where the sounds had been. He motioned Kaffa to call again. After a long hesitation a voice came questioning.

The Hottentot was wise, too. He made no blundering statement about a white man with a *safari;* he said only that he wanted information about where there might be habitations and that he would give a piece of meat if the man would come forth.

"Nay, come thou to me," the man called with innate suspicion. In this way he would avoid falling into a trap and would be able to hear whether one man approached or many.

King signed to Kaffa to go. The rest would be up to the astute little fellow's

power of persuasion. King sat down and lighted his pipe. He knew that all the questions that could come within the scope of the jungle dweller's reason would have to be satisfactorily answered before he would even begin to consider the advisability of coming forward. And indeed an hour passed before the sounds indicated two men coming back.

Kaffa came grinning his triumph, clucking like a hen to encourage its offspring to advance. The man came cautiously into view, but remained standing at a little distance, ready to make an instant dash for safety. He was very black. His scrawny body was short and pot bellied, but abnormally long legs brought him to normal height. His forehead retreated into overhanging crinkly hair; enormous lips protruded in counter proportion; a nose flattened over half the face, was slit by great elongate nostrils. Except for the lack of the cranial ridge and the over developed canines the face might have been a gorilla's.

THE FIRST thing King did, before putting a single question to him, was to give him a large lump of cold meat. With animal intentness the man fell to gnawing at it, watching over its top with wide alert eyes.

"He says," announced Kaffa, "that a white man came long ago with a *safari* four days' journey to the south. He does not know how long ago; he did not see that white man; he never saw any white man; but he heard about him; and that man went away."

"Hm. Right useful piece of news, isn't it," grunted King.

"He says also," continued Kaffa with triumph at all the information that he had elicited, "that he has heard about another white man who came long ago and he has never heard about that man's going away."

"Ha, that begins to sound like friend professor."

King's eyes sparkled. He had not in his most sanguine dreams hoped to strike the trail at his very first effort. It was almost too easy.

"Ask him if he knows anything about where that white man may be, or if he knows where there are people who may know."

Kaffa translated and the man mumbled back at long length over his meat, pointing with his eyes and with inclinations of his head.

"He says he does not know. The jungle people were afraid of that man because the *Ngai* had looked into his eyes and he was mad." King knew that the *Ngai* was an almost universal Central African name for the great Nature god. "The *Ngai* had looked into his eyes," continued Kaffa with prosaic indifference," and so he married a monkey and went away to live with them."

"What? What's that you say?" King's shout was so suddenly vehement that the jungle man sprang back and crouched ready to run for fear he had in some manner offended.

"He says," giggled the Hottentot as though the thing were merely funny, "that that white man married a chim'panze and went away to live with her people in the jungle."

"Good Lord!" This was news with a vengeance. And told with such simplicity that the astounding thing sounded true. "Went crazy and married a chimpanzee." Good heavens, what wild and weird things could happen in Africa!

And then, as reason began to assert itself and to interpret this stark statement of the native, King began to nod with slow understanding, to smile as he nodded, and then to laugh. He leaned back against a tree and held his sides as mirth rocked him. Of course he understood it all now. The professor absorbed in his study of the anthropoid apes, prowling in the deepest forests all the time: That was quite sufficient for the primitive mind to set him down as having been touched by *Ngai*, the Nature god.

There were plenty of civilized people who were quite ready to set down as crazy any fellow human—and particularly a

foreigner—who acted so radically differently from their own established conventions of life.

The good professor was quite possibly a bit eccentric, too; a man would have to be, to come and immure himself in the jungle for so long in order to pursue a study. Even though he had never intended to make fifteen years of it, circumstances had just so happened. That was Africa.

Man proposed and Africa disposed. How many men were there who had come to Africa for a year of business and had stayed the rest of their lives? Cursing it, many of them, moaning about exile, longing for home; but there they had stayed. Africa had just reached out and taken them into her maw. Here was himself. If anybody had tried to prophesy to him that he would stay in Africa for eight years he would have laughed—he would, in fact, have called that person crazy.

Of course the natives would say that the professor was crazy. And when he went away, when he withdrew to some other part where the opportunities for his study were better, they would say—what was more probable than that he had a tame ape or two?—they would naturally say with perfect African logic that he had married it. Why not? They unanimously insisted that apes stole their women. It was true that he, King, had never known of such a case personally; but more than one white man had vouched for the story; and King had heard plenty of sly stories about bush natives who had reciprocal unholy tastes. Why not—in their simple minds—a white man too?"

Of course that was it. King was quickly persuading himself. That was the explanation. Ha-ha, what queer ideas these primitives could evolve out of the simplest things. That, without any manner of doubt, must be the whole truth of the matter.

Still—King laughed less wholeheartedly—this was Africa; the lost end of nowhere in the very center of Africa. Nothing was sure in Africa until one had seen and talked and knew for oneself. He turned to Kaffa.

"Ask him about any people who might know something more about this white man."

Kaffa had already done that. One of Kaffa's greatest assets was that he did not need to have each item of order detailed to him one by one. The little Hottentot had a thinking apparatus within his monkey-like head and he frequently used it.

"He says that one day's trek to the north is a village of the Ba-m'bute. The white man went away with his wife to the north. There is a trail. He will show us. I have said that *Bwana* will give him *potio*, the same meat and mealies that the *shenzis* get and a strong knife."

"Good," said King. "Tell him to start."

THAT trail was a godsend. Crooked, aimless, scarcely more discernible than an animal track, much overgrown, often requiring crawling upon hands and knees; none the less it more than trebled the distance that could be covered in a blind blundering about the forest.

Even at that, it was not till well into the following day that they began to reach indications of human habitation. King had expected no more than that. He knew that a native stating the time distance of any journey always states it in terms of how fast he can do it according to his usual mode of travel, walking, running, canoe, or mule back; he never thinks to translate it into the probable speed of men with packs or of slow footed white men who flounder through unaccustomed bush.

Indications of a village began to be plentiful enough. Little trails criss-crossed; piles of refuse festered in the hot-house air—for these were simple people who disposed of their garbage by throwing it out at the very doors of their crude shelters; and when the stench became unbearable even to their nostrils they just moved their habitations to a less polluted spot.

Over all hung the pervading effluvium of rottenness which the wind, howsoever fiercely it might rage above the far tree-tops, never got a chance to blow clear in the dim, humid lanes below.

The jungle man stopped and explained to the Hottentot that he had better go ahead and announce the arrival of so unusual a thing as a *safari*, making clear not only that its object was pacific, but —much more important—that it knew how to treat jungle natives; otherwise some startled villager might send a blow-gun dart whispering through the leaves as a stop message; and with those things just a touch, as light as the whisper of its coming, was sufficient to stop its recipient for all time.

"Go ahead," grunted King, and sat down.

To the wary Hottentot's suggestion that the man might be going in advance to arrange an ambush—for the little *safari* gear would mean fortune to the village during the lives of all that generation —King grunted again with malicious humor—

"For that purpose do you, little bush man, walk in front, and so shall your cunning which you boast be the security for all of us."

At which Kaffa twisted and wrapped his knees around each other like a shy schoolgirl and grinned with less good cheer than usual.

That interview between the jungle negro and the dwarf village took up half a day. Time, of course, was a non-existent element with them. Tomorrow there would be daylight again. It might rain or it might shine; what difference did that make? One could fight or one could run away and hide in the woods equally well in either case. To run or not to run, that was the weighty question.

The village elders had to squat in conclave and jabber that matter over from all possible angles. In the meanwhile any impatient advance on King's part would mean a hasty blowgun dart or two before running.

So King smoked many pipes and kicked his heels in the patience that is bred of Africa. In the course of weary time the messenger came back and clucked at the Hottentot. Kaffa translated with sly malice.

"He says the little people are prepared to make talk with the *bwana* but they are afraid of the Wa-kuafi."

The Masai gave vent to a noise like the explosive grunt of a buffalo. The Wa-kuafi are a branch of the Masai, pastoral tribes, rich in cattle and in tilled fields, and therefore envied and looked down upon by the fighting men. Barounggo was an Elmoran, a warrior, who owned nothing, but took what he wanted with his spear. He rumbled deep in his throat.

"Many people are afraid of me, little monkey man. Why should not your relatives in this place of stinks also fear?"

"Keh-heh-heh-heh," chuckled the little Hottentot.

It was one of his most enjoyable amusements, to excite the somber ferocity of his master's other servant; although he had in reality a great regard for the Masai's loyalty and courage, as the Masai in turn envied the little man's superior cunning which he acknowledged with a lordly condescension to be a necessity to a man who could not wield a seven-foot spear.

And indeed it was not to be wondered that the little people were nervous about the great fellow. From some mysterious place he had produced a single black ostrich plume which he had bound over his left temple so that it nodded above his plaited hair to exaggerate his height, which was already twice that of the pygmies. To them he typified the stories that had filtered in even to their forest fastness of the fierce great men of the plains who condescended to no work but slew for their needs.

"It is well," said King. "Barounggo stays with the *shenzis* and makes camp in a clean place. You and I go and make *indaba* with these Ba-m'bute."

The village itself stank with a concentrated force much worse than its surrounding middens. It consisted of tiny

huts of interlaced brush, hardly more than rain and wind shelters, scattered among giant tree trunks. No sun ever came here to sweeten the air by dessicating the litter of refuse. Everything lay as it was thrown and rotted in the humidity.

What impressed King most about these people was the extraordinary vitality that they must have, their resistance to disease. They must be very close to the lower animals to be able to live in such conditions without dying off like flies in the fall. Their shelters, except that they were on the ground, were not much more than the nests that the chimpanzees of the same district built in the trees.

What, indeed, separated them from the apes? The faculty of reason? There was no doubt that they did possess a certain dull quality of reason. But might that not be a matter of degree rather than kind? Various learned professors had recently made elaborate experiments to prove that the greater apes could distinctly reason. What, then, was the great dividing line? Something mysterious in the structure of the body cells? King did not know. Perhaps Dr. Hugo Meyer, after fifteen years of close study, would know.

A GROUP of the little people waited for King under a tree. No other live thing was in sight. The reception committee wriggled their toes with nervous tension through the moist muck of mud and rotting banana pulp that made a malodorous slush on the ground. Monkeys did just that in their cages when visitors came to the zoo.

They were sturdy, little, quite naked creatures, most of them well under four feet, and—King was quite startled—they were not black. Reddish yellow, rather; though some tended to brownish black; and the hair of some of them was distinctly russet. It was an amazing discovery to King.

Bristly black hair grew on the upper lips and chins of the older males; heavy and curly on their chests; and—extraordinary again—fleecy yellowish on their cheeks and limbs, quite a mat of it on their backs.

King's thoughts, as he looked, were running curiously riot. Chimpanzees were black, he reflected; but the gorillas of Mount Karisimbi, not so far distant, gorilla beringii, were often no more brownish black than some of these creatures, whose faces, too, were remarkable for their long upper lips, their depressed broad noses with enormous alae and their heavily prognathous jaws.

Where in the scale of evolution would Dr. Hugo Meyer place these people? He had to try to make clear to them that he was seeking information of Dr. Hugo Meyer.

First of all he distributed gifts, little coils of copper wire that he brought out of his pockets—they were that far ahead of the apes in that they did make crude arm bands of beaten metal. And they carried weapons. Each man held either a diminutive three-foot bow or a long eight-foot blow tube. But for that matter King had seen a reddish brown orang-utan carry a club; the difference was in degree again, not in kind. The little men took the presents and chattered to one another, showing their teeth under lips which turned up as they grinned.

King motioned to Kaffa without speaking; he felt almost as if a human voice would frighten these creatures. The Hottentot clicked and clucked to the Ba-nanda man and he in turn made staccato noises at the Ba-m'bute folk.

There seemed to exist a confusion in their minds. The question required to be assimilated. That required time. They pointed inquiringly at King; they thrust out pointing chins to the surrounding jungle; they acted out comings and goings and climbing of trees; they shook their heads; they accompanied all their wealth of motion with chatterings in high tenor voices. At intervals the Ba-nanda man gabbled to the Hottentot and the Hottentot back to him. Fifteen minutes it took to put over that question and

answer. Then Kaffa reported the stunning disappointment.

"They say they have never heard of any white man as far as they travel or as far as the people whom they meet travel. There is no white man here. There are no people here except their own people and the chi-m'panze. The Ba-nanda man told them that his people had heard that the white man had married a chi-m'panze, and had come here; and they say, well then it is clear that one must ask the chi-m'panze, but they themselves are civilized people and do not know how to talk to the chi-m'panze. Perhaps the white *bwana*, who must know everything, knows how to talk with them."

King's high hopes dropped to zero. He had dared to let himself hope when he had first heard the Ba-nanda man's vague story, although he had felt the insistent warning that his quest was shaping up too easily. Things did not fall out as easily as that in Africa. Surely the curse of Adam had concentrated in the African jungles. In the sweat of one's brow one had to labor. Health and life and the indomitable will to carry on had to be heaped in the balance. Only in payment for continuous toil and high courage would the jungle ever yield a grudging return.

All these things King knew from experience. It never occurred to him that possibly the patience and skill and judgment that had gone into his arduous journey into this lost end of nowhere might have appeased the jealous gods of the land.

He made Kaffa question again from every possible angle that might overcome any misunderstanding. But the reply was definite. There was no white man. There had never been any white man. The little people were positive. The one ray of hope that they offered was that perhaps he had gone by another way up toward the foothills where his wife's people were plentiful.

They themselves did not go to the foothills because the Ba-n'tongo lived there. The Ba-n'tongo were bad people, big people, bigger even than the big black man who had stayed with the porter men, and they did not permit the little people to come into their country.

The big people? King's eyes widened. Those must be the giants of whom the police inspector's missionary acquaintance had told. They could not be so hostile, then. If a missionary had penetrated to the country there was no reason why another white man should not have done so; and particularly no reason why yet another white man should not follow. And the apes were plentiful in the hills? Quite likely then that the professor had worked his way up there.

King's hopes began to rise again. He told Kaffa to see whether he could find out anything about directions, routes of travel, trails, anything. Kaffa relayed the question. But the little people's minds had tired of concentration upon the one subject. They had gone off on another tangent and nothing could shake the new thought from their heads.

They were glad, they rambled on, that the white *bwana* had come; because he was without doubt a *bwana m'kubwa*, a very great white master, and he had guns; and they were going to make a war and they wanted him to help them. This very night they had been planning to make their war and it was surely the sending of the ghosts of their fathers that so strong a white man had come, and he must surely help them in their war.

"To which, tell them most surely not," answered King. "If they are out for trouble that's their affair and I'm certainly not going to bring white man's weapons into play to slaughter their enemies for them. Tell them they're fools and that their silly quarrel, whatever it is, can probably be arbitrated, and I'll go so far that I'll see the other side and we'll sit in white man's judgment over the quarrel."

The long winded answer to that boiled down to that the matter could not be settled by talk because the other side could not understand.

"H'm, that's what all our most civilized

belligerents say," said King. "Besides—" with a sudden suspicion that fighting might be some sort of an excuse for treachery—"ask them what kind of a yarn is that; since they said that there were no people around here but their own people."

The reply was startling in its insight into some of the mental processes of these folk. Oh, they were not planning to fight with any people, they said; they were going to war against certain maraud-ing apes; and since the great apes were very fierce, they wanted the help of the white man's guns.

A war it was in their minds. Not just an expedition of humans to hunt some animals; but a conflict against creatures who fought back.

But King was one of those who ob-jected on principle to the unnecessary killing of the great anthropoids. The ad-vance of man into their jungles had al-ready exterminated them from all but a few of the remotest fastnesses; and even to these more than enough millionaire sportsmen came with a covering excuse of collecting specimens for little tank town museums. One of the great indignations of King's life remained against a Euro-pean prince who came at vast expense into the western flank of the great moun-tains on whose less accessible slope he now was, and murdered fourteen gorillas and then posed all over the landscape to be photographed with his carcasses for the delectation of his admiring subjects.

King, in common with many other people, had heard and read a vast amount of hysterical propaganda about atrocities committed by the Belgian government in the Congo; most of which propaganda he considered to be lies circulated by a rival power in Africa. But, lies or no, he was inclined to forgive them all in return for the splendid action of the Belgian govern-ment in setting aside the whole of the Karisimbi Mountains as a sanctuary for the great apes.

He would certainly not be a party to any war on them. But he wanted to know for what reason the pygmy people were so intent upon a war. The reason was simple enough, crude and direct. The apes were robbing the pygmies' melon and yam patches. And they were foreign apes; not the local apes of their own trees; that was what made the crime the more unforgivable. If they would permit this insult, the ghosts of their fathers would bring sickness upon them.

THESE people were becoming more amazing every minute. They stood at the very dawn of human reason and yet in this matter of war and killing, these almost Neanderthal men reasoned exactly as did the most civilized statesmen of today. Foreigners. That was the major crime. Their own monkeys might be shooed off; but when foreign monkeys—astounding thought that; foreign monkeys — when strangers looted their land that was a matter that touched their honor and could be settled only by war.

How could these astounding little sav-ages know that the marauding apes were not the same cunning beasts that lurked in the thickest of their own jungles, King wanted to know.

Oh, that was easy—the little men tossed their heads and grinned in open boasting—they had long ago disciplined their neighbors in their own trees; those apes were wise enough to have learned that punishment followed melon thiev-ing. These overbold marauders always swooped down from the hills where there were no melons and yams, traveling fifty miles in a day along their tree roads and retreating just as fast when they were routed.

Not the best warrior of the little people could follow half as fast along the jungle paths; and besides, up in those hills lived the Ba-n'tongo, the big people who al-lowed no man to enter their country.

The Hottentot translated everything with perfect seriousness. Why not? He knew that in his own bush country far down to the south monkeys were a pest to his own people. Only there they were the big hamadryas baboons and they

raided the mealie patches with immense damage. Many a time had he sallied out with the rest of his village—by no means ever alone—to chase off the robbers.

It was King who laughed, almost giggled. The idea was so ludicrous.

It was just as if he were transported to the beginning of the world and was observing one of the major causes of war that had persisted throughout the rest of the world's history. It had always been the bold mountaineers who had swooped down from their barren hills to raid the comparatively prosperous habitations of their more civilized neighbors, and had fled back into their inaccessible haunts when defeated.

The little men saw him laugh and took heart to press their plea. Would he not help them with his might and his knowledge, for the raiders were very fierce and cunning? If one of them could drop from the thick foliage of a tree upon a pygmy man alone it would give but one tug of its great hands and would tear an arm from the socket; or it might hang from a branch by one hand and clutch a man round the throat with a great strangling foot.

And the leader of these apes—the little savages were building up their case—he was a particularly huge and cunning devil; he could see through every trap, forestall every strategy. From the hills he came; from those hills where that other white man must have gone with his ape wife; perhaps this leader was a son of theirs—that would explain his cunning. It was, in fact, practically the duty of the white *bwana* to help them against this aggression.

King laughed no more. He could not tell just why. He did not entirely believe all the horrors of ape warfare that the savages recounted; that was sheer sympathy seeking craft on their part, he decided. These things might well have happened within the memory of their generation. Anything could happen in these dark primeval jungles. Still, he could not accept them as habitual tactics of malice aforethought.

It was not that that chilled his mirth. It was that recurring reference to the white man's ape wife. The thing came so naturally; it was accepted so easily, without demur, as a commonplace that called for no argument.

Was it remotely possible that— No, the thing was monstrous. A native perhaps, one of these pygmies who were not so very far advanced beyond the tree stage—with only a little more of that horrible brown-yellow hair their faces would be absolute ape. Yes, he had heard plenty of such stories of miscegenation. But a white man? Never! Impossible!

No, this was just the primitive mind ascribing to others what might be quite natural to itself. But Africa— Fifteen terrible years alone in the jungle. Absorbedly interested in the anthropoids—for the sake of science—possibly crazy . . .

King shook himself. He looked around rapidly and blinked his eyes. He was becoming morbid. These dim sunless jungles, these debased dwarfs. They were hypnotizing him into a condition of bizarre unreality. He turned to Kaffa.

"Tell them," he ordered, "that I will not use my guns against these monkeys who rob a few yams. But I will come with them; and if any man is in a great danger from which he can not escape then I will shoot to save his life."

That was a concession, though King scarcely realized it, to the dramatic ability inherent in these savages. They had told a good story; they had built up, unknown to themselves, a situation of man against nature; and King responded to it. As man, howsoever far removed from these naked primitives, he stood by man to the extent at least of defending human life.

That was as far as he could go; and with that the little savages had to be content. Very well then; the war party was to steal out that same night. By night because the apes were too cautious to be surprised by day; and they, humans, had so far progressed beyond nature that they could postpone the time for sleep; while the apes, evolved beyond the nocturnal creatures, had not yet gone far enough, and slept with the coming of the dark.

IT IS a phenomenon among savages that their little patches of cultivation are frequently astonishingly distant from their habitations. Travelers have wondered why. Does anybody know just why a farmer will sometimes walk a mile or more to some outlying field when untilled land lies at his elbow? Possibly he has persuaded himself that the distant soil is more fertile than the nearer and prefers to go according to his hard ingrained "experience" rather than let the government analyst test his soil and give him a true report of its values.

Savages whose analyst is their local witch doctor go according to his expert whim. This crooked branched tree harbors a benevolent spirit; or that curious outcrop of rock is a good omen. And so one finds little hidden patches of crude clearing scattered in a wide flung radius around every village.

The pygmies had located a small troupe of apes that were looting a distant field. They were cunning enough to avoid all traps and ferocious enough to attack any small boys who might be stationed as scarecrows. An armed party of men could keep them off; but then they would simply go to another field. The only recourse, therefore, was war; a surprise night attack upon their roosts. A scout had discovered the group of giant silk cotton trees in which they slept.

King was all eager to see how these primitives conducted a war. And a war it was to them. Man to man, a chimpanzee was as big as a pygmy, much heavier and infinitely stronger—and, King reflected, not so very much less intelligent.

The little people set out with as much precaution and stealth as though they were attacking a neighboring hostile tribe. Their fear exaggerated the intelligence of their enemies; the apes kept a spy posted to give warning of their movements, they insisted. It was a serious business for them. Every man knew that, as in any war, death was a grim factor that played no favorites.

King stumbled along an unseen track in a grotesque dream. He was at the dark dawn of civilization and these were dawn men fighting to maintain their hard won superiority over the apes. He could just discern shadowy little shapes that hurried along and he followed the pattering of their hard feet.

There was a thin moon. Not that it could be seen through the dense mat of foliage; but a pale glow filtered through sufficiently to show shadow masses where otherwise everything would be the utter blackness of the pit.

Good for them but bad for the apes, the little men chattered gratefully. That seemed to be an enigma born of some queer superstition. But Kaffa's woodcraft knew the answer to that one. Monkeys always crouched desperately still on moonlight nights because the great snakes, the tree boas, which were unable to see in the pitch darkness, hunted like cats in the dim glow.

King was hard put to it to keep up with the pygmy army. His stride was twice theirs and his walking speed proportionately so. But those twisty trails had been cut to suit pygmy stature. At six feet of height sudden unseen branches rasped across a tall man's face. More than once a thick limb, like some ghostly arm reaching out of the night, thudded against King's chest and staggered him.

After an interminable stumbling and ducking through the dark jungle maze the swift patterings of little feet began to slow down. Shadows gathered in groups and hissed sibilantly at each other. The groups congested, broke up, melted out into deeper shadows.

There seemed to be no order, no plan; nobody, apparently, was in charge. Shadow groups formed, larger or smaller, according to whim of individuals. They moved away according to mob impulse.

King judged that they had arrived and that the flitting shadows were surrounding a certain group of vast trees whose thick limbs hung low to the ground. Nobody paid any attention to him; nobody suggested any vantage point. These

primitives made war each man according to his own unrestricted desire.

King had always been under the impression that chimpanzees were pacific creatures. But he had seen them only in zoos. A big male ape in its own jungle might be a very different beast from the consumptive creature in a cage. At all events, these pygmy people ought to know; and small wonder, then, that their night foray was a matter of serious moment to them. So formless an expedition, without thought, without plan, was bound to leave a loophole for disaster to strike somewhere.

Kaffa whispered at King's shoulder.

"There, *Bwana*, but a little distance to the right is an open place. No tree is there from which anything can drop. That is a good place. This is a fool's war that plays with death in the dark."

King felt his way out in the direction indicated, Kaffa with him and the Bananda man so close to his heels as to impede his stumbling progress. King wanted to curse him for a frightened fool, but he had not the heart. Fighting with apes was outside of his experience; but he did know that the big hamadryas baboons of the plains gullies would not hesitate to attack a single man or two. These chimpanzees were twice as big as the biggest dog baboon; and there was something creepy about the thought of a black demoniac something dropping, all tearing hands and feet, upon one's head out of a tree in the dark.

Suddenly a spark of fire winked between the farther tree trunks. Another glimmered out, and another. They formed a rough circle round the tree group. Goblin figures showed in silhouette against the light, stepping cautiously under the trees—not too close—peering upward, poised with toy bows and deadly little arrows.

Stealthy shufflings commenced among the high branches. The goblin figures darted about beneath, hoping to catch a glimpse of a moving mass between the deeper abysses of blackness. Gibberings came from above. Excited chatterings answered from below. In the trees a springy creak of wood, a threshing of branches and leaves as a heavy body launched itself through space to a farther branch. On the ground a frenzied patter of feet as the goblins huddled in a protective mob.

King felt as if he were in a nightmare of ghouls. It was weird and unholy warfare. Shadows flitting in the firelight hunting shadows. It was not of the material world, this thing. It was gloomily unreal; a flickery moving picture of a maniac director's inferno.

King did not blame the dwarf people for being afraid of this war of theirs. In that dark setting any horror might happen.

An angry coughing bark sounded from a low hanging mass of foliage. A flurry of pygmies fled that spot. Gibberings answered the bark. The fling and crash of heavy bodies took a definite direction. The angry bark sounded with insistent command.

It seemed to King that there was more purpose and direct plan among the tree folk than among the dwarf mob. He was telling himself that it was as he had expected. The apes were clearly trying to get away and, unless cornered with retreat cut off, would not show fight. And he could then picture the howling, tearing, fury of that fight.

He was just beginning to relax from the tension of an unwarranted expectation of danger, when the horror that he had imagined might happen in the ghoulish setting materialized out of the dark with a suddenness that was the more horrible because it exceeded the wildest probability of his imagination.

The apes were moving successfully along their line of retreat. The goblins were unable to keep up with their fresh fires to light the attack. It looked like a clear getaway, when a lucky arrow flew truer than the rest. There came the shriek of a wounded animal and a frenzied scurry among the branches. The dwarfs yelled in shrill chorus and rushed in a mob to keep up with the scurry.

The arrow, of course, was poisoned.

Its effect would be to paralyze the nerve centers within a few seconds or a few minutes, depending upon the freshness of the venom. The inevitable result would be that the victim, unable to hold on, would fall from its tree. The venom on this particular arrow was fairly fresh and so the end was swift. The ape, feeling its weakness growing apace, began with the last fading of its instinct to climb down in order to avoid a heavy fall.

A dark shape could be discovered lowering itself slowly down the bole of a tree a little beyond the rim of the farthest fires. Desperately it clung; reluctantly it slipped lower. Inevitably lower.

Hobgoblin shadows howled and danced in infernal jubilation. They ringed the tree and leaped in grotesque antics, throwing vast shadows of devils on the farther greenery. The picture required only the master fiend to complete it.

He came. A half human bellow of rage burst from the nearest bushes as a monstrous shape rushed from the blacker darkness and hurled itself upon the leaping shades. In the smoky gloom it looked to be twice as huge as it really was; but allowing even for that, it was enormously bigger than the dwarfs.

Screaming its fury, it charged into the thick of them. Vast arms and feet clutching, swinging, it swept half a dozen little figures whirling into the air in its first rush. After one long second of awful silence the yells of jubilation broke out in shrill yelpings of fear. For a moment a massed mob formed. Not with any idea of attack; it was a huddle of horror.

A bow or two twanged, but without apparent effect. The monstrous shape roared again and rushed the huddle. A luckless dwarf came into the clutch of its vast hands. In a moment it dangled high by one foot. Holding it so by the ankle with both hands, the monster flailed at the mob with the limp body, screaming its fury.

It was enough to terrorize braver people than the dwarfs. With high pitched shrieks the mob broke and fled like devils at cock crow. In an instant every shrieking imp was swallowed into the surrounding blackness. In the same instant the monster made a leap and was gone. A crashing in the bushes, smaller scuttlings in other directions, and the night was as silent as a cave. The devil's nightmare had vanished as suddenly as it had come. Only the flicker of the encircling fires was proof that the thing had happened at all.

KING exhaled a long shuddering breath.

"Twist a grass torch, Kaffa, with speed," he ordered; and when it was ready he advanced warily to the scene of the awesome fight.

It had all come about so suddenly and so far in the gloom that to use his rifle had been out of the question. But there would probably be some first aid to be given, and he was quite sure that none of those pygmies would return to give it.

The torch disclosed six twisted bodies. Dead. Horribly dead. Crushed. Distorted in impossible positions, with broken backs or necks. If there had been any wounded, they had crawled off into the bushes. At the base of the tree huddled the black hairy form of the chimpanzee, already stiff.

As complete as it had been sudden had been the typhoon of death. King was awed. He had never seen anything so sudden even in Africa. Kaffa chattered at his elbow.

"*Bwana*, this is an evil place of devils. We have yet to find our way back to camp through these imp trails without a guide."

"Let us go," said King. "Let the Ba-nanda man make torches as fast as you burn them up."

Occupied as King's faculties were, finding the way back through the jungle maze by sheer trial and error, the thing that he had seen found place to intrude. Anything could happen in Africa, he had often said. But not this thing. This was too impossible.

That the pygmy people should organize a hunting party to chase away some marauding monkeys was nothing. It

was their superstition and their own limited mentality that ascribed a proportionate super-intelligence to the apes and built up their expedition in their minds to the dignity of a war.

But what was this other thing? This sudden avenging monster? No chimpanzee had ever grown to half that size. This creature must have been at least six feet in height; possibly more; though in that gloom it had been impossible to gage with any accuracy. And there had been more than ape intelligence behind the ferocity of its fight. Was an ape physically built so that it could stand on wide spread legs and swing a body round its head with both hands?

Kaffa, trotting along with the torch, might almost have been reading his thoughts.

"In my own country," he broke out of a long silence, "the monkeys have a god whose name is Han-Hau. We give him mealies and pawpaws to keep his people out of our fields. This great one is undoubtedly the god of these chi-m'panze. It is good that we took no part in that war. He is a very fierce god."

"Which is about as far as we shall ever get with any explanation," grunted King. But to the Hottentot he said for the sake of morale, "Monkey gods for monkey people. This was an ape as great as you are a fool. With the morning the little people will make it clear."

And with the morning it was his amazement that the pygmy folk bore him out to the letter. Yes, they said, this was the leader of those apes about whom they had spoken; very big and very terrible and very cunning; had not all men heard him barking his orders to his people?

King, forgetting his reproof to Kaffa, said—

"Rubbish; who ever heard of a chimpanzee growing to that size?"

They answered with perfect readiness, of course not; this was not a chi-m'panze, but a wo-m'panze, one of the greater apes from the big mountain, and the chi-m'panze had chosen it for their leader. Was not a greater ape wiser than a lesser ape even as a big man was a better leader than a small man?

To which sound logic there was no answer. What though King growled irritably that no gorilla would herd with chimpanzees any more than hamadryas baboons would herd with chacmas. The little people would not even argue the matter. There it stood; they had seen with their own eyes and he had seen; what more was there to talk about?

More important was that since the white *bwana* had miserably failed in his promise to shoot his gun and save their lives, he should now come with them to give a belated protection. They had to go and bring in their dead. And the body of the ape would have to be skinned and the hide stuffed with grass and hung up in a tree as a horrible object lesson. The skull would be brought back and decorated with yellow and white clays and kept in the tribe as a trophy.

King was not averse to returning to the scene of the nightmare by daylight. He wanted to convince himself of the impossible by looking for gorilla tracks. The distance which had been an interminable torture by night was agreeably shortened by day. The pygmies approached the battlefield with caution and a certain awe; but took courage from the presence of the white man who towered in the center of their mob.

But once upon the scene and satisfied by throwing stones into the trees that no vengeful enemies lurked in ambush, they dragged their dead aside with animal callousness. Death was something that came in its various forms of suddenness and horror; and the dead would have to be properly cared for according to tribal convention and tradition; otherwise their ghosts would come back and make things unpleasant.

But all that could come later. Just now was the occasion for the quite as important matter of offering indignities to the body of a slain enemy with all the proper ceremonies so that his ghost would suffer an unpleasant time and would not be able to come back.

Ordinarily King would have been intensely interested in watching these ceremonies and in finding out the why and wherefore of each move. It was a necessity of Africa, he considered, to know what all kinds of natives did and why they did it, and from that to reason out in what queer manner they thought. More than once he had been able to apply his accumulated knowledge to the working of some simple hokum that had gained for himself a considerable reputation as a white witch doctor.

But just now he was busy on a more absorbing matter. For the sake of his peace of mind he wanted to see those gorilla tracks. He prowled, therefore, over the ground, searching for footprints. In the immediate vicinity was only a mess of trampled mud. No hope there.

At the base of the tree where the ape had been shot were a couple of prints of foot and knuckle before the sagging body had blurred the rest. King studied these carefully. A gorilla print ought to be very similar to these, only larger. He cast around for larger tracks without success. Going back to the actual spot of the demon fight, he reconstructed the direction from which the monster had charged forth.

From that heavy underbrush it had come. King went there and dropped to his hands and knees so as to miss nothing.

And there it was. Startlingly King saw it, and he froze. Stiffly on all fours, like a trained dog, he tensed over his find.

There it lay, quite clear and sharply outlined; and a little behind it was another deeply impressed by a heavy weight, unmistakable.

King gave a thin, hissing whistle, and in a moment Kaffa was at his side—also on all fours, gazing incredulously at the tracks, broad nostrils twitching as though to find a clue by scent. King spoke no word, but looked at his man. The Hottentot slowly turned his head and puzzled wonder was in his eyes. This track that shouted out loud at them from the silent ground was just not possible.

The imprints were clear all round, easy to read, unmistakable. The wonder lay in that there were no long prehensile toes, no great opposed thumb as in the prints of the chimpanzee. The marks were long and quite flat with sharp edges, slightly wider in front than at the heel. There was no possible room for error.

This thing had worn shoes!

Or moccasins, rather, would be more accurate; for there was no sharp indication of a heel. These were moccasins such as a man might make who had long been out of touch with a shoe store.

KING squatted back on his heels and his eyes narrowed to long, barely open slits. What wild and impossible enigma of Africa was this? A thing that had worn moccasins and had rushed out to murderous battle on the side of chimpanzees? What ancient Roman was it who had written, "Out of Africa always some new thing?" As long ago as that this dark land had startled the world with its bizarre unrealities; and what new manifestation was this?

King strode to the busy group of pygmy skinners and frightened both the leader of them and the Ba-nanda interpreter by taking them both by the arm and leading them to look at those inexplicable tracks.

But the little leader was in no way nonplused. He had the explanation in a second. He looked, and a great understanding broke in upon him.

"Why, it is quite clear then," he said. "It is not a wo-m'panze from the hills at all. It is without any manner of doubt the son of that white man who married the chi-m'panze and went up into the hills. That is why it is so cunning."

King pushed away the dwarf with an exasperated mutter.

He stood looking with hard eyes in the direction of the hills where the man had pointed. After many minutes he called Kaffa.

"Little man," he said, "you are wise; wise in the ways of the woods and of the people of this dark land. Tell me now out of your wisdom. Would any native of

Central Africa ever wear a foot covering like that?"

"No, *Bwana*, never," answered the Hottentot with instant conviction.

"Who, then, would?"

"Only a white man, *Bwana*."

King nodded. Slowly and with deliberation he nodded, still looking toward the hills which he could not see.

"Well," he breathed at last, "I don't know what weird mystery of this unbelievable land this is. But to those hills we must go. The trail leads to the hills. Little man, go swiftly and tell Barounggo to bring along those *shenzis*. I wait here —on the hill trail."

II

THE LITTLE *safari* toiled up a long slope of a vast lateral ridge that reached from the high shoulders of the Ruwenzori to splay out into the far plains of the southeast. It was still the same limitless rain forest, but its nature was changing. King felt a thrill of home to recognize an occasional witch hazel. A scattered grove of junipers gave a tang to the air. Begonias grew in sheltered limb crotches as cosily as in parlor window pots.

But the reminder of Africa was ever present in enormous, somber *podocarpus* trees and in thorny vines; in the grating squawk and clear whistle of gray parrots and the thin cough of toucans.

Now and again the long lost sky became visible where some decrepit forest king, falling, had torn a hole in the green canopy. Gray clouds hung sullenly over these openings. These Ruwenzori Mountain flanks were beyond the terrible monsoon belt; but a hundred inches of rainfall distributed themselves fairly evenly through the twelve months with a preference for Spring and Fall. This was April. The relentless gods of the land substituted extreme wet in place of extreme heat.

Wet clothing—wet bedding—wet tents —wet food. It was not cheerful. Ammunition alone was dry; and that was almost a miracle. But the outstanding achievement of King's organization was that he traveled with the same twelve porters with whom he had started.

These were men of the open plains; people who traveled not at all during their monsoon. They shivered like wet monkeys in this permanent damp. Their normal food was maize, with meat as a very occasional treat. Here King kept them supplied with plentiful meat; but, animal-like, they moaned at the substitution of yams for their mealies. Still, here they were, all twelve of them. Barounggo, cheerfully grim, saw to that.

The *safari* slowly topped the wind-blown back of the ridge. A wide valley that rippled and tossed in waves like a green sea spread before them. This was bamboo. The solid ground was a hundred and fifty feet below its liquid surface. A far, sublimated yelping came up with the wind. It sounded almost like the jolly chorus of fox hounds. But King's eyes narrowed and he looked keenly to the far right and left to see whether that bamboo jungle could be avoided.

Kaffa was appraising the same forest with glistening eyes.

"There will be elephant in that jungle, *Bwana*. Much meat for many days."

The *shenzis* awoke to a hungry interest with thick red grins. There spoke Africa. Meat. A gorge or two before quick decay would turn even those calloused appetites; and the remaining tons of waste would be left.

King had heard of the curious subspecies of straight tusked elephant that might be found in these jungles; but he was slaughtering no vast, inoffensive beast just to feed his *safari;* there was plenty of smaller game that would be picked to the clean bone at a single meal.

Beyond the bamboo forest another ridge swung in a slow heave to a higher escarpment, blue in the misty haze; and beyond that another again. Those were the true hills. There would be—if the little pygmy men spoke true—the lairs of the great apes. And there—God alone knew—perhaps the haunts—or rather,

the home—of this dark mystery that had worn moccasins.

The long descent commenced. The grade was not steep; but going was difficult on account of the long trailers of thorny vines that stretched, as though with the set purpose of impeding, always across the choicest openings where one hoped to pick a path. Not high, low creeping things they were, seldom more than knee height; more usually hidden under the sparse grass tops, and tough as wire. Many people will remember how a barbed wire entanglement impeded advance.

Once in the bamboo jungle, however, going was easy. The giant grasses grew in clumps, twenty or thirty knotted stems as thick as a man's thigh in a close bunch. Between clumps the ground was clear, carpeted only with the fallen leaves of all the centuries.

King paced silently in the lead. This was excellent ground for getting a snap shot at a buck or a pig, so avoiding the later delay of hunting meat. But King carried his rifle by its sling over his shoulder; he was not hunting—he was listening. The *shenzis*, far behind, feeling the first easy going in more than a month, the ground soft underfoot, broke into a grunting rhythm of song, one man supplying a short impromptu verse and the rest barking a chorus.

King cursed venomously and ran back to stop the idiots. He did not shout at them but, as soon as within view, signaled with his both hands to shut up. The *shenzis* blundered cheerfully ahead and kept up their barking. It was not till their master was almost upon them and they could see the impotent rage in his eyes that they came to a confused halt in staring wonder.

Barounggo, man of the open plains himself, had not known of any need for silence, and he too stood wondering, but outwardly emotionless. King cursed the men with silent ferocity for fools, and hoped that perhaps luck would be with them.

But it was not to be. A thin ki-yi of yelping came from far down the valley. An answer followed quickly; many more answers. King damned loudly, then:

"Make *boma* swiftly," he snapped. "Tree *boma*."

Kaffa, with the first yelp, was alive to the need. Under a barrage of obscene invective he drove the now frightened *shenzis* to the task.

In bamboo forest, fortunately, to make a tree *boma* was easy. It required but to scramble up a clump and to chop half through a few of the great hollow tubes at a height of eight or ten feet; to wedge them fast or, if necessary, lash them, where they fell into the next clump; and to lash cross pieces of split bamboo to make a rough platform, using twisted strips of the tough green cortex for the purpose.

King was taking no chances. He had recognized those distant yelpings in the first instance to be the terribly destructive hunting dogs of Central Africa. These ever hungry brutes had been known to range in packs of fifty or more and in those numbers to attack men. It might well be that the present pack would not be large enough to molest a party as large as his. It might, however, just as well be the record pack of all time. It was by not taking unnecessary chances that King was here.

With the same number of white men he would have collected them in a compact body and would have pushed on. But with twelve panicky natives who could be held together no better than sheep, King was taking the precaution of being sure. It was for just such reasons that he had his same twelve porters.

"Up you get, monkeys. Squat and dangle your dumb feet. Pass up those packs first."

A quite close yelp of the scent discovery punctuated the order and sent the men scrambling with frenzied haste. At the farthest visible opening between the bamboo clusters a rangy, tawny creature sat back on its haunches with red tongue lolling and watched.

IT WAS plain dog; nothing wolfish about it. Just long haired, underfed hound dog; and its tongue lolled in a grin of friendly looking interest.

Barounggo stood his ground. His eyes rolling white, nostrils twitching, full lips protruded, he gripped his great spear and stood to give battle. It was beneath Masai dignity to take shelter from a big dog, or from an army of dogs.

King grinned at him and pointed at other shapes that sat still, expectant. No yelping now; only watchful waiting with long lolling tongues, and in the farther, unseen distances, a pattering of many feet.

"This is something, old blood letter, where your great spear will avail you little. I, too, make a monkey of myself."

And with that he swung himself on to the platform. With his master's example before him, the Masai could not but unbend. Yet he did it reluctantly—those chattering *shenzis* must see no haste. Scowling ferociously and with cold deliberation, he prepared to hoist himself to safety.

There came a rush of quick feet, a clicking of teeth, as a hungry red beast, seeing the last of its hoped for meal escape, mustered courage to charge in, snapping at the Masai's dangling foot.

With iron nerve the great fellow never hurried. With the same slow deliberation he lifted his foot clear, only inches from the white teeth. Then with the sudden speed of light he whirled up his spear and drove down. The wretched creature yelped once in agony, rolled over twice in desperate effort, and then stretched in its last convulsive tremor. A hell's chorus of howls answered the yelp, and the lean brutes closed in to see what had died.

"One," said the Masai.

"But forty are left," said King.

He was being sincerely glad of his swift precaution of the *boma*. With so large a pack in attendance, had he been caught on trek, nothing would have prevented the panic crazed porters from dropping their loads and scrambling, belated, for trees; and nothing then could have saved at least one of the number from being dragged down.

As it was, King lighted his pipe. Seeing which, the Masai with a vast show of unconcern drew a little tube of ivory from the lobe of his ear, pulled its wooden plug and tapped a meticulous measure of snuff on to his thumbnail.

"What now, *Bwana?*" he asked. "Do we grow tails and become *shenzis* and stay in the trees, or do we cut, each man, a stick, and drive these dogs before us?"

The *shenzis*, looking down through the wide openings of the hasty platform at the red tongues and clicking teeth, chattered horror at the thought.

"When they are fed and full bellied," said King, "they will go their ways in search of water."

"Wherefore," Kaffa chimed in quickly, "one of these who by their ape song called these beasts forth, we might well throw down quickly in order that the delay be short — keh-keh-keh-hee-hee-hee-ee-ee."

The porters rolled fearful eyes at him and then, slowly grasping the idea, tittered with faces averted. They were used to Kaffa; but the great Masai they never understood, whether serious or not. His somber ferocity that lay just beneath his calm exterior kept them in a condition of permanent awe.

"If we should lose a *shenzi*," said King seriously, "then would Kaffa have to carry his load."

This, to the *shenzis*, was brilliant repartee. If their master could joke it meant that he knew some way of getting them out of the nasty situation, as he had so often done before. So they guffawed their appreciation. When King drew his Luger automatic and shot one of the gaunt hounds, and quickly another and then three more, their minds grasped the stupendous strategy almost at once.

"Awo! Meat for their full bellies," they told one another, and gabbled for an hour thereafter about the astounding wisdom of their master who could think of such a brilliant maneuver.

Wild dogs, of course, like wolves, are cannibalistic. And King's nature craft, too, was correct. The great brutes snarled and gorged and fought and gorged again, till, surfeited, they began to drift away in a search of water and a secure lie-up. Only a few, that thought gluttonously to wait awhile until their distended bellies could hold some more, made themselves comfortable in the immediate vicinity.

To chase a full fed dog, of course, is no very difficult feat. With snarlings and ferocious growlings and all the noisy bluff of canine belligerence, these few got to their feet and slunk into the farther jungle. The total delay had been less than three hours; the loss, *nil.* The whole thing had been no more than an inconvenience.

But Kaffa knew. He was astute enough to perceive what would have happened had it not been for the prompt order to construct a tree *boma.* The Hottentot theology, almost as complex as its grammar, recognized various gods of woods and trails. To them he would give a goat, a pure black goat with no blemish on it. And when he told his laudable plan to his master as he trotted alongside and explained that the offering was really in thanks that no *shenzis* had been eaten—not that *shenzis* mattered; but that the whole *safari* would have been slowed up on account of the heavier proportionate loads—his master said:

"Good. I will give you the money to buy that goat, for I no longer know what gods or devils guide this quest for a thing which is not possible."

CAMP was made that night in the rain, well away from the bamboo valley and up the side of the farther ridge in a grove of conifers. The next day's going was worse than it had yet been. It was not that the slope was steeper; it was the thorns. Those terrible barbed entanglements. Something in the soil there, or the rainfall, just suited the growth of these tough vines. They crept insidiously through the grass; they spanned every opening between the underbrush. And they grew higher here than on the other ridge; at waist height almost they plucked at the clothing and raked the tenderest skin.

For a white man, well cord breeched and high booted, it was bad enough; for bare legged, bare footed natives, the going was well nigh impossible. King, in the lead with a bush knife, was forced to cut a path. Kaffa remarked wisely:

"I think, *Bwana,* that the little man said true. Here indeed must the great apes take refuge, coming by their tree roads, for here no man can follow."

It was beginning to be literally true. The thorn vines grew in tough tangles to the exclusion of all other growth. Turn whichever way they would, the barrier grew worse with each new cast. King was realizing the hopelessness of progress and considering a return and a detour, possibly of many days, to come up on the other flank of the ridge, when he chanced on a heaven given trail.

There it was, hardly discernible through the encompassing bush, but still a trail. Little used and faint, but obviously a human road through the otherwise impassable barrier. The vines had been cut with a sharp instrument and forced apart.

Whose path, or why a path at all, was a matter for surmise as one went along. The important thing about it was that it led in the right direction; the direction in which King was determined to go, detour or backtrack or around, north-northwest by his little pocket compass to the hills. King accepted the trail thankfully. He was almost inclined also to accept Kaffa's quick suggestion that this was the direct and immediate result of promising that goat.

The providential trail led unerringly over the back of that ridge. From its high point a vista of tremendous country spread out. Green—all the various shades of green. Treetops, treetops, miles beyond rolling miles of them. From the far west a cool breeze washed the cheek; and there, beyond the ridges that

turned from green to blue, from blue to purple, a ghostly white broken cone glimmered out of the gray sky. Toward the north the grayness was accentuated to a sullen storm darkness.

King breathed the fresh air with a crinkling of the nostrils. That smoky blackness must surely be the one of the M'fumbiro craters. The snow peak would then be Ugali, or maybe Ubungo. He must be in the Ruanda country. If that were so, then farther to the north again, behind the smoke screen, would be Karisimbi, the gorilla mountain. This began to be like getting somewhere.

Kaffa pointed silently. King followed the line of the skinny finger. At first he could discern nothing besides softly waving high lights and deep shadows of green. Then his eye picked it out—something that did not wave. Motionless it hung and peered through an opening in the high branches; a black face with round wondering eyes.

"It seems that the little people spoke true," whispered the Hottentot, "and here the great monkeys live."

"Maybe then this path goes some place where people live," murmured King. "People who can tell us about a something that wears shoes."

For an hour the *safari* followed the trail diagonally down the flank of the great ridge. Without it progress would have been impossible. The thorn vines grew in an impenetrable mat. Kaffa sniffed with head high, quartering the breeze.

"I smell man," he announced.

King knew that this was no superhuman power of scent that the Hottentot possessed to detect, as a dog might, the actual scent of man; but that he had distinguished a whiff of the effluvium that surrounds the habitation of African man.

In another minute the path opened out into a small clearing. Yam vines and a great yellow cucumber thing grew along one side. The path went straight across the clearing and dived into the thorn tangle on the other side as into a tunnel. At the mouth of the tunnel was a wattle-and-daub thatched hut around which lay the usual litter of fire wood and gourds and oddments of bone and dirt.

At the noise of the *safari* a man came out of the hut, bending low under the opening and leisurely covering a yawn behind a long hand.

King was startled as the man unbent himself and straightened up; and a gabble of wonder came from the porters behind him.

It was an immense creature that stood up. King himself stood his good six feet, and the Masai was a couple of inches taller. But this man towered from the shoulders above them both. Well over seven feet his height must have been, and the spear that he held was longer even than the Masai's, though the blade was a tiny thing compared to the great Masai weapon which was practically a sword, four inches wide and two feet long, stuck on to the end of its polished shaft.

Enormously naked and black he stood, except for a wisp of loin cloth; and it was easy to see that his growth had gone into his great height. He was not as broad as King or the Masai.

"By golly, the Ruanda giant that the missionary told the policeman about," murmured King.

THE MAN was unpleasantly self-possessed. There was a wonder in the rather protruding eyes in his long, bony face; but it was a wonder not at a white man and a *safari*, but a surprise that a *safari* should be there at all. There was calm hostility in his bold stare.

"See if you can make him understand anything, Kaffa," ordered King.

The Hottentot tried various of his bush dialects. The man shook his head; he understood nothing. He wanted to understand nothing. Imperturbably, like some huge traffic policeman, he pointed with his spear along the road they had come. There was no mistaking the command that they should make no fuss about it, but should quietly turn back.

Kaffa whispered—

"The little people—they said there were great fierce men who let no man pass."

The wide corners of King's mouth began to take the faintest possible downward turn, and the beginning of a thin, vertical line appeared between his brows.

"Try to make him understand we don't want trouble, that we're looking for a white man. Tell him that we bring gifts."

King smiled with outstretched, open hands; he showed his own hunting knife and indicated that there were similar things in his packs. He tried in a questioning tone all the words meaning white man he knew — *m'zungu*, *bwana*, *bakwale*, and a half a dozen others—which Kaffa supplemented with a variety of clickings and chatterings.

The man seemed to understand something of it all, for he repeated one or two of the words that Kaffa had uttered, and pointed with his long spear to the slopes behind him. It was done with an impersonal air of disinterest, and with the same swing of the spear shaft he pointed inexorably again to the way the *safari* had come. It was the traffic policeman admitting that the desired goal might well be there, but the road was definitely closed.

The thing was common enough. King had met isolated tribes before who desired to maintain their isolation. Usually such tribes, if a superior party forced an entry, resorted to ambushes, sniping at night, poisons, anything. This tall fellow did not at all seem to feel that he was confronted by a superior party. He was confident and becoming rapidly more hostile. He held his spear threateningly and spoke in a curt tone, that clearly indicated there was to be an end to all fooling and the intruders should get out.

The corners of King's mouth drew lower; the line between his brows deepened; into his eyes came the wary, alert look of one who faces conflict. If his goal were there, as he had come so far to find out, he was not going to turn back. He could not turn back. As a white man, leading a party of natives, he could not afford to let himself be ordered from his objective by a single spearman—or, for that matter, by ten.

The bold front, the sheer weight of white man's prestige applied with determination, had carried through many thousands of such situations in Africa. Delay and argument would be only a sign of weakness.

King advanced without further hesitation. In an instant the point of the giant's spear was over his heart—and in no half hearted warning, either. The man was by no means afraid; his point pierced the khaki shirt and pricked well into the skin. King knocked it aside with a quick sweep of his left hand and stepped inside of its range.

That was the last move in this game of bluff. If determination and prestige would win, well and good. If the man shortened his weapon for a thrust King would have to decide upon his instant next move and then carry the thing through to its finish.

Neither thing happened. Instead the man gave a great shout, obviously a call, and with splendid courage, in view of the numbers that opposed him, dropped his hold on his weapon and grappled with King; just as might a policeman who knew that reenforcements were behind him.

King found himself in the grip of this huge man whose strength, in spite of his leanness, was quite as great, if not greater, than his own.

The sling of his rifle slipped from his shoulder and hung on his arm. He let it go, feeling even in that strenuous moment the pang of dropping the meticulously oiled bolt mechanism into the dust.

He was not flurried. He had been at grips with strong men before; and he had found that a cool head and a quite extensive knowledge of rough and tumble methods could offset most handicaps.

But this giant fought in a manner entirely new. Owing to his immense height and his tremendous reach, he could bring into play an unexpected and murderous trick.

He brought a bony knee up against King's chest and, twining his long arms behind King's back, was able to join hands and exert a terrific pressure against the chest.

Wrestlers given to foul tactics sometimes in desperation bring into play a similar principle, with the head against the opponent's chest. If not swiftly broken the hold is capable of crushing in the chest wall. It can be broken, if the opponent retains sense and strength long enough, by the equally foul defense of battering under the hugging arms at the unprotected face and jaw.

With this giant, face and jaw were out of reach. King gasped under the sudden pressure. It was his salvation that this man had not the huge biceps of a wrestler; but, at that, he felt his chest cracking under the strain and spots danced before his eyes.

He could still reach the pistol in his belt holster; but there remained inexorable in his mind the white man's religion—prestige. Hand to hand the sudden fight had started. Hand to hand he must finish it. In the presence of his native following he could not, would not, take unfair advantage of a gun. By the sheer, indomitable faculty of winning against odds he held his people together and commanded the loyalty of his followers. If he could not continue so to hold it, he might as well be dead as far as his successes in Africa would be concerned.

Through the gathering mist in his eyes he could see the form of Barounggo circling with poised spear. To him he gasped an order to keep off. Against the pounding pressure in his head he must force himself to concentrate on some method of combating this deadly hug while he could still stand on his feet.

That was it. He was still on his two feet. His own wide spread legs and his opponent's one formed a firm standing tripod, with the advantage on the side that could use the free leg as a deadly weapon.

King collected his strength for an effort and threw himself with all his force over to one side, twisting as he fell. The third leg of the tripod whirled a circle in the air. Both bodies crashed to the ground together. The terrible knee slipped from King's chest and passed under his armpit. The awful pressure was broken. Like an anaconda King's arm encircled that thigh and hugged it close while he lay for a moment to gasp his relief.

The advantage was now his. The African knew nothing about fists. Fists are a weapon evolved by a civilization that has discarded arms. The giant clawed futilely at King, battered at him with wrists and elbows. King was able to drag close enough to bring a short chop to the base of the man's ear. The great arms and legs jerked galvanically to the shock. Both King's hands were free. He picked his spot and smashed his right fist at the protuberance behind the man's ear again; and then quickly again.

The great limbs dropped away from him. King rolled off.

"Tie him," he was able to pant, and he lay and drew in great lungfuls of life-giving air.

But weakness would not do. He pushed himself to a sitting position, leaning on one arm, and forced his voice to direct the operation.

A quick thudding of running feet sounded in the farther tunnel of the path. Barounggo turned to meet the menace, as another tremendous man burst into the clearing, brother in every way to the first giant; if anything, a little taller, and a broader built man.

At sight of so many people he stopped short and glared with wondering eyes. He saw only black people. The white man sitting on the ground was partly hidden by Barounggo's burly form. The black men were clearly maltreating his fellow tribesman.

Once again the analogy to the policeman was evident. The newcomer did not howl and rush at the strangers with his spear as a supremely brave man might have done. He acted as though his sheer immensity gave him authority. He took a great stride forward and with a long

arm made to brush the obstructing Barounggo aside.

The Masai stood on braced feet, immovable, and growled out of his belly at the giant. The firmness of the resistance stopped the huge fellow in quick surprise. Resistance to authority . . . The giant looked a moment, then snarled impatient truculence and struck the obstructor with closed fingers and wrist on the side of the head.

A rasping noise like a threatening lion came from the Masai's throat, and his instant retaliation was to lift his foot high and kick the aggressor in the stomach.

The giant let out a hoarse scream of fury and rushed to the side of the hut; he snatched up a great oval shield and turned to take immediate vengeance. Barounggo faced him, shieldless, crouched forward, balancing warily on his toes, and hissing softly between his teeth.

KING struggled to his feet. But even as he did so he knew the futility of any interference. He himself was in no condition to take on a new fight, particularly against an armed man. His pistol! The thought came, but with his hand on the butt he dismissed it.

The ancient code of all fighting men checked him. Mortal personal offense had been received and given. How few years ago was it even in America that duelists claimed the sacred right to avenge their personal honor. Did it make any difference that the duelists were black men?

The giant hesitated. The sudden appearance of a white man complicated things. He stood, half hidden behind his big shield, and eyed King suspiciously. Barounggo, out of the corner of his watchful eye, noted the hand on the gun butt and, as his master had checked him a little while ago, he demanded his right to non-interference now.

"Let be, master, let be," he growled with a whine in his throat. "This dog has put hand upon an Elmoran of the Masai. Look, I have seen dogs before; are not their marks upon my breast? Where are they, those who struck? Their bodies have been eaten by other dogs."

The giant still stood and watched suspiciously.

"Take at least a shield, Barounggo," said King. "Look, there is another great shield beside the wall. I hold him off with the gun."

"A big shield for dancing among the women," growled Barounggo. "A little shield for fighting. What does this jungle man know about fighting? But hold him, master, till I shed this garment that chokes my shoulders. But a moment, master, and I will give this great fool instruction."

King drew his pistol, while with a deft wriggle the Masai shook his old shooting coat from his shoulders and stood only in his leopard skin girdle. The velvety black skin of his chest and shoulders and thighs was scarred with innumerable thin white cicatrices, the marks of those who had once struck and had paid the price.

He moved his big scarred arms in the shoulder sockets and drew a long breath of comfort. He exhaled with a soft hiss.

"It is well, master; let him go."

King shoved his pistol back into its holster with a gesture of hopelessness. The Masai crouched again. His big chest indicated lung capacity, stamina; his rippling shoulders, driving power; his flat thighs and knotty calves, speed; his wide spread toes, sure footedness. And the white scars were evidence that all had been many times proven. It was an ominous figure of poised alertness, the Masai made.

He sounded the sibilant fighting noise of his kind and stepped on wide splayed toes to maneuver into a more favorable light. He held his great spear in an unusual and novel manner. Not with the point forward, as a lance for a thrust; but diagonally across his body with hands wide apart.

The giant towered immense over his crouching form; only his perplexed face was visible over the edge of his shield, and his long spear projected from the

side. He was at a loss to understand what this curious pose meant. It looked to be defenseless, yet the growling man behind it seemed to vibrate power and confidence.

But the Masai was working into the better light. The giant made up his mind that attack, from behind his shield, was the proper move. He made a sudden, enormous lunge. The Masai swayed only his body, and with a swift stroke of his vertically held spear shaft diverted the giant's point to zip past his side. At the same moment he stepped in and with a heaving thrust of his lower hand brought up the spiked butt of his weapon to stab at the inside of the lunging leg.

The giant recovered with astonishing speed for his size and hid behind the lowered shield, alert for defense or attack. But a thin trickle of blood began to run down that leg.

The Masai turned back red lips and grinned at him. He taunted him with words the other could not understand.

"Ho-ho, thou jungle fellow that would deal blows without thought. Thou tree. By cutting the stem has many a tree been felled. Strike again, thou long wood, and receive instruction in spear play."

Though he could understand no word, anybody could understand the scorn in the tone. The man gave a great war cry and charged forward with the intention of bearing his opponent to the ground by superior weight, his spear held short for stabbing behind the shield.

The Masai defense was to crouch quickly, quite low, so as to trip up the attacker by the knees and then to stab him from behind. With an ordinary man this trick would probably have succeeded. But the giant sprang high in the air and clear over the Masai turning himself in time to make a long thrust at Barounggo as he still rested on one knee and hand.

The Masai ducked in the fraction of time below the point, but the blade, flashing over his shoulder, cut a red gash in the muscles of his back.

For the moment King's heart stopped. The Masai's confidence in himself had bred a similar feeling in King, despite the frightful handicap of his opponent's enormous length of arm coupled with the defensive shield. It seemed now that the handicap was more of a factor than the over-confident Masai had been willing to admit.

Barounggo, too, astounded him by roaring over the cut like a wounded lion. It seemed to be an outcry out of all proportion to the seriousness of the hurt. But the incoherent bellowings began to make themselves clear.

"My back! Oh, my back! I am wounded and my life is gone! Never have I been thus wounded."

Screaming in his anguish, he rushed at his huge opponent and, whirling up his spear in both hands, drove at him with all his force. The giant took the stroke on his shield, and such was its force that the great blade pierced the tough double hide and protruded a foot in front of his startled face.

That was the giant's chance for swift victory. Had he retained sufficient presence of mind to drop his shield he would have left his opponent's weapon stoutly held in its cumbersome weight and his opponent helpless.

But the man knew no tactic of spear play other than the crude thrust and shield defense. He clung desperately to his defense and tugged to wrest it free. His precious moment was lost. Barounggo, tugging at the other end, tore the blade from the hide.

King saw the need for jolting his man out of the blind rage that consumed him.

"Does an Elmoran fight with his mouth?" he called. "Does he frighten his enemy with words and beat at his shield like a fool?"

The sting in the words brought the Masai to his senses like a douche of cold water. In an instant he dropped back and circled warily. Only the glare of his eyes and the dog grin on his lips showed the rage that filled him. A growling came from his throat.

"Count thy last ten breaths, thou tall spear dancer. Thy recompense is that thy ghost may laugh when the women

point to my back and say, 'Lo, there was one who ran faster than he.' "

The giant felt that he had learned that when the other man talked was the time for him to attack. His blade and arm flickered out in another enormous lunge—this time with shield low to counter that swift return of the spiked butt.

The Masai swayed his body as before, pushed the thrust aside with his spear, and this time slid his hands together along the shaft, swung his blade in a whistling, horizontal stroke at the other's neck.

THE GIANT threw up his lowered shield in a panic and ducked behind it. The Masai's great blade, whirling like a medieval pike, sheared clearly through the apex of the oval, exposing the scared face behind it.

The giant, feeling his safety, was just beginning to grin his fierce derision when the blade, curving in a swift return circle, bit with a soft chuck deep into his unprotected thigh.

"*Hau!*" shouted the Masai. "A good stroke! Five breaths, I count it, O tree. Five more I have promised thee."

The giant staggered as the gashed muscles gave. Then in his last desperate hope to bear his smaller opponent down and finish it at hand grips on the ground, he charged in once more with shield held close and all the weight of his vast body behind it.

The Masai gripped his spear in both hands and braced himself like a bayonet fighter to meet the shock. As the mountain of man and shield bore down on him he drove square at it with all the force of his loins and legs and shoulders.

The combined impact gave a tremendous power to the thrust. Through the tough hide the great blade went like paper; through muscle and gristle and bone of the great chest behind the hide, and stood out half its length behind the back. It would have gone farther if the Masai's hand on the shaft had not smacked hard against the shield.

The giant jerked up short in his rush; a grating intake of the breath gagged in his throat. Then, slowly, he straightened up—and slowly, like a tree, fell backward. The Masai spear stood straight in the air, transfixed in the wide shield that decently, quietly, covered the death beneath it.

There followed a long minute of tense silence. A tiny rivulet of blood made a crooked path from under the edge of the shield. Then the hissing, steam exhaust sound of many breaths slowly escaping.

"Ss-ss-so," said the Masai, breathing hugely. "Upon my back did he put dishonor; but what shall the ghosts of his women say to the hole in his back?"

His nostrils were flaring wide and his eyes glared white against his fierce black face. A bass humming noise commenced to issue from his throat. King knew that he was preparing to launch into one of those impromptu declamations of braggadocio which are an outstanding trait of his people. Being stolid and undemonstrative, King always felt that these bragfests, as he called them, were unworthy of a brave and strong man; but nothing, he knew, would stop the Masai before he had worked off at least a portion of the heroic emotion that remained as the aftermath of a good fight.

"*Aho,*" chanted the warrior, stamping his feet in heavy rhythm. "*Aho,* it is I. It is I. I heard a noise and I looked. My spear said to me beware. Lo, one came running swiftly. *Ow,* he was great; *Whai,* he was fierce. He put forth his hand and touched me. An Elmoran was defiled. Where is he, that great one? Foolishly he flourished a spear. Lo, I have seen many spears. Like an elephant he charged in his rage. What is this turtle that lies at my feet? This turtle under its shield? What is this that stands so straight before me? *Hau,* it is the spear of an Elmoran!"

This pæan of victory would have gone on for an hour. The Masai would have recounted in flowery detail every action, each separate move—while the immediate future could bring whatever the gods of battle might send.

But King had other considerations to weigh and decide swiftly. How many of these hostile giants were there? How far might this outpost guard be from a village? There were two of the great shields. From that one could easily deduce two men to the guard. But how soon might others come? Were these men relieved every hour or every week?

That path, did it lead direct to a nearby village? Or was it only a distant entrance into this inhospitable country? If strangers penetrated into that country, would they be just herded out—or would they be incontinently speared? And if one entered anyhow, was it in the farther hills that the great apes congregated and would it be there that one might pick up the trail of Dr. Hugo Meyer?

And then King knew that that one was the only consideration. Was the lost scientist somewhere in those hills?

It seemed that he might be. The trail had led consistently there. Vague and evanescent, scarcely more than a rumor, yet there it had steadily pointed. And now at the last it had seemed to be definite. That first giant guard who now lay bound had distinctly understood the reference to a white man and had indicated the hills behind him.

King's frown sat deeply between his eyes and the pugnacious droop twisted the corners of his mouth. That settled it, then. If a white man were there, a white man of any sort, King was there to find out about it. So into those hills he was going; hostile giants—or monstrous mysteries of the dark that wore shoes—notwithstanding. And the sooner he went from this place the better.

"Peace. Peace, great slaughterer," he told Barounggo, who had reached his fortieth stanza, all about the disgrace that had come upon him because of the wound in his back and how people would jeer at him for it and how he would instantly slay them.

"Peace. Cease this bragging. And, since it was a good fight—though it should never have been—I will now quickly wash it and put a white man's medicine upon it so that no scar will show. Kaffa, there will be water in the hut—and open the medicine pack."

The Masai ceased his chant and looked his incredulous hope.

"*Bwana* has such a medicine? *Whau*, then there is no sorrow to this great fight. *Aho*, a good fight it was. A good stroke I smote. Like a—"

"Shut up!" shouted King. "Like a woman grinding corn do you sing. This is time for work. Bring here that shoulder."

Quickly and not too gently he washed the half congealed blood from the wound and swabbed it with iodine. It was a long, though not serious gash. Left to its own African devices, it would fill up with many kinds of dirt, and when the strong vitality of the man had finally thrown off the resultant infection it would leave a neat white scar. With simple hygienic treatment there would hardly be any mark visible. Sticking plaster, that godsend among bush remedies, completed the treatment, and the *safari* was ready to go.

The captured giant was a problem. He lay his enormous length on the ground and looked sullenly at King. He did not cringe, although in his mind there could be but one fate in store for him. Inherently the man was brave enough, as had been shown by his sturdy opposition to so large a party; but there was a certain awe in his eyes, an almost superstitious fear at these men, so small in comparison to his vast tribe, who yet were able to win against all the odds.

King looked down upon the man, biting his lip with a sardonic crooked smile at his own limitations. He knew what decision now confronted him; he knew how he would decide; and he knew his decision would inevitably rebound to his own detriment, perhaps even to the extent of death. He had been up against such decisions before and he had always suffered for his action, and he was going to do the same foolish thing again. And so his smile was bitter as he knew that his rule of taking no unnecessary chances must be

broken on account of his white man's inhibitions.

Certain principles of civilization, he knew, and thousands of others like him knew, to be inapplicable to African conditions. The white man who so applied them placed himself under an inevitable handicap. Here was just another one of those situations in which the white man had to take up the burden. The African method was so much simpler.

"A spear stroke and the thing is finished," growled Barounggo.

And Kaffa quoted the Hottentot of a universal proverb—

"The tongue that does not wag makes no trouble."

"Shut up," King snapped irritably.

He knew these things from long experience; and he knew that his followers would blame him—as the white man's followers have always blamed—for the trouble that would follow upon impractical squeamishness. He cursed inhibitions the more bitterly because he knew that when the white man's government went to war, then such squeamishness went by the board. It was when the white man found himself involved in a matter of life and death without the solemn sanction of the graybeards of his government that the "civilized" code must hold.

"Tie his hands behind and hobble his feet so that he can walk but slowly," King ordered.

And to himself—

"Damn it, I wish we knew how far his village might be."

To Kaffa again:

"Is there food in the hut? Put some in a basket. If he needs it for a long trek he can carry it in his teeth." And once more to himself, "He'll probably wriggle loose anyhow and bring the gang down on us. Hanged if I know, unless I set up a gangrene, how to tie a man so he can't get away.

"Come along," he shouted. "Speed it up there. We must get out of this and travel far in a hurry. There's nothing that we want here."

"One moment, master, one moment and I come," grumbled the Masai. He was standing upon the shield that covered the dead giant, carefully prying his great spear loose from the tenacious grip of wet earth and stiffened muscle and tough hide. "This is a thing of which we shall yet have need. Surely we shall have need."

Kaffa left King inspecting the thongs that bound the other giant, and came and whispered quickly to Barounggo. The Masai stopped short a moment in his tugging at the spear while the thought soaked in. His eyes showed white as they rolled furtively to the prisoner; then a ghost of a fierce grin played over his face and he continued nonchalantly to disengage his spear. Kaffa flitted back to fuss around King.

"Try him again," King told him. "The first time he was too full of fight to listen. See if you can find out anything about his village, and try him about the white man again."

The Hottentot chattered and made inadequate signs, while King fretted that in Africa there had not evolved any semblance of a universal sign language like that of the American Indian. The giant listened stolidly. If he understood anything about a village he made no sign; but to the reiterated question of white man he pointed with eyes and lips to the hills as before.

That was all they could get out of him, though King bade Kaffa set the basket of food beside him and indicate that they were going to leave him so, unhurt and alive. The man accepted the gift of his life with ox-like indifference.

"All right," said King briskly. "That's all we can get out of him. March."

Kaffa sped a quick look from under his brows at Barounggo and herded the *shenzis* together with their packs. King stood at the mouth of the tunnel of thorn.

"Barounggo," he said quietly without looking round. "Do you go first with that ready spear—in case armed men spring upon us. For a little way I come last."

Kaffa exchanged a baffled glance with the Masai. The latter passed into the

tunnel before King with a sheepish expression on his face.

"Keh-heh-heh," giggled Kaffa, unabashed. "What use? The *bwana* knows all things."

IN THE hills—at last the true hills beyond the long ridges of toil and tribulation. It was good country. Not too hot, though wet beyond comfort. The forest was forest, not jungle. The thorn belt had been left behind. That path had wound down the valley to habitations somewhere. King did not know how near or how far. He had struck directly across and made for the next ridge, and the next. He hoped he was lost.

It was easy country to get lost in. Trees were close enough and high enough to conceal all landmarks. Rounded green pericarps were evidence that nuts of various kinds would be ripe later in the season. Fruition in that climate seemed to be permanent. Vivid, heart shaped vine leaves indicated wild yams.

And apes were there. Solemn black faces looked down out of round, wondering eyes at the scarcely more intelligent black faces of the *shenzis*, who looked up out of equally wondering eyes and chattered with no more understanding. Nor were the tree folk any more afraid of the humans than the latter were of them. Long and steadily they looked and grunted, and when they moved it was with the heavy leisure of contentment.

It seemed at last to be the promised land. Good country for the great anthropoid apes—or for a white man who might be eccentric enough to belong to the school of raw vegetarians.

"The apes," King deduced, "have never been hunted; therefore they aren't afraid of man—which means again that this would be the ideal place for a scientist to come and observe them. But why—" musingly—"did those pygmies say that they came to loot their fields because there were no yams here? And why would the apes go so far afield when food is plentiful right at home?"

Kaffa quoted a proverb again from the wisdom of his people.

"When one's own food brings no appetite one visits one's relations. Their food may be worse, but it will taste better."

"I wish," said King, "that we had brought one of those relations along so he could ask them about this white man who must be somewhere around."

It did seem to be something of a hopeless task to find one particular person in those miles upon miles of forest, where one could not see forty yards through the trees. But King had been thinking of a plan which was quite simple and ought to be practical. He proposed to fire his rifle at intervals—the ordinary requirements of hunting meat should be almost sufficient—and then, if the lost professor were anywhere within hearing, he would surely know that his relief party had arrived.

The Hottentot's thoughts ran along entirely different lines. They persisted upon the humanness of the great beasts that observed them with the same slow, ruminative speculation that village elders bestow upon tourists.

"Look, *Bwana;* see that old one who gazes without fear? If I talk to him as I did to that giant of little wit whom *Bwana*, alas, left alive, will he not understand as much? And is he not much more friendly? Surely he will carry the word of our coming."

"Go ahead and try him," King acquiesced; and Kaffa, with perfect seriousness, clucked and chattered at the ape who balanced on a high limb, one long arm holding on to a branch above, and looked solemnly at the gesticulating human below. Then it emitted a croak and moved away.

"See, *Bwana*, see?" the Hottentot gabbled excitedly. "It told me, *kor au-au*, which in the bushman talk means 'all right.' "

"And surely," supplemented Barounggo with lofty prejudice, "that new friend of our Kaffa knows as much as a bushman."

King had to laugh. It was seldom that the Masai was able to score a verbal hit

over the quick witted little Hottentot, who this time had fallen so completely into the trap of his own imagination that he had no repartee to make. In place of which he muttered obstinately—

"Even if he does not know the bushman talk they will talk among themselves and the word will come to the she of their people who is the wife of this white man whom we seek."

King said nothing. There it was again, that persistent reminder of what the black man accepted as perfectly natural fact; and King had seen too many weird things in Africa to lay down any didactic law that some new thing was positively not so, just because he did not know of it himself.

He was content to travel up and down this good forest country, to quarter the ground, spacing his routes by the approximate carry of gunshot explosions. If the lost professor—or, as Kaffa insisted, any of his family—should be within hearing, they would come.

IT WAS to the second camp that something came. It was growing dusk. The *safari* had eaten, and lay in sensuous enjoyment of the camp-fire in a grove of scented junipers. King sat on a folding camp stool before his little tent flap and smoked his pipe. The evening was still, except for the tree frogs that piped their thanks for the afternoon's rain. The faintest possible crackling of tiny dry twigs came downwind.

King reached quietly for his rifle. The *shenzis* had been trained at that sign to stop their uncouth jabbering. The whole camp stilled to listen. Something was moving softly in the brush. King's lips framed the question—

"Man?"

Kaffa shook his head. He rolled over and came up on his knees to whisper:

"Man would know enough to hunt upwind. Lion would know; leopard would know."

King nodded. It was true. The predatory creatures had learned to make their approach so that the wind would carry away their scent. Some non-predatory beast it was, then, that stalked the camp with such caution. There was comfort in that thought. The thing, whatever it was, settled down with the tireless patience of the wild to watch before it would make another move.

There was nothing to do but to match its patience and wait. Any move in its direction, since it was clearly nervous of approach, would bring about immediate flight.

More than an hour passed before the thing had gathered confidence enough to move again. By this time it was dark. The most cautious movement could be heard carefully working its way nearer. Kaffa hissed softly and pointed. It was at a sound in the shadows rather than at anything he had seen; though King had often thought that the little devil could see in the dark. King reached a long arm and groped in his tent for his field glasses. With their aid he could distinguish a dim shape that moved.

A form, no more. He could make out the size of it, not the outline. It moved quickly through a lane of the flickering firelight. The sight was blurred, though he thought he perceived an upright figure. But Kaffa was crouching in the greatest excitement.

"Monkey," he whispered. "The man ape with whom I made speech."

King signed to Barounggo to gather an armful of dry brush and kindling wood and to hold it in readiness. He fixed his glasses on the moving shadow and waited. Presently his chance came. It stood in a clear alleyway between the black tree trunks.

"Now!"

Barounggo dumped the kindling upon the fire and blew a long breath into it. It blazed up. The figure gave a startled leap and was gone. But King had caught a fleeting view.

"Man," he announced "A pygmy."

"Monkey," said Kaffa with equal conviction.

"Monkey would not be prowling in the night," said King.

"Man would not come from upwind," insisted Kaffa. "Moreover there are no dwarf men in these hills. They said so themselves."

"Bring a torch, and the tracks will tell," said King; and there was an uneasy wonder in his mind as to just what impossible tracks this indeterminate creature might have made.

But the ground under those trees was covered with the springy needles of the conifers. There were no tracks other than vague indentations.

So the talk round the camp-fire reverted perforce to what a man or an ape might, would, or could do; each side citing instance and experience, and the *shenzis* offering among themselves proofs that the thing could be no other than a wood devil. The last word was with Kaffa. All arguments, one side or the other, having failed to be convincing, he was left with a firm conviction. There could be nothing else.

"Very well, then," he said. "It could not have been man for such and such reasons, and it could not have been monkey for such and such reasons. Yet with our eyes we saw it. Therefore it must have been the offspring of that white man who married the monkey. Who else would be interested in us?"

And that logical solution satisfied them all, with the exception of King, who sat in his tent in deep cogitation as to what this new mystery of the woods might be.

Those pygmies, they had offered the same solution for the monstrous thing that had rushed out of the dark to do battle with them. To them the solution was perfectly natural and proper, as to the Hottentot it was a satisfactory explanation of this smaller creature.

But that first furious creature had worn shoes—if this thing were remotely possible; if so astounding a combination could exist—and King would have taken no oath that, in Africa, it could not. He was convinced, however, of one thing, and that was that it most certainly would not have worn shoes. He was building his own theory about what that other thing might have been. But what, then, was this? Good heavens, the woods could not be full of these incredible hybrids!

Only one decision could he arrive at before turning in. This inaction was all wrong; he was sure now. This sitting quiet in fear of scaring away the night visitants would discover nothing. He went to sleep on a plan to ambush the next scout, or whatever it might be; and he would then at least know whether he was dealing with furtive dwarfs or with some new creature—possibly some new ape, hitherto unknown to zoology—that could transcend some of the laws that bound the animal kingdom.

King's proposal was to go about the evening camp preparations as usual; to build the ordinary little fire and to lie around it in the abandonment of relaxation. Everything as usual, except that he and Barounggo—the latter on account of his superior physical strength—would lie out, perhaps in a tree, at some favorable point outside of the firelight, and stalk the stalker.

It was a good plan. If the night creature was an ape, the same curiosity that had impelled it in the first instance would bring it round again. If it were man, spying out the newcomers, he would come again to find out more. If he had already found out enough and if the night would bring an attack of his fellows, an unexpected sortie from the rear would be most valuable.

Kaffa, in charge of the *shenzis* in the camp, would indicate to the watchers by means of simple signals with a glowing stick in which direction the stalker might be approaching.

An excellent plan. And it might have worked had not the night stalker been so much more skilful than the watchers, both within and without the camp, that nobody was aware of his presence until his sudden warning arrived out of the darkness into their midst.

The first that King and Barounggo knew about it was a yelping and crying among the *shenzis* and the shouts of Kaffa cursing them into silence, punctu-

ated with the whacks of the cane that symbolized authority.

King tensed. If this were a night attack, it behooved him to give a little thought to his best move. Barounggo leaped down from his tree, ready to charge into anything that might be battle. But it was immediately evident, from Kaffa's energetic action to control the frightened porters, that no attack was taking place.

CAUTIONING the Masai to be wary about blundering into any trap, King ran to the center of disturbance. The camp was in confusion and consternation—the reason of which stood starkly apparent. Out of the silent dark—even Kaffa had heard no sound—had whizzed a great spear which stuck now straight out from the bole of a tree.

"Douse the fire, fools, and lie flat," King snapped at the prancing *shenzis*. "Kaffa, scout a half round this side. Barounggo, there."

With all the caution at his command King wormed his way out in the direction from which the weapon had come.

He found nothing. No movement; no sound. He came back and found the others already there. They too had drawn a blank. The forest was as darkly silent after the coming of the portent as before.

"Well—" King gave his opinion—"whoever it be is as clever as a devil and this thing is a warning—he could just as easily have got a man as a tree."

He levered the spear loose from the tree and tendered it to the Masai, the expert. Within the tent he lighted a campers' candle lamp and said—

"What, now, do you read from that spear?"

The expert examined it carefully, went outside of the tent to feel its heft and balance, and then announced:

"It is not a spear of those giant folk. It is better balanced and the blade is better set in the shaft. See, an iron pin holds it fast in the wood. Thus do we of the Masai set our blades. The blade, too, is not of this land. It is a blade such as the Banyan traders sell in the market in Nairobi. The steel is much better than of this land; but the style of the blade is foolish. Those who make such toy blades have never used one. The wood is of the black tree such as grows here—good, but too heavy. That is all that I read."

"Read yet one more thing," said King. "Could a dwarf man such as we saw last night—or a half ape—wield such a spear?"

The expert was immediately positive.

"Never, *Bwana*. To wield such a spear with any skill would require a man such as I; though for me the blade is too light for the shaft. To throw such a spear would require a man greater than I."

"Humh," grunted King, and sat in thought. "Not a Ruanda spear. Then the giants are not after us—yet. A trade blade, imported by the Banyans—those things are all made in Germany . . . Thrown by an unusually big and strong man . . ."

Those descriptions were definite and they pointed in only a single possible direction. What particularly big strong man who used a German made blade might there be in this lost end of nowhere?

The Masai broke in on his cogitation.

"One other thing does this spear tell, *Bwana*, though that, for *Bwana*, makes no difference. It says, "Go from this place swiftly."

The corners of King's mouth dropped and the vertical indentation sprang into being between his brows. Then as quickly they passed, and he looked at his henchman with speculation.

"Would you go?" he asked.

The Masai stared in wonder at the question; as though the baffling developments of this thing, the dark mystery of it all, had driven his master off his normal balance to think in such a manner as he had never known him to think before. He spoke in almost a frightened tone.

"But nay, *Bwana*. How can this be that we should go away, having come this far and having accomplished nothing?"

King's hard grin dissipated the obstinate frown. The sturdiness of the Masai's intrenched viewpoint was a comfort.

"Good man!" he grunted shortly. And then his troubled mind harked back to his thoughts of a moment ago, and to himself he wondered, "But why should Dr. Hugo Meyer throw a spear as a warning to get out of here?"

ONE benefit, at least, came out of that latest addition to the tangle of guess and surmise and enforced belief in the utterly incredible. If indeed it had been Dr. Hugo Meyer who had thrown that spear —and who else could it have been—who else could possibly fit into all the circumstances?—then there was no further need to go hunting through the limitless forest for the lost scientist.

The object now to be achieved was to have speech with him. But this was Central Africa and the way of man in Central Africa is not easy. If Dr. Meyer threw spears at people out of the dark and disappeared into the silence again, how difficult was it going to be to attain to that speech? And furthermore, if that speech should be attained, what sort of speech might it be? What gruesome thing might Africa have done in fifteen years to the scientist that first he sent an indeterminate something in the night to spy out the white man's *safari*, and then came and threw a spear into it?

For the moment King could see nothing ahead. Here he had arrived into the hills that had been his hard won goal. The difficulty had seemed to be the finding of a single man in that wilderness. But now, having found him, the new difficulty seemed to be a hundred times greater than ever before.

This lost scientist had of his own volition managed to get a letter out to his fellow savants in his home country, a fairly recent letter, for the man was still alive and apparently in the most vigorous health. The letter called for a relief expedition to bring out the results of fifteen years of study; results which the doctor in his letter claimed were of immense scientific value. The relief expedition had come; it was here—and the doctor crept in at night and threw a warning spear at it. The mystery of the whole thing was more than just discouraging. It was enough to turn any man back.

King ground his teeth together and swore to himself that he would stay in that forest till he could, if necessary, track down and capture the mysterious scientist and find out what the whole mess meant. Tracks once again. In the morning he must hunt for tracks and hang on the trail of his quarry till the final showdown.

But for this one time, that difficulty was spared him. The morning showed upon a distant tree trunk an irregular, lighter smudge that had not been there before. King went to inspect the product of the night and as he came near enough to distinguish it his pulse quickened. It was a piece of paper. A very crumpled, very much stained and torn piece of what had once been white paper. It was pinned to the tree trunk with slivers of bamboo. There was writing in pencil upon it.

The writing was in English, the broken English of a foreigner, wild and threatening, but perfectly coherent. It read:

> To the sport hunter, warning. You shall not these apes in this forest murder. If you will not immediately go away I make with my people war against you. My power have I shown. I can yet much worse perform.

The ultimatum was unsigned. But what signature was necessary? King read it and his pent breath broke from him in a great laugh; a whole hearted laugh of vast relief. This truculent warning made everything easy. Kaffa and Barounggo stood in the helpless wonder of the illiterate at the magic of script. King in his lightness of heart translated the ultimatum to them just to get their separate reactions.

Kaffa, the wise and cautious one, said—

"It will be necessary to sleep in *boma* and to set spring traps of the sharpened

bamboo until this enemy be wounded."

Barounggo, ever belligerent, murmured appraisingly—

"This great spear thrower, if he has any skill, ought to make a good fight, a very proper fight."

King's heart glowed to know that neither of the men harbored the thought of obeying that warning and going away, and he laughed with carefree abandon again. To him the note made everything clear; it explained everything—or at least a part of everything; for nothing in Africa is ever completely explained. The writing explained nothing of the furtive, half human creatures of the dark; nothing of the insistent mystery of ape wives. But it did very clearly explain this latest development that had seemed to be the most baffling mystery of all.

King understood it perfectly, now. The scientist, his life devoted—fifteen awful years alone in the jungle—to his study. His secure retreat broken rudely in upon by a white man's *safari;* not a relief *safari* of German colleagues—that was what the indeterminate spy in the night must have reported. What else could this white man be but one of those so-called sportsmen who had penetrated at last into this lost haven of the fast vanishing anthropoids?

King could well understand the devoted scientist's rage; and he did not blame him one bit. He knew more than one or two such sportsmen whose necks he would like to twist himself. He was able to laugh, therefore, out of a full heart, and he felt an immense weight slipping from his shoulders. He was beginning at last to see the end in sight. This warlike warning could be quite easily settled.

King had with him, as credentials, the letter from the Herr Doctor Director der Naturforschung of the University of Heidelberg, which commissioned him to come in and bring out Doctor Hugo Meyer.

That night, therefore, King spiked his credential letter to the same tree of the ultimatum and hung above it as a guiding beacon his camp lantern. Then he withdrew his camp to a little distance and sat down to wait. And for the first time in many nights he let himself relax and take his full measure of unworried sleep.

THE day brought the expected result. And, though expected and awaited, it was startling in its suddenness. King was sitting smoking in front of his tent, listening to pick up any sound of approach from the forest. He heard nothing, saw nothing, till from behind a tree not thirty yards away stepped the figure of a man.

An enormous man. Not particularly so in height—though he topped the six-foot mark—but enormous in bulk, with massive shoulders and thick, corded arms, huge thighs and knotted calves. A tawny, bearded Hercules dressed in skins.

He stood a moment and took in every item of the camp through quick, flashing eyes. There was suspicion in his poise. Then with a lithe animal grace, in spite of his bulk, he advanced.

King sprang up to meet him, desperately ashamed at having been caught napping, and with unconscious mimicry of a world famous phrase said—

"Dr. Meyer, I presume?"

The huge man's eyes lighted in quick recognition of the words and strong teeth showed for a moment under his Viking mustache. Speech came to him haltingly, dug with an effort out of a memory of a language known long ago.

"*Ach*, so, the finding of Doctor Livingstone, no? From here not so very far. This also is a—a—how says one?—a like feat, yes? *Ach*, you Americans!"

King offered him his battered camp chair; but the man sank by preference to his heels and squatted native fashion. King called to Kaffa to bring the coffee which had been in readiness for the past hour, and to serve what was left of the previous day's broiled pig with the leathery corn flapjacks that took the place of bread, where wheat flour neces-

sitated the labor of a few porters who would carry but thirty-five pounds apiece. The man's eyes lighted again.

"Ha, coffee I have since many years forgotten. Bread I have from yams made but in the past. Since years I have no fire used. I thank you, I am not flesh eater. I have already a long time ago learned the raw vegetables to eat; and so, like my friends, I keep in the jungle good health."

King experienced a vague uneasiness. He had, as a matter of fact, been making up his mind to find the long lost scientist to be a good deal off the normal. He seemed, so far, to be normal enough. But that reference to "his friends" . . . That was the second time. In the ultimatum on the tree he had written of making a war with "his people." What friends? King wondered. What people? There was, of course, no reason why the doctor should not have established himself with some isolated forest tribe; but somehow that expression rang uncomfortably upon King's ears.

The doctor, of course, wanted to know everything. King found it difficult to adjust his answers to the incredible fact that fifteen frightful years of darkness had to be sketchily elucidated. Some major events the doctor knew with a certain modicum of accuracy; but all were most amazingly colored by the African minds through which they had passed.

He knew, for instance, that the war was long since over; that the *Bwanai Inglesi* now controlled all the country to the east of him and that the native chiefs were becoming strong again—absorbing insight into the native acceptance of the British pacific policy of colonization. He knew that the *Bwanai Belgani* controlled all the country to the west. But he did not know who controlled the immediate district in which he was— Which satisfied him well enough; for he inferred that nobody cared very much about it.

His contacts with natives had been sporadic and less and less frequent since the servants whom he had originally brought had died off—the fools would insist upon eating meat, he swore with a sudden flare of rage at the recollection.

Natives, the doctor explained, never came of their own free will into this retreat. It was necessary to make long journeys to catch them.

"And," wondered King, "what the devil did the man mean by that—journeys to *catch* natives?" That sounded as queer as the talk about his people. And with that connection the uneasiness that had assailed him before sprang into life as a strong sense of disquiet. "If there were no natives, who were his people?"

The doctor asked a thousand questions, mostly from a scientific angle—world events were of minor importance. Some of them King could answer in a superficial manner; but his answers never held the doctor's interest. While he spoke the other's attention wandered off the subject to gaze with acute interest at some trifle of camp gear, to look into the distant treetops, to scratch himself with absorbed intentness.

It came to King with a qualm of realization that the man, living that way, must be verminous.

But the doctor always brought himself back with a visible effort to ask some new question; and King began to find a definite connection running through all of these inquiries. They tended, every one, to inquire into the most modern developments in the study of anthropology, with a special curiosity about what was being accepted in the theory of man's evolution.

It began to be clear to King that the scientist's mind clung to a fixed idea. Accurate answers to these technical queries were beyond King's knowledge. But his answers did not matter. The doctor wanted only answers which he knew to be wrong. He chuckled to himself out of the satisfaction of a superior knowledge that was his alone.

What was being said about the apes? The doctor wanted to know. What were these complacent scientists deciding about their place in the scale? This was his subject and an excitement was growing upon him as he questioned.

King happened to know such of the

more outstanding arguments, *pro* and *con*, as had furnished newspaper copy; and through his connection with an animal collector he knew that some remarkable experiments had been made with a young gorilla. But the doctor leaped to his feet with a single springy bound and strode immensely back and forth, his skin garments flapping raggedly in the wind of his own making.

No, no, that was wrong, he shouted; all wrong. The gorillas were all very well; but they were an inferior tribe. It was the chimpanzees that possessed a far superior intelligence. To these chimpanzees here an obstinate science must look for the link, the infallible connection. And he, Dr. Hugo Meyer, he would show to the thick headed world that—

He strode up to King and shook a thick finger under his nose, as though lecturing to a headstrong pupil.

"Look you now, sir. I will show you—I will before you place the proofs which I have now with certainness established. With your eyes you will see, and you will believe what—" With a huge inhalation the doctor recovered a certain measure of control over himself. His voice fell to an angry mutter. "But what use? What use? My papers, they have all. I have it written down. My experiments, they live. They will to those stubborn professors who know nothing give proof; and these murderings shall cease."

He came again to King, apologetic.

"You, my friend—you do not understand. But I shall show you, and you shall then my papers guard with your life. As I too, with my last life. Look you. I thought in the first sight that you were hunter—" at the hated word the doctor's excitement began to grow again; his voice rose—"a collector, come to murder these anthropoids for their skins; where so long no hunter has come. That is why I made you a warning. I shall not permit this murder!" The doctor stamped up and down and shouted, "I shall not permit! I shall defend. With my life I shall defend—" the thick arms raised themselves high, the fists clenched, the tawny, leonine head lifted back and the great voice roared its warning—"to the death I shall my friends defend."

THE huge figure stood on its tremendous, wide spread legs, great chest outflung, eyes glaring, unmistakably snarling its defiance to the world.

And in that moment King knew it for the monstrous maniac thing that had rushed from the dark upon the pygmy mob that had hunted the apes with their poisoned arrows.

Kaffa, shrinking away from the little folding table where he was clearing up the meal, knew it too; but for another reason. He edged up to King and whispered:

"Look, *Bwana*; look at the feet. It wears shoes of rawhide."

The only sentiment that King experienced was pity. A vast pity for the man, overlaid with a certain awe. This was Africa. This man had matched himself against the dark gods of Africa, had adapted his living to the hard conditions of their jungles; and the inexorable gods, unable to touch the splendid physical specimen to put the mark of Africa upon him, had reached out quiet, insidious fingers and put their mark in his brain.

King's one thought was to calm the man down. When not excited he was perfectly normal. King told him a piece of news.

"But, Doctor, here is something that I'm sure will please you. You don't know perhaps that the Belgian government has formally set aside the whole of the Karisimbi Mountain as a sanctuary for the great apes, where no man may hunt under any circumstances."

For a moment it seemed as if this information would increase the raving man's excitement rather than diminish it. He glared into King's face. One hand gripped King's arm as though to wrench it off if there should be any trick about this thing.

"What is? What do you say there? Lie not to me!"

King repeated the information at

great length. How a famous American explorer had campaigned to raise public interest and how the Belgian government had responded to the appeal to create this great sanctuary for the vanishing anthropoids against all encroachment for all time.

The scientist drank in this information. Slowly he absorbed all of it; and as he understood its whole significance he quieted.

"You will mean to tell me," he asked, still half incredulous that the white man in Africa could have shown so much foresight, "that all the anthropoids who live in—or who to Karisimbi may go—shall remain by the law from killing protected?"

King nodded. The scientist sank slowly to the squatting posture on his heels. It astonished King to see tears in those fierce eyes.

"*Ach Gott, wenn ich gewusst hätte.* If I had known. If I had this known, I would have—but it is not too late. I will immediately tell them and they shall go. *Ach*, yes, there will be a *Völkerwanderung.* We shall emigrate."

The great man smiled with an expression of singular benignity, as of some kindly nomad patriarch arranging for the moving on of his tribe to better pastures. He was apologetic again.

"You must excuse, my friend. I am angry when I think of these murders. My good friend, this is a very beautiful information. It is progress. Yes, it is good. But it is not enough. They must be everywhere protected. But you shall come. You shall see my papers, my proofs. You shall meet my Cri-ack, my halfbreed. You shall carry to the world my proofs; and they shall by law be protected. Come, it is far, my house."

He started off at a tremendous pace, walking King along with him, holding him by the arm. King hung back.

"Wait a minute. Ease up. I've got things to attend to here first. I can't barge off like that at a second's notice."

The big man checked his stride.

"*Ach*, your *safari*? It shall follow. My people shall show the way."

He lifted his head and barked up toward the treetops, and King was awestruck to hear a gibbering answer from above. The man started off again in a vast impatience, but King shook free.

"Barounggo," he called. "I follow this wild man. Kaffa comes with me. We mark the trees with a knife. Do you bring the *safari*. Explain to the *shenzis* that there is nothing to fear."

The Masai, watching all this extraordinary happening, leaning imperturbably on his spear, boomed comfortingly:

"It is well, *Bwana*. We follow. To these *shenzis* I explain that there is more to fear from me if they think not to follow."

The German was already disappearing through the trees. King stepped out after him. Kaffa trotted at his heels.

"*Bwana*, look; his wife's people are thick in the trees above us."

"Shut up," snapped King, and exerted himself to keep up with the tremendous pace set by their guide.

His head swam with speculation. Well might the Hottentot wonder. One thing, of course, was pitifully clear; the man's highly strung brain had broken down under the stress of intensive study of a single subject and frightful conditions of living. How badly or how permanently King could not guess. He hoped fervently that when he should get the man out—and that was going to be more than a small job—proper attention and rest might restore him to normal.

But how much was there to all this talk about his people. What were all these half spoken hints about proofs? Proofs of what? His people must be protected legally from being murdered—the man insisted upon calling it murder. Good Lord, that sounded as though he really considered them to be people. The Hottentot's firm acceptance of that forest negro's yarn about marrying a monkey. Absurd! Insane! But—what was the impossible meaning of "my Cri-ack, my halfbreed"?

All these almost insane thoughts raced in a confused maelstrom in King's brain

as he struggled not to lose sight of the German. And above him the swoop and swish of heavy bodies through the branches indicated that the "people" were coming along.

King felt that he was walking in a Grimm fairy tale—a particularly grim African fairy tale, he punned to himself with a strained laugh. The laughing did him good. It released some of the tension; and the relief enabled him to think more clearly, to sort out the confusion in his mind. An explanation of the ape people's presence grew out of a simple application of wood lore.

It was perfectly possible that the doctor, living in isolation among the apes, never molesting them, knowing their habits, had established a certain sense of his harmlessness among them. Many a hermit had been known to tame the wild creatures of his environment. It was perfectly possible, too, that certain of the bolder apes—there were certainly not more than a score of them above, in spite of all the noise—having learned that the man often had food for them, or could lead them to food, followed him about whenever hunger prompted them.

And as for the apparent answer to the man's bark, which so impressed the Hottentot, King had seen native hunters locate *colobus* monkeys by giving vent to a sudden ringing call in the silence of the jungle, which the monkeys would invariably reply to with indignant chatterings at the disturbance.

The explanation pleased King. It refreshed him. It removed some of the gruesome mystery of the whole thing. Possibly there might be similar perfectly normal explanations of some of the mysteries that remained.

THE German strode on. His tremendous vigor was a tribute to the efficacy of vegetables as a salutary diet for the jungle—raw vegetarianism at that. A thought flashed into King's mind that possibly that was why the great apes never survived long in captivity; because they were given, among other things, cooked vegetables—those little understood vitamins, or something, were lacking. King stored this theory away for future use.

The wild man evinced no desire to talk. Apparently he had nothing to say until he was ready to demonstrate his proofs, his papers which were to be of such vital value to the world. What were these proofs going to be? Would anybody but a scientist understand them? The wonder stayed with King throughout the most strenuous day's march of his life.

It was approaching evening when the tireless guide suddenly stopped before no less a miracle than a woven wattle cabin of extraordinary symmetry. The vertical upright poles were of perfect thickness and alignment and the corners were of a sharp squareness that betokened a phenomenal skill in bush carpentry.

And then as he came close to examine the phenomenon, King was astounded to see that the thing was an iron cage; a great iron cage, the bars which had been interwoven with split bamboo to make a very compact wall. And then he remembered. Long ago—he had forgotten how long ago—he had read a newspaper account about some professor who had gone into the interior of Africa with a hare brained proposal to live in the jungle within the security of a cage to make a phonetic study of the noises made by apes and to trace, if possible, a language out of them.

He seemed to remember that this professor had come back with a claim that he had established a vocabulary of some twenty or more words. Was this Hugo Meyer the same wild philologist come back for more words, or was he another and more persistent enthusiast? The doctor indicated the cabin, apologetically again.

"In the early times I used here to sleep; but that fear is no more. The house is, however, of value my writings to protect —my valuable papers from the curiosity of my friends. I will show you. You shall see and you shall believe. Come, while yet there is light left."

The man paused as an idea came to him; an idea of not much moment, but one to be disposed of before proceeding to the important matter of the papers.

"You do not, I suppose, require to eat, is it? Or is it not?"

King could, at a pinch—and frequently had—gone without food for many more than twenty-four hours. But just now he saw no need. Papers that had waited fifteen years could wait a little longer. Furthermore, he wanted to see whatever there was to see by full daylight; he wanted to talk a lot more to the professor first, so that he might get an inkling of how he should receive the information contained; what sort of replies he should make so as not to occasion excitement; and particularly did he not want to have an excited madman on his hands in the gathering dusk. Therefore he claimed a consuming hunger that left him weak.

The eager professor was disappointed. But, except on his one subject, he was normal. Hospitality's claims could not be ignored.

"Fruit I have; nuts I have; yams I have. Nourishment for all needs of the body. Somewhere it is possible a tin plate I have, but I do not know. If cooking is for you necessary you must, alas, your own matches have. For fire I have not in many years known."

King was amazed again at the simplicity to which this man had reduced his life. Fruit, nuts, yams; all the food content for a balanced ration. If this single track man had so controlled his appetite that it needed none of the variety that civilization has gradually evolved with all its coincident ills, so much the better for him; and he certainly most abundantly testified to the benefit of his diet in his own person. But perhaps no one but a man single tracked to the point of mania could ever so have controlled the impulses of his heredity.

King had often made a meal less tasty than that which the doctor enumerated; though yams, to his mind, did very much need to be baked. Kaffa, turned inside out with hunger, made a fire; smelled out, or by some other process of wizardry discovered the store of yams and some plantains and had them baking in the embers while the white men were still talking about the need as against the dispensability of fire.

After the meal King smoked. The doctor evinced no desire for tobacco; he seemed to have reduced his desires to the simple needs of an animal—of one of his apes. It was dark. King was glad. Those disturbing documents would have to be postponed till the next day. He was willing to talk; or rather, to listen to the fanatic talk about his subject that was of such vast importance to the world.

"Look you now," said the scientist. "Tomorrow I show you and you shall believe. Tonight I tell you and you shall laugh. It does not matter. Those others, those doctors of the university who know so much, they shall laugh—until they my papers have seen.

"Listen now with care. *Imprimis*—" the lecturer was to the fore—"*Imprimis* I have a full vocabulary established. One hundred and six words. In my papers it is written down—System Hugo Meyer, upon the phonetic of Gaston Larue based; every known sound can be thus written. By a study of the phonetic and a good practise of the tongue a man may the anthropoid sound also reproduce and he will understand. Presently I shall from the tree one summon and you shall hear. Good. But that is small things. That is nothing. Wait yet and I tell you."

"Nothing?" thought King to himself. If the man called that stupendous achievement nothing, what marvel had he yet to disclose? If it were actually so that the man had isolated as many sound groups as he claimed and had connected a meaning to each, or even to half as many, why, then, that would be a language; that would mean the power of consecutive thought; it would mean—King hesitated to let himself speculate what it might mean, if all this were not the imaginings of an overenthusiastic brain.

King wondered. The man talked so

sanely. It was only when he was excited upon the subject of killing that he went into maniac rage. Could it be possible that he was normally balanced when he spoke of a vocabulary?

He was talking with perfect normality now. His great hand fell upon another packet of papers, a fat notebook with many inserted sheets, all neatly bound together with twisted grass fiber.

"Here, my friend, I have—" he looked at it and stopped.

His mood changed. The feverish eagerness with which he had been expounding his thesis lost its interest. He smiled in his tawny beard, half pityingly, disdainfully. He shrugged his big shoulders.

"This is—yes, this also represents a labor. But—it is foolishness. *Gott*, how foolish is man! Look, here is complete description with drawings from microscope of a fungus. A very unusual fungus of mold. In the time of war I was for this fungus searching; but I did not until long afterward isolate it. It does not matter.

"In the native condition here where I have isolated it with much trouble, the rain keeps all things so moist that the fungus does not grow. In foodstuffs, which must above all things be preserved dry, you see, my friend, how this thing is a danger. For eradication the complete burning of everything is necessary.

"Look you, this fungus, it is very extraordinary; it propagates in the dry, not in the moist. It is of the family of the dry rot; and it propagates with a quickness like the devil and in time of war this fungus—one little pinch, so—if it shall be placed in the food supplies of an enemy, will quickly spread through everything. This is a weapon more deadly than guns; for it is silent and it can with only very great difficulty be stopped."

The scientist was deadly serious.

"My friend, I tell you that who in a war has this weapon can spread the mold in all the foods of his enemy. This is a terrible thing, is it not? But—" the mood changed swiftly again to a lofty pity for the follies of man, and the strong, blond, hairy hand swept the packet aside—"this is nothing. It is of no importance. I tell you something better. I tell you something of very much bigger importance." Enthusiasm glowed in the fierce eyes again. The leonine face lighted with interest. "I tell you—no, I do not tell. You shall not laugh. I show you my Cri-ack."

HE WENT to the steel door of his queer composite home and called out into the night. King's eyes were glued in fearsome fascination upon that deadly packet. That was the work, then, that had been so important as to render this man immune to military service. That explained the notation which the conquerors had found in the records. That explained, too, the mysterious source of funds to the impoverished university.

The thing came over King with sudden horror. Good Lord, could this be literally true?

He was living through a fairy story now; a wild romance of men and apes and jungle, far from the known world. But, great heavens, could it be possible that this scientist with his deadly concentration of purpose had actually discovered a new and terribly insidious weapon of destruction? A weapon that he brushed aside as of no importance in comparison with his obsessing interest in his apes?

The monomaniac was calling into the jungle.

"Cri-ack!" he called, and King could distinguish other sounds which seemed to be restricted in their gamut to various renderings of grunts and squeaks; no scale between these seemed to exist.

Perhaps they were words; perhaps no more than calls in various tones. King could not tell. A dread expectancy encompassed him.

"Cri-ack," the doctor called. "*Kom mal her, du.*"

Something rustled in a low bough of a tree and plopped softly to the moist ground somewhere beyond the circle of

Kaffa's firelight. Kaffa left the fire and edged closer to the steel cabin.

The doctor called again, persuasively, affectionately. The something came hesitantly into the outer fringe of the fire light and stood upright, peering under its hand, but fearful of coming closer. It stood in the dim outer fringe and made cricket-like noises. King cursed himself that in the hurry of leaving he had left his prism glasses in his tent. The figure, as far as he could make out, was a pygmy man; not the same as those of the earlier jungle; a lower type, longer in the arm and shorter in the neck. But the firelight flickered horribly; King could not be certain.

The doctor stepped out to reassure the hesitant savage, to bring him in. Kaffa slipped close to King and whispered—

"The same monkey who came to spy upon the camp."

"The same," agreed King. "But man. He stands upright."

"Monkey," insisted Kaffa. "He is afraid of the fire."

It was the same difference of opinion as before; and it was settled the same way.

"Look, *Bwana*," the observant little Hottentot compromised. "Listen how with affection he calls. Surely it is his son. But like a monkey it runs to hide."

"Rubbish," snorted King. But into his mind flashed the doctor's own words, "My halfbreed." It was with a fascinated horror that he watched.

The doctor strode back through the gloom with that extraordinary litheness of step, annoyed but self-possessed and calm.

"He is afraid. Fire is a new fear to him. But no matter. Tomorrow you shall see close and you shall believe. Now I tell you."

He paused, the lecturer once more, arranging in his mind his discourse so that his pupil might understand.

"I do not into the pathology enter. That is all in my papers for my colleagues to understand. All. With slides for the microscope. Sufficient I tell you this elementary. Those doctors, those *Dummköpfe*, have always said the difference between the man and the anthropoid is absolute. There is no link. It is in the blood construction. For them it is finished. The science has spoken.

"But I tell you, my friend, I, Hugo Meyer, have the science to be a liar proved." He thwacked two thick fingers into his other palm to emphasize his statement and his strong white teeth glinted in the firelight above the mane of his beard as he chuckled his triumph. "My friend, to you, since you have first come, is the privilege to be the first man to hear what is a—how says one?—a revolution, *ja*, an epoch, in the thought of man, in the science, in the religion, in everything.

"Listen." His deep voice sank to a portentous bass of authority. "You have seen my Cri-ack. Not good; but you shall see him better. You shall see others; not so clever like my Cri-ack, but similar. What do you think he is? Man? Or do you think he is ape? I will tell you."

The great voice whispered the secret.

"He is halfbreed."

King sat silent. He was spellbound, hypnotized by the tremendous force of this man. Whether crazy or sane, King was in no condition to judge. He knew only that there in the black African night, with only the fire flicker for light, this huge shaggy scientist convinced him of truth. The thick finger laid down the details of explanation.

"In the blood cell construction is the not-to-be-overcome difference, say those doctors of the science. *Unsinn*. Stupidness. They know nothing. Listen. I, Hugo Meyer, have made experiment where the difference is the least. I have the lowest type of man selected and the highest type of ape—I have the pygmy men kidnapped."

King was beyond surprise any longer. Anything was possible in that African night. It came to him, as a pleasing solution of a puzzle that that raid upon the pygmy people had not been for the useless and paltry purpose of looting a few yams but in order to obtain specimens for

an enormously important scientific experiment.

The calmly convincing voice continued to state cold fact.

"*Ja*, it has been difficult, the men. They are so cautious to catch. Formerly I have the women kidnaped; they are easy; and they do not so much trouble with the mating make. But that was my mistake with which I have many years wasted. The progenys die—they are weak. The true reason I will tell you. The pygmy man for the male parent is better; for the anthropoid mother has the instinct for the rearing instead of the savage superstition. So are the progenys stronger.

"*Ja*, it is more satisfactory so. The men I can then let run away; the women I would have to keep four, five years. They have made for me much trouble. Always they wish with their progenys to their tribe to run. And I, ho-ho-ho, you can see, my friend, I am for a nurse not so good."

The natural, normal laugh brought King out of a dream. He shook himself to shake off the hallucination of reality. But the thing remained so damnably real. The more he thought over it the less improbable it seemed. The scientist was stating callous fact. Why not? Other scientists with the loftiest aims performed hideous experiments of vivisection upon living animals. They had coldly proposed to perform various experiments with condemned criminals. Who could say that this scientist's experiments had not been inspired by an equally lofty—or perhaps loftier—aim?

The scientist proceeded to lay his claim to the latter.

"And so you see, my friend, my Cri-ack and the others, they are proof that the so not-to-be-overcome difference in the blood construction *can* be overcome. I ask you then, is this not proof that the blood difference does not exist? And if this blood difference does not exist—" The scientist took a long breath and held it. This was the supreme conclusion, the ultimatum of fifteen years of awful devotion. His voice vibrated with his strong emotion and he enunciated his words with incisive precision. "Where, then, is the difference between pygmy and anthropoid?"

Excitement began to overcome him.

"What man shall say that between European and pygmy is a less difference than between pygmy and anthropoid? Where does man cease and monkey begin? You understand, my friend, do you not?" Passion shook the voice in a fierce gust, and the man strode hugely up and down before the dim fire glow. "One may not, by the law, kill pygmy. The law says murder. One *must* not, by the law, murder anthropoid who is a tribe not so much different from pygmy."

The fanatic gesticulated with his arms and shouted the challenge of his proven thesis into the night. And from the farther darkness his furtive proofs chattered to him in support.

Hurriedly King agreed with the shouting, stamping enthusiast. In the face of that cold logic—of those apparently incontestable proofs—in the looming African night, he was convinced. Or at any rate he was in no condition to argue with himself whether or no. He agreed. He said that it was indubitably so; that it was murder; worse than the killing of a pygmy, because the apes were peaceful, defenseless, unprotected—which, had he thought of it, was not so very far from his real conviction.

The German calmed down. He stressed the importance of his discoveries.

"You see, my friend. It is so, is it not? My papers, my proofs, they must before the world be brought. The science shall recognize. With your life you will now this so important trust guard."

King promised. At that moment he was convinced. Those documents and those living proofs—whatever they might be—must be brought before the world of science. Murder must cease.

Far into the night the scientist lectured. He gave details of his experiments, of his earlier gropings in the dark, of his progressive loss of human contacts,

of the dying off of most of the native servants whom he had at first thought to be necessary, of the frightened flight of the rest, of his loneliness, of his gradual adaptation to the requirements of the jungle, of his slow winning of the apes' confidence, of his mistakes, of his weary reconstruction, of his troubles with his human captives—there was where the cage had been so useful. The whole story was an amazing jungle tapestry of a tireless energy, of a perfectly astounding fortitude, of a fanatical singleness of purpose.

To King came the thought: Where did fanaticism cease and mental unbalance begin? But he dismissed the thought; and he dozed over the tireless recital of technical details of cell construction which he could not understand. He dreamed fanatic dreams of debased savages and cultured apes and of a voice that droned on with an awful conviction of impossible things.

KING awoke to a confusion; to a hurrying and scuttling in the trees; a grunting and barking of orders and a gibbering and a squeaking of response. He was immediately wide awake and on his feet. Dawn was turning the blacker shadows to gray. The doctor strode back and forth, collecting various objects of his primitive life and throwing them into the big cage.

King looked quickly to the bolt of his rifle, wiped it over with his handkerchief and stepped to the scientist. That one barked a terse explanation.

"The Ruanda men. That at this time they should come. Never before have I had with them trouble. But only now I receive word that a war party comes. *Gott*, what a bad luck."

King did not ask in what mysterious manner he had received word; this was no time for questioning. He swore whole heartedly with the scientist. It was his white man's inhibition that he cursed. The penalty had come as he had hoped against hope it might not come. That wretched prisoner whom he had let live solely because his heredity and his upbringing had inculcated in him a certain code that distinguished between killing in hot blood and killing in cold blood. Of course the man knew that he was looking for the lost white man and so the reprisal party knew just about where to come.

Gratitude on the part of the man who had been spared? Bah! This was not an uplift story. This was stark, savage Africa. The white man had accepted the disadvantage of his inhibition and the white man must pay the price.

King did not feel that it was necessary just then to tell the fuming scientist that his trouble with the giant people *en route* had brought this visitation upon them; but to Kaffa he snapped the information—

"The giant men from the place of thorns."

The Hottentot let out a long hiss. He was humanly savage enough to rub it in.

"Ah-h-h. If *Bwana* who is so wise had but been wise enough not to let his eyes see or his ears hear."

The scientist, cursing his luck and his ill fate in a deep, continuous growl, called to them to come within the cage.

"Better here. These people have only spears; they do not know bows. These walls of bamboo are proof against such. Here we hold a fort."

"How many of them, do you know?" asked King.

"*Verdammt*, no, I do not know. They count not with ease, my people."

Even in the tense atmosphere of expected attack King felt the surge of wonder whether this bizarre thing could be true—this was daylight today; the hypnotism born of the night's fierce personality no longer swayed him. This hybrid Cri-ack creature who had presumably brought the news, was he a crazy creation of the fanatic's brain, or was he no more than a pygmy halfwit who hung about the doctor's home for the sake of shelter and food?"

The doctor was bolting the cage door. He grumbled grimly:

"Your rifle, I see it is good. A rifle I also have; but my ammunition since many years is finished. For weapons I have no use. Only my friends live in these hills. They have the leopards chased away. There is nothing else. My weapons are these."

He lifted from a corner, both in one vast paw, a builder's broad ax, rusty from disuse, and a light lumberman's swamping ax still shiny along the edge from occasional wood chopping. A flash-back of schoolbook memory brought to King a picture of a huge Goth ancestor with matted long hair and tawny flowing beard wielding just such an ax and shouting the names of heathen gods as he hewed his foemen down. Himself a good woodsman, well used to swinging an ax, he knew what a terrible weapon it could be in the hands of such a physical specimen as the forest hardened scientist.

But all that was idle speculation. There was going to be no foolish hand to hand encounter here. This was a matter of holding a fort with arms and ammunition. The white man, having accepted the disadvantage of his inhibitions, had a right to accept the advantage of his weapons.

That was why King was anxious to know how many there were in the war party. His store of ammunition was with the *safari* which had been forced to camp overnight somewhere as soon as it had become too dark to follow the trail of the blazed trees. In his rifle King carried six cartridges. They were all he ever needed. It was seldom that he required more than a single one for the day's supply of meat. He carried a Luger pistol in a belt holster, also with only six cartridge in the magazine; for he adhered to what was probably no more than a superstition of his father's, one of the old-timers of the six-gun days in the West, who thought that more than six cartridges to a gun was not quite decent. And since his father had taught him to shoot, he had found that six shots were as many as a man might need in a pistol.

Twelve shots. How many men? Would twelve be sufficient to discourage the rest?

He was soon to know. Lank figures of abnormal height could be discerned among the farther tree trunks. The number of them could not yet be determined in the density of the forest. An unfortunate thing, too, was that the doctor, with his simple needs, had never found it necessary to make a clearing round his cage. It was the sheerest luck that his native servants, while he still had them, had felled the nearest trees to give sunlight to their mealie patches.

King—so strong are the qualms of hereditary conscience—still hesitated to take the advantage of the first offensive while there remained the possibility of the parley which the foolish white man always hopes for. But the Ruanda men had no stupid inhibitions; they were out to make a war.

The cage had a little square opening cut in the bamboo wattle of each of its four walls to admit light, making neat little barred windows. A light throwing spear whizzed through one of these and stuck in the farther wall.

King whirled with a certain grim joy that he was free at last. His rifle found his shoulder as he spun. It cracked like many whips in that slatted enclosure. The spear thrower flung his long arms wide and embraced the tree from behind which he had stepped. Then slowly, like a drunkard, he slipped down the trunk, sagging ever lower, till he clutched its roots.

"One," counted Kaffa in imitation of Barounggo who always tallied off his dead.

"So," said the doctor coolly. "You shoot well, my friend; as well as one would expect from one who has come here as you have come. But these holes we must with something defend."

The cage contained a couple of sturdy folding camp tables of wood such as the German outfitters used to supply to *safaris* in the days when they owned territory to which *safaris* might go. The doctor carefully removed his methodical piles of papers from these. With a wrench of one great hand he tore the lid from a

box. These things could be propped or jammed between the bars to form shutters.

While he worked King's rifle cracked twice more.

"Three," counted Kaffa, without glancing from his work.

Three was true. But only three shells were left. King decided to hold these in reserve and drew his pistol. Thanking his stars that his father had taught him to shoot, he discarded right there his father's superstition about six cartridges. He swore to himself that if he should ever get out of this he would in the future carry his pistol magazine jammed to its full complement of nine, and one cartridge in the chamber besides.

A snarled oath from the doctor following on a rattle of spear heads against wood caused King to spin on his heel. His own front was clear. A volley had been fired at the table top that the doctor was fixing in place, and the tip of a particularly well hurled shaft had pierced the wood sufficiently to prick his hand.

"Quick," snapped King.

He snatched the board down and two fast shots dropped their men before the rest vanished behind protecting trees. The horrible proximity of the cover gave the one advantage that it was impossible to miss at that range.

Kaffa, on his front, was hopping before his window, holding his box lid as a shield and catching the spears as they came. King darted to his side and relieved him of three overconfident attackers who had thought that side almost safe enough to rush.

"How many. *Bwana?* I have lost count," panted the Hottentot. "These great men are devils; they have no fear. Would that Barounggo were here."

The scientist stamped from one shutter to another, peeping hurriedly through the narrow slits that he had left and fretting at his inaction.

"*Gott in Himmel!* You shoot *hundert pro cent*, my friend; but I—I can nothing help. *Verdammte Schweinehünde*, why must they just now come when all the departure is at last ready?"

The big man, inherently a nervous organism of enormous energy, could ill stand the ordeal of attack without retaliation. His anger rose with each minute and his great limbs quivered as he fought with himself for control.

King was husbanding his ammunition. Only one pistol shot and three rifle cartridges remained, and it seemed to him that quite a dozen giant figures still slunk among the trees.

American Indians in that number, as he had heard his father relate, would have had enough of that unerring shooting and would have drawn off, if not for good, at least to consider a safer plan of attack. But Africans—the warrior tribes—less intelligent, possessed greater animal courage. And these Ruanda giants had shown themselves, from their very first contact in the thorn belt, to be physically brave.

A YELL from Kaffa called King's attention to the hitherto undefended side of the cabin. He rushed to the shutter board in time to see a long figure that had crawled, flattened out under his shield, almost to the very wall. The last shot in the pistol, fired straight down through the shield, must have broken the man's spine; for he lay without a move and the shield settled quietly over him.

Kaffa yelled a triumphal count of nine. But King was very grave. His eyes were nearly closed slits and the corners of his mouth were tightly drawn and white.

For that man had been carrying a weapon far deadlier than a spear. In the hand that protruded from beneath the shield a twist of grass glowed red under a thin blue spiral of smoke. The man must just have been blowing upon it preparatory to sticking in between the dry bamboo slats. King watched with a nauseous fascination while the dead fingers tensed and curled slowly over the bright flame and crushed it dead.

The doctor called to him.

"Those devils there, they are some

hell thing doing. I do not know what."

But King knew and he waited with ready rifle. From behind the sheltering tree an occasional giant elbow showed, and once the curve of a long back bent over a horizontal spear shaft. The attackers seemed to be grouped together in that place, their combined brains engrossed in their task.

King might have snapped a rifle bullet into one of those incautious elbows; but he waited for the surety that was deadly necessary.

A spear thrower suffers under the great disadvantage that he must expose all of his body in order to throw. A rash warrior thought to dash from behind an unexpected tree and make his cast. But the rifle cracked and he lurched forward before the spear left his hand. It buried its point in the ground and its twist of grass went out in harmless smoke.

"*Gott!*" came from the doctor in a strained gasp. "*Gott!* That, also, they have thought of. My papers! *Du lieber Himmel*, my papers!"

Two shots left. Ten men, as far as King could make out; perhaps nine. It was very hopeless. Two shots would quite surely not frighten those men away.

But their minds had at last assimilated the lesson of that deadly gun. They were cautious, very cautious. And they were becoming crafty. The group showed themselves just enough to show that they were there. They stayed farther away among the trees and all that remained visible for any length of time were the shafts of their spears as they worked assiduously upon them.

King watched like a hawk. The doctor strode mightily in his cage, at times growling his awful rage and then trembling in fear for the papers that were his very life.

Time passed. The group of tall forms beyond the trees began to move as though on some concerted action. Something was about to happen. King held his rifle for a snapshot at the first advance.

The thing happened to one side of him. A heavy thud sounded low in that wall. A spear point projected through the wattle. While the doctor still looked at this aimless cast, a wisp of smoke crept between the chinks and curled lazily into the room.

But King had already torn the improvised shutter from its place. A lank figure was running for shelter. The rifle spat viciously after him, and he pitched forward in a long dive and slid on his face in the gravel.

The group of men yelled their derision and triumph. One more had fallen; but his spear stuck in the wattle and the red flame was beginning to lick higher with more fuel than the grass that it had brought. His fellows flung their arms high and danced in uncouth glee.

"*Verpfluchter Gott!*" It was an animal scream from the doctor. "My papers!"

He stood for just one moment in an agony of horror. Then he went berserk. With one enormous bound he snatched up his broad ax, tore open the bolt of the cage door and rushed screaming out to the giant gang that massed together to meet him.

His mane of hair streamed in the wind; his yellow beard streaked over his shoulder; his garments of dressed skins fluttered behind. So must his ancestors have rushed roaring forth to battle to slay until they should themselves be slain.

King fired his last shot into the group. A man fell. Seven seemed to be left.

"Kaffa," he yelled. "Look to that fire. There is water in jars."

Then he, too, snatched up the only weapon that remained in the house, the lumberman's ax, and raced out after the screaming scientist. Passing a fallen man, he stooped and grabbed up his shield. He knew little enough about its use; as he ran he wished it were as familiar to his hand as the swamping ax.

He saw the raging doctor brace himself mightily on his legs to meet a giant who rushed toward him. The giant lunged with his spear. He seemed to miss. The broad ax whirled in the air, swung in both great hands. The giant went down, spouting blood, seemingly hewn in two

from chest to thigh. Other giants stood in the way. The maniac roared on to meet them.

And then King found a tall spearman in front of himself. The man made a tremendous lunge at him. King caught the point somehow on his shield. His impetus carried him beyond the glade and inside of its scope. The man's great shield was up before his body. King swung his ax in with an underhand stroke. He felt surprise and a savage joy to feel it bite deep under the man's arm pit. The man screamed like a stricken horse and dropped below his line of vision.

He heard the doctor roaring somewhere close by, and a fierce shout following a crunching sound. A long black arm worked at him from behind a shield; a spear shaft rasped along his neck. He struck savagely at the arm and saw it turn suddenly red.

Clutching arms were round his waist, dragging him down. He struck at them, but his ax fell on a shield. A rank odor of sweating African sickened him even in that fierce mêlée.

And then he heard the most welcome sound that he had ever heard in his life.

Long drawn and high, it sounded over the roaring of the berserk scientist and over the hoarse shouts of the Ruanda men.

"*Ss-zwee-ee, m'bale! Ss-zwee-ee!*"

The strident, hissing war whistle of the Masai.

The clutching hands slipped from his waist to his knees. His feet felt something that might be a face. Savagely he stamped upon it. He could see nothing. In front of his own face a great shield was pressed. He hacked at it with his ax.

Suddenly the shield disappeared of its own accord. In the space it left he saw a fierce, eager face under a rearing black ostrich plume and a great blade that he knew.

"*Hau!*" shouted the face. "*Jambo, Bwana?* A good fight is this!"

The great blade glittered a streak and disappeared.

"*Hau!*" shouted the Masai again. "*Ss-zwee-ee!*"

And then there were less of the lunging Ruanda giants. And then only one. His back was toward King and was going away fast. The Masai bounded after it and the great blade whispered *ss-s-whee.* Then there were no more giants.

King stood panting in the shambles, splashed a spotted red, nauseated with the reek of hot blood. The Masai with wide nostrils breathed it in. He stepped high footed over the sprawled bodies with ready spear—he was taking no chances of an escape this time. But there was no need. He grinned joyfully at his master.

"*Whau, Bwana.* A good fight, a very proper fight. But these people are fools. With their long spears and arms they should fight at long distance and apart. Massed thus like saplings swaying in a wind, the ax hews them down. Truly a good fight. But, *tche-tche,* it is my ill fate that I did not come sooner. Already had *Bwana* and that great man there slain—look, *Bwana,* the great one is hurt."

The big man stood, braced on massive legs leaning on his terrible broad ax. Face and hair and yellow beard were red from the spouting of that first man whom he had hewn nearly in two. The massive forearms were bathed in blood. The raggy skin garments dripped red. But the dripping continued in a steady tiny stream. Then King saw that the broken neck of a spear protruded from his right side, and that the man stood with closed eyes, fainting as he stood.

"Quick, Barounggo, hold him."

King jumped forward and caught the swaying figure. Together they helped him on sagging feet back to the cage and let him slip down to a patch of grass. Kaffa, unbidden, brought water and a grimy cloth. King washed some of the blood from the leonine face. The eyes opened wearily. Uncomprehendingly they looked as far as could be without moving the head. They saw the cage that had been home for fifteen years, intact. The tired eyes lighted up and looked their wonder.

"The boy managed to put it out," King explained.

A long breath filled the straining lungs. The doctor nodded.

"Good boy. In the box is still a little money—I give it to him."

He smiled slowly with closed eyes and nodded many times. He strained another bubbling inhalation.

"Yes, it is good. My papers. My friend, you make me now a promise. You will my papers take— By the Semliki forest you shall go out. North, three days; then east, ten days—Uganda—safe. Thirty more days to the English railway. My life, it is nothing. In my papers it is all written down. Those so stupid doctors will understand. You will my papers with your life defend. They are many lives worth. My proofs, my Cri-ack and his brothers, that will be now more difficult. But—you will tell—with your eyes you have seen. The science will believe—and this murder shall cease."

The tired voice stopped and the shaggy head rolled over. King thought it was finished. But the eyes opened once again and held King's commandingly.

"The science is pighead. It will demand with its own eyes to see. You will bring them. But not here. My people, I have told them. They go to the reserve of Karisimbi."

The lion eyes glowed a last flame and the voice took on sudden strength.

"My friend, you are a brave man. You give your promise?"

King nodded silently. The eyes smiled and closed still smiling. A whisper came from the lips—

"The murder shall cease."

KING spent a long day in that place; a day of cleaning up and of burials. He was glad of the strenuous work that made it unnecessary for his mind to think. He did not want to think about anything for awhile. But in spite of his resolution, an insistent question groped in the back of his mind—the question of this dark riddle of Africa that had reached out and drawn him into its maze. Nor did the succeeding days tend to elucidate one single item of it.

That night as the collected *safari* sat about the camp and moaned in fear of the ghosts of the dead who must be prowling about the scene of their last fight, a something howled a high pitched shriek at intervals from the high trees.

"It is his wife who mourns," said Kaffa with conviction.

"You are a fool," said King. "He had no wife—and apes do not howl in the night. It is the man thing, whom he calls Cri-ack."

"Men do not howl in trees," said Kaffa.

And so the old argument was on, the question which must be settled; for its importance was vast.

Still another day King spent in that place, and another. He was trying to lure the Cri-ack creature to a nearer approach. At times he would catch a fleeting glimpse of it; but always in the farthest woods; never clearly. Was it hybrid, as the scientist claimed, or was it halfwit pygmy? King could never decide.

He tried to trap it. With all of Kaffa's craft and ingenuity to help him he constructed snares and traps of half a dozen kinds and set them with all the care of their joint command.

They were good traps; they would have caught the cunningest monkey or ape. But—it was weirdly extraordinary —*there were no apes.* The solemn black faces that had looked down upon them so contentedly had all disappeared. Kaffa said—

"His people have gone to shave their heads and to put clay upon their bodies for the period of the moon, as is due to the passing of a great chief."

King said:

"You are a fool. They have gone to Karisimbi." And he did not know why he said it.

The traps remained empty. The Cri-ack thing was too clever for them. They

would have caught an animal, but not even a weak witted man.

King had a fleeting hope that he might glean something from the scientist's papers, some word of friendship, of reassurement for the creature, from that astounding vocabulary. But the explanations were all in German. Perhaps those German colleagues would understand and perhaps some student among them, with the stolid pertinacity of his race, would master that miracle language.

At the end of a week King's mind was made up. Whether the dead scientist were crazy or whether he were coldly sane, here was one mystery of Africa that science must settle so definitely that the world would know once and for all.

He gave orders to pack up the camp gear; to burn, as a careful camper should, the week's litter in the last of the breakfast fire. He packed very carefully the scientist's collection of precious papers and notebooks, wrapping them in a rubber ground sheet. In his hand he held the notebook.

The innocuous looking fat notebook with its many inserted leaves tied with grass string. King paused in his operation of packing and looked into distant nothing through thin slit eyes.

Was there anything in that? Was it possible that a new and horrible weapon was contained within those closely written leaves? When the scientist wrote it all painstakingly down—that was years ago—had his mind already succumbed to the awfulness of the African jungle? Had it, for that matter, succumbed at all? King did not know what he thought.

But that book. That deadly, innocent looking book. The power behind the German university that had supplied the funds to get it out; would it find within those pages a ghastly weapon for some future conflict? Or perhaps—suppose on his way out that his ingenuity failed to avoid an overhauling from the British authorities and an investigation of his finds—would this weapon be theirs by right of seizure?

King pondered long, frozen in motionless introspection. Who had a right to this weapon, if any? Or had anybody a right to so evil a thing?

Then decision came. King shook himself out of thought into action. A hard grin split his face.

"Heinies or Limeys," he muttered. "It's all one to me—and I'm darn sure *we* don't want it. And Hugo Meyer was right; the other things are more important."

He stepped to the fire and dropped the deadly little package into the flames with the rest of the litter. He watched the string char and burst asunder, the stiff covers curl up as they blackened, the little lines of blue flame race along the edges of the paper sheets. And he laughed out whole heartedly.

The rest was easy. All these other papers; all that he had seen and would report. That was for science to decide; to come out with an expedition properly prepared, and to investigate and decide and publish. He called Kaffa and Barounggo to him.

"I place an order upon you," he said. "From here we go to Nairobi. From Nairobi I take train and steamer to this great man's country. If I should die on the road, as death may come to any man in this dark land, this is the order: You will wait in Nairobi. Whether I come or no, men will come speaking my name. The *Ngai* will have looked upon all of them, as upon this great man. You will bring them to this place with all the care that you know and you will tell them all things that you have seen. Is it understood?

"It is an order," said both men.

"Good," said King. Then to himself, "And I think, whatever they find out, whatever they decide, there will be sufficient interest so that the murder of the great apes shall cease."

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A READER brings up an interesting point in connection with "Pigboats," the widely acclaimed submarine novel by Commander Edward Ellsberg which recently ran in our pages.

Dallas, Texas

I have just finished reading with breathless interest Commander Ellsberg's wonderful story, "Pigboats." This is the best "sub" story I have ever read and I believe one of the outstanding *Adventure* yarns for the year.

There is one point in this story about which I am not quite clear. When the *L-20* was cut loose from the *Galway* upon meeting the first submarine, the *U-19*, she took her towline in with her own capstan, either through a hawsepipe in her stem, or the line was stowed on deck. If this was the case, why was it her crew could not go into the bow of the sub and cut loose the towline without having to climb outside and do this?

I have been reading *Adventure* continuously since 1911, and have hardly missed an issue during all of this time. Upon purchasing a copy, the first thing I do is to glance at the cover, then turn to Ask Adventure and read every line, and then to Camp-fire. After I have digested everything in these two exceedingly interesting and educational departments, I begin on the stories.

I have never found a magazine that quite takes the place of *Adventure*. The stories have that "true" ring about them that makes one almost live through the adventures of the characters. This is my first attempt to seek admittance to the Camp-fire, after about twenty years of sitting around in the shadows, thrilling to the yarns of the old-timers.

—J. L. JAMES

Which point Commander Ellsberg himself clears up for us in battleship style:

Westfield, N. J.

In connection with the question which Mr. James asked, there is no inconsistency in the two cases of the *L-20's* casting loose from the *Galway*. On a submarine, the capstan or drum on which a towing or anchoring hawser is reeled up is outside the watertight hull of the boat, and inaccessible to the crew while the boat is submerged. It is operated by a motor inside the boat which the crew can start or stop at will; the motor drives the capstan by a shaft which passes through a watertight stuffing box to the outside of the boat.

In the first instance of the *Galway's* letting go the *L-20*, the crew of the submarine simply heaved in on their capstan (without ever seeing either the capstan or the hawser) till the shackle on the end of the hawser brought up in the bullnose and stopped further heaving in. In the second instance, with

the *Galway* unable to let go the line, the men on the L-20 were as always unable to reach the line while they were submerged, and were forced to come up in an attempt to cut it. —EDWARD ELLSBERG

STANDING up before the Camp-fire for the first time, Mr. Davis Quinn, who has recently become a member of Ask Adventure as authority on "Ornithology," gives us some of his views on the subject of buzzards:

Bronx, N. Y.

The familiar turkey buzzard is known to destroy newborn (living) calves, lambs, pigs and chickens and there are records to prove it, the matter having been investigated at some pains on account of its possible economic importance. Although the established records of these attacks are confined to young livestock and poultry, there is no reason to suppose that these vultures so limit their depredations, except that domestic animals being more or less tame, are probably easier to catch and subdue. But so is a sick or crippled jackrabbit, for that matter, or perchance a batch of young herons about to leave the nest. There may be no data available to support this last likelihood but neither is there any to exclude it.

These birds are probably very fond of fresh meat and do not really prefer carrion, as is commonly supposed; but not often do they have the strength in beak or talons to rend a carcass, especially a large one, till it is well decomposed. Hence their selection of the tender skinned bill of fare that new born livestock would provide.

TURKEY BUZZARDS have a habit of gathering about sick or disabled animals when death seems imminent. If the death of the victim is quite assured, as when an animal is mired fatally in a bog or in quicksand, these birds will approach it, and occasionally the bolder individuals among them have been known to offer attack as soon as they see the unfortunate animal is helpless. But such cases are extremely rare. So are the others, cited above. On the whole there can be no doubt that the majority of turkey buzzards are not at all predatory.

In fact, there is no stronger evidence of the rarity of such as the foregoing than the experiences of men like Mr. Charles H. Coe and others contributing to these columns, who all their lives have observed carefully in buzzard country without recalling a single predatory individual among these birds. Mr. Marten S. Garretson, an old-timer who rode the old cattle trails before there was a bridge on them from Montana to Texas, and is now a curator at the New York Zoological Park, says of these birds (and Mr. Garretson is a reliable observer), "I have known them all my life and watched them many times but have never seen or known of their killing anything whatsoever. They are indeed a valuable bird and quite harmless and should always be protected."

VULTURES are not birds of prey. They are lazy, they are cowardly, and they are not fighters. With a comparatively weak, little-hooked bill that is scarcely raptorial, with weak legs and feet appending dull, barely curved claws, and with cumbrous, clumsy flight except when well on the wing, a turkey buzzard outside of its sheer size and weight could not constitute a formidable assailant to any but small and defenseless prey, not to exclude of course sick or dying animals. There is nothing about the bird, either in its manner or its structure, to suggest the eagle or the falcon or even the comparatively slow moving and unwarrior-like buzzard hawk (*Buteo*).

The black vulture, the less common by far of the two species of this tribe found in the United States, is a weaker and slower bird than the foregoing species and hence is even less adapted to attack living animals and undecomposed dead. I think the black vulture can pretty well be left out of this discussion altogether.

IF YOU want to venture beyond the United States, there is the condor of the Andes, a veritable monster of a bird, the largest living "bird of prey" in the world, and it is well known that this condor successfully attacks young livestock and such creatures as old indefensible horses. The wing spread of this species is recorded to reach eleven feet! Were it raptorially constructed and disposed, the havoc it might wreak among life wild and domestic is not pleasant to contemplate. But again, for all its massive proportions, this bird, which is indeed scarcely a bigger bird than our own condor of California, is but ineffectually harmful at its best—or worst.

It is strange now that this controversy over vultures should be so prolonged and so replete with available data, and yet no one has touched upon a kindred subject so vital and of such far-reaching importance that it quite overshadows the mere predatory issue. I refer to the current question: Do or do not vultures in stock country transmit and spread stock diseases like anthrax, black-leg and hog cholera? These birds have been accused of it time and again, they have suffered beneath a mass of propaganda disseminated by the press and by agricultural journals. When a hog dies of cholera all farmers in the neighborhood declare open war on these defenseless birds, often slaughtering them to the last individual; or, more frequently, a carcass poisoned with strychnine is set out, which results not only in the extermination of these unfortunate birds over a wide area but also in the death of countless other birds and animals, for most all creatures will eat carrion when they are hungry.

THIS propaganda is based on no stronger evidence than popular belief. The buzzard partakes of an anthrax victim, swallowing in the same mouthful a liberal dose of anthrax spores or bacilli with which the carcass is infested, and therefore it is presumed that the subsequent and far scattered droppings of these birds constitute a very real

menace to livestock. But while this belief is still prevalent, the most careful experiments with these birds have disclosed the fact that buzzards may eat any quantity of anthrax, cholera or black-leg germs with impunity. Their digestive organs, which are adjusted to derive nourishment from carrion that is often wholly bacteria or bacterial products, destroy these disease germs completely.

It is interesting to observe further that such is not the case with any other group of birds or animals, so far as is known, and that dogs, cats, pigs, possums, chickens and particularly *flies* have been shown definitely to excrete virulent spores or bacilli of these diseases, even for several days after having eaten them, and hence are to be considered very real agencies in the transmittal of these diseases.

TO OFFSET this, the buzzard, in its eating habits, destroys countless millions of the larva (screw worms and maggots) and eggs of blow flies and the like that always occur in carrion. This great benefit can not be overestimated. The fly is considered today the worst of all spreaders of stock epidemics. One blow fly is really more of a potential spreader of anthrax than one buzzard, and when it is remembered how incommensurately prolific are these flies, and that in a short time one pair of blow flies may increase to a staggering number in nine noughts, the immense value of the buzzard as a check is appreciated. And outside of buzzards there is no other important check on these flies in the Southwest.

The right way to control stock diseases is to bury an infected carcass at once. But how, on the vast open ranges of the stock country, are you going to find a new carcass without the help of friend buzzard to point the way? Therefore, not only has the buzzard a better record and more to its credit in this matter than any other animal, but the real fault of severe epidemics lies not with the animals or with the buzzards, but with man himself for carelessness in not disposing of diseased carcasses. If buzzards are not desired, let the farmer bury his carcasses and these birds will disappear quickly enough. It is criminal to endeavor to exterminate a bird for a cause that is attributable more than anything else to man's own carelessness. —DAVIS QUINN

A BILL ADAMS poem recalls windjammer days to an old reader:

Ketchikan, Alaska

I read *Adventure* since 1913, but never butted into the Camp-fire until now. What makes me do so now is Bill Adams poem, "All Hands on Deck," Sept. 15th issue. The dawgone thing is so realistic that it almost made me get up from bed at 3 A. M. thinking that I was back at sea again. But I stayed put; I can realize the sensation of getting up out of a wet bunk just after one got it nice and warm with the cry from above, "all hands on deck!" to either furl or reef topsails!

But, the main reason for writing in is that I may pick up some old-time shipmate who sailed on the only two windjammer trips that I ever made.

My first trip (1887), across was on the barkentine *Heribea*, Captain, Allesandro Vukasovich, "Austrian" 101 days from Philadelphia to Brindisi, 10 days from Brindisi to Ancona and then 8 days from Ancona to Trieste. When we arrived in Brindisi the captain's wife was to have a baby, and just as we came into the mouth of the harbor the wind died down and we sure were in a hurry to get to the mole, so we lowered our only lifeboat and towed the ship into harbor, just in time to get the lady into hospital and everything was just fine. After that we sailed for Ancona where "Peter Vukasovich" was baptised by a Greek priest, and Old Man Vukasovich sure put up a fine spread for the crew, even for cabin boy, myself. From there we sailed for Trieste, as I said above.

My second trip across was from Perth Amboy to Marseilles (1891), 41 days to the Straits. When we got to the entrance of Marseilles harbor the wind died down and we had to drift off to wait for pilot and then during the night, a northwester *mistral* started and we were forced to stay for four days on one lower topsail. When a steamer passed us we signaled him and we got no answer, but he reported us. The first night of the storm an Italian brig which had sailed from Perth Amboy with us was lost in the Gulf of Lyons with all hands. So you can see that I had quite a sea experience in my two trips. Of course I do not want to mention my trips back to the States—they were made in tanks!

—JOHN M. BUSSANICH

SOME time ago one of you asked how to make an old-time rawhide rope. Subsequently a letter appeared in this section giving a rough idea of the process; but several other readers have since written in asking for an account giving full details. This Ernest W. Shaw of Ask Adventure has tried to do in the following:

South Carver, Mass.

USE a fresh, two-year-old, unbranded bullhide, or one branded on the neck. Next best is a steer hide with all the other requirements named above. A yearling hide is too light weight (better for hackamore or bridle and quirt work). Anything of greater age is too heavy. If hide is branded, and the strips are cut across the brand, the rope is weakened and will break at those points. No rawhide rope worthy of the name was ever spliced in the making. All four strands run through the entire length of the rope. A four strand is stronger than a five or six strand and was always preferred by the old-time riders.

When skinning out, use care not to cut the hide; and it is far better to leave no fat or flesh on the hide

rather than have to take such off after skinning. Stretch tightly in a frame as a bear hide, or nail hair side down against the smooth wall of a building. Use no salt or other tanning material at any time, except as later directed.

THE point at which it is ripe to work is when the hide is dry enough to lie flat when removed from frame, and yet not too dry and hard to cut easily. Cut out and do not use a strip about two inches wide down the backbone. If a strand is cut across the backbone it will break at that point. Now you have the hide in two parts. Cut off the thick neck part but not too far down; trim off the legs, but not too far up. Trim out the flanky parts behind shoulder and in front of hind leg.

Now take a smooth floor or a large table, a razor-sharp pocket knife such as the usual stockman's knife, and a gage of some smooth grained hard wood. This gage should be about two inches wide, and one inch thick, with the cutout part just enough to take the hide in the thickest part plus the hair. The gage is nailed down solid to the floor or table. The knife is set or driven into the floor and, leaning against the gage, held with the right hand to steady it.

PERHAPS it should be stated that all outside edges of the hide have been trimmed so that there are no sharp corners to turn when gaging strands. Experience will teach just how sharp a corner can be cut without too great a kink in the strand. The first rough strands cut with the hair on should be made about five-eighths of an inch wide. This is so that when shaved and stretched no part of strand will be less than the five-sixteenths of an inch required for finished strand.

Cut a starting strip beginning at neck end, toward the tail end. The hide should lie on table hair side down. Insert starting strip under gage between shoulder of gage and knife and pull through to the end of cut and strip. Have a man to help turn hide and feed into gage. The gage man holds knife in right hand and pulls steadily with the left, the hide revolving on his right toward the gage and the cut strand falling at his left on the floor. Great care should be used to see that the hide feeding into gage is held closely against the gage shoulder, and that the knife does not slip and cut into strip. There is a place which, when you have trimmed out the flank, will meet the cutting of strand from the backbone edge. This piece is trimmed off when the cutting of the strand severs it from the remainder of the hide. Run the strand clear out until you can cut no more. You will have to stop when the remainder of the hide is about as large as the top of a water pail.

REPEAT with the other side. You will now have two very long strands about five-eighths of an inch wide with hair on. Cut each in two at the center, making four of equal length. Now tie them—all four—at one tree or post, and stretch them out to another post at proper distance and tie those ends. Then bear down at center of strands, stretching them. Take up slack gained and repeat, until most of stretch is out. If strands have become too dry, dampen by wrapping in damp cloth. You should not have to wet the strands themselves at this time. The cutting strands and shaving of them should be done on the same day, if possible while the hide is in just the right condition to work.

To shave the strands, take one, loop it over a fence post with about two feet between end of strand in hand and post. Hold tight by placing foot on strand on ground. I said post, but meant rail at post, so that the strand will lie flat over the top of rail, and between your thumb and forefinger. Experience will show you how much of strand can be exposed and worked on at a time, but a foot to eighteen inches is about right. Shave off the hair without cutting or injury to the grain surface of strand. This is very important as the full strength of rope depends largely on the uninjured surface of grain, or hair side. When all are shaved, dampen again. If very dry by this time, dash into water in a coil, and take out. Repeat until pliable enough. Don't put into water and leave until spongy or transparent looking. Now stretch some more as before. This should be done in shade or part shade rather than in direct sun.

WHEN all the stretch is out, and the places where the hide was the thinnest is about five-sixteenths of an inch wide, it is ready to finish. Make a similar gage as before, with notch just the depth to take the thickest part of strand. Gage as before to five-sixteenths of an inch, with no sharp corners. This applies to all four strands. Now they must be gaged to the same thickness throughout. Make a similar gage with the notch five-sixteenths of an inch in depth. Nail to table. Cut block the width of gage and five-sixteenths inch in thickness and insert under gage, pressing toward gage shoulder until the space is that of the thinnest part of strand; then drive two nails on each side of gage and about one inch from it. Have space between nails line up with the space under gage. Trim strand at one end on the flesh side until it will slip through gage and nails. Slip through enough to get a firm grip. Place gage knife in position and gage all four strands to an even thickness on the flesh side. In this gaging the strand is held on the vertical.

The four strands are now ready for the finish. If a real pretty rope is desired, the edges of strands on the grain side are both trimmed or beveled by taking off a triangular strip about one-sixteenth of an inch on the grain side and down to the flesh edge; but if a strong rope is wanted, the operation should be done on the flesh side leaving the entire grain surface of strand intact. In the first case the rope is braided with the grain surface out. In the second instance the process is reversed, and the grain surface is braided into center of rope with the flesh side out. This trimming of edges may be done through a gage, one edge at a time, or free hand. I have found it quicker and fully as well to do the latter way. That is, bevel the edges of both sides so as to braid the rope round.

The strands are now ready to braid. If at any time following shaving and stretching it is necessary to postpone the work for a period of time, roll the strands each in a ball, and wrap up in a damp cloth; but the most successful rope builders never stop the work except for night, until the rope is braided, after once starting.

THERE are several kinds of braided rawhide ropes, each of which has had its advocates. They are the four, the five and the six strand ropes. The first and the last are braided round. The five-strand rope is a four-strand braided around a center strand, which is rolled round before braiding. However, by far the great majority of riders prefer the four-strand rope, because in most cases it proves the stronger, and it is this rope I am trying to describe.

Soak all four strands by dipping until pliable. Roll each in a ball, leaving a loose end about six or seven feet long and tied to ball with a halfhitch to keep ball from unraveling. Tie all four ends together. Drive a heavy spike into rafter or ceiling joist in the barn or shed and slip the knotted end of strands over it, letting two fall on each side. Begin to braid, pulling the braiding tightly as you work. Don't pull down only, but pull each strand tightly as it is brought to the front and at same time hold the other three strands firmly with the left hand. That is, the pull should be back into the braided rope rather than with the length of the rope.

The spiked end should be high enough to require standing on a bench or box to start with. When enough of rope is braided so that the feet are standing on the floor, and the required tension can not be obtained because the point where braiding is too low, tie a string around the completed braid and take a new hitch by passing finished rope over spike, fastening the first end at a distant point. That is, the round of the rope is passed over the side of spike, instead of the spike through the strands as at first.

When braiding is completed, the end is finished by taking opposite pairs of strands and weaving them through each other by making small cuts lengthwise of strands at proper alternate intervals. Thus should be left hanging about a foot of unbraided strand, which after the final finishing can be cut off to suit. The No. 1 end should now be finished by tying a Turk's head knot, or something similar.

AS THE braiding progresses unwind the balls, taking new halfhitches as required. With practise you can soon learn to swing the balls pendulum fashion so they will not become tangled. When both ends of newly braided rope are completed, it must be rolled on a smooth floor many times from end to end. Do this with the toe of boot, lightly at first until it starts to roll, then gradually placing more weight on it with the toe, until the rope is firm and round with the same diameter from end to end.

When completed this rope should have a length of from thirty-five to forty-five feet, depending on how much care is used to reduce waste by cutting the first strands wider than was necessary to obtain five-sixteenths of an inch in width after stretching.

Now the rope must be finally stretched and finished. Never put oil or grease of any kind on it. The rope must be made pliable by softening the grain without breaking it. Let it cure a week or more by stretching in shade its full length. The north side of a fence is an excellent place if there are no mice or squirrels about to chew on it.

THERE are several ways to soften the grain on a rope. The old California method was to stretch the rope tightly between two posts, and take a green oak stick about three inches in diameter and with it take a hitch around the rope, and with your pardner walk the stick back and forth from one end to the other. This must be done slowly so as not to burn the rope by its too rapid running around the stick. At intervals rub into rope fresh killed beef liver. Perhaps any liver will do, but as to that I can not say, as I always used beef or calf liver. This process must be continued until the rope is smooth and as pliable as demanded of its future use.

I like the following method much better, since the horse does the work and it is not necessary to have a pardner, although much quicker with one: Take a hard wood 4 x 4 and bore through it three two-inch holes with auger. Spike this firmly on a post so that the top hole is about level with your saddlehorn. Run the rope through the three holes, rigged with hemp rope at ends as formerly described. With your horse, pull from saddlehorn until reaching the other end. Drop that end and ride back to post, loop the end of that hemp rope on horn and pull through until the other end reaches the 4 x 4 stick. Repeat until rope is pliable, treating with liver as before.

WHEN the rope is first threaded into the holes, only use two holes, or you may break the rope before it becomes soft enough to run easily. As the rope is worked out, it may be faster to bore four holes and use all four. With this method it is seldom that a rope is burned even when it becomes so pliable that your horse can be worked at a trot. If you have a good natured pardner it is of course quicker to work a horse at both ends, and saves having to stoop from saddle to pick up the end of the Manila rope each time.

We used to get twenty dollars each for a rope after braiding and the owner furnished the hide and broke in the rope. No one ever became rich making rawhide ropes, though some have achieved fame from Montana to the Rio Grande because of their workmanship. —ERNEST W. SHAW

ERRATUM: On the contents page of the last issue, the heading designs were credited to H. M. Bonnell. Our apologies to L. F. Wilford, who executed them and failed to receive acknowledgment for a fine job, due to an editorial slip.

ASK Adventure

For Free Information and Services You Can't Get Elsewhere

Snakes

THE bushmaster, a sluggish monster, is deadly—while on the other hand the ferocious looking hog-nosed snake is a harmless bluffer, even going so far as to turn over and feign death like a 'possum.

Request:—"1. Will you please give me any information regarding the bushmaster snake, viz: habitat, habits, diet, length of life, size, if venomous. I would like to know, also, what is the largest known snake, and how many snakes are larger than the bushmaster.

2. What are the venomous snakes to be found in Oklahoma? Are the adders found in Oklahoma venomous?"—MRS. L. R. SNYDER, Weleetka, Oklahoma

Reply, by Mr. Clifford H. Pope:—1. The bushmaster, Sirocucu of Mapepire, is a pit viper that ranges from South America (Guiana, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia) into Central America. It reaches a length of twelve feet or more and is the longest of all the deadly snakes of the New World and one of the largest known. The fangs of a fully mature individual are well over an inch in length and the amount of poison secreted enormous. Death often occurs within an hour after a good bite.

The pattern of the back may be described as follows: The ground color is reddish yellow crossed by blackish bands rhomboidal in shape on the back but narrowing on the lower sides. There is a conspicuous black streak on either side of the head. The skin is very rough; a result of heavily keeled scales. The bushmaster prefers the shade of large forests where it lies in wait for birds and small mammals. It is not aggressive and never does more than hold its ground when attacked by man. The females guard their eggs during incubation but pay no attention to newly hatched offspring.

The anaconda of South America and the Indian and regal pythons of Asia probably share honors as being the three largest of all the snakes. Thirty feet may be taken as the maximum size attained by any of them.

It would be exceedingly hard to determine how many snakes exceed the bushmaster in size, for many harmless forms certainly do, but I recall only one poisonous species that does so—the king cobra of Asia. I know of the record of a specimen that measured 18 feet 4 inches.

2. Oklahoma certainly favors the copperhead, coral snake and various species of rattlesnakes, all of which should be classed as highly dangerous if not deadly. I do not know about records for the water moccasin, which is known to occur through the lowlands and swamps of eastern Texas and Louisiana. The snakes you refer to as "adders" are without doubt the blotched, thick bodied species often known as hog-nosed snakes because of their turned up snouts. They are entirely harmless and do not even bite in spite of their assumption of an aggressive and venomous attitude when annoyed. It is merely their way of giving a bluff which is very easily called. If annoyed repeatedly they often turn over and feign death like the 'possum.

Homestead

BEWARE of land sharks. They may locate you on a claim that's not worth a straw hat.

Request:—"Would you advise a man to take up homestead land in the Northwest?"

—PAUL F. BUCHMAN, Canton, Ohio

Reply, by Mr. E. E. Harriman:—Good farm land near the coast in Oregon ranges from one hundred an acre up and little for sale, and no homestead land in mountains, since there are forests which are

either privately owned or in National Reserves. In the East it is all stock raising or mines pretty generally, and homestead of no value. Homesteads are risky today. All the farm land was gone years ago, so filing a claim is throwing away a fee. The entire West is spotted with claims on which money and labor were wasted until hope died and men left them. Land sharks advertise to locate folks on claims and they do locate some on land where the entire claim is not worth as much as a straw hat.

Basketball

WORKING the ball through a five-man defense.

Request:—"I would appreciate it very much if you would give me information about a good offensive used with a five-man defense in basketball."

—A. F. ROOSE, Danbury, Connecticut

Reply, by Mr. I. S. Rose:—There are several ways of combating a five-man defense.

The Cleveland Rosenblum's, World's Professional Champions, use a system of long shots when the five men are spread across the floor. They also try to work the ball through by sending two men—one to each of the extreme corners of their baskets, where they can get corner close-up shots.

Another way of working the ball up is by dribbling right up to the center of the first man on the defense, making a sort of pivot of team-passing, as another man comes down the side. This is what might be termed a legal block. By dribbling down, it has a tendency to draw the five men closer in on the defense, and you can have more of a chance to pass the ball to the men who station themselves at the corners.

But if you have a good long-shot team, and several of the shots go through the hoop, the defense will naturally spread out and come closer to the center of the floor, giving your team a chance to work through the defense with a short passing game.

Naval Architect

A HIGHLY technical profession which is apparently unregulated.

Request:—"Would appreciate it very much if you would inform me as to the usual procedure in obtaining the degree of Naval Architect. I know that in England you must take examinations of The Board of Trade.

Is it necessary to have an N. A. degree or equivalent to design cruisers and small motor boats or act in a consulting capacity?"

—V. D. HOLLIS, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by Mr. Gerald T. White:—The degree of Naval Architect can only be obtained by graduation from one of the several American universities which teach yacht and ship design.

However, no degree is required to practise the profession. In fact, but a small number of the recognized designers are actually holders of the degree. Many of the most successful did not even study the subject in college but took up some other branch of engineering.

For those who desire a degree it is suggested that they get in touch with the University of Michigan, Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Webb Institute in New York.

If you simply wish to learn the theory and practise, irrespective of the possession of a degree, I would suggest your trying to get a job with a naval architect as draftsman. Put in about five years of that, studying mathematics and general engineering at home during the same period and, at the end of that time, you should be able to turn out a creditable job on your own hook.

There is no license necessary; in fact any butcher can hang out a sign stating he is a naval architect and no law will stop him, providing no one has him arrested on a charge of fraud.

Colonel Lawrence

A NOTE on the strange author of "Revolt In The Desert".

Request:—"Would you so kind as to give me some information about Col. T. E. Lawrence and the part he played in 'Revolt In The Desert'?

1. Is it true that he has reenlisted as a private in the air corps?

2. Did he resign his commission, or was he in disgrace from his activities?

3. Just what were the circumstances of the revolt, and how was he connected with it?"

—W. E. MACMILLAN, Los Angeles, California

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—Colonel Lawrence's work in Arabia during the latter part of the World War, although of minor importance, was one of the most interesting episodes of the whole war. I can not go into the details within the limits of a letter and I suggest that if you wish to know more than I am able to set down here that you read Colonel Lawrence's own story of his activities in "Revolt In The Desert". This is, I think, one of the most interesting books of adventure ever written. And if you wish to know more of Lawrence himself read "Lawrence And The Arabian Adventure" by Robert Graves (Doubleday Doran, New York) or Lowell Thomas's book which I do not have at hand but which is called, I think, "With Lawrence In Arabia".

To answer your specific questions briefly:

1. Lawrence's life since the war has been something of a mystery so far as the general public is concerned, due chiefly to his dislike of any kind of publicity. Numerous stories have been published and it seems that shortly after the war he enlisted as a private in the Tank Corps of the British army and went to India for service. Later the statement was made that he transferred to the Air Service. It has also been said that he was connected with the British diplomatic service and the latest seemingly authen-

tic account of his activities came from India at the time of the revolution in Afghanistan.

2. Lawrence did not hold a commission in the regular British service but had the temporary rank of colonel, which terminated with the close of the war just as with thousands of other officers in all the armies.

3. At the outbreak of the World War Arabia was dominated by the Turks, and the Arabs seized the opportunity of the war to revolt. They made little headway, however, until Lawrence, then connected with the British headquarters in Egypt in a subordinate capacity, saw the possibilities of the movement and became the actual leader of the Arabs. He succeeded in forming the Arabs into a unified force which cooperated with the British armies and rendered effectual aid to General Allenby in his conquest of Palestine.

Mexico

ON THE drinking of *pulque*, an ancient beverage with a bad reputation.

Request:— 'Can you tell me something about a Mexican drink called *pulque*? How do they make it and what are the effects of drinking it? Is it fermented or distilled?"

—FRANK G. WINTERS, San Ardo, California

Reply, by Mr. C. R. Mahaffey:—*Pulque* is the fermented juice of the maguey plant, or what is called the Century Plant in California, including several varieties of what is called the agave family. Stretching in endless rows, these plants are a distinctive part of the landscape in many parts of Central Mexico. These plants are grown from suckers that spring up about the parent plants, which are transplanted in rows—when they are two or three rows, the suckers I mean—and reach maturity at about eight years of age. Normally the plant blooms, making a flower stalk about twelve to twenty feet high, but to make *pulque* the plant is not allowed to blossom. The heart of each plant is cut out to make a cavity, which fills up with the juice each day. Each plant produces from one to two quarts a day of the sweetish juice, which then is called *aguamiel*, or honey-water.

Every day or so a man called *tlachiquero* siphons the juice out of each plant with a long gourd called a *acocote*. He places the juice in pigskin bags on his burro and when they are full he takes the juice to headquarters and places it in vats of beefhides, hung on wooden frames. In these vats the juice is fermented, and then shipped to Mexico City or some other market, and sold in places called *pulquerias*, known by colored fringes of tissue paper over their front entrances.

The *pulque* is handled in barrels, and has an alcoholic content of from 5 to 7 per cent. of alcohol. It is never bottled, but sold in glasses from the containers. This *pulque* was known in Mexico since ancient times and there is quite a legend as to the manner in which it was discovered. The effect is different from other drinks, as it contains bacteria which ferment in the intestines of the consumer, causing a sort of noxious intoxication, which is very bad for the health. It is a cloudy, whitish sort of drink. Many foreigners never learn to like it.

Each maguey plant produces during its life some 300 liters of *pulque*, and there are almost a million acres planted to these maguey plants. It is usually sold in the cities at from 12 to 15 cents Mex a liter or from 6 to 8 cents American money a quart. A cheap drunk can thus be obtained anywhere in Mexico where *pulque* is sold. It is said to deaden the brain and many a good man has gone on the rocks from drinking it. The effect is especially deadly on foreigners if taken over a considerable length of time.

Everglades

LOSTMAN'S RIVER, where bad men often hide, and native guides sometimes lose their way.

Request:—"Will appreciate any information you will give me on southwestern Florida. Mainly between Naples and Cape Sable.

Nature of the coast country between these two points, around Marco; also, if country suitable for homesteading; price of land; if plenty of hunting, what kind of game; good fishing, I would think. How about Lostman's River and Whitewater Bay?

Presume these points could only be reached by boat?" —J. R. HARRIS, Colorado, Texas

Reply, by Mr. Hapsburg Liebe:—Southwestern Florida is low, much of it marshy; along the coast it is cut up much by salt marsh, brackish water rivers and creeks and bays, all lined with mangrove. Water to drink must usually be rain water caught off a thatched roof and stored. Water out of the ground, away from brackish water shores, is limey. Mosquitoes by the trillion. Not too much game. Seminoles get it—and Northern hunters. Plenty of fish; bass in freshwater, with tarpon, robalo, jack (*cavelle*) in the brackish water. The game are deer, turkey, raccoon, fox squirrel (the latter protected the year around), duck, etc. Also small black bear and alligator.

The Everglades reach this section. The higher land, even, is known as low pine or palmetto land. Probably coral rock is just under the surface in all this.low pine and palmetto land. I don't believe it's fit for much, unless you happened to strike muck, which would probably have to be drained—and in most instances it would be too low to drain. Nobody much lives there. I was on Lostman's River a few years ago—it surely is wild—was hunting and we killed five rattlers, more rattlers than anything else! It's a sort of last frontier. Some really bad men are found in there occasionally. My advice is—forget it.

You could reach that country by boat best (Lostman's River section) and at the last you'd have to

wade a rowboat to get on dry land. I'm pretty sure Whitewater Bay can be reached by automobile—Ford only—from Miami via Homestead and Royal Palm Park. The country around Naples and Marco is higher, not so bad, but rather out of the way. There is a fine road through both these places now. I understand, however, there is no really worthwhile homestead land left in this State. The State was well combed during the late land "boom," you know.

P. S: You can get lost quickly in southwestern Florida. Do *not* go in there without a competent guide. Lostman's River got its name by men getting lost somewhere back in there. When I was hunting there we had three guides, and half the time *they* were stuck!

Denmark

HERE is a country for civilized adventure. The farmer is prosperous, the cities are clean, the rents are cheap and the beer is good.

Request:—"Please tell me about Denmark. I can't be very specific. What are the amusements? What is the way they make their living, on the whole? What kind of a town is Horsens? I married a Dane and I am American born. If we went over there to live, what would I find to compare with my home town or country? Would we need to have a lot of money to live there—in Copenhagen I mean, or could we make a living there? Are there places of business where English is spoken, where employment might be found?"

—LUCILLE HOYNECKE, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by G. I. Colbron:—This little country, just about the size of New York State, in population behind New York City in number, leads the world in modern thought. Denmark has the most highly educated population, i.e. the lowest percentage of illiteracy, of any country in the world. Its educational system, especially the system of adult education in what is known as the "People's High Schools" is known and admired by every other European country. Educators from everywhere else go up there to study the schools. Even Germany, acknowledged as most highbrow country, sends teachers to study Denmark's system.

DENMARK has made some remarkable and most important economic experiments as well. Denmark is prosperous because the farmer is prosperous. It would take too long to go in to the details here. But, because of a few sensible intelligent men in the national legislatures, the impoverished estates of the land barons who were rack renting the peasant and spending money in Paris and elsewhere—with the result that the Danes wouldn't stand it and emigrated by the thousand—these estates were bought by the government, put into the hands of the farmers on very easy terms, with the sole condition that they would use the land. Money was lent them for stock, implements, etc. These farmers known in Denmark and elsewhere, where the system is eagerly watched, as the "small-holders" are now the backbone of the country. To an astonishingly large percentage they are entirely out of debt to the government. Their yearly return equals the yearly income of the "white-collar class", salaried clerks or office-workers in the nearest towns.

Of course, prosperous, sophisticated, highly educated as they are, the Danes are after all, a race of former Vikings and lots of young folk want to go out and see the world. But the plain man can make a living at home, and that is what counts. There are few if any enormous fortunes in Denmark, but a higher level of general comfort than any other country can show. Even Copenhagen has no slums such as New York, Chicago and many other American cities have.

The chief industries are dairying and shipping. Danish butter, eggs and cream are exported to any country in the world. In an almost strictly agricultural country there can be no great factories, but there are many industries which are most interesting. The beautiful porcelains and textiles are known all over the world; there is a thriving metal industry. As in any country which is prosperous any imported articles of use or beauty sell well. Bicycles, still enormously used, are a very profitable article to manufacture or sell. The splendid roads of Denmark allure to the use both of the bicycle and the motor car. Ford has opened agencies there; the French Citroen sells finely. Importers of tropical fruits, of textiles, of clothing, do well.

IF YOU went back with your husband to his home, what would you find to compare with your home town? The question is vague, but if Copenhagen is his home town and Chicago yours, the answer is easy. You would find a smaller city, but one incomparably nicer to live in. *Clean* . . . clean throughout . . . Can any Chicagoan visualize this? Clean, charming, attractive surroundings, a pretty water-side, beautiful public buildings, not staggering as to size, but harmonious. Lovely little parks throughout the city, attractive suburbs in all directions; good hotels for any purse, ditto apartments, excellent theaters, not so advanced in splurgy scenery as ours, but with the best acting that I have ever seen . . . and I have lived for years in Germany. Excellent concerts of all kinds, film houses, vaudevilles, good restaurants. And Tivoli! There is nothing like Tivoli anywhere else in the world. An amusement park, right in the heart of the city, with restaurants from the best and largest, to cunning little "beer rooms"; with music of all kinds to be heard, lots of side-shows, etc. And yet no noise, no vulgarity, as in Coney Island. The nicest people of the town go there, the royal couples walk about arm in arm, rubbing elbows with the small shopkeeper and farmer in town for a holiday.

Horsens is the fourth city in Denmark, a pretty town, live, growing, with a good harbor on what is known as the "Great Belt". Horsens is in Jutland, the peninsula province, the only part of Denmark

that is not an island. Horsens has now about 25 to 28 thousand inhabitants, is rapidly growing. Charmingly situated. Does not, of course, offer the amusements one can find in the capital, but should offer good business opportunities, say for a motor car agency or something of the life. Living should in some way be cheaper there than in Copenhagen. But Denmark is not an expensive country to live in.

Some things, especially rents, are dearer there now, as everywhere. But to my mind it's a great satisfaction, if you do pay a bit more for your food, to know the farmer gets the difference, not the railroads or other exploiting middlemen.

Winters are long, but not cold. But, as in all north Europe, there are many dark days when you never see the sun, and have your lights on from 4 P.M. Sometimes you need them at 3 o'clock and you need them until 9 or 10 next morning. But the other side of the medal is that in summer, say from early May to late July or mid-August, it is never really dark, just dusk from midnight to 2 A.M., otherwise light. These "white nights" are the most wonderful things in the world, to my mind.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. DO NOT send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

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Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care Tropical Plant Research Foundation, 312 14th St., S. W., Washington, D. C.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk, General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Offices can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R., 333 Fifty-fourth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 507 No. Harper, Hollywood, Cal.

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State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3758 81st Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

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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.

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Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

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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, 73 Farmington Ave., Longmeadow, Mass.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

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Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

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Hockey "Daniel," *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, 524 West 3rd St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Boxing CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH, 455 West 23rd St., New York City.

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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.*

South Sea Islands JAMES STANLEY MEAGHER, 4322 Pine Street, Inglewood, Calif.

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

Borneo CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

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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, 14837 Grand River Ave., Detroit, Michigan.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe Part 1 *Jugo-Slavia and Greece.*—CAPT. WM. W. JENNA, West Point, New York.

Europe Part 2 *Albania.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 3 *Finland, Lapland and Russia.*—In the case of Russia, political topics outside of historical facts will not be discussed. ALEKO E. LILIUS, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 4 *Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 6 *Great Britain.* THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, W. C. 2, London, England.

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Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson Street, Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

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South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 457 W. 123rd St., New York, N. Y.

South America Part 3 *Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, southern Appalachians.*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure.*

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: Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—C. R. MAHAFFEY, Colinas, Santa Barbara, 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.

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.*—JAS. F. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.* Trips for Sport and Adventure—big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts, Indian tribes and present conditions.—S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), 45 Vernon St., Toronto, Can.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Hunters 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, c/o William H. Souls, 1481 Beacon St., Boston, Massachusetts.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing.—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 5607 Virginia Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S. Part 1 *California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Utah and Arizona.*—E. E. HARRIMAN, 1832 Arlington Ave., Long Beach, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 2 *New Mexico.* Also Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance.—H. F. ROBINSON, Albuquerque, Box 445, New Mexico.

Western U. S. Part 4 *Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Travelers Hotel, Reno, Nevada.

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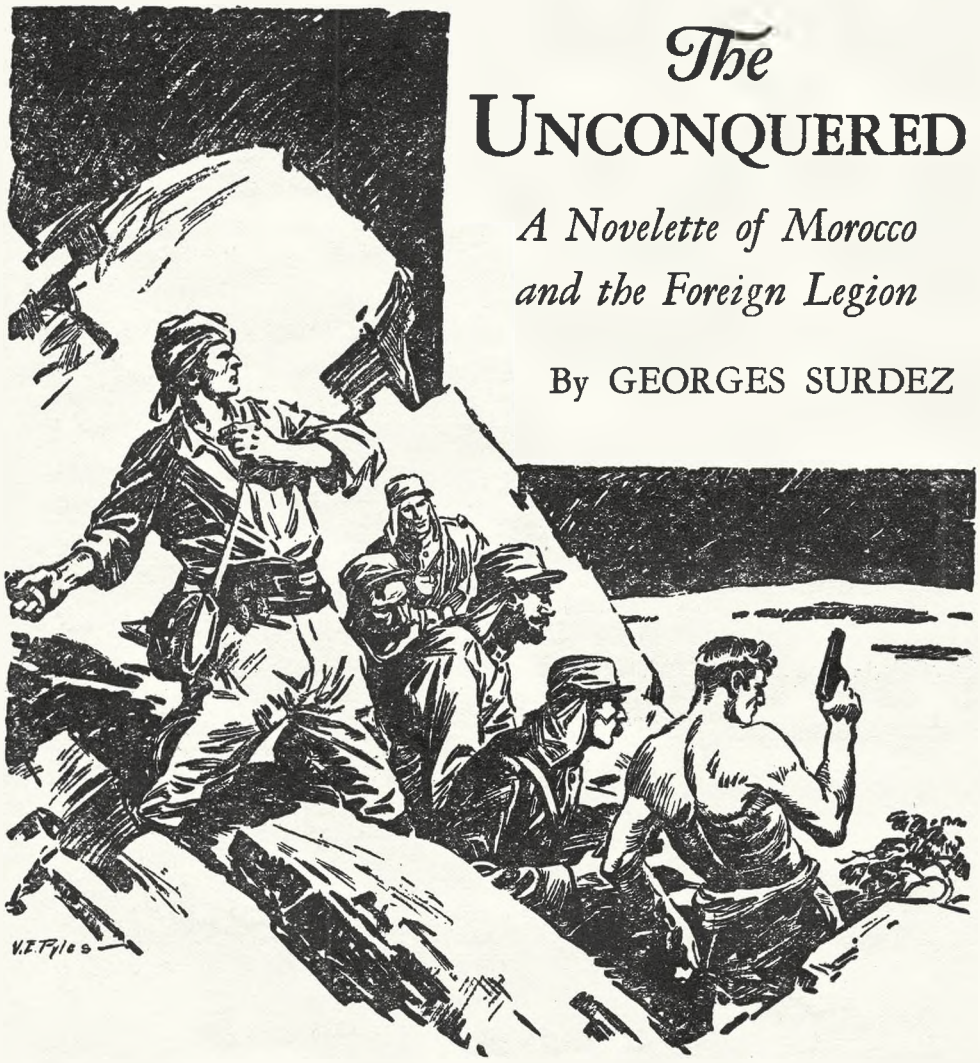

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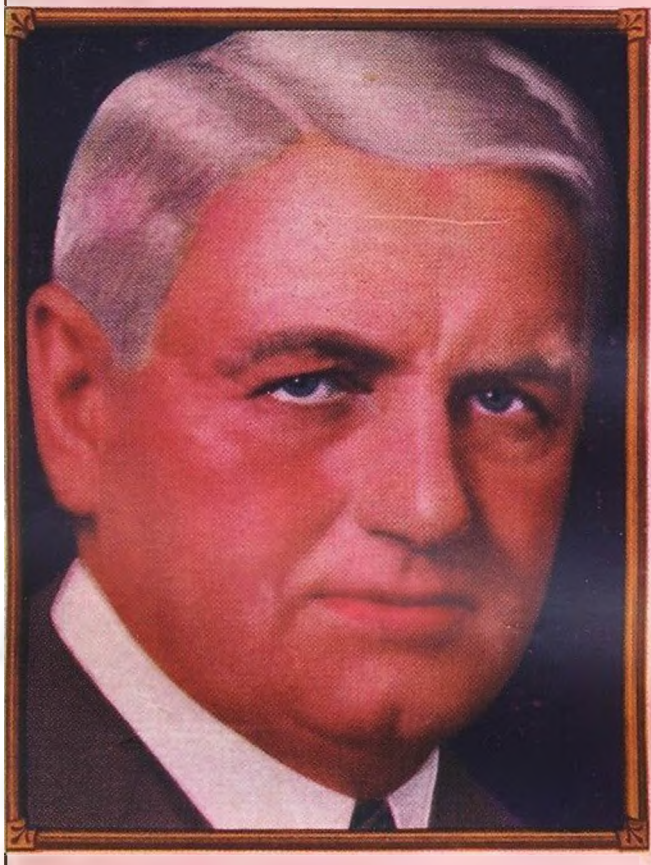

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